WAR BY OTHER MEANS: ENVIRONMENTAL VIOLENCE IN THE 21ST CENTURY

by

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A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Environmental Studies Program
and the Graduate School of the University of Oregon
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

June 2017

DISSERTATION APPROVAL PAGE

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Title: War by Other Means: Environmental Violence in the 21st Century

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DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

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Doctor of Philosophy

Environmental Studies Program

June 2017

Title: War by Other Means: Environmental Violence in the 21st Century

This dissertation studies the intersections of militarism, climate change, and environmental justice in U.S. literature and popular culture since the end of the Cold War. The project identifies different mechanisms enacting environmental military violence through discursive analysis of literary and cultural texts, and considers the ideas, values, and beliefs that support environmental military violence. In each chapter I trace a different dynamic of environmental violence structured through the logics of U.S. counterinsurgency theory by examining what I call "narrative political ecologies"—cultural texts that center concerns of ecology and broadly defined political economy. Chapter I establishes the stakes and questions of the dissertation. The next two chapters investigate the dynamics of environmental violence depicted within narrative political ecologies. Chapter II investigates how eruptive interpersonal violence secures more insidious, hidden forms of slow environmental violence in Héctor Tobar's *The Tattooed Soldier*. Chapter III considers the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands and the environmental military violence responsible for the deaths of undocumented migrants by examining Luis Alberto Urrea's *The Devil's Highway* and the Electronic Disturbance Theater's *Transborder Immigrant Tool*. Chapter IV turns to potential f wars and conflicts that may

be caused by climate change as they have been depicted in speculative fiction. In novels depicting climate migrants, such as Octavia Butler's *Parable of the Sower* (1993) and *Parable of the Talents* (2014), I show that even politically progressive, intersectional approaches to environmental endangerment naturalize conflict and occlude dialogic solutions to environmental change. The final chapter traces how the environmental refugee has become a paradigmatic figure in climate change discourse, particularly the aspects of this discourse where issues of national security are articulated. At the center of these texts is the figure of the migrant and narratives of migrations, and I argue that the figure of the environmental migrant offers a privileged vantage on the constitutive forces of the Anthropocene. The dissertation identifies the specific literary and rhetorical techniques that authors use to contest environmental militarization and expand the U.S. public's capacity to creatively and compassionately reason around increased flows of environmental migrants— issues of vital importance for humane climate change adaptation.

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Siperstein, Stephen, Shane Hall, and Stephanie LeMenager, editors. *Teaching Climate Change in the Humanities*. Routledge, 2017.

"Learning to Imagine the Future: the Value of Affirmative Speculation in Climate Change Education." *Resilience: A Journal of the Environmental Humanities*. 2.2. University of Nebraska Press. 2015.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am extremely grateful to many people for their help, support, and friendship throughout my work on this dissertation and my graduate education more broadly. I wish to express that gratitude and appreciation to Professors David Vázquez and Stephanie LeMenager for co-advising this project. More than helping me on the dissertation, I appreciate how you have mentored me by ushering me into different book projects, conferences, and fishing trips. I am grateful to Professors Sarah Wald, Jacob Darwin Hamblin, and Anita Chari for both helping me bring together my diffuse ideas and compose this manuscript, and for offering me advise about how to continue this work. For being my collaborators, co-teachers, colleagues, and commiseraters, I would like to thank all my grad student friends and colleagues in Environmental Studies and English, particularly: Taylor McHolm, Stephen Siperstein, Aylie Baker, Jules Bacon, Erica Elliot, M Jackson, Deion Jones, Nick Dreher, Alayna Linde, Dan Platt, Andrew Dutterer, and Kaityln Grigsby-Hall. I thank my family: Thomas, Peggy, Jamie, and Trevor Hall, Briana Garcia, Kim, Kurt, and Kyle Grigsby. Most of all, I thank my partner, Kaitlyn Grigsby-Hall, for her infinite patience and insightful advice, her humor and her passion for making the world a better place. I also want to acknowledge Professor Kate Chandler, who introduced me to good books and farming at St. Mary's College of Maryland.

This dissertation is dedicated to Kaitlyn Grigsby-Hall

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION:
WAR BY OTHER MEANS: ENVIRONMENTAL VIOLENCE IN THE 21ST CENTURY

> "The 20th century will be remembered as the age whose essential thought consisted in targeting no longer the body, but the enemy's environment."
>
> –Peter Sloterdijk, *Terror in the Air*
>
> "In a few decades, the relationship between the environment, resources and conflict may seem almost as obvious as the connection we see today between human rights, democracy and peace."
>
> –Wangari Maathai, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate
>
> "Whose security gets protected by any means necessary? Whose security is casually sacrificed, despite the means to do so much better? Those are the questions at the heart of the climate crisis."
>
> –Naomi Klein

An Introduction to War, Militarism, and Environmental Crisis

At the 2015 Universal Expo in Milan, Italy, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry urged world leaders to adopt aggressive standards for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and fund measures for adapting to climate change. Kerry took the theme of the Universal Expo ("Feeding the Planet, Energy for Life") as a jumping off point for building momentum for the upcoming 21st United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Conference of Parties (UNFCCC COP21) negotiations: "Climate change is perhaps the most significant threat to global food security today." He warned, however, that "[climate change] isn't only about food security; it's about global security, period."

How then, per the former Secretary of State, is climate change an issue of global security? Kerry continued by providing narratives tying climate change to the generation of wars and mass movements of refugees and migrants spurred on by clime-fueled poverty and extreme weather, as the dangerous ramifications of unchecked, run-away climate change. Specifically, Kerry tied aberrant climatic conditions to the ongoing war in Syria:

> It is not a coincidence that immediately prior to the civil war in Syria, the country experienced the worst drought on record. As many as 1.5 million people migrated from Syria's farms into Syria's cities, and that intensified the political unrest that was beginning to brew. Now, I'm not telling you that the crisis in Syria was caused by climate change. No. Obviously, it wasn't. It was caused by a brutal dictator who barrel bombed, starved, tortured, and gassed his own people. But the devastating drought clearly made a bad situation a lot worse.

While Kerry firmly lays the blame for the civil war on the dictatorship of Bashar al-Assad, he bookends his remarks on Syria with reminders of how environmental conditions "clearly make a bad situation a lot worse."

Kerry shifts quickly from the battlefields of Syria to the refugee crisis generated by the war. At the time, over one and a half million Syrians had migrated out of Syria, and millions more were internally displaced people (IDP) within Syria. According to Kerry, "unless the world meets the urgency of this moment, the horrific refugee situation that we're facing today will pale in comparison to the mass migrations that intense droughts, sea-level rise, and other impacts of climate change are likely to bring about." Kerry proceeds to explain the general concept that the war in Syria and its attendant refugee crisis illustrate: "Climate change is – to borrow a term from the Department of Defense in America – a 'threat multiplier.' Even if it doesn't ignite conflict, it has the ability to fan the flames." It isn't just Pentagon upper brass and America's top diplomats

who refer to climate change as a "threat multiplier;" narratives linking conflict and political instability to climate change are now commonplace among academics and environmentalist civil society organizations as well. And in these narratives growing conflict— in size and global scope, accompanied by waves of migrants teeming out of the Global South and into the Global North—are fast becoming hallmark tropes of global climate discourse.

On the night of November 13, three weeks after Kerry's speech and just three weeks before COP21, Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) gunmen attacked various public spaces in Paris, killing 130 people. In the chaotic aftermath of the horrific attacks, delegates and civil society participants didn't know if the much-vaunted negotiations would take place at all. These attacks caused French President Francois Holland to declare a state of emergency— France's first since World War II. COP negotiations involve a lot of people— an understatement, given that each of the 197 Parties to the treaty send negotiating delegates, civil society delegates who can be present for parts and spaces of the negotiation, media representatives, and thousands of un-credentialed groups such as NGOs and businesses descend around the negotiations. Environmentalist and climate justice organizations' planned marches, civil disobedience, and counter-summits. Such events, typical of COP negotiations, were suddenly illegal. Climate activist Naomi Klein, in an op-ed for the Guardian, spoke out against the curtailment of civic freedoms in France on the eve of the fateful negotiations. Klein charges that the shut-down of public space reflects the "fundamental inequity of the climate crisis itself – and that core question of whose security is ultimately valued in our lopsided world:"

> Here is the first thing to understand. The people facing the worst impacts of climate change have virtually no voice in western debates about whether to do anything serious to prevent catastrophic global warming. Huge climate summits like the one coming up in Paris are rare exceptions. For just two weeks every few years, the voices of the people who are getting hit first and worst get a little bit of space to be heard at the place where fateful decisions are made. That's why Pacific islanders and Inuit hunters and low-income people of color from places like New Orleans travel for thousands of miles to attend. The expense is enormous, in both dollars and carbon, but being at the summit is a precious chance to speak about climate change in moral terms and to put a human face to this unfolding catastrophe. (20 Nov 2015).

In the wake of the ISIL terrorist attacks, this slim chance for some procedural and representative justice (means towards greater distributional climate justice) evaporated. More than directly lobbying the official delegates, the alternative summits, workshops, and demonstrations planned during each COP serve as a loadstone in the global climate justice movement, a space where coalitions of students, workers, academics, indigenous and civil organizations form coalitions and articulate counter-visions to the thus-far inadequate response by the governments of some of the UNFCCC treaty signatories. The official negotiations proceeded under the surveillance of a heavy militarized presence, without direct action engagement by civil society. Kerry's speech and the ISIL terror attacks leading up to the COP21 negotiations highlight two examples of how militarism and armed conflict impact environmental politics and imaginations.

This dissertation, "War by Other Means," explores this confluence through environmental cultural studies. It is an exploration not only of "whose security is valued" at others' expense, but also of the "imaginative ways" writer activists and artists respond to environmental military violence and weaponized landscapes. The world is witnessing a rise in militarism that corresponds with the rise in global temperatures; and the growing consensus is that the collision course of these trends is potentially catastrophic. In Kerry's

speech, the specter of catastrophe took on the appearance of civil unrest and a hungry tide of climate migrants swarming into Europe and the United States. For those planning to attend and influence the COP21 negotiations, that catastrophe took the form of terrorists targeting public spaces and militaries squelching civil liberties in the name of security. Visions of a violent, warmer world suggest a consequential confluence of political and environmental violence in the 21st century. "War by Other Means" turns to the work of artists and activists to recover fugitive environmental violence in modern armed conflicts. My project identifies the specific literary and rhetorical techniques that these authors use to contest environmental militarization and expand the U.S. public's capacity to creatively and compassionately reason around the intersections of security, violence, and environmental change.

Wangari Maathai, the founder of the Greenbelt Movement, writes: "In a few decades, the relationship between the environment, resources and conflict may seem almost as obvious as the connection we see today between human rights, democracy and peace" (*Greenbelt Movement).* Maathai's grassroots linking of environmentalist projects (such a planting trees) to women's empowerment and direct democracy and peace-building efforts in Kenya, and later, across the Global South, have made her the only African woman Nobel Peace Prize laureate, as well as the first environmentalist to win the prestigious prize. Her prophetic claim that the links between "environment, resources and conflict may seem almost as obvious" as those relations the Greenbelt Movement made between environment, gender, economic self-determinacy and democracy is, like many a prophesy, ambiguous. The sentence can be read with optimism or dread. I am riveted by my project because I cannot help but read that quote by Wangari Maathai with

apprehension. "In a few decades," as issues of climate justice continue to challenge political, economic, and ethical systems, how will the "relationship between environment, resources, and conflict" be made "obvious?" Will these connections be valued precisely because we have avoided the collision course of rising tides and rising militarism? Or will the obviousness of these connections be made salient through constant warring over scarce resources? Based on depictions of climate change and other forms of global environmental change in popular culture, the answer to these questions favors a decidedly dystopic turn; narratives of environmental collapse saturated with interpersonal and organized violence dominate recent U.S. film and literature. In many of these stories, set "a few decades in the future," the scarcity of natural resources or disruptive environmental hazards of the future spark and sustain a Hobbesian state of constant warfare[1] between different tribal groups of humans. U.S.-based climate activists and public intellectuals make similar arguments, albeit via different rhetorics. Christian Parenti, Naomi Klein, and Bill McKibben each press for climate mitigation and adaptation based on the premise that climate change poses threats not just from geophysical changes to earth systems but also from changes to human politics and hatreds.

I am motivated to explore the discursive intersections of recent US militarism, environmental change, and social and environmental justice because I do not want these relationships to be realized through ubiquitous conflict, but rather through the peaceful

[1] In *De Cive* (1642) *Leviathan* (1651), Thomas Hobbes writes that humans' natural state is that of a "warre of all against all" ("bellum omnium contra omnes"). Each individual, moving from a fundamentally greed-and-need driven nature, struggles against one's fellow human for scare resources. Only by entering into a social contract with a civil state can people find peace among one another, and so by giving up certain freedoms civil society holds back the war of all against all.

understandings and compromises people make to meet the challenges of climate change. It is not a question of which reading of Mathaai's prophesy corresponds most closely to the ground truth of the empirical world. Indeed, Marshall Burke, Solomon Hsiang, and Edward Miguel find a positive correlation for both interpersonal and intergroup violence and rising temperature in a recent meta-analysis of 55 peer reviewed studies. Across these studies, Burke et al. conclude, one degree Celsius increased interpersonal violent crime by 2.4 percent, and intergroup conflict by 11.4 percent. There is empirical evidence then that global climate change may increase violence. Yet the causal pathway(s) by which this violence increased is, as these authors note, as yet unclear. From a social constructivist viewpoint, the answer to Mathaai's question is ultimately a matter of human choice and understanding. Whether humans engage in conflict or in peace-building is a question ultimately of how humans choose to live in the world, of our ethical, political, economic, and creative relationships to one another and to the more-than-human world. Such peace-building, I believe, is only made possible by creative and compassionate democracy. Militarism is not, after all, solely a matter of bombs and bullets, but rather the ideas and beliefs we hold that enable the use of violence as an extension of politics (Sturgeon, Clausewitz).

This dissertation argues that we should theorize environmental military violence as the kind of violence done to humans conducted through, or resulting in, ecosystem degradation. Militarism and militarization refer to social processes that structure the production of organized military and paramilitary violence, and so militarism refers to both recognizably material as well as ideological and discursive formations. Modern warfare, and both its direct and indirect effects on human bodies and environments, is the

object of this study. Yet to call modern warfare to account through critical study one must also disrupt the easy separation of object and subject in academic study. I aim not only to uncover some of the different kinds and mechanisms enacting environmental military violence through discursive analysis of literary and cultural texts, but also to consider how knowledge of this subject— including that which is produced in academic discourse— is imbricated with specific assemblages of power, privilege, and difference. In other words, "War by Other Means" examines both mechanisms of environmental violence as well as the ideas, values, and beliefs that support and sustain environmental military violence. I trace a different dynamic of ecological violence structured through the logics of US counterinsurgency theory in each chapter by examining what I call "narrative political ecologies"—cultural texts that center concerns of ecology and broadly defined political economy. I find these narrative political ecologies within a broad contemporary cultural archive, one that includes novels, news media, documentary film, and art installations. These popular culture texts use shared vocabularies in representing environmental military violence, the logics undergirding that violence, and the links between war and the environment. A chief trope deployed throughout these texts is the figure of the migrant and narratives of migrations.

The figure of the environmental and climate migrant offers a privileged subject position with a vantage on the constitutive forces of the Anthropocene, the name stratigraphers have used to signify human-caused changes to global climate. These forces include structural racism and patriarchy, environmental change, nationalism, and rising economic inequality. Many of the texts that I treat in this dissertation examine environmental violence and just adaptation to global environmental change by deploying

the figure of the environmental migrant and refugee; one who is constructed paradoxically as a victim of environmental violence as well as a menacing threat posed by environmental degradation. I argue that the migrant plays a central role in narrating environmental military violence and is a locus for creative and compassionate public reasoning and resistance in a time of militarized climate adaptation.

"War by Other Means" argues that since the end of the Cold War the practices and ideas associated with "counterinsurgency theory" have grown increasingly important to the U.S. military and the U.S. public's conceptions of environment, war, and national security. Military conflict has always incorporated environmental violence, both as violence conducted against non-human environmental features, and aspects of the environment used as weapons against human bodies. But while environmental military violence may be transhistorical, it manifests in radically different ways and for different purposes in specific historical moments. Drawn from models of British and French imperial policing, counterinsurgency is a kind of military action that constructs and controls environments in part through covert, interlinking forms of ecological violence and militarized police action. This kind of warfare is a far cry from Carl Von Clauswitz's enduring conceptualization of war as an extension of politics conducted through the logics and practices of a duel. Unlike Clauswitzian notions of armed conflict as reflecting the logical extension of a duel between two combatants, each vying to disable or kill their opponent, counterinsurgency theory conceptualizes conflict as an attempt to shape and control environments and the populations living in those environments. Since the end of the Cold War the United States has enjoyed a level of military hegemony unmatched in history, however, this superpower status has also meant that the US is constantly

militating against insurgent threats to its power. Counterinsurgency Strategy (COIN) is central to how militarism organizes and deploys environmental military violence. In COIN strategy and tactics, environmental military violence is generally not a byproduct or flaw of operations, but rather a design feature. The logics of counterinsurgency not only animate military thinking, policy, and actions, but are also present within mainstream political discourse and popular culture depicting relationships of war and environment. Literature and popular culture articulate these logics while describing and contesting environmental military violence as a force of social inequality formation[2].

Militarism through the Environmental Humanities

The humanities—and especially the environmental humanities—are crucial to the study of the values and ideas that support and sustain war, to understanding how people experience war and militarism. To theorize environmental military violence conducted through counterinsurgency logics, and describe it as marshalled to particular aims, I explore the discursive intersections of U.S. militarism, climate change, and environmental justice as they are represented in literature and popular culture produced since the end of the Cold War. Literature and popular culture may seem an odd archive in which to find the nature of environmental military violence and counterinsurgency. The environmental humanities—its attention to form, context, and ethics—provides unique and important vantage points into the study of war and the environment.

[2] David Pellow's notion of environmental inequality formation stresses different "dimensions of intersection between environmental quality and social hierarchies," and Pellow argues that environmental justice studies must seek multiscalar accounts of how social inequality is forged or secured through environmental inequalities (582-583).

War, in its long and bloody history, has never been a solely material endeavor. The *need* for war, the *art* of war, and the making of peace after war are all simultaneously narrated, social, and ethical endeavors as important to the fighting and outcome of battle as are blades, bombs, and bullets. Studying how environmental military violence is enunciated in popular culture provides a means for directly theorizing the nature of this violence—its effects and mechanisms as they are experienced by individuals and collectives. Furthermore, this humanistic understanding of environmental military violence allows scholars to apprehend the logics and ideas that direct the use of environmental military violence as a mechanism of power. Discourse analysis recognizes that form not only reflects power, but investigates how knowledge and form are effects of power (A. Baldwin "Racialization" 1476). Knowledge is enmeshed with power precisely through form, and to analyze form and representation allows scholars to attend to the relationships between the subjects and objects of discourses (Foucault 1980). This approach not only allows for the study how environments and environmental inequalities are weaponized through armed conflict and repressive military action, but also allows me to engage in the study of how militaristic thinking ties conflict to environmental change through ostensibly environmentalist rationales. What discourses support and sustain war and militarism's use of environmental military violence? How do these values and beliefs limit public imaginaries to envision a future of resource wars and resurgent imperialism rather than democratic, dialogic solutions to socio-environmental problems?

Attending to these discourses can help scholars and students recognize environmental conflicts and their effects that environmental studies has previously overlooked. Such insights are far from immaterial beyond the academy. Consider the act

of "truth and reconciliation" that follows many armed conflicts. Such commissions, supported by governments through the United Nations and other regional and international institutions, attempt to account for wartime casualties and crimes as a means of appropriating reparations, apologies, and steps towards restitution and reconciliation between the aggrieved parties of war. Yet these commissions also advocate for a kind of truth, the truth of a witness documenting *what happened*. *What happened here*? In such acts of witnessing, the ability to fully apprehend the faces and the names of those who died in the conflict is a moral necessity. By overlooking environmental conflicts, or ramifications of environmental violence as a mechanism of strategic power within widely-recognized armed conflicts, we risk overlooking and silencing a wartime casualties and underestimate the true human and environmental cost of militarism.

Likewise, unpacking how understandings of environments and environmentalisms have at times contributed to "green hate" and "green militarisms[3]" may allow peacebuilders and environmental justice environmentalists to disrupt these ostensibly environmentalist justificatory schemes for war and conflict. As Jacob Hamblin shows in *Arming Mother Nature*, the current widespread popularity of at least "shallow" environmentalism in the U.S. (to borrow a phrase from deep ecologists) is attributable to the U.S. military's concerted interest and palletization of environmental manipulation and catastrophic endangerment since World War II. Hamblin complicates the quick association students of environmental studies often draw between notion that environmental concern in the U.S. emerged from preservationist movements on the 19th

[3] Jessica Leanne Urban uses the phrase "greening of hate" to refer to ways mainstream environmental security discourse scapegoat marginalized populations for environmental degradation (253). With "green militarisms" I extend Urban's nomenclature to the ways militaries justify their missions in environmentalist values and deploy discourses of sustainability and environmentalism in their efforts.

century and the counterculture movements of the 1960s. Such associations are understandable, as environmental studies formed as a discipline during raucous student movements reshaping college curricula around issues of identity and social justice (Wapner 2007). But to attending to militarism centers virulent strands of nativism and nationalism— if not outright imperialism— in many aspects of American environmental letters and thought. This may in turn offer a corrective to one of the most significant differences between environmental studies and the other "studies" that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s (i.e. ethnic studies, women and gender studies). While all of these area studies arose from the efforts of student movements to reshape college curricula towards an education that could in turn reform society, environmental studies, like mainstream environmentalism more broadly, focused on critiquing society's abuse of nature without interrogating the connections between social justice and environmental health. What more, the field often centered neo-Malthusian ideas that blamed people of color, countries in the Global South, and the world's poor for environmental degradation. I believe an environmental criticism of militarism will help identify and combat the longstanding "green hate" biases that are perpetuated in environmental studies by drawing attention to the ways that imperialist military conflict by the U.S. (itself a settler colonial state) targets marginalized communities and normalizes violent conflict over environmental resources.

Locating Environmental Humanities' Investigations of Militarism

Despite the need for bringing environmental humanities approaches to bear on these questions, environmental literary and cultural studies have infrequently and inadequately addressed the links between conflict and environmental inequalities. Indeed,

Rob Nixon finds that "the most startling feature of environmental literary studies" is the "reluctance" of American scholars to seriously engage with "the environmental repercussions of American foreign policy, particularly in relation to contemporary imperial practices" (33). He argues that work within the environmental humanities in America generally has remained "skewed" toward nation-bound investigations that seldom engage "the environmental fallout of U.S. foreign policy head on." Such "superpower parochialism" is especially bewildering considering that the discipline of environmental studies is centered on the study of those connections that are most potent in shaping and mediating the relations of humans to the more than human world (Gould 331). The fundamental task of critical environmental study, particularly in the humanities, is to explicate the relations between humans and the natural world. Environmental sociologists claim that scholars of environmental studies "cannot fully explain the relationship between humans and the natural world without theorizing a link between natural resource extraction, armed violence, and environmental degradation" (Downey et al. 417). Indeed, how can environmental studies make good on its mission to describe such forces without strong theoretical and empirical engagements with war and militarism? The material and discursive pathways tread by the machines of war should be basic to the scholarship and pedagogy of anthropogenic environmental change and to the study of environmental inequality and social justice in the Anthropocene.

I argue that a literature of environmental justice is incomplete and insufficient without stronger theoretical engagements with armed conflict's role in creating and maintaining environmental inequalities. One of the central aims of this research is thus to make a case for greater focus on militarism and armed conflict within the environmental

humanities, and environmental studies writ large. Metaphors of battle abound in environmental studies and studies of U.S. empire that touch on environmental issues. Eduardo Galleano writes that the "Open Veins of Latin America are bleeding," Bill McKibben demands that we "literally declare war on climate change," and Rachel Carson warns us that "man is a part of nature, and his war against nature is inevitably a war against himself." Yet these wars (despite McKibben's appropriation of millennial generational irony run amuck) are all *metaphorical*. Within the proliferation of war-talk in environmentalism and environmental studies, it seems odd that literal war is long been neglected. Although environmental studies has taken on issues of economic expansion and affluence, population growth, and technological change, comparatively little attention has been paid to wars and their environmental impacts. The literature of environmental justice, which studies how environmental inequalities are produced, represented, and understood, is incomplete without stronger theoretical engagements with armed conflict's role in creating and maintaining environmental inequalities.

Armed conflict and militarization, after all, cause massive ecological degradation and change, perhaps more so than any other human endeavor (Gould 331). The buildup of militaries in the Global North facilitate the unequal relations with the Global South that allow for the extraction of raw goods and resources from the South by the North (Hooks and Smith 63). While relatively few people in the world today fight in wars, or actively plan and prepare for wars by producing munitions or practicing different maneuvers, the environmental impact of militarization is profound. There is perhaps no more iconic example of such ruination than the image of a mushroom cloud created by the detonation of a nuclear weapon. The image has become synonymous with the uneasy

apotheosis of human technological intervention into environments, and its fireball connotes not only the mass destruction of the detonation but also the lingering fallout of radioactive weaponry and nuclear winter. As the Anthropocene Working Group of the Quaternary Stratigraphic Society noted in its August 2016 report to the International Geological Congress, the dawn of a new geological epoch is scientifically warranted based in large part on the "geological signal" created by the radioactive elements unleashed by atomic weaponry and energy development during the Cold War. Nuclear missiles and bombs are located in submarines and U.S. military bases around the world, many of which were located due to the U.S. Navy's 19th and early 20th century need for re-coaling stations, places where the imperial fleet could restock its fuel supplies. Today, those ships and submarines and planes are powered by a prodigious consumption of petroleum; the U.S. military is the single greatest institutional consumer of fossil fuel on the planet, and consequently the largest emitter of greenhouse gases. Numerous natural science studies of war and militarism's environmental footprint have proliferated since the 1980s, buoyed by broader public awareness of global environmental changes such as the depletion of atmospheric ozone, declining biodiversity and deforestation, and climate change. Brauer's (sp) *War and Nature* collects hundreds of such studies and lays out a meticulous accounting of different environmental and human health repercussions of conflicts across the world.

The growth of empirical studies and proliferation of public discourse concerning war and the environment has yet to produce a comparable body of literature within the environmental humanities, however, this overgeneralization does not as strongly pertain to two distinct areas within the environmental humanities— environmental justice studies

and environmental history. Scholars in these areas have begun to articulate the necessary critique of how armed conflict and particularly the U.S. military industrial complex reinforces ongoing environmental endangerment of the poor and people of color worldwide. Those scholars, such as Valerie Kuletz and Traci Brynne Voyles, focus on how US militarism produces the slow violence of toxins and radiation— deadly environmental burdens—and make "national sacrifice zones" across the U.S. and its imperial holdings. Gregory Hooks and Chad Smith argue that the environmental inequalities created by the American military industrial complex are engendered and distributed through different processes than those inequalities distributed through capitalism. Hooks and Smith maintain that environmental danger caused by armed conflict operates by a different logic than that of capitalist expansion (the old, bitter foe of environmental justice critics). The logics of "arms races and geopolitical competition" drive a dually expansionary and accelerating human impact on the environment that they term the "treadmill of destruction" after Schnaiberg's "treadmill of production" (562 see also Gould and Pellow 2008).

Environmental military violence is the use of spectacular as well as attritional environmental violence to secure the authority of the state and the continued extraction of resources for capitalist expansion. Environmentalists frequently characterize capitalism[4] as a metaphorical "war" on the environment, but it seems few have articulated how *war* is war on the environment and human populations working, living, praying, and learning in

[4] Priority in environmental justice literature has focused on extraction, production, consumption, and disposal of natural resources. Warfare is intimately embroiled in all aspects of this familiar material pathway, but may operate according to different logics and systems of representation (Smith and Clark). While the "treadmill of production" operates through a logic of constant expansion, the "treadmill of destruction" may serve expansion at times while also being directed, and expanded, for other geopolitical aims, such as strategic command of space or research and development (Schnaiberg, Smith and Clark).

it. To focus on the "treadmill of destruction" is to understand environmental military violence as a force that creates social inequalities by distributing environmental burdens and benefits. It makes some lives and ways of life more secure while making other lives more insecure. Thus, environmental military violence secures uneven power relations.

Environmental historians have also been at the forefront of environmental humanities answers to this challenge to our research and educational agendas. For example, Jacob Hamblin, an environmental and military historian, traces how military planning from the end of World War II and throughout the Cold War produced "catastrophic environmentalism" both within and without the U.S. military and government agencies as much as the counterculture-based environmentalist movement (2013). The writer activists decrying slow violence coincide with a similar time frame throughout Nixon's *Slow Violence*. Peter Sloterdijk dates the intellectual start of the 20th century to the moment Germans deployed weaponized gas in Ypres during the First World War. As he notes, "the 20th century will be remembered as the age whose essential thought consisted in targeting no longer the body, but the enemy's environment" (Sloterdijk). Edward Russell likewise focuses on the legacy of chemical warfare and discourses of pest control since WWI. Within Charles Closmann's groundbreaking *War and the Environment*, J.R. McNeill and David Painter explore the environmental footprint of the US military from 1789-2003, while Lisa Brady focuses on the refinement of environmental military tactics in the American Civil War. Scholars like Robert Marzec and Alfred Crosby take even longer views by examining the ecological impacts of European and American colonial conflicts, and in the case of Marzec's *Militarizing the*

Environment (2015), drawing through lines from the forces that animated the 17th century enclosure movement to contemporary climate change war games.

"War by Other Means" contributes to the work of 21st century "critical environmental studies" and more specifically, the work of "critical environmental justice studies" by expanding the contours of environmental justice to focus on both militarism and how artists take up how militarism exacerbates environmental inequalities. The use of "critical" in both terms is an example of academic convergent evolution. As Paul Wapner and David N. Pellow note, the originators of each term, respectively, do not appear to be in conversation with one another. Following Robert Cox's differentiation between "critical theory" and "problem-solving theory," Wapner defines "critical environmental studies" as initiatives within our broader inter-, cross-, and multi-disciplinary field that question "existing power dynamics and seeks not only to reform but to transform social and political conditions" (7). It is precisely this kind of critical action that artists like Héctor Tobar, Octavia Butler, the Electronic Disturbance Theater, and Junot Díaz effect in the texts I take up in this dissertation. By foregrounding migrants and migrations as who navigate weaponized environments and militarized landscapes, these narrative texts push back against simplistic frames of victimhood that have undergirded environmental justice studies in the past. These fictive migrants may be targets of oppressive violence and environmental inequality, but they also—through their negotiation of space and various differences that make a difference (such as race, nation states, and natural hazards)—are able to articulate the conditions of environmental violence and at times push back against it.

To unpack these texts' depictions of environmental military violence and treatment of the figure of the environmental migrant, I rely principally on the insights of critical race theory and disability studies. The need for rapprochement within environmental studies and critical race studies has been furthered in recent years by scholars such as Paul Outka, Gabriela Nuñez, Julie Avril Minich, Sarah Wald, Camille Dungy, Rob Nixon, Byron Caminero Santangelo, and Priscilla Ybarra, among others. This emerging work in the environmental humanities advances what David N. Pellow calls a "third generation" of environmental justice scholarship that takes up multiscalar and intersectional approaches to the study of environmental inequality while also questioning "how different forms of inequality and social power are viewed as entrenched within society" (Pellow "Critical Environmental Justice" 223). My project advances scholarship along two "pillars" Pellow identifies as crucial to the growth of "critical environmental justice studies," a notion of which he originally formulated with co-author Robert Brulle in *Power, Justice, and the Environment* (2005). While ever mindful of the intersectional nature of EJ struggles, how multiple categories of social difference (e.g. race, class, gender, nationality, sexuality, religion, etc.) mold geographies of environmental inequality and contestation, I think the constraining genre of academic scholarship as well as uneven scholarly attention across aspects of social difference still hold open the need for emphasis on subsets of social difference.

Critical Contexts and Confluences

"War by Other Means" takes up the literature and cultural production of the early 1990s to the present because this period is a dense assemblage of intersecting social movements and developments that are bringing discourses of national security,

environmental sustainability, and social justice into stark relief. I do so by analyzing a wide archive of American literature and popular culture written or produced from roughly the end of the Cold War to present. Both ends of this temporal spectrum are necessarily "raggedy," in that the specific events and historical forces that are reflected in and on by these cultural productions cannot neatly be contained within this specific date range. For example, *The Tattooed Soldier* by Héctor Tobar, a text I examine in Chapter II, was published in 1998, but its plot depicts events of the late 1970s and early 1980s in Guatemala before rejoining the narrative present in 1992 Los Angeles. Tobar himself grew up in Los Angeles decades before the end of the Cold War. It is appropriate to analyze this book as both a product of both Cold War and post-Cold War culture and history.

Likewise, this project has changed considerably in light of developments in geopolitics, and particularly, climate and security state politics, following the election of Donald J. Trump. Much has changed since I began this project in the Fall of 2015. Any book emerges from its specific historical context and how that context affects its author and interlocutors. The events of the past few years, and the rapidly developing consequences of Trump's presidency, have shaped the urgency I feel towards this project. While incorporating contemporary events and cultural productions into this dissertation is important to tracking the confluence of several of the historical trends I study in literature of the 1990s and 2000s, any researcher's view of the "present" is necessarily partial; one is constantly trying to catch up to events even as they continue to unfold.

The quote from Wangari Maathai that serves as frontispiece to this dissertation helps explain this disjuncture; by claiming that "in a few decades, the relationship

between the environment, resources and conflict may seem almost as obvious as the connection we see today between human rights, democracy and peace," Maathai points to the relatively recent emergence of a popular understanding of environment as linked to issues of peace building and war making. Maathai's 2004 Nobel Peace Prize signals an important milestone in the intellectual history of war and the environment. Maathai was awarded the prestigious prize for "her contribution to sustainable development, democracy and peace," and more specifically for her role in founding and building the Green Belt Movement (nobelprize.org 2015). The Greenbelt Movement, now a global NGO operating in dozens of countries across the Global South, works toward "continued improvement of [people's] livelihoods and a greener, cleaner world," particularly by working with cooperatives of women to grow and conserve tree seedlings that they plant and derive material benefits from. Just three years after awarding one environmentalist, the Nobel committee selected the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and former Vice President Albert Gore Jr. to jointly share the 2007 Peace Prize for "for their efforts to build up and disseminate greater knowledge about man-made climate change, and to lay the foundations for the measures that are needed to counteract such change" (nobelprize.org). To understand the Greenbelt Movement's humanitarian, pro-democracy, and environmentalist work and the IPCC/Al Gore's climate teachings as peace building would not be possible without the maturation of several social trends that have sutured issues of environment to discourse of development and security. These trends shoot through the last thirty years and inform the readings I make throughout the project.

The first of these trends is the growing public understanding of global environmental justice issues, particularly the uneven risk and vulnerability poor people of the Global South face from environmental degradation, industrial and market-based agriculture, and resource extraction more generally. Closely linked to this broad understanding of environmental justice is the rise in public concern over anthropogenic climate change as well as the rise of intersectional study and education in universities across the world. Finally, and perhaps most salient to the aims of this project, I chose this time period because it marks a major and ongoing shift in U.S. Military and National Security apparatus operations. Since the end of the Cold War the U.S. Military has reevaluated the global mission of U.S. Military power and how the various branches of the armed forces go about fulfilling that mission. I'll briefly describe how I see each of these constitutive trends in the following paragraphs.

A massive shift in military power and purpose

Two events loom large in the recent history of the U.S. military: the fall of the Soviet Union and the Al-Qaeda terrorist attacks of September 11th, 2001. The first event instigated a shift from a bipolar political, economic, and military world to a globalized world in which the U.S. claims hegemonic superpower status. Despite being the only superpower on the block, emergent threats such as terrorism, pandemics, and natural disasters are omnipresent. Such events threaten the stability and productivity of neoliberal markets and the general pecking order of nations. During much of the history covered in this dissertation it would be common to hear the U.S. described as the "world's police." This nomenclature indicates the shift in the U.S. military mission in changing from a bipolar to a unilateral world. For any strategic endeavor, a change of mission necessitates

a change in strategy and tactics. I argue that the change from a bipolar concept of power to a superpower fending off upstart threats entailed the gradual evolution of "small wars" or "revolutionary wars" (as they were called in the 1970s and 80s) into first "Low Intensity Conflicts" (LICs) and later "Counterinsurgency" and "Counterterrorism" operations. Although pivoting from large-scale preparedness for all-out war with the USSR or so-called "rogue nations" meant changing the target of the military's wrath from large targets to the relatively small targets (like terrorist organizations or nationalist insurgencies), this shift did not necessitate scaling down military spending or the overall footprint of the military. Instead, the role of militarism has expanded and permeated into social institutions.

Second, and following the September 11th attacks and the subsequent invasions of Afghanistan, and Iraq, both counterterrorism and counterinsurgency became front and center of the public face of U.S. military operations. While war games in the Cold War obsessively modeled nuclear holocausts shared between NATO and the Soviet Bloc, war games since the 1990s have emphasized "block to block" urban fighting and disaster relief missions instigated by terrorism, extreme weather events, and political revolutions (Parentii, Marzec).

The rise of the environmental justice movement

I focus my critical environmental justice discursive and literary analyses on environmental military violence as a means of capturing a time period in which issues of environmental justice are legible, if not omnipresent, in the representational goals and strategies of the authors and texts I take up. While environmental inequalities have existed in every human society, theories of environmental justice as a component of

social justice, and social justice as a primary goal of environmental stewardship existed in only inchoate forms in the West prior to the 1980s and 1990s. The birth of U.S. environmental justice is often credited to the citizens of Warren County, North Carolina, protesting the dumping of PCBs in their community in 1984. Hundreds of people engaged in direct action non-violent civil disobedience by laying down in front of trucks delivering loads of PCBs to a landfill near a predominantly African American community. While the mass protest inaugurated the environmental justice movement, indigenous youth grassroots organizers and over 500 people of color activists codified the core tenets of the American environmental justice movement in 1990 by birthing the Indigenous Environmental Network and convening the First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit. Delegates of the Summit generated "17 Principles of Environmental Justice" to guide the rapidly-growing social movement. Beginning with the United Church of Christ Commission for Racial Justice (CRJ) publishing of *Toxic Wastes and Race in the United States* in 1987, the so-called "first wave" of academic and NGO scholarship on environmental racism grew in the early 1990s, and shortly thereafter the University of Michigan founded the first environmental justice graduate program. While environmental justice linked race and class to environmental risk and vulnerability in the early nineties, both activists and academic study continued to expand to ever more refined assessments across spatial scales and through various forms of social difference (e.g. gender, ability, immigration status, age) in the early 21st century. That work continues today.

While early EJ scholarship was based in social science methodologies, in 2001 the first humanities-based EJ anthology, *The Environmental Justice Reader*, edited by

Joni Adamson, Mei Mei Evans, and Rachel Stein, published academic essays alongside activists engaged in environmental justice struggles across the country (much as Robert Bullard's *Voices from the Grassroots* did with sociological analyses in 1998). As Cole and Foster have argued, the environmental justice movement has always been a confluence of grassroots activism, academic inquiry, legal defense, and government action (Cole and Foster). This integrated, or at least amalgamated, social movement has produced artistic movements and formal innovations as writers and artists concerned with the intersections of social justice and environmental conditions have taken up the problems of environmental impacts and influences on social inequality. Such art emerges from and reflects on the environmental justice movement, and to investigate both environmental justice literature and the literature of environmental justice together, to use Julie Sze's phrasing from *The Environmental Justice Reader*, one needs to consult a contemporary archive of cultural production. At each stage of the environmental justice movement's growth the connections between human health, social justice, and environment have become clearer and more salient to civil rights organizers and environmentalists alike.

The rise of intersectional analysis and pedagogy in higher education

The growth of the environmental justice movement in the United States coincided with the growth of intersectional analysis and multicultural educational movements within U.S. Higher Education. This body of scholarship is crucial to my study because it is the intellectual armature by which we can understand the multiple interlocking systems and multiscalar levels by which the neoliberal state stratifies social difference. Referring to the ways in which multiple aspects of social identity relate to privilege and oppression

at various times, Kimberly Crenshaw's concept of intersectionality offered the intellectual bridge by which scholars could explain the interlocking systems of oppression and various aspects of power, privilege, and difference. Along with innovations in black feminism more broadly, intersectional analysis of social privilege and oppression grew within the academy at the same time as global multiculturalism reached mainstream status within K-16 education. Unlike the student activism of the 1960s and 1970s, which produced black studies, Latina/o studies, women and gender studies, sexuality studies, and ethnic studies departments, student and faculty movements coming out of the "culture wars" of the 1980s yielded the first "multicultural" and "social inequality" related general education requirements. These requirements provided a space within the academy and publishing houses for a freshet of influential literary and artistic production by multiethnic authors and artists. While the distributional check-a-box style of general education requirement— to this day still the norm— may not consistently yield transformative learning in the liberal arts for undergraduate students, these requirements likely helped maintain enrollments in humanities departments and fueled hiring, tenure, and promotion of scholars studying multiethnic literatures of the US and world literature more broadly. In this context, texts like Hector Tobar's *The Tattooed Soldier* and Octavia Butler's *Parable of the Sower* have reached larger audiences of students since their publication than they might otherwise have. Yet this context also enabled accusations from prominent right-wing ideologues such as Pat Buchanan, Rush Limbaugh, Ann Coulter, and Steve Bannon who have made accusations about "political correctness" and "thought police" shoving bleeding-heart liberal agendas onto innocent students. Nowhere is the political Right's vilification and castigation of the academy in

recent years more acute than in the humanities and humanistic social sciences' studies of power, privilege, and difference.

The rise of public concern over anthropogenic climate change

James Hanson testified to U.S. Congress in 1988 about the causal links of the "greenhouse effect" to unprecedented global warming. Less than a year later Bill McKibben published *The End of Nature*, the first popular press book about global warming. Since then scientific knowledge and public concern for global warming has grown both globally and within U.S. politics. While climate change *per se* may remain at the margins of US politics, lagging a distant also-ran in the perennial ranking of American's top concerns of economy and security, the influence and ramifications of climate change have permeated key events of the last thirty years. With the same rhetorical flourish with which Sloterdijk named the 20th century's true ground zero, for me the 21st century was born on August 29th, 2005 when Hurricane Katrina narrowly missed New Orleans but flooded the city, killing over 2000 people. (First in the days, then in the weeks, then months and now years that followed Katrina proved the incapacity or unwillingness of an ascendant neoliberal economy and government to heal New Orleans and the Gulf of Mexico, exposing the vast extents of violence color-blind, post-intent racism can unleash four decades after the Civil Rights Act was signed into law – too long and confusing). The day the storm made landfall Jeffrey Klueger proactively asked, "is Global Warming Fueling Hurricane Katrina?" in a signature article in *Time Magazine*. While the specific merits of Klueger's argument and the damage of Katrina attributable to global warming was, and is still hotly debated, Al Gore's *Inconvenient Truth* and countless other global warming documentaries, articles, and books prominently

featured the devastation of Katrina as a harbinger for the routine devastation climate change could bring about via extreme weather events and reduced resilience caused by increased disease, decreased crop yields, and abnormal weather patterns.

Organization of Work

The first two chapters of this work take up the dynamics of environmental military violence as they interact within a broader political ecology of violence, biopower, and repressive state action. In the Chapter II, "The Spectacular and Slow Violence of War's Environmental Racism in Tobar's *The Tattooed Soldier*," I investigate how eruptive interpersonal violence secures and enables more insidious, hidden forms of slow environmental violence. Referring to the Guatemalan civil war as a historical case-study wherein the Guatemalan military and government (an often-meaningless distinction) enacted theories and practices of counterinsurgency to effect spectacular, eruptive violence as well as to use this violence to secure slow, inscrutable environmental harm. The effect of both tactics served one genocidal and political strategy. I read this ecology of violence through Héctor Tobar's novel, *The Tattooed Soldier* (1998) and through the ethnographic interviews of actual Guatemalan military officers conducted by Jennifer Schirmer for the University of Pennsylvania's *Guatemalan Military Project.*

In the Chapter III I turn to the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands and the environmental military violence responsible for the deaths of thousands of undocumented migrants over the past three decades. This is not a metaphorical war, but one that has claimed between 5,000-10,000 lives since the start of "Operation Gatekeeper" and its policy offspring. While scholars such as Dunn and Palafox have long regarded the region as a "low intensity conflict" fought through the hallmark tactics of "small wars," few scholars have

directly addressed the border war using an environmental lens. Ecocritical accounts of border militarization stress either the environmental impact of militarization of flora and fauna, on the one hand, or how this militarization coincides with wilderness law to criminalize and demonize migrants. I look to the kinds of environmental violence that have been strategically operationalized to make the Greater Sonoran Desert Ecosystem into an environmental weapon. In my view, one reason that this conflict has remained peripheral to discussions of militarism is the way in which the weaponization of the U.S.-Mexico border environments has naturalized human violence and obscured it. I read Luís Alberto Urrea's *The Devil's Highway* (2004) as conducting a form of what I term "narrative political ecology." That is, *The Devil's Highway* does the transdisciplinary work of political ecology— investigating how history and power relations forge environmental and social landscapes—through the art of storytelling. This chapter also considers how the humanitarian work of The Border Angels and the "tactical media" firestorm caused by the Electronic Disturbance Theater/b.a.n.g. lab's "Transborder Immigrant Tool" captures the fugitive human agency that undergirds and directs Borderlands militarization.

Examining the discursive construction of environmental military violence also allows students and scholars to examine how war and militarism may be tethered to ostensibly environmentalist rationales, and vice versa. Chapter IV turns to potential future wars and conflicts that may be caused by climate change as they have been depicted in speculative fiction. It argues that while futurist speculative fiction remains a rich site of environmentalist jeremiad and epidiectic rhetoric, this archive often naturalizes imperialism, and an innately violent and atomistic sense of human nature to arouse

environmentalist sympathy. In novels depicting internal climate migrants, such as Octavia Butler's *Parable of the Sower* (1993) and *Parable of the Talents* (2014), I show that even politically progressive, intersectional approaches to environmental endangerment naturalize conflict and occlude dialogic solutions to environmental change.

The final chapter traces how the environmental refugee has become a paradigmatic figure in climate change political discourse, particularly the aspects of this discourse where issues of national security and apocalyptic change are articulated. I argue that the logics of counterinsurgency and anticipatory action undergird how the construct of the climate migrant embodies both threat and victim, provoking both menace and a humanitarian ethical demand from the future onto the citizenry of the Global North. I read Michael Nash's 2009 documentary, *Climate Refugees*, alongside Junot Díaz's "Monstro" (2011) to show how the "human face" of climate change is rendered a monstrous, revolutionary other to be combatted through U.S. Counterinsurgency. I read Junot Díaz's short story, "Monstro," as an exemplar text depicting the climate refugee as epitome and paragon of emergent global risk, and an assertion of the folly of the ecological security state's attempt to guarantee security while fomenting insecurity (Marzec #). Finally, and conversely, I discuss how people in the US climate justice movement have alternatively claimed the identity of "climate migrant" as a political identity. Some climate migrants claim this new political subjectivity in the 21st century and perform "moral jujitsu" to claim privileged epistemological and political subjectivity within the political and economic spaces they are militantly excluded from.

Conclusion: Challenging Militarized Adaptation in the 21st Century

Militarism is not only the physical impact of war, but the values and beliefs by which these activities are supported and sustained (Sturgeon). Militarism is then, in its broadest sense, a social process that evokes a number of cultural relationships and narratives by which people perceive and understand the world through violent clashes of militarized force. Popular culture provides multiples avenues through which these understandings are articulated (Davies and Philpot 44). It is for this reason that the environmental humanities must study how tropes of militarism intermingle and both co-shape and are co-shaped by environmental(ist) discourses. In this project, I center the tropes, narratives, and images associated with the migrants of the Anthropocene, the "political figure(s) of our time" (Nail 235). Tropes, as Rosemarie Garland-Thompson reminds us, are "structured by sets of images and ideas that have slipped from their original metaphoric status to control perceptions of" social phenomena (16). In the case of militarism, the environmental migrant and refugee appear across narrative and media to evoke a world of inequality, instability, and insurgency. In literary representation, these tropes carry forward the suppositions of the world as a dangerous and hostile place where an allegiance and support of state-sanctioned violence and control is a necessary presupposition of life, stability, and prosperity itself for the Global North.

However, while the texts I take up in this dissertation almost invariably depict narrative political ecologies rife with different forms and scales of violence, the turn to the figure of the "environmental refugee" in these works refuses to reduce migrant subjectivity to mere victim or menace. The environmental refugee's fraught position as a

target of violence gives this figure a unique viewpoint from which to critique environmental militarism. For example, one of the novels I study, *The Tattooed Soldier*, follows the experience of three Guatemalan migrants living in Los Angeles, and through their displacement demonstrates the various forms of environmental violence and inequality stemming from their encounters with military forces. In *Parable of the Sower* and *Parable of the Talents*, utopian communities are forged by migrants fleeing the structural violence of "failing economies and tortured ecologies," and in Junot Díaz's "Monstro" the potential violence of refugees to dominant social orders celebrates the liberatory potential of violence. By placing at the center the often-marginalized figure of the environmental migrant and refugee, this project reevaluates and reforms reductive views of migrants as helpless victims or menacing threats.

"In a few decades," as issues of climate justice continue to challenge political, economic, and ethical systems, *how* will the "relationship between environment, resources, and conflict" be made "obvious?" Will these connections be valued precisely because we have avoided the collision course of rising tides and rising militarism? Or will the obviousness of these connections be made salient through constant warring over scarce resources? No dissertation can answer such enormous questions. However, I see the texts I consider within this work as offering crucial insights into such questions. Changing Americans' public capacity to creatively and compassionately reason over issues like increased flows of environmental migrants and refugees is vital to adapting to climate change. This *cultural* adaptation is often overlooked compared to the technical adaptation of building solar panels and improved levees, but it is essential to promoting just, peaceful adaption. Human communities, despite living in ever more disrupted

environments, still have the cultural resources to promote social and environmental justice and avert war. The task for peace-builders in the 21st century is to challenge militaristic "solutions" to growing environmental problems while attending to how environmental disruption may instigate conflict and exacerbate social oppression.

CHAPTER II

THE SPECTACULAR AND SLOW VIOLENCE OF WAR'S ENVIRONMENTAL RACISM IN TOBAR'S *THE TATTOOED SOLDIER*

Introduction

This chapter offers an environmental justice reading of Hector Tobar's *The Tattooed Soldier.* In doing so, I take up Rob Nixon's call for environmental literary studies to tackle "the environmental fallout of U.S. foreign policy head on" by tracing the ways in which U.S. imperialism produces different kinds of environmental violence at the periphery and core of empire within Tobar's *The Tattooed Soldier*. Building on Rob Nixon's concept of "slow violence" and Julie Avril Minich's attention to the importance of corporeal metaphors within this novel I read modern U.S. imperialism operating through mutualistic symbiosis between spectacular repressive violence and attritional environmental violence. Understanding the specific dynamics of this relation is central to the ability of state power at the periphery and core of U.S. Empire[5] to hail and dominate subjects.

The Tattooed Soldier indexes the ecologies of violence inherent in U.S. foreign policy and the repressive Guatemalan state. *The Tattooed Soldier* links these hazardous environments to structural racism in the United States as well as racially-based genocide

[5] I follow Hardt and Negri's definition of Empire, that holds that contests between individual nation states that marked earlier imperialist systems are being supplanted by a new order of biopolitical power composed of overlapping and at times discordant assemblages of political, legal, military, and economic actors. This form of Empire envelopes and mediates social experience across the globe to secure the domination of U.S. interests. Within this system "enemies" are not ideological threats to Empire, but rather banal law-breakers and undesirables to be managed through policing actions (Hardt and Negri 6).

and ecocide in Guatemala. In doing so, *The Tattooed Soldier* provides a powerful case study of the causal links between different forms of environmental violence. It is a story that asks its readers to consider the links between ostensibly disparate forms of violence, oppression, and environmental change; the complex terrain of environmental justice. The novel places at its center counterinsurgency warfare and cruelly ironic rhetorics of cleanliness and public health as mechanisms of environmental change and social control.

The Tattooed Soldier grapples with the fraught history of the U.S.A.'s military and economic entanglement in the Guatemalan Civil War and genocide through the stories of three focal characters; two living in Los Angeles just prior to the 1992 Rodney King uprising, and one left dead at the hands of the "Jaguar Battalion" after voicing concern over water pollution in the refugee slums of Guatemala. The two immigrants, Antonio Bernal and Guillermo Longoria, live unaware of each other in East L.A. After being laid off from his job and evicted from his apartment, Antonio Bernal wanders L.A.'s Crown Hill neighborhood and McArthur Park until he spies one of his family's killers playing chess. Antonio recognizes the killer of his wife and son by his distinctive Jaguar tattoo, and begins stalking Guillermo Longoria. Antonio eventually exacts his revenge in the chaotic midst of the 1992 L.A. Uprising, shooting Guillermo and leaving him to bleed to death in an abandoned tunnel. While ostensibly "a chilling revenge story[6]" of how Antonio brutally avenges his dead wife and son, the majority of the book concerns itself with mapping layers of different forms of economic, social, and environmental injustice across the geographies of Guatemala and the United States. By describing racialized warfare and inequality similarly in both Guatemala and the United States, the narrative

[6] This blurb appears on the Penguin first edition paperback cover.

links different moments of oppression through the metaphors and rhetorics that legitimate and support state-sanctioned violence and pollution (Minich 212).

It is during Longoria's time at Fort Bragg studying under the tutelage of School of the Americas (SOA) instructors that he embraces his identity as a member of the Jaguar Battalion and finds conviction in the military's role in bringing "order" to a wild world. The narrative follows Longoria's SOA training, and provides a scene in which the connections between state military force, environmental degradation, and ideological representation are most explicitly articulated. The insidious glue that holds these three forces together is the methodology and practice of "psychological operations," or, "Psyops." Longoria's instructor, Lieutenant Sanchez, begins training the Guatemalans by explaining that Psyops is the use of "tricks of the mind to defeat the enemy," (221). Sanchez continues:

> "In Psyops we fight terror with terror… We fight confusion by creating more confusion. We fight lies with lies. And we separate the enemy from his sustenance, starve him." (221)

By "separating" the enemy from "sustenance," Psyops is a form of weaponry that shapes populations and environments. This kind of environmental violence is an attack on resources as well as the use of environmental resources (or the depravation thereof) as a weapon against humans.

During the macabre apex of the Montt-ordered massacres in the early 1980s, military squadrons like Longoria's Jaguar Battalion embarked on a campaign to raze the Quiche department of peasants, villages, and the forests which the Ejército Guerrillero de los Pobres (Guerilla Army of the Poor) supposedly relied on for food, timber, medicine, and shelter (Schimmer 2, Schirmer 61-62). This "scorched earth" policy was intended

not, by definition, to be an excessive *use* of force, but rather an excessive *display* of force. Burning down villages and forests is meant to intimidate peasants from supporting the insurgency while also effectively weaponizing environmental inequality in the *matazonas* (killing zones) of the counterinsurgency operations (Schirmer 45). In the early 1980s approximately 200,000 Guatemalans were disappeared or killed by the army and civil patrols, and 626 Mayan villages were burned to the ground (Sanford 150). Indeed, the "70/30 Bullets and Beans" doctrine that characterized the army's approach to counterinsurgency following the coup that brought Rios Montt to power was intended as a "measured" and "targeted" use of force, compared to the "100% bullets" counterinsurgency tactics used in the war in the 1970s and early genocidal sweeps of 1980-1982 (Schirmer 49). As Jennifer Schirmer notes, the pivot to "30% bullets and 70% beans" does not accurately reflect a reduction in direct or indirect violence committed by the Guatemalan military but rather a turn towards an ever more expansive role of the military in civil affairs and development while "targeting" tremendous violence more "efficiently" in the *matazonas* (ibid 78). In this kind of warfare, "efficient" violence is that which kills the greatest number of "targets" with minimal energy and planning. The expansive role reflects an important "cultural turn" in the mechanisms of modern counterinsurgency that conceives of warfare as "armed social work" (Gregory 9). As a biopolitical regime, counterinsurgency campaigns like the "30% bullets and 70% beans" initiative in Guatemala attempt to train and produce docile populations that will, in turn, produce life in terms amenable to the State. The extensive use of psychological operations by the Guatemalan military were seen by military leaders as central to both the endgame of war and the development of the State.

After describing the basic logic of Psyops as one of deploying affective discourses as a weapon ("lies, terror"), the narrative moves away from quoting Sanchez directly and paraphrases his lecture:

> The guerillas depended on the peasants for nourishment, Sanchez explained. If you cut off the source of nourishment, the guerillas would slowly die, like a corn plant deprived of water, withering in the sun. (221)

It is unclear in this quote if Sanchez or Longoria characterizes this style of warfare through this particular metaphor, but I read these two sentences as Longoria processing Sanchez's argument for Psyops' effectiveness by reimagining the tactics within an agricultural metaphor, one he could viscerally understand because of his upbringing as a farmer[7]. Longoria listens to Lt. Sanchez because Longoria enjoys the social distance he has gained from his former life, a life "Longoria couldn't help look at the ground in shame, remembering his own family" each time officers blamed the peasants for "the backward nature of the country" and "everything" (221). Longoria, a short indigenous man, literally looks up to the "tall, round-faced Puerto Rican who spoke excellent Caribbean Spanish" (222). Having internalized a racist self-hatred of indigenous farmers and embracing the militarism of the army, Longoria is in the perfect (if tortured) position to see the devastating logic of Psyops. The logic undergirding the metaphor, that of separating the guerillas from the nourishing peasants, echoes how high-ranking Guatemalan officers during the height of genocidal and ecocidal violence in Guatemala (Schirmer 46, 117-120). In an interview with Jennifer Schirmer, for example, General Héctor Alejandro Gramajo Morales (later Guatemala's Minister of Defense) drew a series

[7] Maize is the principle sustenance crop grown by indigenous farmers of Guatemala, and would therefore have been the crop most closely associated with Guillermo's childhood. He imagines maize as he dies, further suggesting that he may have supplied the metaphor as a means of grasping Sanchez's description of Psyops' goals.

of diagrams showing how Guatemala's counterinsurgency operations attempted to "[attack] until… the Population (P) was separated from the subversive leaders" (quoted in Schirmer 50).

The irony that this "cure" seems to lay waste to far greater swaths of the country's body than the actual insurgency seems utterly lost on the erstwhile agriculturalist. Instead, he raptly listens to Sanchez's instructions:

> Disorder is your friend. Violence and randomness, that's the recipe. If the people believe death can come from anywhere, anytime, they will be paralyzed by fear… Dispense enough fear, and the people will be paralyzed into inaction. And inaction is what we're shooting for here… (222-23).

To this Longoria cries, "¡Yo entiendo!" (223). Razing villages to ash, killing children, burning down valuable tropical forests… these actions devastated the infrastructure and ecosystems of Chimaltenago, Huehuetenago, and Quiche *departmentos* in the early 1980s, leaving thousands of people dead and hundreds of thousands more displaced from their homes and livelihoods. Yet the physical devastation was conducted as part and parcel of psychological operations, and indeed constitutes a particular tactic of psychological operations in counterinsurgency that I term "spectacular." Lisa Wedeen describes such spectacles as modes of representation which "represent a regime's understanding of dominance and community" as well as "functional strategies [which] enforce dominance and construct community" (13). Inaction is not a given state; it must be produced through the movement of social energy. The fear created through spectacular violence "paralyzes into inaction" a larger public and thus constructs the "orderly" hierarchy and functioning that modern counterinsurgency operations (in and out of Guatemala) strive for. The more-than-human environment, which is wild by definition, and hence unable to "choose" allegiance to any political faction, must be likewise

disciplined in order to ensure the human subjects remain dependent and docile towards the State. The ability to access natural resources becomes dependent upon a village's quiescence and contribution to the military state.

The logic of Psyops as it is articulated here is an expression of counterinsurgency doctrine as the United States and its Central American partners in Guatemala and El Salvador understood it during the 1980s. This iteration of counterinsurgency practice controls and modifies environments to become implements of terror. The understanding of scorched earth warfare as a form of precision psychological warfare stems in part from the U.S. experience in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia in the 1960s and 1970s. U.S. forces spread 19 million gallons herbicide defoliants (including the infamous Agent Orange) over roughly 10% of South Vietnam and used bulldozers and incendiary bombs to level huge swaths of territory (Agent Orange Record). The work of counterinsurgency then and now in places such as Iraq, Afghanistan, and the proliferation of militarized borderlands the world over is to create violent environments that produce docile bodies (Anderson 2). Counterinsurgency is a "politicomilitary struggle" for the "control" of a population. While counterinsurgency campaigns involve battles, the grounds for victory or defeat does not lie with military victory in those battles. Instead, each force targets a population for the "right and ability to win the hearts, minds, and acquiescence of the population" (Kilcullen 29). This, David Kilcullen argues, is counterinsurgency theory "in a nutshell."

Reading for Ecologies of Violence

The Tattooed Soldier models ways in which this spectacular military violence and attritional environmental violence work in tandem to secure the lasting, deleterious effects of environmental racism in Guatemala and the United States. I argue that these different modes of violence are legitimated and enacted through similar rhetorics of state corporeality, cleanliness, and purity in both countries. In doing so, I build on Julie Avril Minich's reading of the novel that links the inequalities created through racialized warfare in Guatemala to racial and economic inequality in the United States. Like Minich, I find the rhetoric and metaphors of bodily purity and hygiene in the novel highlight the shared genealogy of the systems of oppression targeting racial minorities in both countries (212). The novel's centering of environmental hazards as weapons used against the bodies of racial minorities suggests the importance of studying armed conflict's environmental justice ramifications to broader theorizations of social justice and oppression.

Defining "environmental violence" for the sake of this analysis is tricky, for if one defines violence as any action which causes damage, death, or pain, *most if not all* environmental public health issues could be interpreted as "violent." Rob Nixon terms this expansive view of environmental damage as "slow violence;" "violence that occurs gradually and out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, an attritional violence that is typically not viewed as violence at all" (3). This attritional violence is similar to Johan Galtung's concept of "structural violence," but Nixon places a greater emphasis on the potentially nonlinear, long-term effects of present actions. For example, depleted uranium bullet casings may leach heavy metals and

radiation into a water source today only to accumulate and negatively affect ecosystems and humans far downstream in space and time. While I believe learning to reconceive of pollution and resource depletion as violence is a productive lens for directing research and teaching, the association of slow violence with environmental pollution downplays forms of eruptive, spectacular violence that also are environmental.[8] These slow-violence frames help highlight the violent effects of quotidian pollution while ignoring intentionally weaponized pollution used for strategic purposes. Consequently, one way to read the ecology of violence depicted in *The Tattooed Soldier* is in terms of how it makes visible how both "fast" and "slow" forms of environmental violence are weaponized in armed conflict to create or exacerbate social inequalities.

Microbios: Discourses of Cleanliness and State Repression

The Tattooed Soldier is the first novel by Héctor Tobar. Tobar grew up in East Lost Angeles, the son of Guatemalan immigrants. Some of the principle scenarios of environmental endangerment in the novel are drawn from his father's stories of life in Guatemala (personal correspondence, October 2015). Before becoming a novelist and creative nonfiction writer, Tobar was a journalist for *The Los Angeles Times*, sharing a Pulitzer Prize with the *Times'* team for coverage of the 1992 L.A. Uprising, otherwise known as "The Rodney King Riots," or the "1992 Civil Unrest." Tobar's training and ongoing practice as a journalist heavily influences his fiction; Tobar describes his writing process as one of "intensive research" into all matters related with his story (Personal correspondence, October 2015). Tobar's research, as well as his own experience

[8] This difference may be overwrought; Nixon argues that a purpose of attending to slow violence is to see the pressures which often incite "exponential" violence in the form of more conventionally perceivable armed conflicts (13).

navigating the 1992 Uprising as a correspondent for *The L.A. Times*, is evinced in the grounded realism of *The Tattooed Soldier*. Yet it is not the novel's mimetic fidelity that makes it a useful text within a literature of environmental military violence and the literature of environmental justice more generally. The strength of literary representations' are in their ability to flexibly represent the experiences of living with environmental degradation and the simultaneously global and historical roots of forces contributing to environmental oppression (Sze 163-164)[9]. *The Tattooed Soldier* provides especially fertile ground for the seeds of a literature of environmental militarism to take root. It does so because its three focal characters encounter different forms of environmental military violence through unique ideological lenses, and thus give vantage to the ideological representations that shoot through spectacular and attritional forms of environmental violence depicted in the book.

Tobar describes the physical and political environments of Guatemala in the 1980s and Los Angeles in 1992 using similar words and phrases, associating the two spaces. Specifically police action, genocide, and the microbial hazards of poverty appear in the novel within similar discourses of pollution, infection, and sanitation. Most of the characters (including those in positions of relative social power and those in marginalized positions) describe marginalized peoples and environments associated with these peoples as infections, vermin, or viruses. These descriptions are dehumanizing, and evidence the claim that those who commit violence dehumanize their victims through already

[9] Writing in 2000, the same year as Julie Sze's call for greater literary study of environmental justice, the environmental sociologist David Pellow wrote that comprehensive theories of environmental justice need to incorporate foci of "history and processes" which result in environmental inequalities, "the complexity of stakeholder interactions" and a "life-cycle approach to environmental harms" (590-97). A strength of literature is that literary texts refract and critically reflect on each of these criteria due to the fact that a novel is not restricted by disciplinary limitations and has the formal length and complexity necessary to engage each criterion.

powerful discourses and affects of pestilence, disgust, and aversion (Tucker and Russell 8). Specifically, calling people and places dirty, pestilential, or noxious designates these people and places as "ecological others," a term Sarah Jaquette Ray uses to describe those who are defined as "bad" for nature and thus subject to eugenic programs enacted through environmentalist rationales (15). The bitter irony of this violence is that these discursive "props" conceal the ongoing violence of toxics, microbes, and material pollution used as weapons against the very people who are dehumanized and rendered as toxic influences (Minich 223).

While the Los Angeles Sanitation Department, the L.A.P.D., and the Guatemalan military dehumanize the target populations by conceptualizing these people as vermin in need of eradication, this dehumanization is rendered through the deployment of superficially environmentalist tropes and attention to the physical infrastructure of specific places. Julie Avril Minich argues that the deployment of such discourses is a "rhetorical devices that nations employ to incorporate their citizens into a unified body" (214). The racially idealized body of the state, be it the "mestizaje" ideal projected by the ladino military regime in Guatemala or the ostensible "multiculturalism of the United States" "is not the united body it purports to be" (Minich 214). The necessity for repressive force to masquerade as required, even beneficial, public hygiene programs in both locations means that neither state body is just and whole. Minich argues that the "discursive props" of mestizaje (in Guatemala) and multiculturalism (in the United States) constitute a form of "national prosthesis" that construct a normate body that occupies an ableist social location predicated on unmarked, dominant racial identities. As

metaphorical prostheses, these rhethorics both hide and reveal the illogic of the states' claims to purity, justice, and unity (Minich 213).

While I find Minich's concept of national prosthesis through ableist and racist discourses compelling, my analysis adds to her reading of the novel by explicating the *environmentalist* rhetoric within these same metaphors of state corporeality and cleanliness. I argue the logic of state purity and state repression are both aligned with and are articulated through the construction of particular environments and human relations to these environments.

In both Guatemala and in Los Angeles, repressive state apparatuses discipline unruly bodies to ensure docility and productivity among subdued subjects. Guatemala and the L.A. Police Department represent the primary agents of repressive state action in different settings and act through different forms of violence, each force's position is enabled and maintained through the creation and reproduction of hegemony. As I've noted above, both the Guatemalan military and the L.A.P.D. justify their use of repressive violence through similar rhetorics of state-corporeality, sanitation and cleanliness. These rhetorics point to how even the most blatant violence (as in the "scorched earth" state terrorism of the Jaguar Battalion, or the demolition crews of the sanitation department) always operate through ideology as well as through physical force.

Early in the chronology of the plot's present, the Los Angeles Police Department teams up with the "sanitation" department to bulldoze a homeless encampment in the Crown Hill area of Los Angeles, a real-life neighborhood that in the early 1990s would have been a mixed plot of "sagging apartments, homeless camps, weed-strewn lots and a smattering of faded historic homes" (Mosse 2004). The "lush knoll of wild plants and

grasses in the middle of the city" provides space for Antonio and Jose Juan, freshly evicted from their apartment, to camp alongside other homeless Angelinos (13). Antonio experiences déjà vu looking at the ruins of the old Crown Hill neighborhood, registering the novel ecosystem as the product of some ancient war like the one he experienced in Guatemala (14). Recognizing the "plastic shelters, the ruined homes" of the area, Antonio begins to feel a "kinship with the flattened earth around him" (15). When the L.A.P.D. comes to displace the squatters, an officer evokes "Penal Code Section Six-Four-Seven" ("a misdemeanor") through a bullhorn to roust the homeless people from their shanty homes (Tobar 231). When one of the camp's inhabitants, "the Mayor," challenges the police officers as to the legality and morality of demolishing their homes, one police officer responds by declaring the shacks "health hazards," adding quickly that "this is private property" (231). The violence of the demolition to the property of the homeless is justified through a protective rhetoric privileging the property of the absentee landowner and an appeal to public health. This rhetoric criminalizes poverty by casting it a danger to public health. The pale green vehicles with the word "Sanitation" stenciled on their door gobble up the encampment, leaving "nothing to be found but the bumpy soil beneath… the crisscross of the bulldozer's long tracks, [and] the wounds gouged by the shovel" (232). This scene shows that the act of sanitizing the wild encampment is both injurious to the nonhuman biota of the hill as well as the people living in the camp. If the squatters *were* indeed an unsanitary threat to people's health, the sanitation department has broken their de facto quarantine and dispersed these people across Los Angeles. What was a vibrant community among a novel ecosystem of grasses, plants, and animals is reduced, yet again, to a muddy palimpsest of present and past real estate speculation, poverty, and

state violence. The ability of the state to "protect" the speculative project of private property holders is articulated within a regime of sanitation and health, while grinding out the actual life and community that the Mayor categorized as a "liberated zone" (47). The private interest is cloaked in invocation of the public good. For Crown Hill, that once bore stately Victorian homes before the last forty years of real estate speculation, the cycles of capital and violence are another profound moment of déjà vu, one that the refugees of the economy and far-away wars can relate.

Longoria the jaguar

Ideology is not just used in public rhetoric, but interpellated within individual subjects. Guillermo Longoria, the eponymous tattooed soldier, epitomizes how subjects are interpellated within the rhetorics of state sanitation and control in this novel. Understanding the processes of Guillermo's subjection are critical to explicating how slow and eruptive environmental violence interact within the novel. Longoria's identity as a Guatemalan soldier is predicated and justified as one spent "fighting… a cancer" (63). Believing that atrocities are necessary to "cure" such a "cancer" allows Longoria to commit environmental violence as well as overlook the slow devastation of that violence's ramifications. Thus, through Longoria's spectacular interpersonal violence is slow violence made inscrutable and incontestable within a warzone.

Longoria is trained by his superior officers to understand the civil war as a biopolitical act undertaken to protect Guatemala's population. Longoria's colonel compares Guatemala with a human body, one that is susceptible to disease and pollution. The "uncles and cousins… and children" of the guerrillas all constitute the "organisms" or a "virus" that threaten the metaphorical corporeal body of the state (63, 64). The need

to stave off infection justifies the brutal acts that Longoria is forced to commit as a soldier, as squashing the infection theoretically spares the rest of the "body." The impetus for genocide, viewed in terms of eradicating cancer and removing pollution, is an "environmentalist" rhetoric gone horribly awry. It is also apiece with other 20th century justifications for genocide. In *Why Not Kill Them All?* Chirot and McCauley argue that perpetrators of genocides fear pollution most when the metaphorical pollution is deemed evidence of failure in the "natural" or social order (39). Edmund Russell adds that the ability to destroy humans and environmental features on unprecedented scales developed in many 20th-century conflicts (such as the WWI and WWII) through the metaphoric rendering of war as pest extermination[10] (144-145). In a similar way, Longoria recognizes that "you had to believe" the officers account of children as bearers of an incurable virus. The consequences of not believing the officers are omitted, but are implicitly obvious to the mostly indigenous recruits who are regularly bludgeoned and threatened by their officers. Ripped from his home and mother, Longoria begins to embrace his role as a soldier and internalizes the eugenicist logic of his superiors:

> Sometimes the children were contaminated with it too. You killed the cousins and the uncles to make sure the virus was dead… the parents passed the virus along to their children. It made you want to kill the parents again and again, even after they were dead, because if it wasn't for the fucking parents you wouldn't have to kill the children. (Tobar 63-64)

Believing this absurd rhetoric of national corporeal health seems to be Longoria's only way of surviving his service. Yet as his iconic tattoo suggests, Longoria emerges from

[10] As both Peter Sloterdijk and Edmund Russell's work suggests, deployments of chemical and biological weapons were coeval with the environmentalization of armed conflict. These weapons targeted the environmental conditions of life itself, and killed humans and nonhumans, combatants and noncombatants, indiscriminately. Technologies which target the common biological conditions for life's existence, it would seem, also provide a rhetorical platform for dehumanizing, and verminizing, human populations.

this service a transformed man who carries the trauma, guilt, and anger of one who has committed crimes against humanity. He struggles against the "necessity" of killing children and his own identity by projecting his anger and hatred onto indigenous families, not his commanding officers or the national project of "winning" a war against his compatriots. Longoria struggles with his actions, but sees his integration into the body of the army to ultimately be a cleansing and elevating struggle against his Quiche identity (Minich 220).

Unlike Antonio and Elena, whom the reader comes to know only in their adult lives, the narrative treats Guillermo both as a child as well as a military officer. Thus, the reader sees Guillermo develop as both the brutally oppressed and the brutal oppressor. As a child Guillermo works with his mother[11] to "grow corn on two acres of hillside" until the army abducts him.[12] After his forced conscription, Guillermo is disciplined by the army into Longoria the sergeant (33). Through Guillermo's "education" in the army the narrative reveals how Guillermo is transformed from a "skinny *campesino* with a wispy mustache… head bowed before the officer" to a muscular, modern-day Spartan with utmost fealty to hierarchical order (37) His superior officers hail Guillermo as Longoria, his surname, and this hailing symbolizes the profound physical and moral change that the army brings to the boy. As "Longoria," his head is shaved, and the army begins immediately to humiliate Guillermo and teach him to feel shame about his indigenous, peasant origins (216). Guillermo muses later in life that "you had to love the army,

[11] The lack of any reference to Guillermo's father suggests that he has, like Guillermo, left his native town for a life abroad or already become victim to the war prior to the narrative's start.

[12] The novel is unclear as to the mechanism by which Guillermo is conscripted, however, the timing of the narrative (in the early to mid 1980s) fits with the mass mobilization of up to a million men into "civil patrols" that carried out numerous human rights violations under the order of the army (Sanford 148).

because if you didn't love it you were finished... you had to believe" (63). In short, Guillermo is broken down and remade as "Longoria the Jaguar." The ideology of order, freedom from pollution, and corporal strength carries into his life in L.A. after his involvement in the war. He views the polluted neighborhoods of L.A. as showing signs that "the same kind of infection [as in Guatemala] was spreading" into America, which he had previously envisioned as a "country where order and cleanliness reigned supreme" (216). Expelled from the body of Guatemalan state, Longoria obsessively erects and fastidiously maintains a barracks-like apartment and personal appearance that epitomize personal cleanliness and hygiene. Longoria's devotion to cleanliness, his violence towards those around him (including his customers at a money-wiring service and his girlfriend), and his continued analysis of urban life within the logics of counterinsurgency and war, all evince the extent to which Guillermo the *campesino* is ultimately supplanted by Longoria the *soldier*.

After his schooling at Fort Bragg, Longoria maintains his fealty to order, cleanliness, and Psyops as his guiding belief system for the rest of his life. The extent to which his identity is married to this ideology is ultimately measured at the moment of his death. Propelled by his rage and by his inability to recognize or forgive his own frailty, Longoria attempts to chase and kill Antonio after Antonio shoots him. After Antonio shoots Longoria in the shoulder with a .22 caliber pistol, Longoria pursues Antonio through the chaotic streets of Los Angeles in the midst of the 1992 Uprising. Longoria eventually succumbs to the massive loss of blood and falls down near the homeless encampment where Antonio has been living. Antonio carries Longoria into an abandoned Pacific Electric Red Car tunnel to hide the body. Initially Longoria is frightened by being

surrounded by the filth in the tunnel, and snaps out of a semi-conscious revelry when he comes in contact with the "muddy floor" (300). But as Longoria bleeds out in the muck, an interesting change to his character appears to take place. This man, who has so obsessively militated against "pollution" and pursued personal purity and cleanliness, begins to imagine himself as the *campesino* teenager who once worked the soil with his mother; a memory triggered by being immersed in the mud. He imagines a return to life revolving "around the cycles of rain and harvest" and hallucinates his mother walking towards him through the stalks of corn that have sprouted and risen through the mud. "He smiles at his dirty toes, mud caked in the nails... so strange and happy," (301). Yet when his mother speaks to Longoria, she calls him, "*Balam*" (33, 301). In this moment it is clear that Longoria has switched to thinking in his first language, Quiche, but is hailed in his mother's tongue as "*Jaguar*." Although in his final moment he recovers his first language, signifying, along with his "strange and happy" return to an ethereal field of maize and mud, some rapprochement to his identity as a Mayan farmer, he remains marked as a member of the Jaguar Battalion. The title negates the wishful reclamation of his innocence, and proves that the scar of Guillermo's ideological branding, his *true* Jaguar tattoo, remains his central identity at the moment of his death.

Germ warfare

Longoria's belief in the metaphors of a unified and pure state body cause him to both embrace the terroristic spectacular violence of Psyops and overlook the obvious ironies and inconsistencies of this counterinsurgency tactic. The antiseptic rhetoric of the state make it difficult for each of the characters to apprehend the environmental violence produced through state violence. This additional ironic resonance of the antiseptic

rhetoric of the state body is most tragically exemplified by the Guatemalan state's propagation of *actual* microbial infection amongst the impoverished residents of San Cristobal, as well as the U.S. state's environmental racism that produces "the toxic soup and hydrocarbon winds" of East Los Angeles. The bluntest descriptions of environmental violence in *The Tattooed Soldier* occur during "Part 2: Antonio and Elena," when Elena takes it upon herself to uncover and stop the pollution that is killing babies in San Cristobal. Funeral possessions "float" past the pregnant Elena's fortress abode on the top of a hill in San Cristobal; three to four children are buried each month. The children hail from a slum that holds only one thousand residents. The location of San Cristobal in the novel itself is somewhat of a mystery, which is interesting within a novel that pays so close attention to how power relationships are mapped across actual space in a realist manner. Guatemala is a small country and the text of the novel clearly states that the small town is close to Quetzaltenango in the Totonicapán department (West Central Guatemala, not far from the origins Longoria and the bulk of the 1982-83 massacres committed under order of the Montt regime) (Steinberg et al 3-5). There is indeed a San Cristobal in the Totonicapán department, northwest of Quetzaltenango. Yet despite these geographic cues, the town's location is confounded by an odd description of the towns Elena and Antonio pass as they flee the capital city along the Pan American Highway; Elena relieves herself at a rest stop in San Marcos twice, even though this town lies over an hour's drive *west* of San Cristobal, which in turn is west of Guatemala City. Thus, the exact location of the town, in an otherwise realist novel, is mystified.

The military state's terrorism in the region both produces the attritional violence responsible for the children's deaths as well as the inability of San Cristobal's residents to

meaningfully apprehend the violence in such a way that they can stop it. Elena is dumbfounded by her maid's casual description of the many deaths amongst the children from illness in a nearby area called Colonia La Joya. The maid explains to Elena that La Joya is "a *limonada*, a slum they built in the ravine by the old bridge" (Tobar 116). La Joya, supposedly placed at the outskirts of San Cristobal in the Totonicapán department, would be more correctly described as "La Limonada," an actual slum founded in a ravine bordering Guatemala City after the land reforms of deposed president Árbenz Guzmán were revoked. Refugees of the civil war and those displaced by military land grabs flocked to the capital city and took up residence in unused land near the city's dumps.

The origins of La Limonada are mirrored in the fictitious limonada, La Joya (even down to the absurdly incongruous name[13]). According to Lemonade International, a U.S.-based community development NGO working in the ravine, La Limonada, with a population of 60,000 residents, is the largest urban slum in Central America ("La Limonada"). The images and descriptions of La Limonada on the websites of aid organizations such as Lemonade International or El Fondo de Apoyo Comunitario International resonate with those images and descriptions of La Joya Elena confronts in *The Tattooed Soldier* (121-122). Elena gains access to the "burning trash stacked into small pyramids" within a wild, overgrown, "city of corrugated tin, plastic, and paper… patchwork structures" by wandering away from her 19th century colonial home in the center of San Cristobal.

[13] Tobar has not relocated La Limonada to San Cristobal in this narrative, but instead narrated "a limonada;" another Guatemalan *asentamiento* created by internal refugees of the grueling civil war that Elena, Antonio, and Longoria each fall prey to. The presence of "a thousand or so" inhabitants in La Joya contextualizes Antonio and Elena's relatively privileged exile from a core city to the "country" within the larger displacement of nearly 1.6 million Guatemalans inside and out of their country during the conflict. Elena is determined to play "biologist, a public health expert" for "*this limonada*" in order to halt the alarming flood of deaths she witnesses from her window.

Elena, whose support for liberal ideas and marching with protestors in college made her a target of the Montt regime and caused her to flee the capital, reacts to the pollution by immediately concluding that she needs to take political action. Elena is powerfully moved by the poverty and pollution she encounters in her investigations, and unlike her local informants, feels that the situation can be ameliorated if she somehow intervenes. She describes the untreated sewage she finds upstream from La Joya as something out of "the nineteenth century, things [she] read about in books, conditions that belong to history" (133). Despite the research she conducted which led her to "suspect the answer to the riddle" of why so many people were dying in one area was "probably quite simple," she is unable to determine the cause of the pollution from interviewing San Cristobal's residents. Her maid, Marisol, explains to Elena that the "bad air" in the ravine, along with the poverty of the residents, accounts for why "*those* babies die so easy" (emphasis added, 116). Both hypotheses locate the source of pollution in the intrinsic nature of a place (the bad air of a ravine) or unhygienic behavior of the poor. Both these explanations naturalize the problem and scapegoat the poor as naturally unhealthy, and thus suggest the deaths are inevitable. Marisol elaborates that the cause of death is "diarrhea," which of course is symptom of water-borne diseases, not "bad air." Both Marisol and Father Van der Est (who would likely be more formally educated than Marisol) tell Elena that the cause of death is diarrhea, yet neither is forthcoming with an accurate attribution for the diseases' cause. Elena, who carries her activist ethics with her, is unable to believe her eyes when she looks upon the utter lack of sanitation at the dump. Elena immediately confides to Antonio, "we have to stop it. This sewage is killing the people downstream. It's killing the babies" (133).

The denial of the pollution among the local people, and the shock Elena experiences upon finding the dump, speaks to how the war emaciates democratic governance, and by extension, environmental stewardship. Even if the residents of La Joya came to live downstream of the dump through poverty, and not the acute displacement of war, the inability of residents or Elena to voice and redress their concerns without being executed speaks to the war's effect. The novel thus offers not only a depiction of deadly pollution, but also an internally held, subtle explanation for why it persists without contestation. It is implausible that Elena's letter to the Totonicapán department government would be the first indication that there was a public health problem in San Cristobal. Instead, the slow violence of untreated sewage is condoned by the state to continue the work that Guatemalan death squads started in the refugees' villages. The public murder of Elena and Carlos remind residents of San Cristobal and La Joya how dangerous it is to even acknowledge the attritional violence they are complicit in or subjected to. The three to four deaths each month in La Joya constitute what Rob Nixon calls "cold war casualties" of the Guatemalan Civil War; "post-combat" fatalities killed by the deferred effects of environmental military violence (214-215). Germ warfare hardly requires high-tech military laboratories.

Antonio is exposed to similar forms of germ warfare in East Lost Angeles. Elena's peregrinations, and the dangerous infrastructure she encounters, mirror Antonio's forced wandering through L.A.'s "hydrocarbon winds" to find the unkempt shanty town of Crown Hill at the start of the novel (10, 122). The "plastic shelters, the ruined homes" located on "vacant property" in Crown Hill, focalized through Antonio's eyes at the start of the novel are replicated nearly verbatim by his wife as she sleuths to discover the cause

of diarrheal disease in La Joya (16, 122). Just as the residents of La Joya are refugees of war, so too are the residents of Crown Hill referred to as "gringo refugees" by Antonio (41). Evicted from his apartment, Antonio is himself an internally displaced person on top of already being an unofficial international refugee. Just as the peasant refugees are rhetorically constructed as threats or obstacles to the modern state, the residents of Crown Hill are displaced from their "liberated zone" by the police and sanitation department for supposedly being "health hazard[s]" to the larger L.A. community. By rhetorically linking Guatemala and Los Angeles through the description of "sanitary" police action and the microbial dimensions of poverty, Tobar's narrative shows how structures of oppression in both countries are linked. The similarities of rhetoric are born of a shared history of U.S. Empire in Latin America. That both victim and perpetrator of atrocity reside within one small, toxic neighborhood in East L.A. is neither accident nor flight of fictional fancy. While the war drove both men out of Guatemala in different ways, the poverty, xenophobia, and racism they experience in the U.S. push them into similar social spaces where they experience new but familiar forms of political disempowerment and industrial pollution.

In *The Tattooed Soldier*, the pollution of the inadequately managed landfill ("something out of the 19th century"), like the "liquid trashcan" of the lake in McArthur Park, seems to sink into the background of the landscape while exerting its insidious influence on the bodies trapped in the spatial orbit of its reach (74). The pollution is both byproduct and strategic weapon of repressive state authorities that are linked in both Guatemala and Los Angeles through the U.S. military's ongoing sway over Central

American governance and military actions[14] that devalues and discards people as "health threats" and a logic of counterinsurgency that prizes preemption and preparedness against emergent (racialized) 'threats' (Anderson 211).

The atrocities committed by the Guatemalan military initiated multiple forms of creeping environmental violence, from the aftermath of the fires destroying agricultural and agroforestry lands to the displacement of victims throughout Guatemala and abroad. All told, the Commission for Historical Clarification concluded that the conflict displaced over one million Mayan Guatemalans internally, and another 200,000 to Mexico or the United States (Jonas). Elena's encounter with the unending stream of small corpses flowing past her refuge of relative privilege attests to the fate of many of these displaced and impoverished peoples. This is a clear instance in the novel of how a torrent of "fast" violence (environmental and just plain old physical violence) enables the gradual rise of environmental violence. The fast, spectacular violence of village massacres and burning of forests leads to the attritional violence of poverty and microbial infection for the displaced refugees.

But what of the inverse relation? Does slow violence lead to fast violence? Nixon argues that "attritional violence" can lead to "exponential violence," a term I dislike. I dislike it because "exponential" functions *are* nonlinear, (a trait that Nixon notes in other places to be an important trait of slow violence) but implies an unstoppable expansion of

[14] There are additional avenues of intervention that a fuller explication of the U.S.' links to Guatemala should scrutinize. These include corporate interests, particularly those of the United Fruit Company. Though the United Fruit Company (UFC) is not mentioned explicitly within the novel, the U.S. military's role in deposing democratically-elected president Árbenz Guzmán in 1954 was linked with the U.S. company's loss of thousands of hectares of farmland to the president's land reform acts which redistributed idle farmland to peasants. Guatemala's Civil War, which intensified in the 1980s, partially fought in defense of American capitalism broadly, and the interests of select U.S. companies, narrowly (see Stephen Schlesinger and Stephen Kinzer's authoritative *Bitter Fruit: The Story of the American Coup in Guatemala*).

violence and precludes other nonlinear functions of violence. For instance, couldn't the functional progression of violence be "sigmoidal" or "logarithmic?" I prefer to characterize the kinds of violence Nixon calls "exponential violence" as "eruptive" violence; like a seed germinating into a sprout, the slow activity of slow violence beneath the surface of perception rises up to pose novel threats.

The clearest instance of such an emergence occurs in the destructive climax of the novel, when Antonio enacts his vengeance against Guillermo. The acute cause of the L.A. Uprising is associated with the acquittal of four L.A.P.D. officers who had been accused of using excessive force when detaining Rodney King. Videotape made by an eyewitness shows the police horrifically beating King after he attempted to flee from the officers. The eruptive response of South Central L.A. communities was precipitous and violent, though as in more recent uprisings responding to police assaults or killings of black men, this violence was primarily targeted at physical infrastructure, not human bodies. That truth aside, 53 people died in the Uprising and hundreds were wounded. While the acute cause of the violence was a specific act of police brutality, a long durée of structural racism and economic stagnation fueled the collective anger felt by the protesters. The attacks on infrastructure and private property are telling; revenge enacted against the structures that daily wound and oppress people.

Both Antonio and Guillermo view the riotous Uprising through their experiences with the Guatemalan Civil War, and fixate on how the physical infrastructure of South and East L.A. symbolically and materially produces the outbreak of violence. Antonio is caught off-guard by the sudden eruption of violence. Seeing young men with rocks "roaming the streets," he wonders:

> How did they get rocks in the middle of the city? [He] looked closer and saw they were just chunks of concrete and brick, pieces of crumbling walls. There were plenty of crumbling walls in this neighborhood and thus no shortage of ammunition. (283)

The rubble providing the literal ammunition for the youth is a metaphor for the squalid conditions and environmental hazards that Los Angeles' poor, largely minority inhabitants live with everyday. The rubble is also a metonym of the 1964 Watts Riots, another uprising responding to the structural violence of poverty and racism as well as the eruptive violence of police action. Antonio concludes that "someone had declared this the municipal day of settling accounts, a day for all vendettas" (283). The attritional violence of structural and environmental racism add line after line to the accounts that Antonio feels everyone is attempting to settle in one swift wave of cathartic anger. The rubble, acting as a line of these accounts as well as the literal ammunition for the violence suggests the causal link between slow and eruptive violence. Guillermo also confronts the "scorched brick walls left standing alone... twisted and rusting" across South and East L.A. as "familiar" markers of war (Tobar 187). While these events are called "uprisings" or "riots" or, more euphemistically, instances of "civil unrest," both Guatemalan migrants read the sudden wave of violence in terms of a war that has been waged for a long time. Verifying or disproving this causal relationship is more difficult than describing the relatively linear ways in which Psyops produce displacement and pollution that exact slow violence, however through Antonio and Guillermo's eyes at least, slow and structural violence of environmental racism *does* seem to be a contributing factor in the cataclysmic violence of the 1992 L.A. Uprising.

Conclusion

The Tattooed Soldier links structural racism in the U.S., U.S. foreign policy, and the genocidal war machine of the Guatemalan State. The environmental inequalities and acute interpersonal violence Antonio, Elena, and Guillermo experience are a result of these structures. *The Tattooed Soldier* is a violent novel, but a close reading of that violence reveals that there is an web of different forms of violence contributing to the oppression of the focal characters in the book. The ubiquity of polluted images, descriptions, and phrases within the novel invite the discursive association and analogy between the structures of oppression operating at the level of the state and individual within each nation. This study shows how the studies of spectacular military violence and the slow violence of racism and poverty are linked discursively and materially through environmental entanglements. In so doing *The Tattooed Soldier* offers a compelling case study of how discursive analysis of literary texts may contribute to studies of environmental inequality and violence.

CHAPTER III

THE "FUNNEL EFFECT" AS ENVIRONMENTAL WARFARE: DESCRIBING AND DISRUPTING THE FUGITIVE AGENCY OF THE BORDERLANDS IN URREA'S *THE DEVIL'S HIGHWAY* AND ELECTRONIC DISTURBANCE THEATER'S *TRANSBORDER IMMIGRANT TOOL*

Introduction

Each year, hundreds of undocumented migrants die of exposure due to the adverse climactic conditions in remote regions of the U.S.-Mexico borderlands. The deaths are the result of a "funnel effect" created by U.S. border security policies and enforcement actions that effectively close urban crossing sites (San Diego, Nogales, etc) and redirect migrants into thousands of miles of inaccessible desert and other hazardous terrain. Since the start of "Operation Gatekeeper" in 1994, between 6,000 and 12,000 people have been killed trying to cross the border. Although the borderlands have long been, in the words of Gloria Anzaldúa, *una herida abierta* (an open wound), a place of constant, re-irritated violence and trauma, I argue that *only recent* militarization of the U.S-Mexico Borderlands has marshaled *environmental* weapons against undocumented migrants. The deaths caused by these clandestine forms of environmental warfare are a nefarious take on the term "death by natural causes" and are the hidden casualties of a conflict waged by the U.S. against bodies crossing this particular political barrier. The number of exposure deaths has climbed dramatically over the last forty years. Border militarization and migrant deaths have positively correlated since at least the Reagan administration (Palafox 58). And while the overall number of people crossing the border without legal documentation has dwindled following the 2008 recession, the number of recorded deaths

has remained the same. This suggests that crossing the border today is more dangerous than it has been in years past (S Anderson). While scholars have attempted to describe the mechanisms and logics by which this humanitarian crisis has steadily continued to destroy human lives, few have looked at how the buildup of these military assets along the border has explicitly molded environmental features; how militarization[15] weaponizes the borderlands ecosystems targeting migrant bodies. This means that U.S. border militarization is under-theorized as an environmental project.

The argument to view the "low-intensity conflict"[16] of the borderlands' migrant death crisis as an environmental project is simple. It claims that U.S. border policy and concurrent militarization of the border—including in spaces ostensibly dedicated to nature and wilderness conservation—has intentionally[17] incorporated and channeled the violence of environmental hazards into environmental weapons in its ongoing attempts to "secure" the border. Furthermore, the deadly gauntlet created by borderland militarization is so devastating and enduring in part because this form of weaponry appears inevitable and an obvious aspect of the land, not the product of human politics, ideology, and individual decisions. With urban crossing sites effectively closed through militarized policing, migrants are funneled into sparsely-occupied deserts where harsh climactic

[15] Lisa Meierotto's definition of U.S.-Mexico border militarization offers the most salient consideration of militarization along the U.S.-Mexico border region for this analysis. Meierotto defines militarization as "the concentration of armed forces—and all of the resources, human power, and technology that accompany this concentration—on the U.S.-Mexico border" (645).

[16] The sociologist Timothy Dunn was the first scholar to investigate the borderlands and U.S. border policies through a military framework.

[17] Ultimately, I am not interested in questions of intention, as "it is enough to see that these policies have these effects" (Huspek 52). Nevertheless, Operation Gatekeeper and Operation Hold the Line operate under the explicit logic of "deterrence" whereby the extreme danger posed by desert crossings is intended to deter undocumented crossings. Given that this deterrence failed from the start, and that these policies have not been revoked in the face of the catastrophic death toll, one cannot but see the policies as intentionally violent.

conditions and difficult terrain kill migrants who are trying to avoid the detection of various borderlands policing agencies.

The naturalization of environmental violence, the mystification that makes it appear normal if noticeable at all, depoliticizes the ongoing war at the border and provides little stimulus for political solutions.[18] The evacuated agency of this environmental warfare has allowed the deaths of the borderlands to largely remain hidden from public view— both figuratively and literally. Maldonado-Torres describes "a peculiar death ethic that renders massacre and different forms of genocide as natural" along the border, and it is precisely this death ethic and its naturalization that an investigation of environmental warfare in the borderlands attends to. Naturalization is a key mechanism that "flexibly" provides discursive and social justification for unjust situations (Sturgeon 11-12). As such, naturalization is a rhetorical tool that secures and reproduces power. Counterinsurgency theory, the doctrine that guides U.S. Low Intensity Conflicts, understands the power of the concept of the natural within its "full-spectrum" war to secure long-term control over unruly populations, the naturalized environmental military violence ensures that most Americans fail to notice that there is even a conflict at all. Environmental military violence kills efficiently, and doesn't raise political hackles in the same way that ground troops with guns would. The covert, naturalized/izing violence of the funnel effect and the visual and narrative desolation of the desert border contributes to what John D. Márquez calls the "racial state of expendability" and

[18] The environmental violence of the borderlands is similar to Rob Nixon's concept of "slow violence," violence that occurs gradually and out of sight, and thus carries unequal heft compared to more spectacular and immediate forms of interpersonal violence (3).

ungrievable deaths of Latin American migrants killed in the crossing.[19] American mass media images depict the borderlands, and Mexico more broadly, as a "moonscape"; an inhospitable and uninviting locale (Dorsey and Díaz-Barriga 128-129). The stark imaginary supported by the austere landscape photography of the borderlands suggests that the economic desperation of the imagined average Mexican migrant is the product of the impoverished natural resources in the country itself, not the global economy and certainly not the economic influence of the region's economic and military superpower.

This chapter explores two distinct vocabularies of protest that artists and humanitarian activists use to contest how these environmental warfare techniques naturalize the deaths of migrants along the U.S.-Mexico border. The first approach is descriptive, the second, disruptive. In *The Devil's Highway: A True Story,* Luís Alberto Urrea renders the complex web of agency that defines the treacherous borderlands in his narrative account of fourteen Mexican migrants who died (and twelve who survived) crossing the border in 2001. My analysis of *The Devil's Highway* shows this text recaptures the fugitive human agency behind these and other migrant deaths by creating a formally inventive, rhetorically engaging political ecology of the borderlands. Through a unique blending of different perspectives into a focal narrative voice that provocatively deploys tropes of body genres, historiography, and jeremiad, Urrea's book excavates the beauty and brutality of the socionatural Arizonan desert as the center of a border war fought with land itself as a weapon. The second, disruptive approach is that of public and clandestine placing of water caches in the desert for imperiled migrants. While Urrea's

[19] Of course many of the migrants who perish entering or exiting the U.S. are not Latinx or Hispanic; migrants from around the world, and in particular South East Asia, cross the border using the same trails and encountering the same perils as Latinxs. Yet, as Márquez notes, the border has long been associated with racialized conceptions of Latinidad.

narrative political ecology describes the complicated logics of the borderlands, humanitarian groups like Humane Borders, No More Deaths/No Mas Muertes, and Border Angels place caches of water in desert regions where migrants routinely die. These direct action interventions offer a particularly contested vocabulary of protest that disrupts the environmental weaponry of the borderlands. The *Transborder Immigrant Tool* (TBT), a tactical media project of the b.a.n.g. lab that was partially inspired by *The Devil's Highway*, engages these drops by repurposing used cellphones to guide lost migrants to water caches while reading out ecopoetry. Both *The Devil's Highway* and the *Transborder Immigrant Tool* build alternative epistemological guides of the borderlands, replacing the "Desolation" of naturalized violence with a layered sense of the history of human and natural agency in the borderlands. They do so through what I call "narrative political ecology;" they are texts that perform the transdisciplinary work of political ecology through the art of storytelling.

La Frontera Through an Environmental Warfare Lens: Building Deadly Funnels in the Borderlands

The Frontera is continuously— and violently— reproduced. In most places, and for most of the binational border's history, "the best way of visualizing the border is as an imaginary line in the sand" (Mize 137). This description captures the artificial, and often unmarked nature of the boundary, but perhaps understates its importance. This imaginary line is integral to nation building and imperial plunder (Meierotto 638). It has also shifted its geographic location at numerous intervals over the past 200 years. In its contemporary instantiation, this line has been most compellingly described by Gloria Anzaldúa as "*una herida abierta* where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds" (*Borderlands/La Frontera* 25). The open wound, grating against the First World, cannot heal itself, or

staunch the bleeding. Her oft-quoted description centers violent trauma as a master metaphor for the borderlands, and for Anzaldúa this metaphor holds true throughout the imperial history that has erected this imaginary line in the sand. But Anzaldúa's metaphor takes on even greater salience in the explicit weaponization of the borderlands environment; a physical organization of space that wounds and kills. To understand how the border has become an environmental weapon is to understand an entire "paradigm" of late 20th and early 21st century border-making. This understanding also gives a vantage onto how counterinsurgency techniques pervade militarized institutions.

When Timothy Dunn published the first comprehensive account of borderlands militarization in 1994, he wrote that "analyzing immigration and drug enforcement in the border region in terms of a military framework… is an admittedly unconventional and imprecise project" (30). Though unorthodox at the time, Dunn's publication in 1993 would prove prescient. In 1994 "Operation Gatekeeper" dramatically increased the degree of militarization and sent migrant deaths soaring. Subsequent scholarship and public engagement along the border has latched onto the growth of militarization as culpable in the precipitous rise of migrant deaths, yet these analyses have not attended to the environmental nature of this militarization. Concurrently, analyses by environmental studies scholars and NGOs have often decried the ecological toll of this militarization, but have not connected militarism's environmental costs with migrant endangerment. Militarization of the border has consciously molded environmental features to target migrants' bodies using counterinsurgency and environmental warfare tactics.

The weaponization of the environment and its harsh climate is the definitive product of Operation Gatekeeper and its policy progeny (Urrea 59 see also Dunn,

Nevins). As of 2016 these policies have built over 800 miles of fencing, installed thousands of massive floodlights, motion sensors, and launched hundreds of military drones and a fleet of SUVs. All this military infrastructure supports and is supported by a complex web of police and military agencies actively patrolling or staking out different locations along the US-Mexico border. This is not only a concentration of armed forces as a means of preparing for conflict, but an ongoing use of military violence directed against migrants crossing the border. These forces orchestrate a geographical organization of space that produces environmental military violence. The specific deployment of these forces make human disasters out of natural hazards; deadly gauntlets out of desert. "The manipulation of environmental features as a tool of warfare," according to Arne Willy Dahl, is a key feature of war-related environmental consequences (qtd. in Brauer 21). In sum the U.S.-Mexico Border has become one of the most militarized spaces under the purview of the U.S. Military, and is a site of ongoing state-sanctioned violence directed against migrant bodies, even though this environmental violence may not appear a tactic of war at all.

While the U.S. Mexico border has been a contentious militarized location for over one hundred years it has only been the site of de facto environmental warfare for the last twenty or thirty years. With Operation Gatekeeper, the border shifted from a political boundary to a kind of environmental trap. Undocumented migrants have traveled north across the border for as long as there's been a border, but have only recently died by the hundreds, if not thousands each year (Palafox 59). The most prominent cause of death—"death by sunlight, hyperthermia"—appears to be the most natural and perhaps least pernicious of ways to die crossing the border. Consider that 16-year-old José Antonio

Elena Rodríguez was shot 10 times in the back by Border Patrol Agents without even crossing from Mexico in the U.S. near Nogales (Binelli). As Urrea notes, stories of white nationalist vigilantes and murderous agents of la Migra abound along the Mexican side of the border (cite). The Arizona OpenGIS Initiative for Deceased Migrants, a Google Earth supported collaboration of the Pima County Office of the Medical Examiner Humane Borders, Inc., lists 17 different ways[20] migrants have died crossing the border, including exposure, drowning, homicide, complications to pregnancy, and even, lightning strikes.

Understanding the U.S.-Mexico borderland militarization as an environmental project, even as orchestrated environmental warfare, adds to existing scholarly attempts to explain this ongoing humanitarian crisis. Many accounts attribute the deadly effects of recent border militarization with the U.S. State's perceived need for territorial sovereignty and control in a rapidly globalizing world where "opening" markets are diluting or threatening the hegemony of the nation-state. The influx of migrant workers and immigrants stems from the way neoliberal market policies growing out of structural adjustment programs of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank as well as and multinational trade agreements displaced workers across Latin America (Mize 137). Critical race theorists also point to how Latinidad has long been made into a racial marker that has caused Latinx immigrants in the U.S. to be widely viewed as undesirable Others contaminating the white cultural and racial identity of the U.S. (Márquez 479). Today, "the simplistic equation of what it means to be Mexican equals illegal and thus a criminal is increasingly the false logic that neo-nativists promote in their call for closed

[20] This count excludes indeterminate ways specific migrant deaths are recorded in the Arizona OpenGIS Initiative's customizable mapping tool. In addition to the 17 relatively straightforward ways these deaths are categorized (e.g. attributed to "drowning, lightning strike, exsanguination"), migrants are also classified as "undetermined, pending," or "not reported" ("Custom Map of Migrant Mortality").

borders and mass deportations" (Mize 141). This "Mexicans as Latinos, Mexicans as Criminals, Criminals as Latinos" logic is perhaps most paradigmatically exemplified when Donald Trump announced his bid for political candidacy into a crowded field of more known and respected politicians. He captivated nativist votes (and eventually the presidency) by echoing this false, racist logic.[21] To read the literatures that supports each of these explanations together allows one to see how neoliberal market forces and policies push and pull migrants from Latin America (and beyond) across the border while racist projects seek to protect the White sovereignty of the U.S. state in the face of increased migration (Márquez 476). The environmental military violence of the borderlands conceals how US gatekeeping policies target and kill migrants and contributes to the criminalization and racial Othering of Latinx workers. That migrants die crossing the border, so nativist logic might hold, is an effect of *those people's* own inferiority, ineptitude, or evidence of their nefarious reasons for eluding law enforcement and entering the country illegally. Such logics ignore U.S. responsibility for how migrants are criminalized and funneled into weaponized deserts.

Learning "The Rules of the Game": The Narrative Political Ecology of *The Devil's Highway*

The Devil's Highway creates a richly layered and polyvocal history of the border to explain the political and ecological nature of the border conflict. The narrator, by partially inhabiting different voices across space and time, lays out the epistemological,

[21] Standing in front of a giant American flag in Trump Tower, New York, Trump accused Mexico of "not sending its best people." This would seem to be an understatement, as he continued to claim: "they're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists. And some, I assume, are good people." As the Huffington Post notes, Trump quickly made the racial dog whistle inherent in that comment into a bullhorn when he "the candidate expanded his comments beyond Mexico. 'It's coming from more than Mexico,' he added. 'It's coming from all over South and Latin America'" (Moreno, 2015). This isn't a nationalist grudge against Mexico (as if that would be any more palatable), but slander of largely Latino peoples.

geopolitical, and narrative "rules of the game" by which the 26 undocumented migrants are killed and how the reader will encounter their story in the pages ahead. In the case of *The Devil's Highway*, the story of the borderlands can be thought of as the *fabula* of the book, and the physical movement of the migrants across the desert as the *sujet* within the narrative plot. The narrative itself identifies that the "rules of the game" refer to a particular historical "paradigm" of border war; one of "walkers crossing Desolation in place of jumping urban borders" (Urrea 59). *The Devil's Highway* is a story of 26 men, most from Veracruz, Mexico, who die or suffer severe injury trying to cross the border in 2001. Their ordeal garnered national attention, as the fate of the "Yuma 14" (as they were called) constituted the single largest number of migrants to die at any one time.

The Devil's Highway begins *in media res* as five migrants, dying of exposure, stumble into a Border Patrol agent and tell him that between 17 and 70 men are dying back the way they came. It was, as Urrea describes it, the arrival of "the apocalypse" for the borderlands, and would prove to be the single greatest death-event of migrants in the border's history (18). The narrative starts at this moment of crisis, when the lives of an untold number of people hang between the rapidly-mobilized Border Patrol searchers and the oppressive heat of the May sun, but instead of resolving the crises proceeds to pan further back into the past and intricacies of transnational histories. In *The Devil's Highway*, this history extends back to a Tohono O'Odham origin story of the land itself within a few pages of introducing the drama of the dying migrants. From the timeless origin story the narrative proceeds to build up a sweeping survey of gunslingers, cowboys, and railroads expanding in a mythic history of White imperialism (Urrea 7-8 The rapid shift in temporal scope, and switch from indelible empirical evidence to myth

and memory establishes a vast and uncertain stage on which the drama of the dying migrants plays out in *The Devil's Highway*.

To understand the mechanisms of how borderlands militarization enacts environmental violence, one needs to understand the mechanisms— social, economic, political, and ecological— that govern the current border conflict. The unnamed narrator of *The Devil's Highway* calls these mechanisms and customs "the rules of the game;" a phrase that is also the name of the first chapter of the book. Understanding the rules of the game requires the ability to sift through layers of acute events, structural forces, and deeper ideologies. The first chapter of *The Devil's Highway* describes the powerful interpretive ability that the U.S. Border Patrol sign cutters possess.

> There is room, in this desert world, for scholarship as well as sport.
> Cutters read the land like a text. They search the manuscript of the ground for irregularities in its narration. They know the plots and the images by heart. They can see where the punctuation goes. They are the landscape grammarians, got the Ph.D. in reading dirt. (Urrea 29).

While this passage directly references the sign cutting skills employed by la Migra, it also is a metaphor for the work of Urrea's investigative, polyvocal narrator throughout *The Devil's Highway*. The story of the largest single borderland death event, of the group of migrants the media would come to call "the Yuma 14," serves as a focal anchor for a larger political economy and ecology of the border. The physical evidence left by migrants crossing—evidence constituted by inevitable, low-fi "irregularities in [the] narration" of the borderlands' soil (footprints, litter) as well as the high-tech, strategically-gathered pings of Border Patrol motion sensors and photographs from cameras and drones—grounds Urrea's "true story" in the materialist evidence and procedural logic of a true crime narrative. If "the footprints wrote the story" of the

twenty-six migrants involved in the tragedy of May 2001, then "somebody [has] to follow the tracks" in order to tell that story.

By establishing the importance of the signs, and by extension, those with the analytic prowess to read the signs, Urrea positions the narrator as an interpretive gatekeeper and guide to this terrain. In the midst of the chaos, the "Banzai run" of the Border Patrol deploying all manner of troops and cutters into the desert in a race against the summer heat to find the survivors and mark the corpses, the narrator claims no less than six times in one page that "the sign tells the story" and that "the sign never lies" (Urea 31). Thus the "true story" of the chaos can only be untangled by "following the tracks." As a quasi-metaphor, these tracks are material, temporal, and symbolic. Urrea's repeated claim that "the sign never lies" establishes the need for a historical, materialist accounting of the borderlands by evoking a series of "steps" back in time that herald the coming of the Yuma 14.

> Somebody had to follow the tracks. They told the story. They went down into Mexico, back in time, and ahead into pauper's graves. Before the Yuma 14, there were the smugglers. Before the smugglers, there was the Border Patrol. Before the Border Patrol, there was the border conflict. Before them all was Desolation itself. (Urrea 32).

This is narrative stratigraphy; drilling down through the layers of accreted history to reveal the original agencies that produced the deaths of the Yuma 14, and by extension, the thousands of other lesser or unknown deaths in the desolation of the Sonoran Desert. Each repetition of the word "before" heralds a layer of historical action that has contributed to the deaths of the Yuma 14. The short paragraph acts as a claim to a means of linear, if obscure, epistemological framework that is promised the narrative. In this

description “the desolation” of the environment serves as the bedrock upon which human agency is erected.

On the next page the narrative playfully references Tim O’Brien’s own “true war story” by listing “the things [the migrants] carried” as they walked the Devil’s Highway. These mundane objects are for some of the migrants the only materials by which Urrea and the reader can begin to imagine who each individual migrant was. The potential echo of Tim O’Brien’s widely-read novel *The Things They Carried: A Work of Fiction* carries with it the trace of the even-more-widely anthologized and read chapter, “How to Tell a True War Story.” In this chapter the narrator contradicts any claims of epistemological certitude and validity in telling a “true war story.” Instead of the empirical validity of events as they occur in life, O’Brien argues that it is the deeper descriptive or emotive *message* of a war story that matters in the discernment of its truth. Even Urrea’s repetitive avowal of the signs on the previous page contain a trace of the truth’s cryptic nature: “the footprints wrote the story. And after the footprints ran out, it was a trail of whispered stories and paper sheets” (31). The material evidence exists, and certainly the materiality of life as experience (not representation) provides the causal force that “wrote the story” of these men from Veracruz, Mexico. But like “the rock paintings we still don’t understand” that are left for archeologists and elders to ponder, this evidentiary archive may be inscrutable or fugitive (Urrea 5).

Within five hundred words, then, Urrea’s narrative asserts the indelible, impartial truth of the migrants footprints across the Vidrios drag of the Devil’s Highway only to insinuate that the truth of their story, bound up in the things they carried, is perhaps more malleable or elusive than a straightforward accounting of their steps may suggest. The

subtitles of Urrea's and O'Brien's book, read together, show the paradox at the heart of storytelling: narratives and representations are "fictive" signifiers standing in for the real, but are the vehicles by which we construct and evaluate truth. As reviewer Boyd Childress writes, "It is not a simple book." According to *Publisher's Weekly,* "Urrea's story is a well-crafted mélange of first-person testimony, geographic history, cultural and economic analysis, poetry and an indictment of immigration policy" (96). Similarly, Sandra Cox calls *The Devil's Highway* "a pastiche of testimony from heterogeneous perspectives to create a polyphonic perspective embodied in a singular narrator" that presents "a coherent, if evolving, transnational narrative history" (2012). What genre is Urrea's *The Devil's Highway: a True Story*? Despite his early truth claims, which bolster the veracity of the narrative voice, *The Devil's Highway* makes numerous speculative leaps into the interactions and thoughts of its characters-- some of whom are dead and cannot affirm or deny how they are represented, and others who refused to talk to Urrea or were legally prevented from doing so by the U.S. federal government. Amazon.com's extraordinarily-detailed algorithms list the book under "Emigration & Immigration Studies," "Hispanic American Demographic Studies," "Discrimination & Racism," and even "Reference." Such classifications suggest a sociologist's academic monograph, not a *New York Times* bestseller and finalist for the Pulitzer Prize. Urrea's narrator does more than reportage; the narrator focalizes and gives voice to the thoughts of individual characters, picking up and dropping perspectives and voices frequently while skipping back and forth across spatial and temporal geographies.

The cumulative strategic effect of these different voices and perspectives in *The Devil's Highway* is to weave "narrative political ecology." Narrative political ecology is a

term I use to describe a kind of subgenre in both fiction and nonfiction literature that does the transdisciplinary work of "political ecology" through the art of storytelling. As an inter and trans disciplinary academic field, "'political ecology' combines the concerns of ecology and a broadly defined political economy" (Blaikie and Brookfield 1987:17, qtd in Peet and Watts 7). That is to say, political ecologists study of access and control of natural resources in order to take up questions surrounding environmental change (Peet and Watts 6). Like Urrea's book, the study of political ecology is itself an mélange of intellectual frameworks and techniques. It is a field that is contiguous, if not consubstantial, with environmental justice studies. And like environmental justice studies, political ecology emerged out of quantitative social and natural science inquiries and have more recently turned to incorporating discursive and hermeneutic analyses. Peet and Watts connect three sets of ideas in their overview of political ecology: cybernetics, systems theory, and community ecology, first, cultural materialism and ecology, second, and natural hazards and disasters social science research of the Cold War era, third (7-8). Into this nexus of ideas and approaches political ecologists who privilege discourse analysis (or conversely, discourse analysts' whose work is in close conversation with those topics taken up by quantitative political ecology) insist that culture, and language, are as important to the political struggle over resources and changes to the land as economics, and natural forces like wind, erosion, and orogeny.

Of course, *The Devil's Highway* is not an academic monograph, and does not advance its arguments through analytic reasoning, but rather, elucidates relations of power producing the borderlands through narrative. Narrative political ecology texts do this by design, as politically-engaged authors like Urrea are writing these texts to

administer a measure of representation justice to those voices and stories often occluded from nonliterary discussions of who owns or accesses natural resources. More than the political commitments and public life of the author, narrative political ecologies are recognizable in the formal and representational strategies they deploy. Literary form and narrative theorizes, albeit along creative axes over analytic modes of thinking. Thus, stories like *The Devil's Highway* participate in the work of political ecology even though they are not formal academic studies.[22] *The Devil's Highway* administers representational justice to the Wellton 26 and, by extension, the other migrants killed on The Devil's Highway and the borderlands by blending different perspectives into a focal narrative voice that deploys tropes of political history and body genre. Urrea's narrative political ecology leans heavily on literary tropes and rhetoric in order to describe how struggles for the control of environmental features (natural resources, access to place and space, and ways of knowing environments) manifest in the interstices of historical, ecological, economic, and cultural forces in the Sonoran Desert.

[22] The move to identify and study narrative political ecologies in literature is a logical extension of the poststructuralist invigorations of the field in the 1990s and early 21st century.

> Any sophisticated political ecology must contain a phenomenology of nature…it must take seriously Blaikie's (1985) point that [any] environmental problem can be perceived in a variety of ways"(Peet and Watt 20).

As the field has consequently turned to questions of knowledge, power, language, and identity, it makes sense that this research should turn to archives where these aspects are robustly represented. Literature reflects the world as it is experienced and known by its author and readers, and this reflection is always partial and molded through those experiences. But literature is also a kind of moral and aesthetic reflection of that world, and because of this all literature is a kind of critical—even radical—reforming of the lived world through language and opportunity to imagine alternate ways of existing in this world. This language is necessarily radical because its representations invite the reader to in turn reflect on and reimagine the fictive and lived world. The literature of political ecology—what I am here calling narrative political ecology—marshals the creative power of literary form, trope, and rhetoric to do the work of political ecology analysis. Yet this is not to say that all literary texts are amenable to the analysis of political ecology. All stories, and in particular those fabricated in through capacious form of the novel, create worlds of words. In order to present a narrative political ecology a text must show how political struggle over access and control of environmental features is articulated within particular place(s) and time(s).

The narrator, by taking on different perspectives, is well positioned to do the analytic work of the storyteller and the sign cutter, and furthermore grasps the different "rules of the game." This game is competitive. "The relentless border war is often seen as a highly competitive game that can even be friendly when it's not frightening and deadly" (Urrea 16). The narrator likens the low-intensity warfare with a kind of game where one side attempts to cross into or out of the United States and the other side attempts to stop and arrest them. As a "game," the border war has its own participants who "play" under a set of constraints (the "rules" in the title) to pursue particular goals. Like an aficionado describing how to play a complex board game to a tyro, the first chapter of *The Devil's Highway* outlines the object of the game, and gives a history of how this game over frontiers has come to be. The object of the game, from the side of undocumented migrants, is relatively simple: get across the invisible line and move deeper into the country. From the coyotes' perspective, the prime directives are to be paid by the migrants and to avoid arrest. From the multiagency enforcement perspective of the U.S. Border Patrol, Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS), and their affiliate organizations, the goal is "to apprehend lawbreakers, [but] it was equally their duty to save the lost and the dying" (Urrea 18).

Within the parameters of the low intensity conflict and environmental warfare, Urrea's narrator claims that "the game can even be friendly when it's not frightening and deadly."[23] (16). In the particular context of this statement, the narrative is following

[23] Describing the border conflict as game is hardly remarkable, especially reading them from the vantage of 2016. Two of the most financially successful and culturally ubiquitous franchises of recent years include George R.R. Martin's/HBO's *Game of Thrones* and Suzanne Collin's *Hunger Games* trilogy. As in *The Devil's Highway,* the incongruity of describing matters of life and death as a form of play in these franchises highlight the absurd tragicomedy of how powerful interests "play" with the lives of those less powerful. In each of these texts the feeling of a game-like experience is uneven.

Border Patrol Mike F. as he first sees five of the survivors from the massacre, and radios in that he is "getting bodies" (16). The narrative pauses here to explain that Mike F. would not have been referring to corpses, but living people. The migrants hold many noms de guerre amongst the Border Patrol, the narrator explains, including the ethnic slur, "wets" (short for wetbacks), and "tonks," a "bon mot… based on the sound of a flashlight breaking over a human head" (16). This callous racism and fetishizing of violence can be lighted by chicanery, humor, and even compassion, though these more humane responses are generally up to the Border Patrol's discretion. Sometimes agents "know their clients" from past apprehensions, and some play pranks on the migrants they apprehend. For undocumented migrants, and to a different extent their coyotes, the option to plan jokes or cultivate a wry demeanor from the inside of a highly air-conditioned and provisioned SUV is not an option. The narrative underscores this by closing a sandwich of terror around this interjected suggestion of levity and play-making at the border by describing the broad swath of horror stories that cause migrants to "give up immediately" in the presence of the Border Patrol. The reader is introduced to the sound of a flashlight crushing a skull ("tonk"), then has a contrapuntal moment of friendliness, only to be barraged by the rumors of the border towns. But these are not just idle rumors; "Stories burn all along the borderlands of Border Patrol men taking prisoners out into the wasteland and having their way with them" (17). If that's too cryptic, Urrea's narrator outlines the specific acts the Border Patrol and Texas Rangers allegedly commit:

> Truncheons. Beatings. Shootings. Broken legs. Torn panties. Blood. Tear gas. Pepper spray. Kicked ribs. Rape. These are the words handed from border town to border town, a savage gospel of the crossing. (Urrea 18).

Each of these items or outcomes are metonyms of the terrific violence that the migrants fear—and not without cause. Even in high profile cases such as the murder of José Antonio Elena Rodríguez, violence has gone unpunished. Even the U.S. Federal Government's own internal investigation has repeatedly found that the "spit and polish military men" who make up the ranks of the Border Patrol have "operated with a sense of impunity."

Ultimately, the veracity of these allegations is secondary when considering how that terror "burns" through border towns adds to the funnel effect of environmental warfare. The fear of the Border Patrol's all-seeing surveillance and terrible violence helps push crossers into the wilderness, just as surely as the walls of cyclone fencing, spotlights, and drag strips that close the urban crossings. The Wellton 26's fateful "bad step" at Bluebird Pass underscores this. It was in Bluebird Pass, at night, that the Wellton 26 were "scattered by light" (Urrea 109). Having walked through the heat all day and climbing the steep hill to the pass through the Growler Mountains, the survivor's had "already started to lose themselves" and begun to lose coherent sense of time and location. It is not known what happened at Bluebird Pass (was it la Migra, "wetback hunter" vigilantes, civilians, or other migrants?) but all agree that the appearance of lights, perhaps a spotlight mounted on a truck, sent the Wellton 26 running into the night. The narrator spends some time and careful attention to explaining how confusing this moment is. If it were La Migra, why would the coyote commit the "suicidal gesture" of "running headlong into the desert" at night (110). Better to be apprehended, transported back to Mexico, as Mendez the coyote had done perhaps six times before, and try again with another group. Losing the pass, the group was doomed. But the terror of

encountering the Border Patrol, or vigilantes, combined with the discombobulated senses of the migrants, may well explain why it made "sense" in that fateful moment to run for their lives, even into death. The migrants may well have thought that they were not only facing detention and deportation, but police brutality, even lynching. The threat of spectacular violence— whether extralegal or state-sanctioned— pushes migrants into deadly situations of slow(er), but surer, environmental violence. *The Devil's Highway* poetically describes this violence as being "killed by the light" (111).

"All Illegal Aliens" in the Desert: "The Heat Becomes Personal" in *The Devil's Highway*

This effect of Urrea's narrative political ecology is also fundamentally a humanizing project, and by humanizing the Wellton 26 *The Devil's Highway* gives some level of recognition justice to the silenced perspectives of those who suffer and die from environmental military violence along the border. The way the descriptions of La Migra's borderland violence suggestively fuels the panicked and ill-fated flight of the Wellton 26 from the unknown electric lights underscores another aspect of narrative political ecologies; narrative political ecologies depict environmental conflict through stories of individuals, not through generalized principles or dynamics. In addition to elucidating the complex and violent "paradigm" of environmental military violence and the "rules of the game" that enforce that violence, *The Devil's Highway* humanizes the characters in the story (not only the Wellton 26, but also other characters across social and political differences) using direct perspective taking. Taking on perspectives means that the narrator addresses the reader as if the reader were feeling and thinking as individual characters within the story are thinking and feeling, often using second person address to focalize these thoughts. Nowhere does the personal and visceral immediacy of this text

speak more pointedly than in the three short pages that describe the six stages a human body goes through while dying of hyperthermia—being killed by the light (and heat). While most of the book is narrated in a simple third person voice, there are several significant sections of the story where the narrative shifts into the second person and addresses the reader as if the reader is either a Border Patrol agent, a human body dying from hyperthermia, or the repatriated corpses of the fourteen migrants. The effect of this is to ground the text, and by extension, the reader, in particular experiences and perspectives across the novel's *sujet*. It shifts identification from the bird's eye or informant view of the narrator to, in the most agonizing portion of the book, the dying body of a migrant.

Urrea asserts that humanity's biological citizenship lies outside the unforgiving jurisdiction of the Devil's Highway. "In the desert, we are all illegal aliens" (120). This statement of universal, natural law concludes a section of the text in which the deaths of two white, American couples in the desert of the Devil's Highway. The deaths from exposure happened in 2002. One couple's dune buggy broke down a few short miles from their campsite. Not carrying water with them ("They didn't need it—they could drive back to the camp in a few minutes"), the woman died sitting in the dune buggy while the body was recovered a whole two days later—approximately 200 yards from the buggy (118). The second couple goes on a short hike in sight of a highway, only to die of hyperthermia while recreating in a pretty landscape (119). The narrator juxtaposes the deaths of these relatively privileged individuals' deaths to graphic descriptions of dying from hyperthermia that the Mexican migrants will go through in the course of the narrative future of the story. This juxtaposition places the suffering of the Wellton 26 on a

common ground of experience with the kind of people who likely made Urrea's book a bestseller: white, nature-loving, Americans. This common ground is, like so much in the borderlands, expressed both figuratively and literally. The Americans die in the same geographic space, but also by going through the same physiological changes as the migrants from Veracruz. The narrative does not leave this parallel implicit:

> It doesn't matter what language you speak, or what color your skin. Whether you speed through [the stages of hyperthermia] or linger at each, hyperthermia will express itself in six ways.
> The stages are: Heat Stress, Heat Fatigue, Heat Syncope, Heat Cramps, Heat Exhaustion, and Heat Stroke. (Urrea 120).

The reader is led explicitly to see the deaths of these Mexican migrants at the same level, if not more poignant a level for their serious reasons for crossing the Devil's Highway and daunting obstacles for crossing, as the privileged who die by accident recreating in the desert. What follows are detailed descriptions of what happens to the human body on a physiological as well as psycho-phenomenological level.

Throughout this section, the narrative voice shifts from a familiar third person narration that frequently channels different characters thoughts[24] to a direct address to the reader imagining both "your own death" along with the fate of the Wellton 26 (Urrea 120, 121). The direct address in the second person implicates the reader and encourages one to feel a miniscule ghost of the feelings the dying migrants in the narrative surely experienced. Yet while the reader is directly addressed and the stages are purportedly those experienced by any human going through heat death, the narrative continuously

[24] For an example of what I mean here, think of the quote supplied in the paragraph above: "They didn't need it—they could drive back to the camp in a few minutes." This is a thought of a couple enjoying a dune buggy, not of the Border Patrol, coyote, or any experienced outdoorsperson. It is surely not the author's personal opinion either (if we were to conflate the narrator with Urrea), as he is chronicling the deaths of those who enter the desert without sufficient water.

sets up the conditional experience of the reader being a Mexican migrant crossing the Devil's Highway. While at the beginning of the section Urrea explains that the heat is hardest on the elderly ("that's why Midwestern heat waves feature dead Chicago retirees by the score"), the narrative continuously reminds the reader of how some of the idiosyncrasies of these particular migrant's identities exacerbate the danger of heat stress. The narrator notes that, "if you're Mexican, your hair is likely black. The sun encounters body heat on a dark field," heating up one's head quicker than a blond or read head (Urrea 120). Likewise, the hale and hearty baseline a reader can assume about the couples who died while taking a hike is undercut in this section when the reader is reminded of the Wellton 26's physical conditions:

> They were already tired before they began, perhaps slightly dehydrated from all their journeying and restless sleep. Some of them may have had diarrhea from the bad food and water on their long bus trip. (121).

These particular migrants were from the state of Veracruz, Mexico. Reading these sentences remind a reader of the book's second chapter, "In Veracruz," where the narrator lays out how the region of Veracruz has suffered from globalization of markets that has even caused the local beans to flee the area, wrapped in "folkloric Mexican-looking burlap" sacks to be sold by Sinaloa at a greater post-NAFTA price in California (Urea 45). The reminder of the migrant's origins shows how this deeply personal, unique moment of suffering is articulated with the larger economic and political systems that have spurred many of the migrants' journey's in the first place, as well as their physical state of being in the moment of their crossing. To the degree that a U.S. reader like myself, comfortable in my University library chair reading this book, can begin to feel the visceral impacts of heat fatigue by reading the descriptions of hyperthermia Urrea's

book presents, these textual reminders of the Wellton 26's nationality, race, and unique experience traversing Mexico to get to La Frontera all push back against easy identification in the text.

And yet as the description moves from heat fatigue to heat stress to heat syncope, the text continues to lead the reader in a kind of demonic mindfulness exercise. I am thinking of the Western secularized meditative practice of the "body scan," where one is guided to pay non-judgmental attention on the different systems and parts of one's body as a way of focusing in the moment and letting go of distractions. The "wicked genius" (to borrow the book's phrase for Desolation itself) of *The Devil's Highway*'s description of hyperthermia is its focalization on different body parts and functions as an attempt to evoke an embodied, self-conscious response in the reader.

> Your cheeks, your neck burn. Your eyelids burn, too. And the tips of your ears. Your lips are not only burned by sun, but by wind; they become dehydrated, and they get rough and flaky, and you keep licking them to try to wet them (Urrea 121-122).

Because the sentences are written in the second person, each directs the reader to self-identify with each visceral description. I *feel* a wraith of heat on my eyelids (a sensitive spot), and involuntarily tear up for a second whenever I read this part of the passage, trying to blink away the phantom pain. This text operates not only by the logic of mindfulness body-scans but on some level of any "body genre" like melodrama, horror, humor, and pornography (Williams 3-4). Like tearjerkers, thrillers, knee slappers, and arousing erotica, the text provokes visceral reactions in the audience that is achieved formally through the focused attention to individual bodily changes as well as a narrative channeling of how the minds of the Wellton 26 fizzle and become unglued during heat syncope.

The descriptions of each phase of heat death begin with their two-word title,[25] and each phase is separated from the rest by a multiline break in the text. This parallel structure holds at this level of organization, but does not apply at the paragraph or sentence level. In the initial two stages (heat stress, heat fatigue), the paragraphs and sentences are notably longer and more complex than those of the later stages. This trajectory of long and complex expressions contracting to short, often monosyllabic expressions is repeated within the individual sections. The first, most innocuous stage of hyperthermia (heat stress) serves as an example: the first paragraph begins with three sentences, of twelve, seven, and twenty one words. Instead of being addressed to "you" directly, these sentences build a soft sense of empathy by addressing the common experience "everybody" has of "being tired, or even dizzy, from walking in the heat" (Urrea 121). The sentences contain multiple clauses that nuance the sentence and offer short asides. But the fourth, fifth, and sixth sentence dramatically shrink: "This is where it begins. General discomfort, nothing heinous. A little heat rash. Headache from the glare. Thirst (121)." The first short sentence cuts the comparatively grandiose sentences referencing "everybody's" common experience down to size and designate that *this* experience, the experience of the Wellton 26, is going to be different from the dizziness one incurs on an arduous hike in the summer. The minor inconvenience of "general discomfort," modified by the discounting assurance, "nothing heinous," gives way to the shorter sentence fragments, and ultimately the single most important word, "thirst." This final word becomes the overriding desire of the migrants are they walk deeper into the desert and become increasingly desperate.

[25] i.e. heat stress, heat fatigue, heat syncope, heat cramps, heat exhaustion, heat stroke

By the third stage the sentences are mirroring the thoughts of the migrants, and the thoughts have deteriorated to the ponderous, single-focus desire for water: "Where. Is. The. Water." The lack of a question mark shows how grammar and thought have even begun to unravel. After dropping a jug (which may or may not be empty at this point, the focalized migrant begins to make staccato, irrational leaps into confidence. "Oh, well. To hell with the water. I'll find water" (123). By this point it's obvious— no they will not. And in this moment of desperation the narrator reveals the logic of this whole section's organization, one that mirrors heat syncope itself:

> *Syncope* is a noun that denotes *contraction*: in a literary sense, you shorten a word by copping out letters. Never = ne'er. Ever= e'er. Desolation has begun to edit you. Erase you. (123)

The sentences curt, abrupt starts and stops echo the delirium accompanied by this erasure of self in the desolation The Devil's Highway. It shows the erasure of all but the migrant's basic biological existence (what Agamben terms "zoë") as their "brain[s] rot… misfir[ing] like a dying engine" (Urrea 125, Agamben 1995). Describing heat exhaustion and heat death, this erasure is so complete that the narrator pulls back into a more distanced perspective, even while continuing to directly speak to the reader. The figurative language of the heat fatigue section (e.g. swollen "fingers like sausages") that is absent in the subsequent two sections returns in an elaborate and darkly comic description of how one might create a respectable urine cocktail, pulled without citation from one of the "surprising number of urine sites on the Internet" (Urrea 126-127). The voice of the migrants is no longer present, and the narrator, like some spirit, hovers over the dying bodies to narrate the biophysical breakdown of the body. Instead of trying to convey how that rotting brain would continue to attempt to think, the narrator

acknowledges the certainty that delirium and hallucination accompany the dying's final moments when some try to dig holes to escape the sun or attempt to drink sand (128).

This gripping, disgust-and-fear inducing description is but one moment where the narrative takes up the voice of the second person and addresses its readers as if we are characters imbedded in the story. In the section described above, the words "you" and "your" are used a combined 250 times in the 2479 word passage. Having one in every ten words be "you" or "your," implicates the reader in the gruesome demise of the migrant on The Devil's Highway. In addition to this three page description of hyperthermia, in other passages of the book "you" are addressed in a number of different roles. "You" are a Border Patrol agent who means well and is little appreciated—even though you "don't worry about being culturally sensitive and nonconfrontational" (111). "You" become the sentient, feeling corpses of the Yuma 14, experiencing your repatriation transport along the reverse route you took to America from Veracruz (197-198). "You" also become a widow of a migrant whose remains are kept in the Pima County Medical Examiner's morgue. At other moments, the texts addresses an undesignated reader with invitations or commands to imagine other experiences. In "Part IV: Aftermath," when it is clear that the "apocalypse" of the Wellton 26, and the Border Patrol agents who found them would remain a localized, personal apocalypse, the narrator bluntly, and perhaps dejectedly, instructs the reader to "imagine being tortured," raped, and then killed like a girl in Juarez, her experience so awful that Urrea and his narrator seem unwilling to structure the imaginative leap into her horror.

All this is to say that one of the defining formal characteristics of narrative political ecology lies in the marshaling of rhetorical "presence" to environmental

conflicts through the experience of individuals. Chaim Perelman and Olbrects-Tyteca describe rhetorical presence as the visceral attachment and immediacy created by specific organization and delivery of rhetoric. It is the force that viscerally "moves" an audience to be persuaded. The problem of collective tragedy is one of representation insofar as the kinds of representations artists, scholars, activists, and politicians use to speak of the tragedy do not produce significant presence among publics capable of not only being persuaded but also able to take meaningful social action to bring justice to such tragedy. There is even the danger in describing calamity, crisis, and controversy through academic frameworks that the people and non-human things at the center of such studies are silenced and further dehumanized. Perhaps one of the reasons that *The Devil's Highway* is read widely and enthusiastically is because it puts forward progressive, nuanced, "politics of meaning." It does so through rhetorically engaging modes of writing (and hence experiences of reading).

The property of "presence" in texts is not one to be taken lightly or embraced quickly. In describing the visceral effects rhetoric experienced by an audience, Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca adumbrate an embodied rhetoric of the senses. This is, on the one hand, unremarkable, as the Western rhetorical tradition from Aristotle on has acknowledged the importance of appeals to pathos in rhetorical study and practice. But Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca's presence, which may be produced without traditional appeals (merely having the goat in the king's vision, not pointing to its potential suffering) places this rhetoric into a kind of body genre. The excitement of the viscera may spark – as an inspiration—the audience to be persuaded of or against a particular action, but the visceral reaction of rhetorical presence does not, in and of itself, constitute

a decision of action within a rhetorical situation (Perelman Olbrechts-Tyteca). Likewise it is not so easy as to say the most viscerally-impactful rhetoric is the most powerful rhetoric.

The sin of the sympathy that images and narratives of war provoke is that such sympathy offers a false sense of closeness between a privileged consumer of media and those represented in media. For Susan Sontag,

> The imaginary proximity to the suffering inflicted on others that is granted by images suggests a link between the far-away sufferers…and the privileged viewer that is simply untrue, that is *yet another mystification of our real relations to power* (my emphasis) (102).

It is not then sympathy that writer-activists should aspire to evoke through their texts. Sontag continues, "so far as we feel sympathy, we feel we are not accomplices to what caused the suffering. Our sympathy proclaims our innocence as well as our impotence" (102). To Sontag the *isolated* individual, extracted from their relations to the unequal exchanges and forces that have more likely than not rendered their suffering and privilege to view their suffering from the safety of an armchair or cafe. The sympathy of the consumer-reader is one built on the ignorance or denial of how both reader and sufferer exist in the same world in relation to each others, and that the reader may well be "linked to their suffering" (Sontag 103). The presence such narrative images—snapshots of suffering—can offer but a small provocation to untangle the knotted, hidden relationships that relate the oppressor and oppressed, the powerful and the weak, and the readers and those who suffer.

The narrative trope of perspective shifting and taking augments and heightens the effect that all heteroglossic works produce; the effect of presenting multiple viewpoints, values, and beliefs. The words people use and think not only represent these perspectives

but construct them. *The Devil's Highway* turns again and again to directly addressing a new character's stream of thought and projecting it onto the reader, inviting a reader to (re)locate oneself and one's own beliefs in relation to the subjects of immigration, militarization, globalization, and the other transnational forces that course through the Devil's Highway (Cox). By guiding a reader through the escalating erasure of hyperthermia the text of *The Devil's Highway* renders the immediacy and cruelty— even the "wicked genius"— of environmental violence in militarized borderlands. It brings human presence to deaths that this same violence occludes from political and aesthetic spheres of consideration by virtue of its "natural" causes and the combination its geographic inaccessibility and remoteness.

Water Caches as Art in the Desert: The Ecopoetics of the *Transborder Immigrant Tool*

> "We have somehow or another slipped into an insane world. They are using taxpayer monies to help illegals come in to help collapse the system and they are doing it with poetry!" — Glenn Beck, speaking of the *Transborder Immigrant Tool*, 2010
>
> *"*All these investigations lost, art was victorious, and disturbance on multiple levels was accomplished*."*— Ricardo Dominguez, in interview on the aftermath of the *Transborder Immigrant Tool*, 2013

Water drops are another "vocabulary of protest" (*in sensu* Guha and Martinez-Alier) that are both instrumental and expressive interventions into the militarization of the U.S.-Mexico borderlands (13). The battles of the borderlands are always figurative and literal, symbolic and material. People began dropping water caches in the desert in the wake of the deaths of the Yuma 14 in 2001. In addition to the over 100,000 gallons of water placed along the border by Humane Borders over the past fifteen years, other NGOs funded by charitable contributions and government grants have set up dozens of

similar stations. Groups such as Border Angels, No More Deaths, and the Tucson Samaritans regularly drop water or create rescue beacons for migrants walking through the desert along the Arizona-Mexico border. On an even more informal scale, private citizens fill or buy gallon-water jugs and leave them along the trails of the Toho O'Odham Reservation, the Organ Pipe National Monument, and elsewhere in the greater Sonoran Desert ecosystem.[26] They place water along the deadliest sections of the border, such as The Devil's Highway in Pima County, Arizona. The caches can be large, such as Humane Border's 100-gallon metal tanks that announce their presence with a blue flag lofted on a 30-foot pole, or the caches can be as small as one gallon plastic jugs of water scattered among the mesquite and cacti. Taken up in news media and fine art, or in the educational volunteer trips to cache the water with humanitarian organizations, the water caches draw attention to the weaponization of the border and common biological citizenship shared by dehydrated bodies of any nationality. Like Urrea's graphic description of the hyperthermic body, the caches signal the importance of bodies traversing the land. The caches are material interventions into the deadly space of the border, protesting the unmarked deaths of migrants by providing resources that save lives. But just as these actions constitute material humanitarian aid, and act in this contested political and aesthetic space to call into question what the meaning and logic of the borderlands is and should be. These actions do not occur in a vacuum; Border Angels, No More Deaths, and Humane Borders all participate in broader efforts to enact broader immigration and border reform.

[26] The Greater Sonoran Region comprises the desert itself along with the biotic communities contiguous with the sprawling desert. These include such iconic ecosystems as the coastal chaparral and scrubland of the Baja Peninsula, the oak woodlands of the Sierra Madre, and the Chihuahuan desert that follows the Rio Grande as it snakes along the border towards the Gulf of Mexico (Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum).

If the water caches are one form of borderlands disruption, a means of interrupting the political scripts that frame migrants as "illegals" swarming the border, then the unique tactical media performance of the *Transborder Immigrant Tool* (dubbed "TBT" by its creators), is a radical extension of this disruptive logic. The TBT performs poetry as code and code as poetry to create a GPS-based life-saving tool for migrants crossing the border. While I'll get into some of the details of this project below, I want to state at the outset that as of 2016 the TBT has never been used by an actual migrant, but merely by its developers in the Electronic Disturbance Theater.[27] Despite not being "used" directly for one of its intended purposes, the TBT sparked controversy, acclaim and distain on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border between 2008-2010, and is well worth considering in dialogue with other water cache art activism and the political ecology work of *The Devil's Highway*, especially since the "ecopoetry" of the TBT was inspired by Urrea's account of the Wellton 26 (Marino 4).

The *Transborder Immigrant Tool* is the performative tactical media project of the Electronic Disturbance Theater and the b.a.n.g. (bits, atoms, neurons, genes) lab. The TBT was conceptualized and created by Micha Cardenas, Amy Sara Carroll, Brett Stalbaum, Elle Mehrmand, and Ricardo Dominguez. Dominguez's UC San Diego website profile refers to the TBT as a "GPS cell phone safety net tool for crossing the

[27] The *TBT*'s co-principle investigator, Ricardo Dominguez, says that the deployment of the TBT cellphones south of the border has been flummoxed by the increase in the "narco war." Since narcos control coyotes and even access to crossing the border *without* the help of a coyote (as Urrea notes in *Devil's Highway*) "it is very dangerous for communities to have any support beyond what the narcos are willing to give" (qtd in Chao 2013). It appears, in the jaw-dropping but typical irony of the borderlands, that the narcos, enriched through U.S. border policy and enforcement, who help migrants cross the border, are far more potent opponents to this tool for safe passage than the most rabid nativist or government official threatening the Electronic Disturbance Theater and their collaborators.

Mexico/US border" (UCSD Department of Visual Arts). Micha Cardenas describes what that means and how Electronic Disturbance Theater made the TBT:

> We wrote this app for an inexpensive Nextel cellphones that allow people to access the GPS service in the phone without having cellphone service so that they could use the phone to navigate the border without being tracked so easily. And as the user is being, kind of, shown directions towards lifesaving sources of water, they're offered the possibility of hearing poetry. To make this happen we worked in concert with social movements, working, doing humanitarian aid in the US Mexico borders and who put water caches in the border regions, like Border Angels and Water Stations, Inc. and we used the GPS system to map out these water caches and wrote software that leads you to water.

In the charged political climate surrounding issues of immigration and "border security," it's hardly surprising that this project was both strongly celebrated and denounced. As the epigraphs of this section capture, the lines of attack from right wing media pundits like Glenn Beck were diverse and somewhat bizarre. In Beck's coverage of the TBT, he hangs his outrage on the tripartite pegs of frivolous costs to tax-payers, threats to the integrity of the border and nation from dehydrated migrants, and that the medium of the nation's downfall is *poetry*. As Cardenas wryly puts it, "I put that on my CV" ("the Transborder Immigrant Tool: Science of the Oppressed"). The cost to taxpayers stems from the Electronic Disturbance Theater's public university salaries and a $5000 grant for the project. But the principal critique is the charge that Electronic Disturbance Theater are traitors for, in the words and angry eye roll-filled sneer of *Fox and Friends'* host Brian Kilmeade, "navigat[ing] illegals through *dangerous terrain safely*" (original emphasis, "a Phone App to Aid and Abet Invaders?"). In addition to the op-eds and strongly negative coverage from Fox News, the EDT received a "deluge" of hate mail, including graphic death threats (Chao 2013, Cardenas 2014, Warren and Warren 27*)*. After several congresspersons sent a letter to UCSD, the school began auditing Ricardo Dominguez for

misuse of funds[28] (he, along with Stalbaum, are the principle investigators on the project) (Marino 2).

The TBT incensed nativists and captured national media attention at a level that the private water caches have never reached. Surely, as Dominguez himself notes, this notoriety is a unique and "spasmodic," "kind of viral collision between fashion magazines, Fox News, the US congress, the FBI, and my own university" (Chao 2013). In other words, TBT's prominence (especially before it was fully developed) is a product of a complex media firestorm, not necessarily the nuts and bolts of the code or the poetry the tool is comprised. But if the mere concept description of the project can ignite such strong reaction, there seems an implicitly acknowledged power of poetry, code and performances as texts within the political ecology of the borderland.

As members of academia, the Electronic Disturbance Theater have unpacked some of the stakes and mechanisms by which the TBT acts as what Rita Raley (a chronicler of EDT and b.a.n.g lab, among other hacktivists and new media artists) calls "tactical media.[29]" The collaborators of TBT, however, describe the project as a shift from "tactical media to tactical biopolitics" the Electronic Disturbance Theater hits directly on the level that US counterinsurgency operations and this particular form of

[28] The investigations and the threats came in 2010, the same year that Daniel Millis, a Sierra Club employee and volunteer with No More Deaths, won his appeal for the littering citation he received in 2008 for placing sealed jugs of bottled water in the Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge in Arizona. In a 2-1 ruling, the U.S. Ninth Circuit Federal Court of Appeals found "it ambiguous as to whether purified water in a sealed bottle intended for human consumption meets the definition of 'garbage'" (qtd in Binelli). I highlight this here to suggest that the border disruptions of the TBT, and the reaction they engendered, occurred within the larger context of national news surrounding disruptions of the border mechanisms.

[29] Raley defines tactical media as "practices such as reverse engineering, hacktivism, denial-of-service attacks, the digital hijack, contestational robotics, collaborative software, and open-access technology labs" that achieve "disturbance" in social, conceptual, or power relations (13). Such disturbance, Raley notes, through "intervention and disruption of a dominant semiotic regime" in a way that makes "critical thinking possible" (13).

protest contest the border. Low intensity conflict (LIC)and counter insurgency praxis has come to dominate U.S. interagency thinking around so-called "small wars" since Dunn first wrote of the borderlands through a military framework. Counterinsurgency is a kind of biopolitical project meant not to defeat an enemy but to control a population perpetually in fear of emergent threats. Migrants, as a population, appear to nativists as a "biocriminal" threat to the economic, cultural, and racial health of the nation. Post 9/11, the fear of terroristic threats penetrating the sovereign security of the nation state was modeled onto the longstanding threads of nativist anxiety along the U.S.-Mexico border. Even the bare images of cyclone fencing and the unblinking eyes of video cameras along the border help construct the northward-heading migrant as a danger to be vigilant against. Through the criminalization of migration, the War on Drugs, and these optics of Operation Gatekeeper, Hold the Line, and other border militarization schemes, migrants are made into threats and cast as disposable life. The "tactical biopolitics" of the TBT contests the disposability of migrant life in the border by reappropriating the very mechanisms of military cartography and surveillance (GPS) to draw attention to the difficulties migrants face crossing the border and to mitigate that environmental violence by guiding people to life-saving water caches. Dominguez describes how he sees the tool's intervention into the production of bodies' relation to space in the borderlands:

> With the *Transborder Immigrant Tool*, we are taking a technology, the GPS system and a cell phone system, which, again, are very attuned, at this moment in time, to attachment to the body. And so the *Transborder Immigrant Tool* does continue the history of electronic civil disobedience in creating a code that basically performs the belief that there is a higher law that needs to be brought to the foreground: a universal common law of the rights of safe passage. And so the tool calls forth this sense that there is a community of artists who are willing to foreground the higher law.

The "higher law of safe passage" is evoked by the water dowsing navigation system of TBT, its most obvious functionality. But so too does Carroll's poetry provide a certain functionality, an "aesthetic sustenance" that "creates a sense of hospitality to migrants"[30] crossing the border (qtd in Jefferson 2010). When Amy Sara Carroll was writing the "ecopoetics" to pair with the code for the *Transborder Immigrant Tool*, she writes that she found herself reflecting on "what one would need from a poem in the desert." The aesthetics of the poem, and the function of the poem, she speculated, were different in a weaponized desert: "A desert is not just a desert" (Electronic Disturbance Theater 3). Hence the poems are what she calls "the desert survival series." Collectively, these poems, used through any flip cell phone, offer advice about how to survive in the Greater Sonoran ecosystem. Carroll describes the survival series as "pared down prose poems… procedural" instructions for how to perform core survival skills like tending to a rattlesnake bite, or finding true north in the day or night (4).

Using the "aesthetics of the survival manual," (*DH Quarterly*) Carroll's poems provide actionable intelligence with poetic flourishes to the lost and dehydrated. Each of Carrol's poems identify a specific danger of the borderlands desert, in particular the Anza-Borrega desert near San Diego where the project was developed and tested by the EDT and their partner NGOs, Border Angels and Water Stations Inc. While the poems identify venomous animals, poisonous flora, and specific information about hyperthermia, among other dangers, Carrol's poems do not mention other humans. There is no reference la Migra, nativist vigilantes, or other human dangers. The only mention of

[30] These specific descriptions of the project were played and apoplectically received by Glenn Beck on his radio show in 2010.

other humans comes in the form of repeated calls to use the cellphone to call 9-1-1 or 0-6-6 if the user is in a state of extreme danger (Carrol 58).

Carrol's poetry was inspired by her reading of Urrea's *The Devil's Highway* (Marino 4*)*. One poem appears to be a shortened, instructional summary of the six stages of hyperthermia that I read in detail (above). Carroll juxtaposes the symptoms ("heat cramps… fatigue, dizziness, fainting, nausea, vomiting")[31] with advice ("seek water at twilight") (58). As the list of symptoms grows, beginning to overwhelm the user who may well be experiencing these symptoms at the time of hearing, Carroll instructs the user: "STOP. The choices you make from now on will dictate whether you live or die"[32] (58). Where in *The Devil's Highway* the narrator speaks of how a body could be saved by being "found by the Border Patrol" or even "saved by the Border Patrol's famous air conditioner," Carroll's instructional poetry places the agency of life and death with the migrant user, not the U.S. authorities. In *The Devil's Highway* the act of dying of hyperthermia is engrossing in part because the reader is thrown into the perspective of a dehydrated migrant, and so the reliance on the Border Patrol Search, Trauma, and Rescue (BORSTAR) unit finding the proverbial needle in a giant desert haystack accentuates the peril of a distant migrant. But when the intended audience of the poetry *is* a dehydrated person in the desert, and the avowed goal of the tool is to save the life of one who at risk of death, the rhetorical strategy recognizes and enhances the agency of that user. Yet

[31] Each poem is translated into Spanish, the most common first language of migrants crossing the border. The Spanish poem is read aloud through the cellphone. This line, read through the TBT, would be "Los calambres por calor… fatiga, mareos, desmayos, nauseas, vómitos."

[32] "PARE. Las decisions que tome a partir de ahora dictarán si vive o muere."

Carroll cautions the user, "you will not be equipped to deal with these symptoms as they present themselves. Call 9-1-1 or 0-6-6" (58).

By appealing to an aspirational law of safe passage, the TBT takes up the tools of militarization to both draw attention to the environmental violence experienced by those who cross the dangerous border, but also to defang that environmental violence by guiding people through the deadly gauntlet built through borderlands militarization. Additionally, the *TBT* weds digital hacktivism with ecopoetry, redefining what a "guide" in and through a desert landscape can provide. The poetry points to the natural beauty—hazardous though it may be—of the Sonoran Desert. It is a place of "Desolation," as Urrea writes, but one, Carroll suggests, that is enriched by the power of the spoken word. The water caches save lives, and the TBT augments the act of placing water caches by adding additional "aesthetic sustenance" via Carroll's poetry. If the funnel effect of borderlands militarization was meant to deter people from entering or exiting the U.S., the *TBT* asserts the "higher law" of safe passage and extends a different face of the U.S., one that is welcoming.

Artists like the Electronic Disturbance Theater aren't the only ones who engage in the borderland disruption of the water caches. The destruction of the water stations is equally an aesthetic communicative act, communicating to both migrants, Samaritans, and broader media market publics the ferocity and violence of anti-immigrant sentiment along the border. Opposing the NGO's and the Electronic Disturbance Theater's actions are vigilantes who counter-protest by destroying the water caches. Their acts are similarly a literal and figurative intervention into the environmental violence of the borderlands. Water barrels are frequently shot by a variety of firearms. The bullets no doubt serve a

functional purpose in draining the barrel, but it is not the case that bullets are the only means of destroying the barrels. The stations Border Angels place in the desert are not in high-trafficked or patrolled areas. Indeed, in areas like the Cabeza Prieta Wilderness and Organ Pipe National Monument, Samaritan NGOs and the Border Patrol have memoranda or understandings for patrols to avoid the water stations so that desperate migrants don't steer *away* from a spotted station so as to avoid arrest. Thus, a determined vandal is free to walk up and destroy a station with whatever one's favorite implement of destruction might be. Why expend expensive ammunition, making noise that might draw attention to one's act, other than ritualistically enact a kind of vicarious violence against migrants.

But drawing attention, and exacerbating environmental violence while intimating interpersonal violence, is exactly what shooting water barrels in the desert is all about. Consider one macabre image that made the news in 2016, a photograph taken by Joel Smith, the operations manager for Humane Borders. In early February 2016 six of Humane Borders' eight water stations were vandalized, including the station shown in the photograph. Lying next to the barrel, itself shot and drained by shotgun pellets, is a dead coyote (*Canis latrans*). The number of simultaneous vandalism suggests a coordinated plan of attack by a group of individuals, and the fact that this group carried weapons and also the carcass of a coyote with them offers a glimpse into the intensity of the hatred with which these actions were undertaken. The image, and story of the vandalism, was picked up by the Arizona Daily Star and other national news networks via the Associated Press. According to Humane Borders and the Border Action Network Executive Director Juanita Molina, "vandalism [of water stations] typically consists of stolen spigots and

drained water or flags bent so people can't see where the water stations are located, not bullets and carcasses." The widespread publication of this image online and in print journalism comes at a national moment of inflected concern with immigration and so-called border security.

The dead coyote stands in for human coyotes, the guides, traffickers, and smugglers who transport people from Mexico to the United States. As the leaders of the groups that might access the water stations, the coyotes shoulder responsibility for aiding undocumented migrants into the country. Urrea's narrator explains, since Operation Gatekeeper and Hold the Line, "more than ever, walkers need a coyote" (Urrea 60). And the coyotes, more than ever, are vilified by U.S. media and popular culture. Media narratives argue that if it wasn't for the coyotes, who routinely molest or abandon their trusting clients, so many people wouldn't die in the desert. If it weren't for the coyotes, this line of argument holds, no one would try the crazy scramble through Desolation to come into the country and take Americans' jobs; the coyotes are the villains (Spener 205). For the anti-immigrant vandals, whether they were part of a hate group, or lone wolves, the human and nonhuman coyotes resonate in ways that exacerbate this hatred[33].

[33] The hated towards human "coyotes" is also tied the longstanding hatred white settler colonists have shown towards the canine coyote, *Canis latrans*. *Canis latrans* has historically been the target of general American vitriol and concerted efforts to eliminate it from the US Southwest and elsewhere in the country; coyotes are perceived to menace livestock, pets, and children. The U.S. Department of Agriculture, in setting goals for the implementation of the Animal Damage Control Act of 1931, even tried to bring about the "eradication, suppression, or bringing under control" of the "injurious predator species" (Section 426, qtd in Bacon 366). Yet despite federally subsidized killing programs that paid hunters in the US Southwest and elsewhere handsomely for each coyote pelt, the coyote is doing *better* than ever in the US. Much like the failures of borderlands militarization to stem the tide of migrants into the US, the eradication programs targeting *Canis* have spent a lot of taxpayers' dollars and committed tremendous violence without any measurable success. The distinctive cry of *Canis latrans* can be heard across a *wider* range than at the turn of the 20th century *and* in higher density (Urban Coyote Research Project 2016).

Some might argue that the corpse of the coyote communicates anger with the callous, sometimes murderous, human coyotes. It's not that these vandals want thousands to die in the desert. Placing the carcass of a coyote at the station serves as a message to those human coyotes that they are criminal scum, and tells Humane Borders staff and volunteers that they are aiding and abetting criminal scum. It's one thing to be a good Samaritan, and another to help criminals. But even if these vandals fully believe the culpability of this coyote scapegoat narrative, looking past the fact that coyote guías serve as the expendable, exploitable bottom tier employees of larger American-Mexican narco-human trafficking criminal networks, and certainly looking past the culpability of US policies driving both the swell of immigration and the deadliness of the border itself, there's no remotely humane way to read the destruction of the water barrel. The water barrel has the capacity to save the lives of the desperate and the lost. If the dead canine stands in for the criminal guía, the barrel stands in as an indexical representation of the migrant. This act of vandalism is an act of hate, orchestrated through the symbolic murder of the migrants that walk through these unique and dangerous environments. This form of threat is of a kind with nooses hung in trees. Like the noose, the shot water bottle carries both the threat of violence and a trace of the material means for enacting that violence. Similarly, water jugs deposited by groups like No More Deaths are routinely slashed, again intimating extreme violence to migrant bodies (if one wanted to eliminate the water cache its considerably easier to open and empty the jug, not to mention carrying the now-litter out of the desert). No More Deaths marks their water jugs, sometimes including messages to migrants or to borderland vigalantes. As one jug reads, "people are

dying of thirst out here. If you slash this, realize it is equivalent to murder" (No More Deaths, figure 1).

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that the most lethal weapon in the longstanding U.S.-Mexico border conflict is quiet way that U.S. militarization has organized the space of the border to weaponize natural environmental hazards. While we may be "all illegals in the desert," only undocumented migrants from Mexico are banished to this space, left to die in far-flung wild lands. In Chapter II I discussed how Héctor Tobar's *The Tattooed Soldier* models the ways in which spectacular military violence can incite or maintain slow environmental violence, and argued that the environmental outcomes of such actions constitute a legible form of military violence. In this chapter I have argued that the narrative political ecology of *The Devil's Highway* and the TBT reveal that amassing forces, even if these forces are not actively shooting and killing people on a regular basis, still can orchestrate lethal forms of environmental military violence. This second dynamic makes natural hazards into environmental weapons, and is perhaps even more insidious than the dynamics of environmental military violence I discuss in Chapter II because this form of violence looks to be natural, inevitable, and without human origin. It is also noteworthy, however, that in the case of both *The Devil's Highway* and the TBT that these artistic projects have had such material impact in highlighting and intervening in the violence targeting migrants. Groups like Humane Borders and the Border Angels recruit new volunteers using *The Devil's Highway*, and the act of water caches were spurred on by the deaths of the fourteen member of the Wellton 26. The *Transborder Immigrant Tool* sparked a national media firestorm over the power of poetry to provide

sustenance. Both projects bring recognition justice to the thousands of migrants who have died along the border by recovering the fugitive human agency that has produced this ongoing tide of violence.

Although the number of undocumented border crossings has declined since the global recession of 2008, there is evidence that the border is becoming increasingly deadly for those who do cross. Data suggests that even as the number of migrants (and migrant deaths) has fallen over the last eight years, the rate of death per crossing has steadily climbed (Anderson, S 2) According to the National Foundation for American Policy, in 1998 approximately two migrants were recorded dead per 10,000 apprehensions of undocumented migrants by the Border Patrol while in 2012 close to 14 deaths are recorded per 10,000 apprehensions (Anderson, S 2). Although some of this difference could be attributed to greater attention and effort at the border to find and catalogue migrant deaths, it could also well be that the border is actually more dangerous in 2016 than twenty years earlier. With every mile of floodlighted fences and every new deployment of enforcement agents, migrants are pushed into more perilous and remote crossings.

The continued effects of anthropogenic climate change will exacerbate a worsening situation along the U.S.-Mexico borderlands. Summer, the "season of death," is coming earlier, lasting longer, and getting hotter with more erratic and severe weather events (Garfin et al 463-464). Climate change will exacerbate the border war in other ways. Investigative journalist Christian Parenti writes that climate change has stoked the fires of "green nativism" and mainstream political embrace of a "fortress state mentality." Parenti writes that "as the planet warms, the political tumors of American

authoritarianism, our current repression of immigrants, will metastasize" (214). Consciously or coincidently appropriating the armature of Garret Hardin's "Life Boat Ethics: The Case Against Helping the Poor," ubiquitous pundits and politicians (again, it's hard not to turn to Donald Trump as a paragon of this movement) marshal neo-Malthusian arguments for closing the border and restricting immigration (Urban 251, Parenti 209). As reference to Hardin's 1974 essay implies, these nativist strands are not a new phenomenon within mainstream US environmentalist movements, but may become more prominent forces so long as the links between national sovereignty and security as linked to ecological purity and abundance. I'll take this argument up in greater detail in the following chapter, but I think it fitting to mark "green nativism" and the "greening of hate" here to emphasize how climate change is likely to impact the environmental warfare of the borderlands.

While the confluence of global forces is in many ways personified, and scapegoated, in the figure of the migrant, it is not the confluence of these forces that endanger migrant bodies in the borderlands. The climactic danger is weaponized by particular "imperial formations" that have continuously militarized the border justified as "deterrence" that has utterly failed to deter. The military organization of the borderlands environment is simply punitive and deadly, and no less the fault of human actions than the shooting of José Antonio Elena Rodríguez. The texts I've explored in this chapter show powerful ways of bringing the deadly environmental violence out of the sphere of the natural and into the realm of political and artistic struggle. They show, through one vocabulary or another, this "broken place in the world" and the human agency enmeshed with this place (Urrea 32). *The Devil's Highway* and the *Transborder Immigrant Tool*

each move to describe or disrupt environmental military violence caused by border militarization since Operation Gatekeeper and Hold the Line. These texts suggest that in an era of increased militarism and growing threats from climate change in the borderlands that the humanization of migrants and denaturalization of environmental military violence must go hand in hand.

CHAPTER IV

THE WAR OF ALL AGAINST ALL IN THE ENVIRONMENTALISM OF U.S. SPECULATIVE FICTION

> "Climate change is global-scale violence, against places and species as well as against human beings."
>
> —Rebecca Solnit
>
> "This is not just about things getting hotter and wetter, it's about things getting meaner. And that's why we have to talk about values and who we want to be in the face of this crisis."
>
> —Naomi Klein
>
> "It's 2022 and people are still the same—they'll do anything to get what they need, and they need… Soylent Green!"
>
> —movie poster for *Soylent Green*

Climate Change and the "War of All Against All"

This chapter turns to the question of future wars and conflicts that may be caused by climate change as they have been depicted in speculative fiction. While in my previous chapters I have defined "environmental military violence" as a critical term for the study of war and the environment, I now consider how this violence is justified, supported, and sustained in forms of popular culture, namely, contemporary environmental science fiction. Many prominent climate activists and scholars investigating the social ramifications of climate change assert that climate change entails not just a warmer world, but a world more prone to interpersonal and intergroup conflict. These arguments are indirectly supported by the prominence— or rather, ubiquity— of narrative forecasting of "low-rise [climate] dystopias" in recent U.S. popular culture (Davis 270). The imagery associated with climate dystopias resonate with more direct

arguments that place environmental change in tight correlation with rising conflict, be these arguments from politically left-leaning environmentalist or right-leaning hawkish think tanks or from the U.S. military itself. I argue that while futurist speculative fiction remains a rich site of environmentalist jeremiad and epidiectic rhetoric, this archive often naturalizes militaries and imperialism as institutions responsive to an innately violent and atomistic sense of human nature while stimulating broadly environmentalist sympathies. In novels depicting internal climate migrants, such as Octavia Butler's *Parable of the Sower* and *Parable of the Talents*, I show that even politically engaged, progressive, intersectional approaches to environmental endangerment naturalize conflict and occlude dialogic solutions to environmental change.

Octavia Butler's *Parable of the Sower* (1993) and *Parable of the Talents* (1998) depict climate injustice to which characters in the story adapt by migrating away from acute dangers posed by climate change and other environmental stressors. While Butler uses environmental change as a means of setting their characters in motion, both novels focus on the danger posed by patriarchal fanaticism and racism let loose within a democratic state emaciated by neoliberalism. Environmental declension is both symptom and cause of the state's deterioration, and a means of strengthening hateful ideologies that have been the target of progressive, anti-oppressive politics. The plots of the *Parable* duology center on the act of movement away from environmental privation towards physical safety and sustainable living in Cascadia, even if the supposed solaces the characters find are yet again undermined by patriarchal violence. Each novel represents the intersectional nature of environmental inequality while also identifying racism and white imperialism as central forces promoting environmental degradation and

exacerbating the effects of that environmental change. Yet while the stories take up the whiteness of ecological violence, I argue that both Butler's novels tend to naturalize the relationships between environmental change and racist violence, clouding the critique of white imperialism and patriarchal violence these books advance. To cloud these important critiques that the novels otherwise sustain is unfortunate in an era of climate change were a warming world is coincident with rising racial nationalism and authoritarianism (Norris).

By making this argument I do not seek to fall into the "essentialist tendency" in environmental studies or environmentalism of assigning singular root causes to complex environmental and social issues, nor do I think Butler's duology makes this reductive error (Ellis 256). Each novel takes up a swirl of social and environmental issues and their current and potential future effects on American society. That said, I do critique the essentialist tendency of this genre of popular fiction, and Butler's novels in particular, to link environmental degradation— and climate change more particularly— to interpersonal and intergroup violence. In Jeffrey Ellis' enduring essay from *Uncommon Ground* decrying the tendency of environmentalists to squabble amongst each other over the essential root cause of environmental problems, he quotes Thomas Pynchon: "If they get you to ask the wrong questions, they don't have to worry about the answers" (qtd. in Ellis 256). The quote, in the context of Ellis' argument, alludes both to the environmental debates wherein different constituencies are "attacking" each other for asking the wrong questions based on their assumption of the *wrong* root cause of environmental destruction (i.e. population growth, technological innovations, rising production/consumption). Pynchon's quote also refers to a broader failure of *all* environmentalist interlocutors'

desire to pin all environmental problems on a single causal force. Ellis, via Pynchon, implies that the search for a root cause is in and of itself a form of "wrong question[ing]" that does not account for the complex interplay of social and natural forces that constitute what we colloquially call "environmental" problems. My concern is not that Butler or the other authors I briefly treat in this chapter are mired in such discussions (which indeed still characterize much of public intellectual argument around climate change today). Rather, I am concerned that the overdetermination of associations between environmental change and interpersonal/intergroup violence consolidates particular, unverified, assumptions that global environmental change *necessarily produces* or *exacerbates* human conflict.

Furthermore, I argue in this chapter that these assumptions are often predicated on narratives of racial animus and conflict; the argument that climate change or other forms of ecological change producing interpersonal and intergroup violence rests on tropes of black or brown barbarism pitted against civilized white Euro-American identity. Such constellations of ideas permeate not only environmentalist speculative fiction, as I explore here, but also seep out into public and intellectual discourses of climate security, immigration, and policing in the contemporary United States. In each of these arenas the association of environmental change and radicalized violence naturalizes and legitimates increased militarism and police action in the name of ecological security, but enacted in protection of white resource enclosure. There is a tacit conditional argument that many narratives of ecological change and civilizational collapse posit. The argument runs that if "humanity will behave poorly" in the face of climate change, then in order to protect individual and collective security (of those worthy of protecting) some force (i.e. robust

police or active military) must keep humanity from tearing itself apart. Could this force wreak its own form of "bad behaviour" in such a way as to match or even amplify the violence of the geophysical environmental change itself? If, as I argue, the elision of violence and climate change is a flawed assumption, then the kinds of questions, debates, proposals, or imaginings addressing anthropogenic climate change carry forward measures of unsupported and unhelpful thinking, and promise additional casualties from slow and eruptive violence.

Resource conflicts—oil wars, water wars, wars over floods of refugees—are part and parcel of modern dystopian landscapes. Having opened our collective imaginations to the possibility of such awful outcomes, these horrors slip from fantasy into cogent, no-nonsense rhetoric. Rigorous scholarship is not exempt from the larger trend of militarized dystopias I identify in this chapter. Take the beginning pages of Nöel Sturgeon's *Environmentalism in Popular Culture* (2009) as an emblematic example. Sturgeon begins her monograph by inviting the reader to imagine environmental utopia and dystopia. Her imaginings of utopia quickly and self-consciously fall into a wish list of positive policy solutions to environmental ills (e.g. "we will reduce landfills and toxic waste by rejecting the throwaway society through recycling… consumer goods") (3). Sturgeon draws attention to the way her vision has maxed out its proverbial genie wishes by ending her cogitation with the line, "And, … well, the list could go on forever" (4). The utopia is marked by a serial erasure or negation of modernity's worst side effects; these changes are enacted (it's not quite clear who the expansive "we" is) through discreet policy and cultural shifts. In contrast to utopia's wish list structure, Sturgeon forecasts a dystopia through a cause and effect chain reaction characterized by constant terror:

> One can easily imagine the Global North, especially the United States, will not be willing to rapidly make major changes in the overuse of nonrenewable energy, especially the oil we use to run our businesses and homes and to drive our cars. The quickly industrializing countries of the Global South, especially China and India, will not then be willing to sacrifice their attempt to match our environmentally exploitative ways of living. Global climate change will accelerate as a result. The increasing costs and decreasing availability of oil will legitimate U.S. military operations in countries that have oil reserves… increasing our military budget and shrinking our social services budget. War will also break out in new areas, for example, between the United States, Canada, Denmark, Russia, and Norway over the ownership of oil resources in the arctic… (Sturgeon 4).

Sturgeon continues to detail how this new violence will result in increased environmental burdens for the world's poor and marginalized peoples. Of course, Sturgeon's global feminist approach to the study of U.S. popular culture is one that constantly seeks to critique dualisms and the discourse of "the natural" as a tool of power (19). Yet even for as insightful a critic of naturalization, the visions that preface her book rely on tropes of innate human selfishness and violence being unbridled by environmental change and resource scarcity. Her use of the passive voice is telling: scarce oil "will legitimate" U.S. imperialism. Oil availability in the melting arctic will ensure that new wars will "break out." This cascade of violence is not placed in the realm of politics and morality but rather simple cause and effect. Scarcity produces violence as sure as fuel, friction, and oxygen produce fire.

Until this point in my dissertation, I have examined two distinct relationships that describe the nature of environmental military violence. In Chapter II I describe how forms of spectacular organized violence— like bombs and arson and political assassinations— not only cause forms of slow environmental violence, but secure their effects or forestall initiatives to ameliorate this violence. In the second chapter I described how the violence orchestrated by weaponized environments conceals its human agency

through its apparent naturalness. While these chapters describe two important dynamics of contemporary environmental military violence, I have yet to focus on the ideas within popular culture that support and sustain the use of these different types of environmental military violence, and the ecology of violences deployed through environmental warfare more broadly. That is not to say that the previous chapters have ignored such ideological armature; for instance I track the transformation of Guillermo the peasant farmer into Longoria the Jaguar Battalion killer in *The Tattooed Soldier* precisely by examining how he internalizes oppressive concepts of race, masculinity, and nationality. Likewise, the narrative political ecology of Urrea's *The Devil's Highway* examined how globalized economies but virulent, radicalized nationalism contributed to the weaponized borderlands of Arizona. Yet in both of these examples my main concern was explicating the forms of violence rather than examine how the violence itself fit within larger discourses of power and meaning-making. Environmental militarism refers not only to the kinds of environmental violence deployed in military or national security endeavors, but also the values and beliefs that support the linkage of military action to environmental rationales or modes of military action. Indeed, it is because militarism is both material and discursive that an environmental humanities approach is necessary to the study of war and the environment. And it is for this reason that I must focus on the cultural vehicles by which these values are propagated in order to understand both the specific associations that constitute these values and their tenacity in the public sphere.

Environmentalism through Speculative Fiction

Speculative fiction has long been an important site for the articulation of environmentalist appeals. Science fiction in particular has, along with romanticist nature

writing, long been a key genre through which concerns with the growth of industrial modernity at the expense of a supposedly wild and pristine Nature have been articulated (Barratta). Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein,* commonly regarded as the first science fiction novel, depicts the struggle of the Enlightened man against his own wretched machinations and violations of Nature (all the while brilliantly calling into question just what "nature" a wretch made up by a scientist would inherently posses). In Shelley's second novel, *The Last Man*, global climate change in the 2190s correlates with the emergence and spread of a deadly pandemic that ultimately decimates all of humanity (save, you guessed it, the last man narrator). *The Last Man* is perhaps the first truly future-casting speculative novel, and opened the imaginary so that the likes of H.G. Wells could also offer up visions of Social Darwinist dystopia and apocalypse via the death of the sun in *Time Machine.* Pandemics again reared their head, albeit in a very pro-human way, in *War of the Worlds.* These canonical early entries into science fiction evince how this genre, in fulfilling its world-making propensity and engaging with the cutting-edge tools of industrial development and "progress," often raises environmentalist anxieties and critiques of Western Civilization's growth and Nature's decline.

Yet we need not look so far back as the 19th century and sift through these proto-environmentalist novels to see how their 20th and 21st century progeny take up and elaborate these critiques. It is not my goal here to conduct such a genealogy of environmentalism in science fiction, though such a work would be worthy of study[34]. I do want to note, however, that American environmentalism's most-enduring environmental

[34] Chris Barrata's edited collection, *Environmentalism in the Realm of Science Fiction and Fantasy Literature* is a good start to such an effort.

jeremiad, Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, and its most enduring environmental work of children's literature, Dr. Seuss' *The Lorax*, both draw on tropes of speculative fiction. While my inclusion of *The Lorax*, with its furry barbaloots and swammy swans and doomed truffula trees obviously is a work of fantasy inspired by the realities of species extirpation, *Silent Spring*'s speculative qualities are often overlooked in summaries of this monumental work in favor of descriptions of its scientific, or journalistic, exposé of DDT's effects on birds, agriculture, and human health. Yet as *The New York Times Magazine* noted in its recent fifty-year look-back essay on the influence of Carson and *Silent Spring*, "*Silent Spring* begins with a myth" (Griswold Sept 21, 2012). In the first chapter, "A Fable for Tomorrow," Carson paints a poetic American pastoral scene before introducing an insidious influence of anthropogenic pesticides that blight the land. Weaving tropes of nature as nurturing mother, vulnerable garden, and ultimately vengeful harbinger of doom, Carson's "Fable" concedes in its final paragraphs, "This town does not actually exist, but it might easily have a thousand counterparts in America or elsewhere in the world" (3). After admitting to the fiction, Carson explains her authorial rationale:

> I know of no community that has experienced all the misfortunes I describe. Yet every one of these disasters has actually happened somewhere, and many real communities have already suffered a substantial number of them. A grim specter has crept upon us almost unnoticed, and this imagined tragedy may easily become a stark reality we all shall know. (3).

In this moment, Carson's voice disrupts her speculation and shows this act of fiction has been done in service of drawing together the collective stakes of disparate cases and potentials. She implicitly justifies her use of fiction by claiming a "grim specter has crept almost unnoticed" into "stark reality." The creeping violence of such a specter anticipates

Rob Nixon's exegesis of environmental slow violence, and Carson uses speculative fiction to, in Nixon's terms, "apprehend" the violence; to understand and act to halt the threat of industrial pesticides.

"A Fable for Tomorrow" offers a convenient and powerful narrative template that has been taken up time and again in the rhetorical appeals made by environmentalists and politically-engaged speculative fiction more broadly. The template, stripped of frills and boiled down, looks something like this for a prospective environmental speculative fictionist.

Move 1

Move 1 involves constructing a nostalgic past-present. This present, like the future you'll get to momentarily, only exists in individual and collective imaginings and ideas. The keyword here is *nostalgia*; to build a sense of attachment to the conditions of the present or recent past that this story is going to threaten and destroy.

Silent Spring wastes absolutely no time building a nostalgic, Edenic image of the American hinterlands:

> There was once a town in the heart of America where all life seemed to live in harmony with its surroundings. The town lay in the midst of a checkerboard of prosperous farms, with fields of grain and hillsides of orchards where, in spring, white clouds of bloom drifted above the green fields. In autumn, oak and maple and birch set up a blaze of color that flamed and flickered across a backdrop of pines. Then foxes barked in the hills and deer silently crossed the fields, half hidden in the mists of the fall mornings. (Carson 1).

The "harmony" between the town and the country yields "prosperous farms, with fields of grain." This image, in the early 1960s, stands in stark contrast to the financial and ecological travails of the Midwest and Great Plains farms in the nineteen thirties and forties, when the Dustbowl and the Great Depression would have indelibly marked the

consciousness of many of Carson's readers. The brief paragraph moves from seasonal descriptions of spring, summer, and fall, suggesting a full and bountiful harvest for the harmonious town. The pastures of plenty evoke an idyllic image of farmlands fully recovered from the Great Depression—if such a time even touched this perfect refuge.

Move 2

Move 2 is to introduce the dystopian influence of environmental disruption and hazard and systemically corrupt the benevolent past and/or replace it with the consequences of the dystopian influence.[35]

In *Silent Spring*, this influence is first described as a "strange blight" that causes "everything to change." In each subsequent paragraph Carson builds the tension and uncertainty surrounding the strange blight, characterizing the blight as "some strange spell," with "strange," and "puzzling," effects. Systemically the productivity and prosperity of the land and the farmers is stripped away; livestock miscarries, orchards fail to bear fruit, and fish in the rivers die. In this landscape both economic productivity and biological reproduction are essentially halted. Long before acoustic ecology was a recognizable field within conservation biology, Carson strongly links the silencing of organisms to the death of an ecosystem. The death of ecology is expressed through silence; an absence of noise that *should* be the product of birds singing, fish splashing, bees buzzing, etc.

Move 3

Move 3 is to build in the causal exposition (or at least a really strong, suggestive

[35] For those of you more into the *in media res* start, the irresistible casting of one's readers into a brave new world, don't neglect offering some nostalgic snapshots into the past so that the reader understands these two worlds, the horrible future and the generally decent but already corroding present, are somehow linked.

corollary) of how the dystopian present of the story has been enacted through the negligent actions in the near-to-nostalgic past-present mentioned in move 1.

As a genre, fables are narratives that are didactic and address their audience through analogous epideictic. Commonly incorporating personified animals, the fable praises or blames human character traits, human virtues and vices with the explicit intent of moving readers to either emulate or disavow certain behaviors. In "Fable for Tomorrow," the unsettling nature of the descriptions of ecological violence are heightened by the uncertain origin of the destruction, incomprehensible to the complaining farmers who are the only human voices in this story, Carson describes a "white granular powder" as the mysterious corrupting influence (2). While this short introduction withholds the precise identity of the powder, readers learn through a series of negations that the powder is symbolic representation of the community's own actions. The powder and its effect of "silenc[ing] the rebirth of new life," is not "some witchcraft" nor "enemy action," but rather "the people had done it to themselves" (2-3). Carson's "fable for tomorrow" resists personifying animals and plants, allowing the technological interventions of humans into ecosystems to stand as an analogy for what the humans may be doing to their own lifestyles, financial security, and reproductive health.

Unpacking *Silent Spring*'s use of speculative tropes underscores mainstream U.S. environmentalism's reliance on speculative fiction and ecocatastrophe (L. Buell 250). While scholars and those seeking to effect environmentalist social change should always be wary of the "great books" historiography of any social movement—the urge to credit a single speech, declaration, or publication with the rise of organized social protest and policy-making—the impact of Carson's *Silent Spring* is undeniable. Images from "The

Fable for Tomorrow" became standards in other environmentalist science fiction, such as Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* and its film adaptation, *Bladerunner*. This dialogue between fiction and nonfiction texts in turn underscores how speculative genres have also been invested in environmental themes. Like *Silent Spring* itself, this corpus of literature, film, and art is a dynamo of environmentalist rhetoric and popular influence. In the first two decades of the 21st century Hollywood box offices and titanic video game industry[36] have been especially enamored with overtly environmentalist speculative fiction such as Suzanne Collins *The Hunger Games* and apocalyptic science fiction like *The Day After Tomorrow*, *Interstellar*, and *Avatar*.

This rich and influential genre helps people think about environmental and social problems, operating as a kind of funhouse mirror held up to reality. There's the reflection, but warped in unfamiliar ways that highlight or accentuate different parts of the real. Moreover, "Science fiction, too, is a way of opening up the future, affirming the possibility that things could be otherwise—its various scenarios and conceits less often about the future as such than about the present estranged from itself, released to uncertainty" (Uncertain Commons). Yet, while speculative fiction and science fiction helps advance environmental thinking, it often naturalizes and legitimizes militaristic values and environmental violence. Assuming the premise that social and environmental issues are linked, and that militarism is more often than not damaging to ecosystems and socio-economically vulnerable communities, the stakes and lessons of such representation are clear: if one advances an environmentalist critique, calling into question the stability or even wholesale existence of nature, but holds up militaries and

[36] For parallel environmentalist speculative games see Bethesda's *Fallout* series, *Final Fantasy VII*, etc.

violence as a permanent, necessary actors in the world, these texts legitimate environmental problems themselves, as they spring from the imperial ruin of military projects.

While I maintain there are any number of exemplary science fiction texts that I might use to evidence the prevalence of such easy linking, one or two well-known examples should be sufficient to establish the existence, if not ubiquity, of this relationship between environmental decline and rising tides of violence in environmentalist speculative fiction. My first text is perhaps the bluntest example one might hope to find, and thus it is illustrative of the general move I'll make in larger argumentative readings of Octavia Butler later in this chapter. The movie poster for *Soylent Green* (directed by Richard Fleischer) sports the tagline "People never change/ they'll do anything to get what they need/and they need SOYLENT GREEN." The poster's tagline captures one kind of association environmentalist speculative fiction makes between violence and environmental decline. If "people never change," and "they'll do anything to get what they need," the implication is that in an environment marked by scarcity or pollution people will be capable, and willing, to do violent things that the contemporary audience viewing the film would find unpleasant. In this case, the line teases (as a good poster should) that the inhuman, very human response to the year 2022 will be the desperate scrum for "SOYLENT GREEN," which of course, "is… people!"

The subtle promise of on-screen cannibalism, though, is secondary to the violence and governmental discipline promised by an environmentally-compromised future. The image accompanying this text shows one individual—a cartoon rendition of Charleton

Heston—running from a red dump truck labeled "riot control" that is literally pushing and lifting hordes of people out of its path in pursuit of Heston. Other trucks carrying masses of similarly-dressed people follow in a staggered line. The image paints a picture of society without individuals, as the white-clad civilians exist only as a writhing mass of flesh, and the riot control personnel wear rubber suits and mask themselves in domed helmets reminiscent of 19th and early 20th century diving suits. Even the few individuals directly behind Heston are masked. The lack of individuality in the hordes swarming the clearly-identifiable Heston implies that although "people never change," the future dystopia depicted in *Soylent Green* will strip humans of their discernable, individualized humanity. Heston's character is posited as a protagonist fighting to retain his autonomy in the face of these threats. These defaced, inhumane hoards stand in stark contrast to the line of Hollywood stars' cameos shown at the bottom of the poster. Repressive violence, in the form of the militarized trucks, the riot patrol's batons, and Heston's holstered pistol associate the dehumanized future with a surge of people and violence.

The *Soylent Green* movie poster is emblematic of a host of successful ecocatastrophe apocalypse and dystopian film, television, gaming, and literature. The entire *Mad Max* franchise is predicated on a lack of nature producing a surfeit of explosions and murder. The extraordinarily successful serialized graphic novels and television show, *The Walking Dead*, moves from the premise that a pandemic causing a zombie uprising can overthrow the world's militaries and governments, but a few scattered bands of southern Americans with shotguns and machetes can survive the zombie apocalypse. Threatened by zombies and stripped of the comforts of civilization, apparently the only reasonable form of adaptation is to align oneself with the most brutal

white strongman you can find[37]. Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*, while not so overtly Hobbesian, similarly shows that human nature can be stripped away along with nonhuman nature in an ecoapocalypse. In the novel, as well as the film there is hardly any recognizable "ecology" to see at all—just the few last souls scavenging a non-regenerating supply of canned goods (or people, there's always people). *The Road*, a bestselling book in 2004 and a modestly successful box office adaptation, is the kind of "chilling and caustic" ecoapocalypse that is reminiscent of a much earlier generation of post-Carson collapse narratives (F. Buell 251). In such narratives, both "ecology" and the historical political forces that usually interact with ecology are stripped bare, and in the case of *The Road* even the linguistic capacities of the characters seem as denatured as the natural ecology they inhabit (Saliba 144). Monosyllabic, terse exchanges mark the dialogue between father and son, and it appears throughout that culture and nature both have all but perished.

Instead of continuing to rattle off the Hollywood blockbusters (and the equally prolific busts like *Waterworld*) that elide human savagery and environmental decline, I'm more interested in the links between violence, environmental inequality, and overall environmental quality presented in Octavia Butler's *Parable* duology: *Parable of the Sower* and *Parable of the Talents.* Published in 1993 and 1998, respectively, Butler's books are generally considered to be more "literary" than the blockbuster fictions I discuss above, and are widely assigned in environmental humanities courses in higher

[37] In *The Walking Dead*'s seven seasons of television, most of the different groups of survivors are led by white strongmen. The focal group is led by Rick Grimes, whom fans of the show have dubbed the "Ricktator" (playing on his dictatorial leadership). Grimes' fall into brutality is triggered in his fights against antagonistic groups led by white men. Rick's nemesis, "The Governor," is even overtly identified with a "white king" chess piece in an episode.

education across the United States. I am interested in how Butler's depiction of environment and violence in *Parable of the Sower* and *Parable of the Talents* attaches meaning between environmental change, interpersonal violence, and organized large-scale violence. California and Oregon, the predominant setting of the *Parable* duology, are marked, in contrast to the mid-1990s when the books where written, by increased levels and kinds of interpersonal violence (what Rebecca Solnit sardonically terms "artisanal violence…from below") and organized structural violence as well as a more hazardous and chaotic physical environment. As each is prominently situated within the setting and plot of the two novels, the rise of violence and environmental hazards are clearly correlated; but what if any causal links do these texts suggest between the three? Conveyed through tropes of radicalized urban blight, slavery, apocalyptic fire, scarcity, and earthquakes, these different forms of violence are the product of similar causal factors within the novel.

Of Ecocatastrophe and Violence in *Parable of the Sower* and *Parable of the Talents*

Answering what causal links exist between violence (of any or many kinds) and environmental change are significant because these links suggest, on the one hand, that issues of environmental justice are central to discourses and policies promoting peace and security. But as I argue throughout this dissertation, the linking of resource scarcity, environmental hazards, and violence in academic, popular, and literary arenas often naturalizes and legitimizes further cultural, political, and financial investments in militarized organizations that "produce insecurity in the name of security" (Marzec 7). It seems undeniable that ecological change and environmental hazards challenge humans personally and societally, yet these stressors need not result in greater investments in the

ideas and practices that have manufactured social and environmental injustices. Yet the unleashing of violence *seems* natural, *seems* inevitable, when ecological change and conflict is locked together by the secret, but not-so-subtle subtext of race and racism. The linking of environment, violence, and race within Lauren Olamina's epistolary narrative puts forward a dystopia ridden with tropes of environmentally-inflected race war even while she articulates explicitly anti-racist ideals and actions while founding Earthseed, a quasi-religious praxis founded on the idea of sustainability.

Both *Parable of the Sower* and *Parable of the Talents* are part of a long and storied literary history of California rife with both utopian yearnings and dystopian world-making. Lynn Mie Itagaki writes that "at the continental end of the U.S. westward expansion, California has long held the imagination of a nation building a global empire, at the forefront of technological innovations, and increasing economic dominance" (371). The continental margin and perennial mythic frontier of Manifest Destiny, California retains romantic utopian possibilities ever encumbered by bloody histories of conquest, exploitation, and genocide. And despite California's unique ability to broadcast its cultural, financial, and technological hegemony onto the rest of the country and other parts of the world, it has always been the most ethnically and culturally diverse state in the U.S. (Itagaki 372). From such diversity have come a plethora of utopic imaginaries and strivings. If, as Mike Davis claims, "there is a dramatic trend…in merging all of Los Angeles fiction with the disaster or survivalist narrative," the same can not be said of other regions of the state. Indeed, with the white flight of the 1980s to the early years of the 2000s, while Los Angeles has taken on the yoke of a perpetual Ground Zero, suburban and particularly northern wildspaces in California's utopic stock has risen. In

the 2014 bestseller *California* by Edan Lepucki, two lovers' blind flight from a depressed and dangerous Los Angeles to make life anew (without much survivalist know-how or preparation) in the woods of northern California are a perfect expression of the desperate hope placed within ex-urban locales of the West. While the rise of cults— like the "burn the rich" junkies of *Sower* and President Jarrett's Christian Crusaders in *Talents*— are associated with times of change and catastrophe, the terra nullius of Californian and Oregonian wild spaces within the settler colonialist narrative of westward expansion provide fertile ground for new kinds of communities and social arrangements to take root. Olamina's insular Acorn harkens to the many separatist communes and communities that historically have dotted "the State of Jefferson[38]" and Oregon.

Butler, writing into the dominant genre of disaster fiction and utopian science fiction of California, mixes into her story aspects of African American slavery narratives (R. Butler, Gamber). Numerous critics have described the series an Afrofuturist or Afrocentric example of a "neoslavery narrative;" the *Parable* signifies heavily on autobiographical slave narratives, as the story focuses on acts of emancipation and migration related through epistolary (by one narrator in *Sower* and five in *Talents*) (Kouhestani 2015, R. Butler 2010). As with slave narratives, and much of Octavia Butler's literature, the *Parable* texts take up complex conceptions of social power; and further signifying on slave narrative tropes, both *Sower* and *Talents* focus on characters gaining and exercising power through the acquisition of different kinds of literacy (Lacey 380).

[38] Running from Yreka, California north 100 miles to O'Brien, Oregon, Jefferson was a proposed state in 1941 that has continued to exert a cultural influence in mostly rural Southern Oregon and Northern California.

By combining genre elements of Californian disaster fiction, science fiction, and neoslavery narratives, the series therefore not only exists at the nexus of these genres but also can be read as early exemplar of what Ramon Saldivar terms "historical fantasy" and "speculative realist" fiction. Saldívar argues:

> When fantasy and metafiction come into contact with history and the racialized imagination, vernacular cultures, and the stories of figures from the American global south they become… a fantasy-shaped realism that bids to create a new form, a *sur*-realismo, a global *south* realism, within the speculative regions of fiction. (593).

Using "all the classical forms and themes available to ethnic writers to tell their protest stories" combined with speculative fiction tropes to "*reverse"* the penchant of fantasy to take flight from history and trauma (Saldivar 593-594). While speculative fiction is always also "specular" fiction, reflecting back and on historical and cultural moments, historical speculative realism takes up concrete calls for social justice amidst the historical emergence of global neoliberal capitalism and its exacerbation of social inequalities while simultaneously denying the reality of race, gender, ethnicity, or other forms of social difference that make a difference (Saldivar 594). In terms of chronology, Butler's early work predates most of the authors that Saldívar signals out as paragons of writing against conceptions of a postracial U.S., but her final three novels (*Sower*, *Talents*, and *Fledgling*) overlap with this same group writing at the turn of the century (such as Percival Everett, Sesshu Foster, Colson Whitehead, and Karen Tei Tamashita) (Saldívar 596). As an early practitioner of this kind of fantastical historical metafiction, Butler's *Parable* series tackles "the meaning of race in a time when race supposedly no longer matters" (Saldívar 575).

Saldivar's definition of historical speculative realism does not overtly discuss

environmental issues within these novels, however other scholars such as Kate Marshall[39] have looked to similar archives in describing literatures of the Anthropocene; literatures addressing the pervasiveness of neoliberal capitalism's ecological ramifications across scales, times, and locations (local, regional, global, molecular, immediate, delayed, attritional) and attendant environmental and climate justice issues (distributional, compensatory, and recognitional in nature). While Saldivar does not describe environmental justice as part of the matrix of domination historical speculative realism describes, the canon of authors he suggests, and indeed the novels he chooses to analyze in his article, *do* place a great emphasis on environmental justice issues. Julie Sze's call for reading of "environmental justice literature" contains an extended reading of Yamashita's *Tropic of Orange*, and her novel *Through the Arc of the Rainforest* is a regularly-assigned staple in environmental literature courses. Junot Díaz's short story (and presumably the rest of his currently forestalled novel,) "Monstro" takes up global coloniality and climate justice in the Antilles, and Whitehead's *Zone One* has been called the paradigmatic novel of the Anthropocene (Marshall 524). Given the ubiquity and originality with which historical speculative realism takes up environmental and climate justice issues, it's arguable that historical speculative realism is a paradigmatic genre of the Anthropocene and the issues that animate this new cultural and geologic era. At a minimum, those novels Saldivar hails as historical speculative realism are also treated by

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scholars who examine environmental justice and the Anthropocene in literary studies.

Parable of the Sower and *Parable of the Talents* show numerous intersections between environmental justice and social justice issues. Taking a "critical environmental justice" perspective on both novels entails assuming that the human and non-human members of the world depicted in the books "are subjects of [intersectional] oppression and agents of social change" (Pellow "Critical Environmental Justice…" 5). That is to say, that in order to perform an environmental justice reading of Butler's *Parable* series, one must unpack the textual (over)determinations that adhere to the depiction of both human and ecological things in the novels, and more, inspect what agencies these things exert within the universe of the novels and how the ecology of such agencies affects what meaning we can derive from these stories. As I have mentioned previously in this chapter, depictions of ecocatastrophe in speculative fiction often serve metaphorically to "sympathize" with the social ills being decried in the text; blighted landscapes and pollutants act as setting that bolster an emotive atmosphere of modern dystopias without necessarily drawing a coherent relation between what social forces produce or sustain the dystopia itself. And yet, if *Parable of the Sower* and *Parable of the Talents* can be truly regarded as environmental justice narratives, as Govan, Gamber, Miller, Koutenheni, and other scholars have suggested, then the uneven distribution of environmental benefits and burdens within the novels cannot simply mirror or resonate with the social critique of nationalism, racism, sexism, and neoliberal capitalism within the novels. The environmental hazards and despoliation described in the novels are presented as symptoms of these social injustices, however, the depiction of the environmental hazards and their relationship to human interpersonal or organized violence turns, like Oroborus,

onto itself by conveying tropes of colorblind racism in its environmental description and classism that undercut the antiracist messages that Lauren Olamina pens in her journals and *Earthseed: Book of the Living*.

Parable of the Sower and *Parable of the Talents* take up "the meaning of race in a time when race supposedly no longer matters" by throwing the reader into a near future when race has continued to matter, acutely, violently, and overtly. It does so in large part by placing racial representation and social meaning within a failed state that is marked by resource scarcity, lawlessness, and extreme violence (Miller 203). Much of the scholarship and embrace of the novels (particularly *Sower*) stems from ecocritical readings of how the *Parable* series narratively demonstrates the interconnection of environment, economy, and social justice. Yet to suture these realms of social existence to one another in the speculative future, these narratives deploy tropes of barbarity, urban decay, and Hobbesian war depict environmental catastrophe and environmental collapse as a racial and racist project.

Resource Scarcity and the War of All Against All in *Parable of the Sower*

Lauren Olamina's narration focuses on resource scarcity and the connections she sees between society and environment far more often in *Sower* than in *Talents*. These connections are conveyed through Olamina's journal, and her epistolary constitutes the entirety of the narrative in the first book. Olamina's journal entry of what she sees on one evening of television is indicative of the world she sees herself living in, as well as some of the connections she sees holding it together:

> We saw the dead astronaut with all of red rocky Mars around her. We saw a dust-dry reservoir and three dead water peddlers with their dirty-blue armbands and their heads cut halfway off. And we saw whole blocks of boarded up buildings burning in Los Angeles. Of course, no one would waste water trying to put such

fires out. (*Sower* 18).

The serial images Olamina relates in staccato sentences juxtapose seemingly unrelated images that Lauren connects in her writings. The danger and romance of space colonization; the geophysical and social effects of climate change; the terrifying violence consuming Southern California because of the interlinked scarcity and economy of resources. This violence is focalized first through the grotesque murder of the water peddlers; they are not simply shot or stabbed but have been nearly decapitated. Olamina notes that because water has been privatized and is now expensive commodity, costing "several times more than gasoline," that "water peddlers" are routinely robbed and killed (*Sower* 18). But the news shows interpersonal violence at a grander scale in the form of the unmitigated burning of a whole city. Both forms of violence, serialized alongside the "dust-dry" reservoirs, links climate change to violence through the sensationalist spectacle of television. By interpreting all of these images as the part of a greater whole, Olamina formulates her own unique vision of social and environmental justice: a series of beliefs and practices she calls "Earthseed."

Olamina's interest in nature closely attends how the natural world can help or hinder her community's survival. She meticulously tracks the cost of water and gasoline from her father, and devours survivalist books on the uses of native plants and agriculture. In *Talents,* Olamina attempts to establish a community ("Acorn") that is as self-sufficient and sustainable as possible, to the point where there is no "trash pit," only a compost pit and a salvage pile. Her allegiance to zero waste and care to nonhuman ecosystems is an extension of the frugality and necessity she was born into; Olamina exhibits some hallmark traits of Ramanchandra Guha and Joan Martinez-Alier's "empty

belly environmentalism." Her valuation of the more-than-human world stems from this tight coupling between her daily existence and the bounty of local nature, and extends outward into the larger world from this understanding. While Lauren never refers to herself as an environmentalist, she spends considerable time within her journal entries, and later, in her Earthseed verses, to understandings of environmental change as it relates to the economy, and by extension, social justice. Indeed, Earthseed is drawn from Lauren's analysis of nature. She writes, "Consider: Whether you're a human being, an insect, a microbe, or a stone, this verse is true.

All that you touch,
You Change.
All that you Change,
Changes you.
The only lasting truth
Is Change.
God
Is Change. (*Sower* 79).

Lauren regularly deploys evolutionary and ecological metaphors to explain her understanding of social phenomena. The bedrock of her religion, Earthseed, is recognizing the changeability of the universe and life's interrelation and interdependence within a changing world. The appeal of Earthseed to Lauren is not that it reflects her sense of value, but that her beliefs seem rooted in the universality of a dynamic universe in which each thing is hitched to everything else. The ethics of Earthseed are an attempt at rooting morals and ethics in nature and the logics of species survival. Olamina's model

of survival, however, is necessarily confined to the kinds of life she experiences as a child in Robledo and those conveyed in the paucity of books, radio, and one semi-working television she has access to. Olamina applies a Darwinian imperative of evolution and migration to individuals as well as at the level of species and population, as she believes space colonization is the only hope for humanity's long-term survival.

Like many a teenager, she sees her life as confined in the "prison" of these walls, yet she also understands that the walls are the only thing protecting Robledo from "the sharks" that surround her island fortress. What more, while she yearns to leave Robledo, she sees both the community and the wider world as "a dying place" (*Sower* 78). Spinning out the Darwinian logic to its logical extreme, Lauren deems the world an "evolutionary cul de sac" for humanity, and believes that only travel to extrasolar worlds will "pry [humans] loose from the rotting past and maybe push them into saving themselves and building a future that makes sense" (*Sower* 79). Lauren doesn't see the "failing economies and tortured ecologies" as a collection of lifeboats (like Robledo) fighting off the drowning hordes, but rather sees the whole Earth as a sinking ship. Earthseed, as a collection of ideas, is a tool for building lifeboats that will jettison and save some from inundation. Evoking the idea of potential in seeds, the Destiny of Earthseed is "to take root among the stars" "far from the parent plant of earth" (*Sower* 80). Lauren's knowledge and love of seeds also comes from her life in a gated community: by necessity, the community of Robledo grows much of its own food within its walls. Seeds are valuable stock in such an existence, and Lauren caches them with other survival supplies in her "go pack."

Olamina's metaphor for civilization and long-term survival of the species is

constructed through metaphors of plants propagating themselves to far off places in successive generations of movement. Growing its own food from old, well-kept trees, the frugal and efficient people of Robledo sustainably utilize their local resources. They capture infrequent rain in barrels, harvest and eat diverse fruits of the trees using knowledge gained from a book "of California plants and the ways the Indians [sic] used them" (*Sower* 63). When she flees North Olamina brings, along with literal seeds from the Robledo gardens, these values of self-sufficiency and frugality as well as a pastoral impulse to avoid densely-populated cities and costly water.

These values and skills are a far cry from the people on the road who "carry neither food nor water nor adequate weapons [but] carry pills" (*Sower* 236*).* Yet while stable, largely self-sufficient communities such as Robledo, and later, Acorn, constitute one generation towards this line of evolutionary flight, Lauren describes the ecosystems and economies in which these communities exist as a "corpse" teeming with "maggots" and "the living dead." The abject poor, the drug addicts, and those without homes or jobs constitute, to young Lauren, a threat to her own survival and the larger survival of the species. She dismisses critics of NASA's Mars mission who cite the need to direct scarce resources to humanitarian aid (*Sower* 17). For Olamina, species survival easily trumps specific populations' well-being in the present.

While explicitly tying widespread poverty and need to "tortured ecologies," Olamina expresses her fear, aversion, and condescension of drug addicts and the poor through tropes of antiurbanism (as John Gambler argues) and colorblind racism. For example, when discussing Lauren Olamina's anti-urbanism and pastoral impulses, Gamber notes Lauren's penchant for deracializing the marauding class of nameless

characters who threaten *Earthseed*. The "pyro" drug-addict arsonists who destroy Robeldo are painted in carnivalesque dayglow colors, highlighting their unnaturalness by glowing in the firelight of their own destruction. Reveling in destruction for destruction's sake, the Pyro addicts constitute a fearsome and unpitiable force. The paint conceals the race of the marauders, and Gamber notes that it becomes impossible for readers to code these characters by phenotype (28). And while Lauren relates that the addicts are a part of a "burn the rich" movement that is largely populated by children of the rich, suggesting these assailants are likely white, the tropes by which these literally colored marauders destroy communities resemble racist and colonialist stereotypes of undifferentiated swarms of primitives rising up and besieging white luxury enclaves (Gamber 27, *Sower* 99).

The destructive power of the Pyros makes way for Olamina's migration north and the growth of Earthseed. Moving away from Robledo, the journey allows the text to highlight other forms of racial and gender oppression, and further allows Olamina to process and combat these specific injustices. In particular, Olamina is able to cobble together a formidable band of survivors of these structural and acute injustices that are able to fight off other bands of Pyros and protect each other. Yet these developments are set in motion and sustained through the ubiquitous promise of racialized criminal menace in the land.

Paired with the tropes of nonwhite insurrection is the ubiquity of fire itself within the novel. The fires that consume Los Angeles, Robledo, and San Francisco in *Sower* recall the ways in which whole blocks of Los Angeles were left to burn during the 1992 Los Angeles Uprising. The tropes of riots, of instigated but ultimately senseless violence,

reverberate throughout the novel. In her introduction to the 2017 graphic novel adaptation of Butler's *Kindred* (adapted by Damian Duffy and illustrated by John Jennings) Nnedi Okrafor relates a part of an email exchange she and Butler shared directly after the September 11th terrorist attacks. Butler tells Okrafor:

> "One of my favorite quotes— so sadly true— is from Steve Biko: 'The most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed.' There is also the sad reality that it takes very little to set off young men who want to feel powerful and important, but who are either unwilling or unable to find constructive outlets for their energies. Testosterone poisoning. And men have the nerve to complain about women's hormonal mood swings." (qted. in Okrafor, 2017).

Throughout the corpus of Butler's fiction violence is not an evil in and of itself, but a tool that can be used by oppressors or the oppressed that can be used to initiate radical—even emancipatory— change (Outterson 433). But the violence Lauren describes from the "monsters" who kill her brother Keith, and sack her town, and attack her, Zahra, and Harry on the road is not revolutionary violence but just rampant, senseless crime. Such violence pervades *Sower*, as different characters from Robeldo— including Lauren's brother and father— are caught up in the crossfire of gang violence or robberies. As with the Pyro addicts who sack Robledo, these assailants are never explicitly racially coded, yet the depiction of unchecked urban crime resonates with "War on Drugs" and conservative anticrime rhetoric of the 1980s and 1990s. It's not just climate change and resource scarcity that propel this criminal violence, but also the absence of a disciplined police or military force. Olamina is distrustful of police, but the narrative seems to imply that without a strong, militarized police force, violent chaos is the natural state to which urban populations will assume.

One of the biggest examples of environmental stress inciting interpersonal and

organized human violence comes in the form of a massive earthquake that hits San Francisco and the greater Bay Area as the Earthseed community approaches from the south on Route 101. Earthquakes are natural hazards that are endemic to California, which is one of the most seismically active states in the U.S. Unlike climate change and its attendant environmental hazards (including wildfires like the one Olamina outruns towards the end of *Sower*), the earthquakes of California are not caused by human activities. Yet within the landscape of *Sower* the earthquakes seem to resonate and exacerbate the social instability that dominates Olamina's surroundings. With much of California falling along the potent San Andreas Fault (in reality a series of faults), there are over 10,000 earthquakes in California each year. Yet only a small fraction of the quakes are felt by people, and fewer still cause any infrastructural damage. Nonetheless, Olamina reacts to the repeatedly massive, building-destroying earthquakes as a regular occurrence throughout *Parable*. What's more, Olamina interprets these earthquakes as instigations to not only violence but human savagery. Olamina describes one such earthquake in a journal passage "(from notes expanded Sunday, August 29)" that occurs on August 27th, 2027, beginning the passage with the declaration: "Earthquake today" (*Sower* 225). I mention that Lauren composes the description of the earthquake and the events that follow two days *after* the incidents because this act of "expanding" from one's notes implies that she had time to process and arrange the narration of this entry; it is not a slapdash listing of events made on the same day. It is for this reason that I don't interpret "Earthquake today" as a quick note one might make in a diary to causally distinguish one day from another (for instance, writing "rainy today" or "Arbor day") but rather a narrative choice to foreground the most significant thing to one's life about that

day. And in the narrative that follows Olamina attributes numerous deaths and the course of their migration to the earthquake of the 27th.

People experience uneven levels of vulnerability and resilience in the face of virtually all environmental hazards, including earthquakes. The nascent Earthseed community is caught on the road when the earthquake hits. Though Lauren reports that they and the other migrants are literally shaken and that some lose their footing, no one is seriously injured by the quake itself. Indeed, looking down the highway "everything looked the same—except for sudden patches of dust thrown up here and there in the brown hills above us" (225). Yet a short while later the group comes to a community of homeowners living along the highway that is devastated by the quake. Lauren reflects on her immediate premonition of conflict:

> One house down the hill from the road smoked from several of its windows. Already people from the highway had begun to drift down toward it. Trouble. The people who owned the house might manage to put out their fire and still be overwhelmed by scavengers" (*Sower* 227).

Although her own companions wish to join the "scavengers," Lauren admonishes her friends that the homeowners will not give up what they have without a fight, and that whatever they could take would not be worth getting shot (*Sower* 227-228). Lauren, analyzing this community from afar much as she did her own Robledo before and after its fall, concludes that "I don't think toughness will get them through this day." (*Sower* 228). As the group moves on they hear screams and gunfire; Lauren's prophesy of the town's collapse fulfilled.

Lauren does not blame her friends for joining the group that is "attacking the community en masse" on ethical grounds, but rather limits her scolding to the practicality of stealing enough to make the effort worthwhile. As she has referred to the massed

exodus of paupers and pilgrims in multiple occasions as "the living dead" and "the no longer human," the only ones capable of shouldering human blame for the event are those who live in the community. The sin is not attacking another human being or even hoarding resources from other human beings, but rather the inability of the homeowners to remain self-reliant and defend their property. Instead of questioning the actions of the raiders, Olamina privately condemns the action of the besieged community in her journal:

> Distant shouts and screams mixed with gunfire. Stupid place to put a naked little community. They should have hidden their homes away in the mountains where few strangers would ever see them. That was something for me to keep in mind. All the people of this community could do now was take a few of their tormentors with them. Tomorrow the survivors of this place would be on the road with scraps of their belongings on their backs. (228).

Lauren's analysis of the "naked" community's placement as "stupid" underscores her upbringing and forced education within a failed state (228). She intends to learn from this community's "mistake" of being in the path of migrants and earthquakes, but will come to replicate this error when building Acorn in Northern California. That she replicates the open vulnerability of this unnamed community is interesting given its superficial similarity to Robledo (small, laid low by flames and raiders) and the fact that she continues to muse over the death of the community. She thinks that "they should have set up overwhelming defenses— a line of explosive charges and incendiaries… only power that strong, that destructive, that sudden would scare attackers off" (228). This fantastical vision of a fortress community with literal firewalls discounts the obvious cost of such defenses, as well as the danger such defenses would pose to the community itself. Not to mention the fact that a strip of land mines in an earthquake prone area is a risky proposition in and of itself! She concludes "if the people… were without explosives, they should have grabbed their money and their kids and run like crazy the moment they saw

the horde coming" (228). The earthquake produces a seachange in those streaming north from Southern California, changing paupers and beggars into a "horde" of violent scavengers.

The naturalness, the obviousness, of the violence that follows the earthquake undergirds Lauren's frustration with the community she identifies with. The community *should* have prepared in light of the "stupid" decision to place a community in the path of so many migrants and in such a fire-prone area. Lauren's sense of forethought and preparation are based entirely on the notion that one small fire or earthquake will break the levees holding back a sea of human violence, and the battle erupting as the group passes vindicates Lauren's diagnosis within the narrative. Lauren is frustrated with the community because it could not anticipate and prepare for this outcome. Yet even Lauren struggles to understand the relationship between the earthquake, fire, and subsequent violence: "It's odd, but I don't think anyone on the road would have thought of attacking that community *en masse* like that if the earthquake—or something— had not started the fire" (228). Why does the earthquake trigger not only the idea but the swarming of so many? While she has described different scenarios from the point of view of the homeowners, she does not imagine the motivations or incitements of the migrants (wither herself being a migrant) beyond diagnosing them with "greed or need." Lauren doesn't express outrage at the scavengers, but seems to hold umbrage towards the earthquake; to her it's obvious an earthquake would further dehumanize the faceless hordes on the road.

While Lauren's perception of the nameless roadside community offers prolepsis for both how Lauren will act as architect to Acorn and also the way in which Acorn will be destroyed, this event would be minor in scope of the narrative save for the fact that it

sets off three major developments in the story. The first is the introduction of Taylor Franklin Bankole, the doctor who will father Lauren's daughter, Larkin, and be a part of Earthseed until he is killed by Christian Crusaders in Acorn. The second development is yet another precipitous rise in danger and violence for the group in its odyssey. While Lauren's assessment of the community and the pillaging horde is made from the position of safety in the moments I have been discussing, in mere pages the group comes under attack and Lauren kills a man, her hyper empathy incapacitating her early in the fight. Finally, this earthquake's amplified effects— both geophysical and its violent aftermaths— cause the party to change course away from the coast and into California's interior to avoid the mayhem of San Francisco. Following the earthquake, the Bay Area is thrown into chaos where "the quake hit hard" and "scavengers, predators, cops, and private armies of security guards seem bent on destroying what's left." The fate of the Bay Area connotes the scalability of Lauren's naturalizing of earthquakes triggering widespread violence.

Such tropes are nothing new to the strands of Neo-Malthusian "green hate" coursing through environmentalism in the American West. Garrett Hardin's now notorious "Living on a Lifeboat" appeared in the journal *Bioscience* in October of 1974. In the short article, Hardin argues against the popular metaphor of "Spaceship Earth" and advances his argument that instead of a spaceship people should think of the world as a collection of lifeboats floating in a sea of ecological turmoil. It doesn't make sense to think of independent nation states as belonging on the same spaceship, since nations are not all unified crewmembers under the command of a captain (as they would be in any

self-respecting spaceship[40]). With rampant population growth, and dwindling resources, there are more people than can fit in the "lifeboats" of the rich (developed) nations. The poor nations, having grown their populations beyond the carrying capacity of their land, are at fault for this problem. While it is understandable to want to help one's fellow human, Hardin argues, if one were to allow the poor into the lifeboat of the rich, the boat would surely swamp and sink. If one feels guilty about this, Hardin sneers, then one should get out their boat and give someone else her place. The policy payoff of this metaphor-heavy argument is that the United States, a rich country that is nonetheless in a precarious place (a lifeboat is hardly a pleasure yacht, after all), should strictly limit immigration into the country, and should cease giving aid to "underdeveloped" countries that are just getting addicted to aid and using it to raise the tide of highly-procreative poor that threaten the viable nations and cultures. Hardin particularly singles out migrant agricultural labor in the U.S. as an example of pernicious immigration destabilizing regions ecosystems and economies. Implicit in his arguments is the prospect of the poor forcibly entering the lifeboat, swamping it and drowning everyone. Hardin's argument is hardly a flash in the American environmentalist pan; in the late 1990s a group of fiercely anti-immigrant, anti-population growth members tried to take control of the board of the Sierra Club, based in California, forwarding many of the same arguments. And as I discussed in Chapter III, federal and California's state government initiated and vastly expanded anti-immigrant border militarization efforts through Operation Gatekeeper

[40] One can't help but wonder if Hardin would have been so hard on the Spaceship Earth metaphor if he had more widely sampled science fiction depictions of interstellar spacecraft. The world may not have a Captain Kirk, but perhaps he would find Octavia Butler's behemoth, decentralized organic spacecrafts in her *Xenogenesis* triology on the late 1980s and 90s more apropos.

throughout the 1990s when Butler was writing the *Parable* series from her home in Los Angeles. Each of these movements in American environmentalism are bound up in racial projects that associate people of color and immigrants with filth and environmental degradation while defining white American citizenry with environmental stewardship and the rightful control of resources (even if that "rightful" control is simply the product of a regrettable, but inevitable Social Darwinian logic).

Olamina, while enacting antiracist actions and reflecting on the dog-whistle racism of company towns, carries forward these ideas. This is consequential because Olamina's views of the world are generally offered ex cathedra in much of *Sower* and tend to be validated by events in the novel. Yet her Social Darwinian views are challenged and change at various moments in the text; one particularly striking moment comes after the Earthseed group leaves the coast and travels past Sacramento. Leading the group, Olamina rounds a bend in a dried out creek bed and encounters three young teenagers "the age of [her] brothers, twelve, thirteen, maybe fourteen years old" (271). One of the children, a girl, is "so huge it was obvious she would be giving birth any day," and along with the two other boys, is roasting a human leg over a meager fire. After the pregnant girl "pull[s] a sliver of charred flesh from the thigh and stuff[s] it into her mouth" Olamina silently signals for the group to turn around and flee. The image is striking and haunting, but if the children are taken as anything more than horror-movie symbols of a depraved and collapsing society, the ethics of Olamina abandoning them to their "cannibal feast" seems equally disquieting. It's not as if Olamina has eschewed helping others—she trips up thieves robbing Travis and Natividad at the water station early in her travels. She helps an old man get up after the earthquake, and saves Allie and

Jill from the rubble of the same quake. She takes on several others, including her future husband, after deciding they can strengthen the group, despite their individual weaknesses. Some are hyperempath sharers, like Olamina, and everyone save Bankole comes to the group poorer and more ill-equipped than Olamina, Zahra, and Harry began their flight north. The children, pregnant, alone, and desperate to the point of cannibalism, however, are abandoned.

After leaving the children behind Olamina reflects:

> The country we walked through was even beautiful in some places—green trees and rolling hills; golden dried grasses and tiny communities; farms, many overgrown and abandoned, and abandoned houses. Nice country, and compared to Southern California, rich country. More water, more food, more room…. So why were the people eating one another?
> (*Sower* 272).

Olamina finds it difficult to imagine inhumanity coinciding with lands of relative plenty, and yet makes no prolonged effort to identify with the children. The most charitable reading of her actions, given her description of the "cannibal feast," is to think that she found the children to be threatening. Yet what danger could three tweens—one very pregnant—pose to an armed group of eight adults? I see her conduct as fitting into her Social Darwinian approach to Earthseed and its destiny to "take root among the stars." Olamina is not a eugenicist, but she is selective of the ideas that will move the species and group forward. This moment constitutes the harshest conduct of the band during their march north. Even as Olamina is quick to measure the children against her own deceased siblings, she feels no responsibility for helping those who would descend to cannibalism. Her ability to look past the children—either by deeming them a threat or by considering them inhuman—underscores how dimly Olamina views the migratory and destitute populations she encounters throughout the novel. She sees value in humanity, and in the

lives of those wretched of the earth who migrate north, at least so long as those people can accept and contribute to the mission of Earthseed. Cannibal children, it would seem, do not make the grade.

In *Talents*, however, the largely white Christian fundamentalist Crusaders are more fully fleshed out as human beings who participate in *actual* historical modes of domination. Perhaps surprisingly, Lauren Olamina appears to marshall greater empathy towards her tormenters in *Talents* than in *Sower*. As a "hyperempath," Lauren is subjected to the feelings of pain and pleasure of those she looks at. In *Sower*, Olamina feels "the ghost ache of hunger" and other forms of gnawing pain when she looks upon the urban and ex-urban poor. The pain she inflicts in battle compels Lauren to kill swiftly so that she does not have to experience the pain she inflicts any longer than necessary. In *Sower*, then, her hyperempthy contributes to her antiurbanism and exoticizing of the poor. Yet in *Talents* she is given an even more horrific form of empathic connection with those around her. Enslaved by the Christian Crusaders for over a year, Lauren experiences what she calls the "twisted, schizoid ugliness" of experiencing her own "pain and humiliation" of being raped but also the "wild, intense pleasure of [her] rapist" (*Talents* 234). She feels the electronic "lashings" that are administered by the slavers via electronic collars to herself and her friends, but also the perverse pleasure the slavers feel in the act. Suffering more than others by virtue of her hyper empathy, and fully attentive to the hypocrisy of Christian zealots who rape and torture, Olamina "hate[s] to admit it, but some of them are, in a strange way, decent, ordinary men" (*Talents* 233). She clarifies, "I mean that they believe in what they are doing. They're not all sadists and psychopaths. Some of them seem truly to feel that collecting minor criminals in places

like Camp Christian is right and necessary for the good of the country" (*Talents* 233). Olamina empathizes more with the Crusaders than with the painted pyromaniacs or drug addicted highwaymen in *Sower*. Lauren knows the accepted urban legend of Pyro making fire "better than sex" but does not feel this orgiastic pleasure whenever she encounters these miscreants in her travels. In *Sower* Lauren's tormentors are to her "the living dead," "animals," and anything but human, despite the fact that they stand in for the human consequences of "failing economies and tortured ecologies," while in *Talents* Lauren faces all too human and all too relatable forms of human evil present at the time of the book's publication. Lauren's begrudging empathy towards the Christian Crusaders lends a more complex image of human evil; one more directly informed by legacies of American chattel slavery, the terrorism of the Ku Klux Klan, and Nazi concentration camps than *Sower*'s Hobbesian savagery amidst of ecological collapse.

The discrepancy between Olamina's description of the "living dead" in *Sower* and the Christian Crusaders in *Talents* underscores a difficulty environmentalist science fiction and American environmentalism more broadly faces when discussing the security ramifications of environmental degradation. While it is not legal for vigilantes to round up "minor criminals" and "heathens" for indefinite detention, rape, and torture in the U.S., both *Parable of the Sower* and *Parable of the Talents* were published during the sharpest increase incarcerations in U.S. history— particularly driven by the imprisonment of nonviolent drug related offenses ("Fact Sheet: Trends in U.S. Corrections"). Asha (Lauren's daughter who is kidnapped by the Christian Crusaders and narrates large portions of *Talents*) explains that what happened to her mother in 2034 "was illegal in almost every way," however, that "[v]agrancy laws were much expanded, and vagrant

adults with children could lose custody of children" (*Talents* 242). The landscape of California need not be made into a "Third World topoi of utopian possibilities" that *Sower* depicts —the US already entails dystopia and human rights atrocities as they are represented in *Talents*. Asha tells her readers that the events of *Sower* took place in a time of maximal chaos, called "the Pox," short for Apocalypse. The wordplay of "Pox" connotes a pandemic sickness, suggesting further that the actions of humans during the pox are a kind of passing madness—a collective infection that yielded barbarism and madness[41]. The events of *Sower*, the animalistic violence and the war of all against all, is replaced in *Talents* with the more calculated and rationalized violence of religious fanaticism and economic exploitation. Human slavers and sex traffickers, backed by an authoritarian, patriarchal, fundamentalist state, are the clear and present dangers—not the poor gone wild.

Talents' extended treatment of neoslavery and religious fanaticism articulate more pointed social critiques than the blanket evocation of barbarism *Sower* exhibits throughout its narrative. Inversely, Butler's overt critique of environmental exploitation in *Sower* doesn't sustain itself in *Talents*. Indeed, if absolute resource scarcity and climate change are central shapers of the Californian landscape in *Sower*, mentions of the environmental conditions are exceedingly rare in *Talents.* There are no earthquakes. There is no mention of hurricanes and tornados in the Midwest and South. There are no apocalyptic fires chasing characters on the road, nor mention of "dust-dry" reservoirs. These, apparently, were more prevalent during "the Pox." Lauren still focuses on environmental conditions, but confines her own writings on the environment to the

[41] Sickness and madness are tightly linked in Western literature.

sustainable initiatives Earthseed employ in Acorn.

Nature, and specifically the environmental catastrophe of a flood, allows Olamina to successfully rebel and escape Camp Christian[42]. The flood is caused by a tremendous storm: Olamina writes later in her journal: "it went on all night, tearing the world apart outside" (*Talents* 255). The storm triggers a landslide that destroys the cabin housing the central control unit of the slavers' electronic collars. This enables a tactical insurrection led by Olamina to kill the slavers and free the collared. Without the central control unit, the overseers electronic whips are powerless against Olamina's prepared, stealthy, and efficient fighters. While it's Olamina's disciplined preparation for any chance of escape that helps her kill all of the remaining Christian Crusaders, it's the Crusaders' own neglect of environmental stewardship and militancy against every vestige of Earthseed practice within the former Acorn that affords Olamina her chance. She explains:

> The hill where our cemetery once was with all its new and old trees, that hill has slumped down into our valley. Our teachers had made us cut down the older trees for firewood and lumber and God. I never found out how they came to believe we prayed to trees, but they went on believing it. We begged them to let the hill alone, told them it was our cemetery, and they lashed us. Because they forced us to do this, the hillside has broken away and come rumbling down to us. It has buried a [an armored tank-like vehicle] and three cabins, including the cabin that

[42] This flood echoes the Although Olamina does not dwell on environmental damage in *Talents*, environmental degradation influences the narrative through specific characters' neglect of sustainable practices. It is Christian Crusaders' *lack* of attention to environmental issues that allows Lauren and her friends to overthrow their tormenters and escape from their enslavement. In *Sower* an apocalyptic wild fire drives Earthseed north; a final challenge the group faces before arriving at the land they'll make into Acorn. The fire originates from a group of fire-hungry Pyro addicts who are mourning the loss of several of their comrades—killed in an attack on the Earthseed group (*Sower* 313). The group is forced to cover their faces with damp cloths and force march the entire night to outrun the roaring fire that eventually outstrips their progress on both sides on Interstate-5. As Olamina writes after fleeing Robledo in a verse:

> In order to rise from the ashes
> A phoenix
> Must first
> Burn. (*Sower ???*).

Emerging from the weaponized fire tired but largely unharmed, Earthseed's community takes on a Christlike role as he who has battled the devil and been reborn to the world. . Unlike the fire, which largely serves as an overdetermined symbol of rebirth and apocalyptic revelation at the end of *Sower*, *Talents*' apocalyptic, revelatory storm is predicated on the ecological ignorance of the Christian Crusaders.

Bankole and I had built… (*Talents* 253-254).

The malice the Christian Crusaders inflict on the nonhuman world is returned onto them. Forcing the members of Acorn to destroy their living cemetery is an act of psychological torture, and the Crusaders' drive to humiliate and break down the people of Acorn blinds them to the practical value of the forested slopes. Their arrogant anthropocentrism and deliberate assault on the nonhuman world brings a biblical wrath down on the Crusaders' heads. The flood carries with it allusions to Christian eschatology. The dead of the cemetery literally rise up in the Crusaders' final moment of righteous judgment. The collared and enslaved line up to have their collars cut by Olamina, the religious leader (a Shaper) of Earthseed.

Not only does environmental change directly open emancipatory possibilities at the level of the microcosm in *Talents*, but climate change blunts the senseless violence of President Jarrett's "Al-Can War." Even though the very Trumpian[43] president goes to war to prevent Alaska's succession from the union, his ability to wage war is compromised by the new economic and political geographies created by climate change. Alaska allies with Canada when the U.S. declares war. Although the war destroys several iconic U.S. cities, including Seattle, Jarrett can't continue the fight because food prices skyrocket and the populace turns against him and his war. "Years of climate change and chaos" has turned Canada into the breadbasket of North America (*Talents* 243). Without a steady supply of cereals, the U.S. is unable to continue the war effort and makes peace with Canada, allowing Alaska to secede. This is a far cry from *Sower*, where earthquakes, fires, and

[43] Jarrett exploits American's fears and sense of nostalgia for past glories to gain the presidency. He partners with a coalition of white nationalists and Christian evangelicals. His iconic campaign slogan is "Make America Great Again" (*Talents* 12).

water stations alike both spark and exacerbate violent conflicts. In *Sower* the violence of the poor—by gun, by fire, by knife—rises like the tides and temperature with anthropogenic climate change. Likewise, as the company towns of Olivar and the private armies in San Francisco shows, industrial-scale violence of the rich also increases[44]. In *Talents*, however, the same environmental catastrophes work against sustained interpersonal violence. As the landslide and curbing of the Al-Can war suggest, environmental factors can limit large-scale violence or even render assistance towards liberatory ends.

Olamina and Asha do not tell readers about the environmental conditions of the United States or indeed the rest of the world at the end of *Talents.* At the end of *Sower*, however, Olamina finds temporary refuge on Bankole's property, but the book ends with Bankole cautioning Olamina that "as bad as things are, we haven't even hit bottom yet" (*Sower* 328). Stating "[s]tarvation, disease, drug damage, and mob rule have only begun," Bankole correctly prophesizes that Earthseed is not yet the ascendant phoenix rising from the ashes. It is only just begun to burn. This last bit of dialogue that Olamina records in her journal ends *Sower* by reminding her readers of the constitutive forces that have shaped her life and journey to Acorn. Environmental change—marked by resource scarcity and a changing climate—influences each of the harbingers of doom that Bankole points out before allowing himself to be swayed by the energy and strength of Olamina's relatively optimistic perspective about the long-term viability of Acorn. While this scene can be read as a moment of relentless optimism and qualified hope in the face of large-scale crises, Olamina's optimism rings tragic when considered alongside violence that

[44] Again, I am indebted to Solnit's simple and insightful taxonomy of "violence from below" and "violence from above" dichotomy ("Call Climate Change…" 2015).

overtakes Acorn in *Talents*.

At the end of *Talents* there is no mention of environmental change or the long term problems affecting society at the end of the 21st century. Instead, the book ends with a final entry in Olamina's journals. The entry begins and ends with the terse statement, "I know what I've done" (*Talents* 405, 407). What she's done, in her words, is to "help [humans] give themselves the heavens" and "helped [humans] to the next stage of growth" (*Talents* 405). Instead of worrying about the sustainability of the Earth's ecosystems or social justice, Olamina reflects on her ability to "give our species its only chance at immortality" by sending *Christopher Columbus*, the first Earthseed space shuttle, onto its first colonizing mission (*Talents* 406). Olamina realizes she is close to death, and has planned to send her ashes along in a shuttle to fertilize the crops on some new planet. She does not seek to commit herself to the Earth, which is, in her Darwinian analysis, so much like the "corpse" of Los Angeles and the "rotting past" she hoped Earthseed would rip people away from.

Given that environmental disruption played such a critical role in the chaos of "the Pox," it is frustrating that Asha or Olamina don't give readers a sense of what the environment looks like in 2090, especially given the ubiquity of environmental description throughout the narrative of *Sower*. If, as so many critics have written, *Parable of the Sower* points to the interrelation of economy and ecology, or social and environmental justice, then how are readers to interpret the gaps at the end of *Talents* (indeed, throughout the 400 pages of *Talents*)? Given that Earthseed, through its vast web of well-funded universities, is able to train, develop, and launch a fleet of star colonists, and that Olamina would spend her latter days flying hither and yon giving lectures, it

would seem that the Pox was truly a blip in an otherwise rich 21st century. Climate change has altered the geopolitical and regional contexts, but not derailed globalization or the nation-state, which is remarkable, given how the U.S. appeared on the verge of total social collapse at the end of *Sower*.

It is petty to critique a story for something it is not about. If the text of *Talents* doesn't make any claims as to the linkages between social and environmental justice, or between the relationships between resource scarcity, capital accumulation, war, and peace, then the book is like most other novels written in the 1990s or today. But if one returns to the idea that both *Parable* books function as parables, and together as a diptych, then the lack of environmental representation in the latter half of *Talents* appears a significant aporia in an otherwise richly-rendered fictional universe. Perhaps the lack of representations suggests questioning the tightly-linked issues of resource scarcity, climate change, and violence that were so graphically represented in *Sower*. Considering the unmitigated triumph of Olamina's Earthseed in 2090, are readers to discount the graphic violence and dramatic environmental catastrophes that populate the first book? Are such problems simply beneath relevance given her success? There is no certain answer, and this ambiguity is perhaps most productive for those readers, scholars, teachers, and students who want to read lessons from the books; to see *Parable of the Sower* and *Parable of the Talents* as conveying lessons for the individual or the collective in the 21st century. The act of critical questioning and reading are, after all, foundational to the praxis of Earthseed.

Conclusion: Climate Futures

The ecologically ambiguous conclusion of *Talents* has the effect of decoupling the

relation between environment and political violence that the two novels establish prior to the conclusion. I read this inconsistency as a "failure of imagination" that Zižek claims hampers meaningful positive action in an era of climate change. There is no talk of earthquakes and other major environmental catastrophes in *Talents*. Yet for most of the novels it appears that seismic instability, climactic instability, and social instability align in the two novels, a kind of natural sympathetic fallacy. This points to the ultimate fallacy under guarding much of the discourse within these novels and without regarding political and interpersonal violence and environmental degradation. While it is laudable that public discourse now acknowledges *some* relation between environmental conditions and peace, the overdetermined textual effect of aligning social and environmental instability within the novels, especially those heralding themselves as "parables," makes it easy to read such sympathy between nature and human actions as direct causal influences simplifies the tangled web of social and environmental forces that produce, sustain, or obviate both interpersonal and intergroup violence. Lost in this simplification are the forces that Octavia Butler so deftly explores throughout the corpus of her work: patriarchy, racism, neoliberalism, and imperialism. These forces which theorists from Fanon to Mignolo have diagnosed as primary causal agents in contemporary violence organize violence have more explanatory power, ultimately, that environmental changes such as anthropogenic global warming or earthquakes or resource scarcity.

Leviathan was written before modern biological and cultural conceptions of racism and race were formulated (Fredrickson). Hobbes' theory of the social contract arising from the state of nature ("war of all against all") was itself written in a time of protracted civil war. It did carry racial implications, but nonetheless posited a grim view of

individual humans separated by, as Lauren Olamina might put it, "need and greed." Hobbes derives the need and legitimacy of coercive rule under the auspices of a sovereign power from the ecology of human and nonhuman nature—our violent predispositions amidst a land a scarcity. This philosophy, carried into the apocalyptic and dystopian fiction of the late 20th and early 21st century carries forward Hobbes' view of an atomized, needy and greedy human nature set amidst the ruin of civilization. If the plenty of industrial capitalism will no longer produce full-bellied environmentalists willing to curb the worst of capital's exploitation of the land, then the empty bellied Global North will turn into a hideous, barbarous caricature of the Global South's failed states (Miller 204). These modern reboots of *Leviathan* carry forward a naturalized sympathy between human development and environmental health; antagonistic but interdependent. But in depicting the collapse of this antagonistic relationship speculative fiction in the U.S. sustains racialized conceptions of citizenry and worth.

Intertwining ecological and civilizational collapse narratives with racist depictions of human savagery in the war of all against all at the end of the world works to justify the warlike oppression of some against some in the present. Environmental decline signals not only the reduction of so-called "ecosystem services" like flood control, food, or water filtration, but also a direct attack on the angels of our better nature, authorizing people's acts of barbarism. In such a world the might and order of sovereign power is not only necessary, but desirable for those lucky enough to be offered exclusive security amidst the dispossession and endangerment of all.

CHATER V

MONSTROUS FIGURES OF THE ANTHROPOCENE: CLIMATE MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES AS THE HUMAN FACE OF EMERGENT RISK IN CLIMATE DISCOURSE

> "Waves of climate refugees. Dozens of failed states. All-out war. From one of the world's great geopolitical analysts comes a terrifying glimpse of the strategic realities of the near future."
>
> —Amazon.com advertisement for *Climate Wars: The Fight for Survival as the World Overheats* by Gwynne Dyer
>
> "Disenfranchised felon, enemy combatant, and illegal immigrant, each enact a violent and exclusive social relation through a discursive and institutional process of criminalization without the requirement of a racial prerequisite. This raises the question whether all social relationships constituted through forms of extreme state violence should be considered 'racial' or 'racist'— which is to say, it broaches the central and unresolved question of how we can know someone is 'racial' or 'racist' and why we might want to retain 'race' as a category of analysis even when its epistemological grounds are shaky and its ontological basis largely refuted."
>
> —Nikhil Singh, "Racial Formation in an Age of Permanent War"
>
> "We have repaid these cannibals war for war, crime for crime, outrage for outrage. Yes, I have saved my country, I have avenged America!"
>
> —Jean-Jacques Dessalines, after ordering the murder of over 2,000 French nationals at the founding of Haiti as a free and independent nation

Introduction: Climate Migrant as Contested Construct

This chapter claims the construct of the climate migrant, and its closely related figure the climate refugee, as paradigmatic figures in climate change discourse, particularly the aspects of this discourse where issues of national security and apocalyptic change are articulated. To do this, I set out to perform two tasks: first, I describe how recent scholarship has identified different roles the climate migrant plays in different "families" of climate discourse, including those Giovanni Bettini describes as "scientific,

capitalist, humanitarian," and "radical" (Bettini 64). I contextualize these diverse roles within broader conceptions of racial formation through carceralized and militarized institutions managing emergent and insurgent risks. I do so to show how attending to the tropes and narratives that adhere to the figures of climate migrants can reveal why climate migrants play such prominent roles across discursive communities (Baldwin "Securitizing 'climate refugees'" 2012). Andrew Baldwin writes:

> The climate change migrant is said to be a destabilizing subject bearing down on the present from the future. This in turn demands of us, the inhabitants of a particular present, a war-like posture… Yet this is a deeply troubling form of war because the enemy… has committed no wrongs. (Baldwin "Orientalizing Environmental…" 637).

Baldwin describes an enemy yet to come, one who has yet done no wrong, who does not hold enmity against those in the "warlike posture" militating against them. And yet this enemy is already being constructed through orientalist and racist tropes, and made into a monstrous dehumanized foe. I argue that the logics of counterinsurgency and anticipatory action undergird the ways in which the construct of climate migrant embodies both threat and victim, provoking both menace and a humanitarian ethical demand from the future onto the citizenry of the Global North. I read Michael Nash's 2009 documentary, *Climate Refugees*, alongside Junot Díaz's "Monstro" (2011) to show how the "human face" of climate change is rendered a monstrous, revolutionary other to be combatted through U.S. Counterinsurgency. Díaz's short story, "Monstro" is as an exemplar text depicting the climate refugee as epitome and paragon of emergent global risk, and as an assertion of the folly of the ecological security state's attempt to guarantee security while fomenting insecurity (Marzec 9). Finally, and conversely, I juxtapose how people in the US climate justice movement have latched onto the identity of "climate

migrant" as a political identity. This new political identity is exemplified in the People's Climate March of 2014, where self-identified climate migrants claimed privileged epistemological and political subjectivity within climate discourse by marching at the frontlines of mass demonstration. Locating climate migrants at the "frontlines" of climate change and the "forefront of [social and political] change" inverts the ways these migrants are militantly excluded from participation and representation in climate discourse.

The construct of the forced climate migrant, or the closely-affiliated notion of the climate refugee, is a paradigmatic and prominent figure within climate change discourses. Such a claim requires a few terminological caveats in the service of clarity and concision before I proceed to describe what paradigms climate migrants instantiate. Strictly speaking, there are no climate refugees. A refugee is someone with or seeking a legal protection governed by the 1951 Geneva Convention. Under the UN's definition, a refugee is "someone who has been forced to flee his or her country because of persecution, war, or violence" ("What is a Refugee?"). Someone who flees their country of origin due to changing climate conditions in that country (or less commented on, conditions within the country being migrated to) are not currently recognized as refugees. As the one report of the UN Secretary General on the security implications of climate change unequivocally states: "Although terms such as "environmental refugee" or "climate change refugee" are commonly used, they have no legal basis" (UN Secretary General 2009). Beyond legalistic ambiguity, there is wide uncertainty within academic literature regarding the actual number of climate migrants, and even the ontology of climate migrants and refugees. The IPCC Fourth Assessment Report estimates anywhere

between 50 and 350 million people may be displaced by climate change in 2050, while Richard Black, an analyst for the UNHCR, published a report on the 51st anniversary of the 1951 Geneva Convention lambasting the focus of policymakers on environmental refugees as a category of migrants in need of additional legal protections. Regarding the existence of climate migrants, Black writes, "despite the breadth of examples provided in the literature, the strength of the academic case put forward is often depressingly weak" (2). There are so many complex forces that cause people to move, it is perhaps too difficult or too reductive to single out environmental change as the dominant cause of mass migrations. Black's analysis, however, is confined to studies of more contemporary cases of mass migrations; Takeyyuki Tsuda and Brenda Baker synthesize numerous studies in archeology and bioarcheology to argue that environmental disruptions have powered human migration for millennia, and that contemporary migrations are also motivated or hindered by environmental change, a position endorsed by the UN Secretary General (297-298, 2009). Andrew Baldwin separates the academic literature of climate migrants into the "maximalists" and the "minimalists," two camps that take generally opposing positions on the phenomenon of climate migration. In general, the maximalists see climate change or other environmental changes as major contributors or direct catalysts of international migration and the creation of internally displaced peoples (IDPs), while the minimalists see climate change as a relatively minor contributor within a larger collection of "push" and "pull" factors governing migration in and between nation states (Baldwin "Securitizing climate migration…" 121-122). Like Black and Baldwin, I place myself in the minimalist camp, yet nonetheless argue that climate migrants *as constructs, as figures* in climate narratives, carry forward major weight not

only in UN refugee policy circles, but also in climate discourse and security discourse more broadly.[45]

Climate change is a cognitively difficult issue to comprehend, as it works across various spatial scales— from the microbial and chemical to the global— and temporal dimensions— from past emissions and land use to thousands of years from the present, and perhaps one geological epoch to another. It entails a politicization of acts as banal as turning on a lightbulb, and "seems a happening whose trauma is to enact or entail the deconstruction of multiple frames of reference in multiple fields and modes of thought at the same time" (Clark 132). Its human causes are relatively simple (enhancing the greenhouse effect through emissions of greenhouse gases and the destruction of carbon sinks), but distributed across space and time as to be relatively imperceptible to the biological and ideological eye, resisting easy representation (Clark 131, Markowitz and Shariff 244). As with any wicked problem, climate change must be focalized through narrative. Indeed, the concept of climate is inherently a narrative that links past weather events to future weather expectations. In these narratives certain stories and images, the tropes that constitute them, circulate between people in and out of climate research and policymaking. Since climate change affects and implicates so many different parts of

[45] To step back from the issue at hand, which is the discursive construction of the climate migrant and refugee, we may reconsider the philosophical distinction between displaced people pushed by political or religious persecution compared to climate change. If the spirit of the 1951 Convention is to give asylum to the persecuted, it would seem those displaced through "natural" disasters are not persecuted by anyone, per se. But, to follow Bruno Latour's injunction that phenomena like climate change are geophysical processes that are nonetheless "too social and too narrated to be truly natural" then we may reconsider the agencies that may well persecute the climate IDP or international migrant (6). If someone's farm was burned to the ground by a political regime, that person would have grounds to seek asylum. If the emissions of extractivist economies produce such effect, and those producing emissions know the effects of that economic activity, then may we not say this is a kind of calculated persecution, or at least callous indifference to the destructive byproducts of fossil-fuel driven economic growth and militarism?

society, from economics to politics to public health to conservation, there are a large number of different discussions about climate change being held across different discourse communities around the world. Hence, not all climate narratives are created equal nor are all climate narratives given voice in all communities; people construct narratives around climate change that fit with pre-existing ideologies and world-views (G. Marshall 18).

The varied ways in which the climate migrant is figured across different areas of climate discourse evince how the social construction of climate migrants functions as a site of both the "rearticulation of pre-existing racial ideology" and radical challenges to those pre-existing racist and white-nationalist ideologies in the 21st century (Omi and Winant 89). In one prominent racial project climate migrants are configured as dehumanized savages, in the words of Bettini "barbarians at the gate" of the Global North, a 21st century "form of racial Other" (Baldwin "Racialisation and the figure" 1474). Yet it is insufficient to read the climate migrant as an exotic "barbarian at the gate" of Western security and civilization, or as an Other in need of white salvation. It is also important to read *why* the climate migrant, figured in these (and other) ways, has captured such prominent space within climate change discourse across different political perspectives.

Thus, the specific narrative tropes, the meaning-dense turns of phrase and imagery that course through climate discourse, reflect how understandings of climate change are shaped by different, durable discourses and suggest how these discourses are rearticulated through climate change. Take, for example, the polar bear, stranded on an ice flow adrift somewhere in the Arctic Sea. The polar bear remains a powerful icon of

the effects of climate change within the US climate movement. Whenever "global warming" and "climate change" have ticked upwards as phrases searched in Google search engines since 2004 (when Google Trends premiered its open source big data tool) so too has the public interest in polar bears risen. And yet the ubiquitous polar bear shares the stage with an ever-growing panoply of climate change signifiers, including the "human faces of climate change" like the climate refugee.[46] What worldviews then does the climate migrant, someone forced to relocate within or outside of their country of origin, reflect? Why is the forced climate migrant so prevalent within and across climate discourses?

To answer this question, I'll begin by touching on some major discussions defining the discursive terrain of climate security discourse, the land through which the climate migrant most frequently treads. The climate migrant is progeny of both traditions concerning environmental migrants, and migrants and refugees more generally. This

[46] The polar bear itself is often portrayed as a climate migrant, and it is this story of displacement and endangerment that mainstream Global North environmental organizations often use to portray both the polar bear and climate migrants. And indeed, both *Ursus marinus* and *Homo sapiens* do migrate in response to changing environmental conditions, among other push and pull factors. But the stories of both bear and human not only overlap but also elide in many environmentalist representations of both through an adaptive repackaging of older "noble savage" and "ecological Indian" tropes long common in US environmentalist discourse. This elision casts the migrating bears as particularly poignant and endearing charismatic megafauna, endowed with grace and nobility even as they appear emaciated and laid low by forces beyond their ken and control. Similarly, climate migrants, particularly indigenous peoples from around the globe, are depicted as exotic endangered species, likewise noble, likewise innocent of the political and economic sins causing climate change, but nonetheless imperiled by displacement. As the idea of the ecological Indian always implies, the admirable innocence, morality, wisdom and traditional ecological knowledge of these peoples is not only under threat but already foredoomed. The pathos and poignancy of both bear and (indigenous) climate refugee are bound up in this noble savage logic that they are not only endangered but will inevitably become extinct. Symbolically, both constitute a sacrifice; the offering up of humanity's and progress' collective but necessary sins, and a form of permission to mourn the loss of Others while continuing to pursue the path that eliminated the ecological Indian and polar bear alike.

figure is an admixture of criminality, terrorism, hunger, destitution, and suffering. What's more, like the Malthusian predictions of the growth of migrants in the face of environmental decline, the figure of the climate migrant is always future-oriented, looking back and bearing down on the present *because they do not yet exist*. Andrew Baldwin describes the climate migrant as a "destabilizing figure bearing down on the present." In considering the climate migrant as a discursive construct one must, to use Omi and Winant's apt phrase, be "compelled to think racially, to use the racial categories and meaning systems into which we have been socialized" to conduct anti-racist analyses and interventions into racist discourses (159). This is to say, I view the social construction and representation of climate migrants and climate refugees is a racial project that offers "*simultaneously an interpretation, representation, or explanation of racial dynamics, and an effort to reorganize and redistribute resources along particular racial lines*" (Omi and Winant 56). In Chapter IV I argued that even progressive science fiction narratives deploy colorblind racist tropes when rendering the figure of the climate migrant, using the racial formation of climate migrant as a kind of corollary glue to stick rising temperatures to rising conflict. In this chapter I extend this basic argument to, on the one hand, another speculative fiction text that explicitly foregrounds racial formations in a menacing portrayal of climate migrants as a decolonizing force unleashed upon an imperialist neoliberal world order. On the other hand, I examine other modes of climate security discourse that render the figure of the climate migrant as a destabilizing force, as a threat to be confronted or a humanitarian crisis to be ameliorated and managed. Nikhil Singh argues that in the US context, "concrete institutionalizations of militarized-carceral regimes" define the "principal background condition to contemporary theorization of

race." The figure of the climate migrant and increased international migration in the 21st century is central to anxieties of both more liberal and conservative movements vis a vis climate change, and this broad resonance across "discursive families" of climate change discussions indicate why a thorough study of this figure is important to understanding climate discourse, racial projects post 9/11 and Hurricane Katrina, and the discursive links between war and environmental change.

Climate Refugees: The Human Face of Climate Change, a 2010 Documentary directed by Michael Nash, is emblematic of the paradoxical representation of the climate migrant in contemporary security discourse. Numerous scholars have taken up how the climate migrant is portrayed as a menacing threat to economic and cultural stability, particularly in the Global North (see Bettini 2012, Baldwin 2012, 2013, 2014, Trombetta 2012, Jakobeit and Methmann 2012). This is the first, and in the context of security discourse, dominant narrative by which the climate migrant is articulated and understood. *Climate Refugees* participates—heartily—in this tradition of "securitizing" climate migration by depicting climate migrants as a destabilizing force, or indeed "threat multipliers" whose racial, religious, and economic makeup fuel civil unrest or, hyperbolically, the extinction of the human species. Yet *Climate Refugees* also participates in the second major characterization of the climate migrant. This narrative theme emphasizes climate migrants as victims, or indeed, refugees fleeing the persecution of environmental problems they themselves did not cause (Miyoshi 295). Replacing or at least coexisting with the polar bear (itself a climate migrant) the climate migrant/refugee is depicted as the "human face" of climate change that provokes "solidarity from anxiety" of humanity's common plight in the face of climate change

(Beck 49, quoted in Mossner 157) As the subtitle suggests, *Climate Refugees* frames individual migrants in this sympathetic, if paternalistic, light. For instance, the film concludes with an unnamed elder from Tuvalu asserting "whether you live in a big country or a small island, we are all the same human race—no difference. If they suffer we suffer too" (1:18). As he speaks the film cuts to a montage of slowed-down footage of smiling children of color from around the world interspersed with close-cropped images of tearful and concerned parents and elders. The man admonishes the viewer as a soft piano crescendos in a minor key, "love one another, that's the principle… we are one, love one another" (1:19). The man makes a final plea to his implicitly white audience, "tell world leaders about us because we are human" (1:20).

Both narratives and tropes elide the figure of the documented/undocumented immigrant, terrorist, mob, victim, refugee, with the climate migrant construct today. These narratives derive from earlier narratives that attend the related constructs of the "environmental migrant" and "environmental refugee," both terms are historically linked to discourses of US national, and later "homeland," security. And like climate migrants and refugees today, environmental migrants and environmental refugees have been linked to security discourses through colorblind racial projects that evade overt acknowledgement of their racial dimension. The climate migrant may be a new figure in various cultural and policy discourses; however, ideas of the "environmental migrant" and "environmental refugee" date back at least to the mid-20th century. What's more, the construct of the environmental migrant/refugee has always been contiguous with U.S. National security discourse. Patricia Saunders identifies 36 "key documents" that emphasize the role of migrants and refugees within the conceptual history of the

environmental refugee. Saunders argues that each of her key documents draw from the intellectual lineage of Malthus and concerns of overpopulation and absolute scarcity of resources, particularly food and water (219). While Malthus was concerned that population growth would outstrip agricultural production and lead to political and ecological turmoil, neither Malthus nor early Neo-Malthusian thinkers ever turned the phrase "environmental migrant/refugee." However, by the 1960s and early 1970s Neo-Malthusian environmentalists such Paul Erhlich and Garrett Hardin jumpstarted modern notions of migrants and refugees as threats to environmental sustainability as well as national security. In *the Population Bomb,* Ehrlich argues that both "underdeveloped countries… face an inevitable population-food crisis" and that overdeveloped countries are similarly overpopulated because they consume more amenities than their own nation states can supply (3, 9). In his influential essays "Lifeboat Ethics: or, the Case Against Helping the Poor" and "Tragedy of the Commons," biologist Garrett Hardin naturalizes social arrangements to argue in favor of anti-immigrant policies within the US and a reduction of food aid abroad. For Hardin, it's the Global South's own profligacy that has doomed their "lifeboat" nations to sink and that if any humans are to survive in the well provisioned life boats of the Global North, the US and its citizen should militantly prevent environmental refugees from seeking asylum in their countries. To allow them in, Hardin argues, is to risk swamping and sinking the lifeboat.

More than Erhlich or Hardin, however, Saunders credits Lester Brown not only with tying migration and security to environmental change, but with influencing the paradoxical construction of the environmental refugee as both an environmental threat and victim in various discourses since the 1970s (227, 229). Brown has a Masters of

Agricultural Economics from the University of Maryland and another Masters in Public Administration from Harvard University ("Biography of Lester Brown"). He is perhaps most famous for founding the *Worldwatch Institute* in 1974, an environmental think tank that gave Brown a platform to publish numerous policy position papers and op-eds engaged with the intersections of environment and security. Worldwatch Institute continues to publish research and white papers, including the popular "State of the World" sustainability reports, and remains one of the most recognizable environmental think tanks in the US. In 1977, Worldwatch published Brown's *Redefining National Security,* which argues that the depletion of "biological systems, petroleum reserves, [and] mineral reserves" paired with a "preoccupation with national and military security" vis a vis the USSR contribute to nonmilitary threats to US security and geopolitical primacy (qtd. in Saunders 229-230).

In *Redefining National Security,* Brown predicts environmental refugees will be the product of war and political instability fomented by global environmental crises. As would become typical in depicting climate migrants, *Redefining National Security* identifies environmental migrants and refugees as symptoms of the environmental and social malfeasance of the Global North, but also symptoms of rapid population growth and agricultural failure in the Global South. Brown identifies illegal immigrants as threats to national security and a symptom of political leaders' failure to understand the nonmilitary threats "from the rapidly changing relationship between humanities' and the earth's natural systems" (Brown 37). To render the threat that environmental refugees may pose to political stability and national security, Brown cites the high numbers of "illegal immigrants" already in the US and immigration in Western Europe.

> Today, the United States is home to eight to twelve million illegal immigrants, at least six million of them believed to be Mexican. Each day thousands of additional Mexicans cross the U.S. Border, making a mockery of passports, visas, and immigration law… the number of aliens believed to be holding jobs in the United States in 1977 approximated six million— the number of Americans out of work and actively seeking a job" (Brown 35).

Brown positions environmental refugees as the product of resource depletion, but also the proverbial whirlwind reaped by the Global North for its own ecological profligacy. Brown links the supposed threats of undocumented migration to civilizational threat, specifically and gratuitously citing Mexicans as prototypes of future environmental migrants. In addition to "making a mockery" of immigration law and taking jobs that American citizens could theoretically take, Brown claims Mexican migrants "often collect welfare payments, adding to the burden of financially troubled cities such as New York" (Brown 36). Thus, he coaxes *Worldwatch Institute*'s readers to view environmental refugees as a disrupting force of the nation's wealth, culture, and collectively-shared resources. Just as the overpopulated countries of the Global South overburden their countries, *Redefining National Security* implies, so too will these immigrants tax the stability of commonly-held resources like welfare and affordable food. Endangering the stability and sustainability of the nation, the environmental migrant is quickly recast from the role of victim of resource overconsumption and mismanagement to that of an agent of overconsumption and disruption. By rendering future environmental refugees as analogous to anti-Mexican and anti-immigration discourses of the present, Brown chooses to infuse racism and nativism into the construct of the environmental migrant as well as discussions of national security and sustainability, a trend that continues today.

Lester Brown is one of the most frequent commenters in *Climate Refugees.* With a running time of an hour and twenty minutes, Brown's face appears on the camera to

speak 14 times. He appears more frequently and at greater length after the film turns more directly towards security concerns within the US in the latter half of the film. In his opening statement within the film, Brown conceives climate migration as a problem stemming from overpopulation, asserting that in a world of 6.5 billion people "there are not many places to migrate to, and not many places that welcome migrants" (5:05-5:19). Brown's claim is couched as a kind of common sense logic, but ignores the legacy and ongoing displacement of people by US imperialism and neocolonial industry and development organizations to depict a world filled with the bodies and needs of the global poor. There is no correlation between the political difficulty of transnational migration and population growth. Filmed thirty years after the publication of *Redefining National Security*, Brown deploys anti-Mexican and anti-immigrant rhetoric nearly verbatim to his earlier writing in outlining the challenges posed by climate migrants in the near future. Closely following a memorable sequence in the film in which a computer-generated legion of pointed red arrows signifying flows of climate migrants arcs out of the Global South and penetrates the Global North, including the US and Canada, Brown rhetorically asks the audience to "consider the concerns we have in this country with a few million people crossing the border from Mexico" (1:03:10). As he speaks the film moves to night-vision green archival footage of ICE or Border Patrol agents apprehending a line of young male suspects, presumably in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands. The sound of a siren plays as the footage shifts again to an elevated eyestalk of a government camera slowly scanning the terrain before it. Brown's voice claims "they [the Mexicans] will get lost… they will be trivial in comparison with the people migrating from Africa, from India and Bangladesh, Vietnam, and China" as more archival

footage shows men dressed all in black scale a border wall successfully while police try to apprehend them. The sequence ends with a still shot of a rusty fishing boat loaded with more young brown men in tee shirts, their hands held over their heads as they surrender to a white man pointing an assault rifle at the men on the boat (1:03:14-25). The camera angle in the still is pointed from behind the shoulder of the gunman, indicating a visual solidarity with his point of view; both lens and rifle trained on the unarmed men across the water. Compared to this scene, *Redefining National Security*'s racist nativism seems banal, even innocuous. Brown ends this specific appearance within the film by linking the wave of black and brown climate refugees with "refugees within our own country" caused by climate change, harkening back to earlier in the film when he noted that of the million people displaced by Hurricane Katrina, only 300,000 displaced residents returned to New Orleans. Thus, Brown and Nash imply that black and brown refugees menace the US from without and within.

Yet while environmental migrants and refugees have been constructed as menacing threats through essentially racist and nativist rhetoric, in the 1970s and 1980s these discourses coincided with widespread public awareness and humanitarian concern for migrants, particularly those fleeing Cold War proxy conflicts and famine. The use of hunger as a weapon in the Biafran War of 1966-70, the prolonged Sahel drought of the early 1970s, the surge of Vietnamese refugees and immigration following the Fall of Saigon in 1975, and perhaps most dramatically, the famine in Ethiopia in 1984 and 1985, all contributed to educating American consumers on the humanitarian difficulties facing refugees and migrants. Events like the Live Aid concerts in 1985 drew on cosmopolitan multiculturalism and common humanitarian values to raise relief funds for such crises. In

these discourses, the migrant and refugee is not constructed as a threat, but as the victim of war, poverty, or environmental catastrophe and is instead an object of charity. This is not to say that these multicultural humanitarians did not also use racist or nativist rhetoric, or that such events existed outside the realm of security discourse. For instance, Jacob Hamblin credits the Sahel Drought, in particular, with raising U.S. military thinkers' awareness of humans inadvertently causing widespread earth system change. The prominence of the Ethiopian famine in US news media and popular culture was in part a means of highlighting the consequences of Ethiopia's political leaders aligning with the USSR (Hamblin 218, 220).

Plewes and Stuart dub the closely cropped images of starving children (which became ubiquitous following the Biafran war in eastern Nigeria through the 1984-85 Ethiopian famine) the "pornography of poverty," or "images that exploit the poor for little more than voyeuristic ends and [in which] people are portrayed as helpless, passive objects" (Plewes and Stuart 15). Such images, conspicuously prominent in photographs of black Africans, strip away agency and infantilize populations. In his acerbic satire, "How to Write About Africa," Binyavanga Wainaina instructs a presumably Western author to "treat Africa as it were one country. It is hot and dusty with rolling grasslands and huge herds of animals and tall, thin people who are starving" (2). Such narratives accompanied by platitudinous wails of "we are the world" amount to acknowledgement of tragedy, but do little to protest or apprehend the forces contributing to these real tragedies while committing epistemic violence against the complex subjects of food-aid photography and journalistic accounts of refugees (Sontag 40). Due to the academic critiques of those like Kate Manzo, Plewes and Stuart, as well as the infamous suicide of

Kevin Carter,[47] images of starvation and abject poverty have been contested and to some degree addressed by the international aid community by the adoption of new industry standards and ethics guidelines. And yet these literally and figuratively close-cropped conceptions of refugees are still used in prominent charitable organizations' campaigns, and nascent efforts to photograph or otherwise render "the human face of climate change" signify on this tradition of narrating individual human misery through photography in the wake of disasters. Photographs of climate refugees are a mixture of sublime disaster and individuated abjection. Former chair of the IPCC Pachauri tells Nash within *Climate Refugees* that "these are the human faces of climate change we should be aware of," appealing to the moral force *these* faces claim on the viewer. Yet such claims are ubiquitous in the world of mass media spectacle and violence, and similar appeals in recent history have not altered the power relations that produce the "face" of a given tragedy.

The climate migrant, figured as threat and victim, can hold this paradoxical subject position in security discourse through the logics of precaution, prevention, and preparedness, or in other words, the logics that underpin counterinsurgency theory (Anderson 2012, Bettini 2012, A. Baldwin "racialization…"). One won't find explicit reference to "race" within counterinsurgency theory or US military doctrine. However, this mode of full spectrum biopolitical warfare relies on colorblind racial formations and enacts its own kind of racial projects. Robert Marzec calls the kinds of thinking that

[47] Carter received the Pulitzer Prize in 1993 for his photograph of a starving girl collapsed in the dust at the feet of a plump vulture in Sudan (now South Sudan). First published in *The New York Times*, the photo prompted hundreds of letters and editorials (as well as frequent re-printings). Carter committed suicide three months later, haunted by his work photographing the famine in Sudan and the uproar his photograph caused.

underpin counterinsurgency's embrace of environmental control "environmentality" in the US security state, a form of "environmentalism as police action" that "creates insecurity in the name of security" (7, 31). From its roots in European and American imperial policing, modern counterinsurgency continues to militarize police action, and criminalize unauthorized use of violence. Enemies are delegitimized as such, and depicted as illogical or irrational criminal elements and terrorists (Genova 183-184). In an age of permanent anti-terror and counterinsurgency small wars the "disenfranchised felon, enemy combatant, and illegal immigrant, each enact a violent and exclusive social relation through a discursive and institutional process of criminalization without the requirement of a racial prerequisite," writes Nikhil Singh. And yet each figure is indelibly marked by racial othering, and they stand in as colorblind shibboleths that rearticulate racist ideology and continue to (re)distribute power, voting rights, citizenship, and economic and political power along racial lines domestically and vis a vis US foreign policy.

Apocalyptic narratives featuring "waves" of climate migrants from the Global South eroding the social fabric of the Global North abound in popular culture and policymaking circles (Bettini, 63). That *any* figure associated with climate change is associated with apocalyptic narratives, given that apocalypse is the single most important master metaphor in American environmental imagination (L. Buell 285). Yet the way in which the climate migrant is articulated within such narratives is often to play "the barbarian at the gates," and this frequent Orientalist threat signals the strong degree to which white affect motivates present anxieties around climate migrants (Baldwin "Whiteness and Futurity"). The climate migrant's dual nature of threat and victim is not

only a product of the orientalist othering of the migrant (via racial projects and other discursive formations), as Andrew Baldwin maintains, but also and relatedly a product of what Ben Anderson terms "anticipatory geographies" enacted through kinds of environmentalities to control emergent and insurgent threats. Within the larger militarized discourses of resource enclosure and "environmentalism as police action" the climate migrant constitutes a "destabilizing figure" that, by virtue of their terroristic insurgent potentialities or the seemingly inexorable dissolving power, the societal erosion, envisioned by the rising "human tide" of mass migration, threatens the white social order that has erected violent environmentalities to manage both the migrant and the white citizenry of the Global North.

Junot Díaz's "Monstro" and the Apocalyptic Insecurity of the Security State

Junot Díaz centers climate refugees and migrants in an apocalyptic climate justice short story called "Monstro." Díaz's 2012 story, set in the Dominican Republic and Haiti sometime in the near future, reflects the shared logics of anticipatory action that undergird US security discourse in the 21st century by crafting a speculative short story that combines aspects of mysterious pandemic, climate change, migrant uprisings, and fierce militarization defending corporate geopolitical interests. Not only does "Monstro" reflect the logics of anticipatory military action as a means of managing emergent environmental threats, the story does so while also representing a means by which this anticipatory action constructs threats as racial projects. In doing so "Monstro" narrates how the climate migrant is articulated within a number of discourses that condition publics to accept the hegemony of militarized responses to these threats and militarization of social institutions. If militarized hegemony "gerrymanders the boundary of

perception," Díaz's short story is an example of artistic cultural production that "highlight(s) those places that are most unseen and unknown and at risk of climate disaster" through a sustained emphasis on migration and displacement (Sze 103). "Monstro" appeared in *The New Yorker's* June 2012 special "Science Fiction Summer Issue," and was originally intended to be an excerpt of a larger novel. In 2015 Díaz admitted that he was abandoning his *Monstro* project, nearly three years to the day "Monstro" appeared in the *New Yorker*.

Told by an unnamed Dominican-American narrator who is a journalism student at Brown, the story interweaves the narrator's personal recounting of the bizarre outbreak of a new disease— colloquially called la Negrura (the Darkness)— with a tale of the narrator's "chasing a girl" throughout a summer he spends in the Dominican Republic. The mysterious disease begins in Haiti, and after several unsettling and mysterious epidemiological developments, fuses the infected together into an army of "forty-foot-tall cannibal motherfuckers" who bring about the end of the world. By the end of the story the narrator's admittedly shallow personal ambitions and the epoch-defining events of the outbreak are coming to a head, as he and his two friends hop into a car and drive towards the DR-Haiti border to witness a DR-backed military force meet waves of "invader" refugees "with maximum force." Like Alfonso Cuarón's 2006 film, *Children of Men*, the dystopian features of "Monstro" reside at the figurative edges of visibility within the text, flickering in and out of the story as the narrator almost pathologically directs his gaze in the wrong direction to see the enormity of what is happening around him. Sketched through these brief narrative glimpses, the end of the world is constructed through suggestion and interpretation of the descriptions of the quotidian world that the narrator

relates without intentionally singling out as relevant or important to understanding the mysterious outbreak that leads to the apocalypse. For the narrator and his companions the disappearing beaches, the "one hundred straight days over 105 F," the climate-controlled New Colonial zone that the rich inhabit, the militarized borders and inhumane conditions of refugees in Haitian "relocation camps" aren't spectacular within the story; they're just part of the normal landscape that the narrator necessarily has to relate to tell his story about hanging out with his friends during a summer break from college. The narrator spends his summer in the Dominican Republic to "take in that ole-time climate change" because a "General Economic Collapse" has made getting a job in his home of New York nigh impossible. The General Economic Collapse, the narrator informs the readers, is caused by "droughts." He delivers this information not to lament climate change, but simply account for why he chose to travel to DR instead of working closer to where he attends university.

In "Monstro," the apocalypse arises from what James Ferguson calls the "global shadows" of neoliberal capitalism and coloniality in an era of pronounced global warming. Paradoxically, even as narratives of globalization highlight the tighter connections between disparate peoples and places via an expanding global economy and lightning-quick communication technologies, more and more places are thrown out of global visibility and political imperatives. Narratives of global connection and contiguity, Ferguson notes, often employ naturalistic metaphors of "flow" and webs, but that metaphors of quicker "point to point connections" skip over points in between. Information, minerals, missiles, and especially capital can skip across the globe without passing through communities in between their point of departure and point of destination.

This is not a more connected world, but a more *selectively* and *strategically* connected world that, as Arundhati Roy puts it, "as if you shine a light very brightly in one place, [and] the darkness deepens around." These darkened areas, dimmed by the contrast of the spotlights shining in the Global North, are the global shadows. In an interview accompanying the story in the *New Yorker*, Díaz explains his fascination with apocalyptic narratives in the context of Hispaniola's unique history of colonialism and global capitalism.

> From the start of my immigrant days, I've been fascinated by end-of-the-world stories, by outbreak narratives, and always wanted to set a world-ender on Hispaniola. So many apocalypses have already taken place on that island, including the one that gave rise to the modern world, I figured: what's one more? If any place could take it, it would be that poor island. What sparked this precise story was: A couple years ago I got to thinking that our world has so many blind spots, so many places and people it intentionally doesn't want to see—if some menace began to coalesce in these spaces, our own unseeing would, in fact, blind us to the danger. It struck me that many of these very spaces were also the most neglected, mistreated, vulnerable areas of our world—areas on the global body where an opportunistic infection could and would take root—and from there the story began developing. (qtd. in Leyshon 2012).

Díaz references the multiple "world ending" events that have defined Hispaniola and the Antilles more generally, beginning with the apocalyptic "contact" between the so-called Old and New World in 1492. Within ten years of Columbus inadvertently landing on the island well over 90% of indigenous Taíno (Awarak) peoples living on the island were killed by European diseases or enslavement. Following *that* particular world-ending genocide, the Europeans began importing enslaved Africans to replace the extirpated Taíno labor pool. Communities decimated and scrambled in West and Central Africa, all to bring uprooted men, women, and children across the ocean to labor in the cane fields (themselves replacing pre-contact socionatural ecosystems), constitutes the second world-ending event Díaz alludes to. By referencing these genocides as the "[apocalypse] that

gave rise to the modern world," a world built on slavery, sugar trade, and global capitalism, Díaz places Hispaniola as the ground zero for ancient apocalypse while looking to his future-oriented story as the proper site of modern apocalypse. The story itself signifies heavily on these world-ending and world-forming events, but also alludes to the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, a devastating example of how neoliberal global capitalism places resource extraction enclaves alongside communities denied access to the benefits of extractivist economies. While Hispaniola has been the site of multiple apocalypses and the founding of the modern world, it remains in the "global shadows" at the periphery of both hemispheric and global geopolitics. Haiti is chronically the poorest country in the Western hemisphere, and was the first country to gain its independence through a slave revolt.

"Monstro" doesn't directly explain or narrate the end of the world, but rather the narrator's life prior to the unknown world-ending event. The narrator begins his tale from a post-apocalyptic vantage, well after the world-ending events in the story have already taken place. He tells his reader "these days everybody wants to know what you were doing when the world came to an end. Fools make up all sorts of vainglorious self-serving plep— but me, I tell the truth. I was chasing a girl" (Díaz). The girl is named Mysty, an international law student at Universidad Iberoamericana. The narrator meets her early in the summer while hanging out with his friend from Brown, Alex V—. Alex V— is a super-rich, super attractive, super talented, and super hard working "priv kid who looked more like an Uruguayan fútbal player than a plántano." Alex embodies a kind of European privileged ideal, down to the "short curly Praetorian hair and machine made cheekbones and about the greenest eyes you ever saw," features that the dark-

complexioned narrator envies and blames for why Mysty romantically overlooks the narrator in favor of rich, white men. From a plot perspective, the three friends don't really do much of note; they janguiar (hang out) like rich people do today, taking drugs, going to clubs, and focusing on their hobbies. Alex is obsessed with becoming "either the Dominican Sebastião Salgado or the Dominican João Silva," and thus he is constantly dragging his friends along with him to photograph impoverished residents outside the walled (indeed, *domed*) enclave of privilege he lives in. "[Alex] also got obsessed with photographing all the beaches of the D.R. before they disappeared." It is Alex who raises the prospect of going to Haiti to take photographs of those infected by the mysterious La Negrura.

Beyond reading La Negrura through the always already racialized logics of anticipatory geographies in the age of counterinsurgency, I also read the disease as an "imperial ruin" within the larger imperial formations of climate change. Ann Laura Stoler defines imperial ruins as that which "people are 'left with': to what remains, to the aftershocks of empire, to the material and social afterlife of structures, sensibilities, and things" (194). The accumulation of greenhouse gases and dramatic shifts in nonhuman species populations, material, and land use patterns since the rise of modern capitalism and imperialism in the Antilles all constitute imperial formations exerting force today on various peoples' mitigation and adaptive capacities in the face of climate change. The gas molecules in the atmosphere are not only a material trace or legacy of empire, but rather continue to be "processes of becoming, not fixed things" within the ongoing imperial "processes of decimation, displacement, and reclamation" (Stoler 193). La Negrura, and by extension, the indeterminate future-oriented figure of the climate migrant, condense

the ruinous nature of climate change; they stand in for "both the claim about the state of a thing and a process affecting it" (Stoler 195). Like Jean Jacques Desallines, the fusion monsters of La Negrura, "repay the cannibals war for war, crime for crime, outrage for outrage" as they fuse together each of these outrages in a collective body. The human and more than human body of the "forty-foot-tall cannibal motherfuckers" avenges the wrongs committed against its constituent body.

Each age gets the monsters it deserves. Within the post 9/11 security state threats of terrorism, pandemics, and climate change all share similarities in their discursive construction, and the logics by which these threats are enacted as threats are also similar (Cooper, Anderson 779). Each threat constitutes "systemic interruptions" that, while low in probability, are catastrophic in effect (Anderson 779). Each is difficult to detect and isolate, as they emerge from within the population itself, and are not imposed on a population from without. This is why we can consider climate change, epidemics, and terrorism a kind of emergent/insurgent (from the Latin "insurgere:" to rise up) threat and why counterinsurgency theory is useful to describing prominent responses to each of these threats. Counterinsurgency theory holds that since potential threats incubate within populations, counterinsurgency forces must work to monitor and intervene preemptively into populations in order to defend against insurgent threats.

Who, or what, is monstrous in "Monstro," and how do these monsters resonate with the shared logics of these threats to the modern, increasingly ecological, security state? In his *New Yorker* interview Díaz claims that he was drawn to the short story form because he could be suggestive without being explicit about the monstros in the story, whereas in the form of the novel he would need to narrate the monstros in greater detail

(Leyshon 2012). The power of Díaz's depiction of monsters is precisely in the text's ability to leave much to the imagination of the reader, using culturally resonant tropes to allow for interpretations to give flesh to the shadowy monster. The ultimate apocalyptic monster is never described; the closest the story narrator gets to revealing the monster is to claim that a few polaroid pictures show a "class II" eating a child. Reading "Monstro" as climate justice fiction, the monstrous pertains first and foremost to the human systems that give rise to climate and broader social injustice as well as the specific mechanisms that unleash mere anarchy upon the world. I've already detailed how placing the story on Hispaniola fingers the imperial formations of colonialism, slavery, and global capitalist extractivism at the heart of the monstrous story, but I have yet to comment on the speculative figuring of monstrous collapse the text provides in reflecting these systemic evils back on the narrative. The representation and effects of La Negrura within "Monstro" combine aspects of epidemic disease, insurgency-theory, and the ever-racialized discourse of zombification. Following Jefferey Jerome Cohen's method of "reading cultures through the monsters they engender," and his understanding that monsters serve as gatekeepers of social boundaries, I interpret La Negrura as an expression of counterinsurgency-invested fear of *emergence* and *insurgence* out of a wild, perilous environment of neoliberal capitalism's own creation.

La Negrura enters the narrative in the first lines of the story, initially posed as a racist joke. La Negrura (the Darkness) is not the disease's official moniker, but rather the slang by which Dominicans refer to the disease they initially regard as "the joke of the year" (Díaz). The punchline of this joke is that the mysterious new outbreak "[made] a Haitian blacker" (Díaz). The narrator relates that "you couldn't display a blemish or catch

some sun on the street without the jokes starting. Someone would point to a spot on your arm and say, Diablo, haitiano, que te pasó?" (Damn, Haitian, what happened to you?) (Díaz). The joke assumes that any Dominican who has dark skin must have this disease particular to black Haitians, and therefore the person must be Haitian. The seemingly innocuous joke highlights the racial assumptions linked to citizenship in both Antillean countries and signifies the pervasive antihaitianismo developed over 200 years of contentious, and sometimes genocidal history held between the countries. Modern day Haiti, at the western side of Hispaniola, was historically held by the French, but enslaved Africans and Native American peoples overthrew the French, and by 1809, also had liberated the present-day Dominican Republic from Spanish Control. Yet Spain repeatedly attempted to regain its former colony, and after decades of civil war and rebellion within the greater republic of Haiti left the country vulnerable to fragmentation. A cadre of Hispanic creole property owners, led by Juan Pablo Duarte, violently gained independence for the Dominican Republic in 1844, and briefly re-annexed the country to Spain. The mountainous borderlands of the DR and Haiti provided refuge to Dominican rebels who fought successfully to regain independence from the Spanish is 1865. The product of global mixing and routes, of economic, political, and cultural exchange, the populations of both countries are multiracial. However, elite in the DR identify themselves as more European and whiter than Haitians. Through various wars and struggles, this distinction has given the tensions between the countries on Hispaniola a distinct racial component, one that has erupted into open race war. For example, in 1937 under the order of Dominican dictator Trujillo thousands of Haitians and dark-skinned Dominicans living in the borderlands of the D.R. and Haiti were rounded up and

butchered based on their skin color and their ability to pronounce "perejil," the Spanish word for parsley. The jokes spawned by the disease "that could make a Haitian blacker," calling Dominican citizens "haitiano" for their blackness, however phenotypically ephemeral, are only funny if the teller and hearer assume blackness is an inherent vice, or indeed, pathological in nature.

Even as La Negrura is immediately racialized, it is also associated from the start with displacement and climate change. The disease is traced to a small boy in a "relocation camp" near Port-au-Prince "in the hottest March in recorded history." La Negrura causes the boy's arm to swell to an enormous size of black, rugose "mold-fungus-blast" (2). The new disease is unique, but not outside the ordinary ecology of Díaz's near-future Antilles:

> Everybody blamed the heat. Blamed the Calientazo. Shit, a hundred straight days over 105 degrees F. In our region alone, the planet cooking like a chili and down to its last five trees— something berserk was bound to happen. All sorts of bizarre outbreaks already in play: diseases no one had names for, zoonotics by the pound. (Díaz 2).

In Díaz's speculative near-future story "everybody" has internalized the logic of climate change producing new diseases, a position that remains at the margins of climate discourse even as the IPCC consistently reports that diseases may spread farther and faster in a warming climate. New life forms emerge from the bare life the relocation camps, "zoonotics by the pound" rising up and out of precarious life suffering the effects of climate injustice. This particular "blast" begins "epidemically and then worked its way up and in," slowly paralyzing the infected over the spread of a few months (Díaz). The infection indeed "makes a Haitian blacker," as "black rotting rugs masses" fruit from the infected epidermis. To describe what this looks like, the narrator wryly notes that "coral

reefs might have been adios on the ocean floor, but they were alive and well on the arms and backs and heads of the infected" (Díaz). This particular wordplay further associates the "viktims" of La Negrura with climate change by comparing the symptoms of La Negrura to an early casualty of warmer, more acidic oceans. Despite the grotesque effects of the disease, the narrator explains that "this [disease] didn't cause too much panic because it seemed to hit only the wicked of the sick, viktims who had nine kinds of ill already in them" (Díaz). In other words, La Negrura seems marginal to "everybody" because it affects only those who are already marginalized and materially suffering from political, economic, and social marginalization and thus excluded from "everybody." La Negrura is a form of climate injustice that is layered onto ongoing social and environmental injustice wrought by ongoing imperial formations working prior to the extreme heat of a changed climate.

The position of the refugees perfectly exemplifies Giorgio Agamben's concept of the *homo sacer,* they who live under the ban of sovereign power at the outskirts of political life. The *homo sacer* is not properly a subject of normal political life, but is reduced to "bare life" that is not targeted for death, but is dispensed with nonetheless in this peculiar state of exemption through "violence without precedent precisely in the most profane and banal ways" (Agamben 144). For Agamben, the technology of "the camp" is a means of making *homo sacri* of masses of people, and is paradigmatic of the links between biopolitics and sovereign power in the 20th and 21st century. The technology of the camp and Haiti's long history at both the center of world history and the periphery of world power helps explain the geographic pathology of Díaz's mysterious disease. The reader does not know why the camp residents have been relocated to the camps.

Published two years after the 2010 earthquake in Haiti when dozens of refugee camps were (and are) still operating in Haiti and the D.R., "Monstro" implies the camps may contain "refugees" of both economic and environmental catastrophes. La Negrura emerges from the normalized state of exemption established by relocation camps where they are contained and managed as a potential threat to those outside the camp. As such, the force of La Negrura challenges the passivity with which Agamben's rendering of "bare life" generally implies. While the disease seems to justify the exclusion of the *homo sacri* from the polis of Port-au-Prince and beyond, it also signals the inability of camps to truly banish *homo sacri* from the biotic and political webs they are a part of. As the narrator admonishes the reader, the diseases "respected no boundaries," and boundaries of the camp seem only to foster the coalescing threat of La Negrura towards those outside of the camp. La Negrura asserts the agency of those human and nonhuman living in the sovereign ban of global biopolitical regimes.

The relocation camps at the outskirts of Port-Au-Prince signal one kind of enclave in "Monstro," but they are juxtaposed within the narrative by the narrator's experiences within the rebuilt Zona Colonial of Santo Domingo. Known colloquially as "the Dome," the "meta-glass palace" of the Zona "overlooks the Drowned Sectors" of Old Santo Domingo. If climate justice narratives conceptually need to construct the "vulnerable figure" (and indeed, who more vulnerable than the *homo sacer* host of an apocalyptic disease?) these narratives likewise need to juxtapose this vulnerable figure with the seemingly-impervious and powerful enclaves of the privileged, the center of extractivist power.[48] In Colson Whitehead's *Zone One*, heralded by Kate Marshall as a paradigmatic

[48] Such enclaves, to my mind, function as reverse mushrooms. Many species of fungi spread outward from where their original spore germinates through hyphae, a network of tendrils that digest organic matter in

novel of the Anthropocene, for example, protagonist Mark Spitz is deployed out of the a "green zone" in the Wall Street area of a zombie-infested Manhattan that is ultimately overrun by the walking dead (524). In *Parable of the Sower* and *Parable of the Talents*, as I have detailed at length in the previous chapter, the technology of "walls" are deployed against migrants and brigands alike, to little ultimate effect. But to figure the technology and politics and viability of the fortress state (instantiated at whatever scale one desires), many cli-fi stories explicitly incorporate tropes of the BioDome. Matt Johnson's *Pym* (2011) is an obvious example, as climate justice critique of the pastoral retreat is centered on the Karvels' biodome. Without calling it a biodome, Paolo Bacigalupi's *Water Knife* also constructs glass orbs of privilege amidst dangerous landscapes of climate risk. In "Monstro," the narrators' friend Alex lives in the "rebuilt Zona Colonial" of Santo Domingo, where "the bafflers held the scorch to a breezy 82 degrees F. And one mosquito a night was considered an invasion." Access to the Dome is exclusive to those with V.I.P. security passes costing "about a year's tuition" (at Brown, no less!). As in other moments of the narrative, this description of the Zona Colonial harkens back to the earliest histories of European conquest in the Americas. *Old* Santo Domingo was built across the Rio Ozama after Nuevo Isabella, the first colonial city built in the Americas was destroyed by a hurricane. Santo Domingo, as of this writing, is the

soils or a decomposing log, or animal flesh (depending on the species). The hyphae are sustained by the organic matter, and thus once the substrate is stripped bare of the resources the fungus needs the hyphae in that area die back while other hyphae expand outward to find more resources. Most of a fungus is hyphae; mushrooms are only the sexually fruiting organs that develop for the purposes of reproduction. On the University of Oregon's campus where I am writing this, for example, it is common to see large "fairy rings" of mushrooms. Supposedly the location of where fairies danced the night before, such rings are circles of mushrooms. The mushrooms indicate where the hyphae are alive and thriving, but the center of the circle indicates where the fungus began its live years' prior. Resource-capture enclaves secure the nearest usable resources to it, then resources a bit further, then future, until the land around the fortified enclave is damaged and barren while the enclave lives on like a permanent yet sterile fungus.

oldest permanently-inhabited European settlement in the Americas, making the creation of a "rebuilt Zona Colonial" above the sea-rise susceptible city a renewal of a 500-year cycle of settlement, extraction, destruction (via socionatural disaster), and relocation.

More than a way of representing enclaves of resource capture and privilege in speculative future fiction, the specific technology of the biodome in these texts always refers back to the fantasy and folly of the Biosphere II projects. Biosphere II (as on 2007 Biosphere 2, under the new leadership of Arizona University), is a sprawling "closed system" laboratory where scientists attempted to live free of outside inputs or exports for two year cycles. The two experiments (1991-1993 and 1994-1996) tested the idea of a vivarium, where earth-like environments can be sustained under the exacting and total technocratic control in the face of larger ecosystem collapse, and suggested this idea is fantasy. Even with unlimited money and the finest scientific apparatuses, the Earth's life-sustaining complexity is not so easily reproduced or substituted. Extrasolar fiction like *Wall- E, Elysium, Interstellar,* and the far-cleverer *The Martian* all point to the social and ecological downsides of this thinking while holding out hope that such technology may preserve a minority of privileged individuals long enough to escape ecosystem collapse. The folly of the Biosphere II and its fictional counterparts is the belief in closed systems of discrete parts over dynamic systems interacting, at times, in nonlinear ways at spatial and temporal scales beyond the perceptive horizons of the human.

Both varieties of enclaves deploy similar strategies of walled securitization and militarization to manage the population of Hispaniola. Both are a form of anticipatory geography, technologies of space used within biopolitical regimes to survey, monitor, protect, save, abandon, destroy, and sustain different segments of life within certain

social-spatial conditions (B. Anderson 781). In the Zona Colonial one needs an expensive "VIP pass" to move within the boundaries of the enclave, and the quarantine zone separates the potentially threatening bodies from the healthy polis.

From Human Face to Human Tide in Climate Change Discussions: La Negrura

La Negrura "respects no boundaries," and this perhaps more than any other aspect of this fictitious disease maps onto the fears that animate the threats of climate change, pandemics, terrorism, and insurgent threats more generally (Díaz). Climate change, pandemics, and terrorism all disrupt dominant social, economic, and political relations, and call into question the taken-for-granted boundaries that discipline populations to comply with the hegemonic power of the neoliberal state. While La Negrura emerges from a shadowed point of origin within the normalized state of exception (the metaphoric and literal camp), its danger to the social order is bound up in its possibility of *spreading* and *fusing* as well as its unpredictability and inscrutability. It is unpredictable because it evolves, and through the narration of "Monstro," the pathology of the epidemic is revealed one mysterious and unsettling turn by turn. "The blast seemed to have a boner for fusion, respected no boundaries," the narrator explains (Díaz). The narrator and Mysty are disgusted by the images of "naked trembling Haitian brothers sharing a single stained cot, knotted together by horrible model, their heads slurred into one" (Díaz). The coral-like growths not only tunnel through the infected, but the arborescence sticks to other infected, "slurring" them into a ghastly whole. La Negrura signifies the fear of multiplicity within aggregates, obliterating the taken-for-granted integrity of individual bodies and social relations by fusing together the immiserated Haitian individuals. Infections always constitute a threat to the purity and integrity not only of society but also

of the autonomous self. This "fusion" is replicated and elaborated as the disease evolves and continues to confound the scientific attempts to diagnose its cause, effects, or cure. Notable for this study, the narrator avers that not even "the military enhancers could crack it." He describes the disease as "a slow leprous spread" of "mold-fungus-blast" that "didn't turn out to be a mold-fungus blast" but instead "something different… something new" (Díaz).

In addition to the literal fusion, the infected patients strongly desire to be close to one another in the main quarantine zone of Champ de Mars, the largest relocation camp (Díaz 5). Individuals separated from each other or removed from the relocation camps react by getting violent and irrational, breaking their restraints and ignoring sedatives or physical discomfort by trying to return to the infected zone. Growing stalks of coral-like, fungus-like, mold-like bodies on their own bodies, and drawing together spatially and physically within the camps shows the dissolution of individual human bodies even as they are taken up, with nonhuman-like features, into a geographic and multi species black body. Once gathered in the quarantine zone the infected stop speaking, an event the narrator terms "the Silence" (Díaz). Their literal silence echoes their loss of agency and subaltern status as camp refugees. While the subaltern voices of the infected are silenced, the disease claims the proper location "suited to the task of assuring the care, control, and use of bare life" in the quarantine camps themselves (Agamben 140). Resisting violently the attempts to separate the infected from each other and the quarantine zone, those infected by La Negrura reclaim agency by asserting their determination to live in solidarity with one another. The infected are not separated from the general population through the mechanism of the quarantine, but instead withdraw themselves.

After “the Silence” La Negrura begins “the Chorus.” Two or three times a day “the entire infected population simultaneously let out a bizarre shriek.” Despite blocking the literal fusion of the rugose fruiting bodies between human bodies, the infected are somehow in perfect synchronization with each other despite a lack of physical contact, emitting “eerie siren shit” in thirty second intervals all together. Opposite Spivak’s subaltern silence, figuratively performed by “the Silence” of in the quarantine zone, is this literary enactment of Enrique Dussel’s “originary interpellation.” For Dussel, the “radical origin” of ethical responsibility in Philosophy of Liberation—a moment within Latin American philosophy to rupture oppressive and colonial relationships— comes from hearing the cry of another:

> The oppressed, tortured, destroyed, in her suffering corporeality, simply cries out, clamoring for justice: I am hungry! Don't kill me! Have compassion for me! (Dussel 111).

While Agamben defines bare life as that which is always outside the political, Dussel maintains bare life’s inclusion within the political because of its capacity to express suffering. Bare life indicts the polis to acknowledge and respond to its plight:

> The radical origin is not the affirmation of one's self (the soi-même), for that one must be able to first reflect, assume oneself as possessing value, that is, discover oneself as a person. We are before all of that. We are before the slave who was born slave and who therefore does not know he is a person. He simply cries out. The cry, as noise, as clamor, as exclamation, proto-word still not articulated, which is interpreted in its sense and meaning by those "who have ears to hear," indicates simply that someone suffers, and that from out of their suffering they emit a wail, a howl, a supplication. This is the originary ‘interpellation.’ (Dussel 111).

The “wail” of the silenced patients can be read as simultaneously a collective protest and interpellation from the global shadows of the quarantine camps as well as a more-than-human indictment from the disease itself. “Those with ears to hear,” the narrator relates

again and again, fail to acknowledge or heed the warning signs each new mutation or progression of the outbreak brings.

All monsters "escape the epistemological nets of the erudite" and signal the limits of dominant ways of knowing and thus ways of controlling aspects of the world, La Negrura's monstrousness is partially a product of the narrator and world powers' ability to hear the summons of its lamentation (Cohen 12). This willful deafness is "[unfortunate] for just about everybody on the planet" as managers pay heed to "more immediate problems" like the patients' family members attempting to burn the patients for being devils instead of digging deeper into the diagnoses and potential outcomes of the outbreak. Díaz's narrator justifies why public attention and a global elite stopped paying attention to La Negrura early in its epidemic:

> When the experts determined that [La Negrura] wasn't communicable in the standard ways, and that normal immune systems appeared to be at no kind of risk, the renminbi and the attention and savvy went elsewhere. Any since it was just poor Haitian types getting fucked up— no real margin in that (Díaz).

As a monster, La Negrura operates outside of the "standard ways," and thus challenges the efficacy of medicalized risk management. The infected "Haitian types," excluded from the polis but still a population to be managed in relation to their impacts on the health and economy of the "normal immune systems" of non-Haitians, are in and of themselves unworthy of resource expenditure to diagnose or cure the disease. Without a strong incentive for gaining profit from describing the pathology of the disease, both "renminbi and the attention and savvy" are directed to other sources. The narrator notes the ubiquity of new outbreaks, and obliquely references one called "KRIMEA" that appears to be worse than La Negrura several times during his narration.

And yet local Haitian doctors do make progress in learning of the disease, most notably, one epidemiologist named Noni DeGraff. While the medical examiners and military scientists cannot find the mode of transmission between patients via standard medicine, DeGraff finds that in addition to the more obvious and grotesque symptoms the patients' temperatures rapidly fluctuate up and down out of line with normal human levels. Using a thermal image scanning gun, DeGraff finds that infected patients "flicker blue" in the eye of the scanner, while uninfected read as a solid red color. Pointing the gun onto the street, DeGraff and her colleagues are alarmed that one in eight of the supposedly uninfected pedestrians with no signs of La Negrura flickered blue. The self-described challenge of COIN operations is to identify insurgent and potentially insurgent elements within a population and isolate these from the population (*US Army & Marine Corps* 41). The image of one in eight people, to the naked eye just "pedestrians," harboring an apocalyptic infection, proffers a hallmark example of both the horror and fantasy of COIN operations. The flickering blue pedestrians exemplify insurgencies themselves, hidden threats simmering below detection until they will erupt in revolutionary violence (as indeed the infected end up doing shortly after DeGraff uncovers the extent of the epidemic). But the ability of DeGraff to use military technology; a "gun" pointed to survey the population in a panoramic sweep from afar, embodies the idealized vantage of the counterinsurgent, apprehending the true threats to a population in a glance so that they can be targeted with the appropriate levers of "aligned" military and civilian force.

As the "signs of the apocalypse" creep in and around the narrator and the world at large, the attention of experts, military scientists, and other global managers is directed

elsewhere. This inability or unwillingness to deal with a creeping disaster is a prominent feature of environmentalist critique. Rob Nixon refers to this as the failure to "*apprehend*— to arrest, or at least mitigate— often imperceptible threats," echoes the preoccupation of counterinsurgency planners (14). How to align social movement energy, or indeed military energy, to tackle a target that is imperceptible or seemingly peripheral to more pressing, immediate challenges? "Monstro" gives no indication of what "KRIMEA" is, other than to imply it is another bizarre outbreak that appeared worse than La Negrura. The failure to recognize and preempt the emergence and spread of Negrura is a cardinal sin in the world of "catastrophe risk" preparation (Cooper 82). Biotic emergence, like terrorism, market crashes, and extreme weather events are all threats that, this discourse maintains, can be managed only through Nixon's concept of apprehension and both probabilistic and *possiblistic* risk assessment (Cooper 83, Amoore 23). It is only when the disease turns infected patients into "possessed" killers who lay waste to several battalions of troops and seize control of 22 camps that "High Command pull their head out of their ass." By this time, the intermittent wails are replaced by a constant unified song sung by the infected.

Considering the mysterious lead up, the outbreak's turn to military conflict turns into a relatively conventional zombie narrative; one again relegated to the figurative margins of the page but nonetheless legible because Díaz employs tropes that are immediately recognizable in this moment of zombie renaissance in popular culture. The idea of existential threat born from infected individuals swarming, assaulting social orders via relentless waves of attack, is key to the modern Western zombie. Díaz's "Possessed" and their more apocalyptic "forty-foot-tall cannibal" children are interesting,

but easily recognizable, specimens within the broader genealogy of zombies in popular culture. There are many forms of zombies in this milieu, including slow shambling undead and fast, bloodthirsty monsters. Díaz's "Possessed" are the later, and their appearance in the story is heralded by the infected letting out a choral wail for twenty-eight minutes straight, a nod to Danny Boyle's fast-zombie cult classic, *28 Days Later* (2003). Yet before the infected walking dead overtook American popular culture in the 21st century, the zombie originated in the dawn of modernity through the slave trade in the Antilles, and in Haiti more particularly, through the syncretic religious practices of Vodou. Founded by a wide range of enslaved West Africans, Vodou traditions draw together many stories of different kinds of African monsters— fairy creatures, shape-shifters, and disembodied souls of dead humans— into the category of "zombie" (Moremon and Rushton 2-3). These "*zombie astral*" have not translated to the Western imagination, but the Haitian variant of the reanimated corpse has indeed captured global fascination across numerous vernacular modernities of the West and the rest (see Eric Hamako 2011, Castillo et. al. 2016, Huber et al 2015 for these transglobal walking dead). The idea of "subjugated agency" undergirds these disparate conceptualizations of zombies, and the original Haitian zombies were reanimated by sorcerers to labor as slaves even after death in the sugar cane fields (Inglis 42-43). The infected in "Monstro" take on many recognizable tropes of the modern zombie apocalypse, including their grotesque, rotting physiognomy, their single-minded cannibalism, and their penchant to swarm and "flood" urban spaces and militarized fortifications, including national borders (Stratton 267).

Of course, a zombie apocalypse set in Haiti takes on other significations as well, namely those moments of political and genocidal massacre that have marked the history of Hispaniola. The zombie, as infected, ravenous, insatiable consumer of flesh, doesn't really evidence a fear of the Global North with the Global South sending waves of insatiable poor and hungry to their shores to deplete welfare and natural resources. Instead, the zombie manifests the rapacious overconsumption *by* the Global North itself; a mindless, ghoulish hunger that is seldom visible to the full-bellied "omnivores" capturing resources and dumping the effects of pollution and ecosystem degradation onto the rural poor "ecosystem people" within the Global South (Guha and Martinez-Alier 12, 16). The swarm of Haitians who "go Rwanda" and the literal fusion of the infected patients into giant cannibal monsters signifies off narratives of Marxian revolution by the proletariat and also the successful revolt of enslaved peoples that birthed the nation of Haiti itself. The ravenous swarm is, to borrow again James Ferguson's productive unpacking of shadow metaphors in globalization discourse, a kind of doubling and representation of the Global North's own hunger back on itself. Just as Jean-Jacques Dessalines boldly declared "We have repaid these cannibals war for war, crime for crime, outrage for outrage" after killing thousands of French families at the end of the Haitian war of independence, Díaz's cannibals are a simple balancing of imperialist and ecological accounts. The figure of the zombie is inured to reasonable appeal, as it is of a single motivation; while the US has traded enslaved Africans with Saint Domingue and militarily occupied Haiti and the Dominican Republic in the early 20th century, and sent ill-prepared and poorly-coordinated disaster and humanitarian aid to Haiti along with World Bank and International Monetary Fund-sponsored structural adjustment programs

(SAPS) in the 1980s, 90s, and 2000s, the US mass media and K-12 education seldom mentions its close neighbors in the Caribbean. Indeed, most raised in the US have no idea of the Antilles' history in any meaningful sense.

Like zombies, the US and Europe has lurched forward and ravaged the island of Hispaniola and its peoples, without hearing or caring. "Monstro" turns the tables, centering the most marginalized of marginalized subject positions as a force of apocalypse, or revelation (to readers) and revolution (to the narrator's world). The giant black cannibals, the physical embodiment of the global shadows, assert an unstoppable agency swiftly revenging a larger and longer combination of cannibalism, war, and outrage. The assemblage of elements that these climate zombies embody; their zombie tropes, their blackness, their displaced status, their poverty, their Haitian origins, their unknowable infection and power and fusion with one another, are indeed terrifying to the imperial and colonial world order that has produced them. As it becomes clear that military intervention and technological surveillance have limited efficacy in dealing the outbreak, the revolutionary status of the nonmilitary threats Lester Brown describes are put into relief. But more, the failure of a bombing bombardment to quell the threat again resonates a tenet of modern counterinsurgency theory. One of the "paradoxes" identified in the *US Army & Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual* is that "sometimes the more force used, the less effective it is" (38). The High Command carpet bombs the 22 camps held by the Possessed La Negrura patients, only to trigger an 8.3 magnitude preternatural earthquake that knocks out all electronic devices (including satellites!) in a 600-square mile radius, and presumably catalyzes the transformation of the Possessed into "forty-foot-tall cannibal motherfuckers." The application of force compounds the

insurgent threat, and compromises the safety of those who will undoubtedly be sent in to combat the redoubled revolutionary threat. It is as if Díaz's monstrous Others, the present absence of bare life on the margins of the world, have appeared and declared "that their ends can be attained only by the forcible overthrow of all existing social conditions. Let the ruling classes tremble" (Marx and Engels 1848)! Once the outbreak goes "Rwanda," the narrator's colorful idiom for relating the outpouring of homicidal violence the disease instigates at the end of the story, and the electronic surveillance of Haiti goes dark, the tragedy of the disease and its apocalyptic effects become known through a series of "iconic Polaroids." One such polaroid, showing a "Class 2 in the process of putting a slender broken girl in its mouth," is captioned "Numbers 11:18. *Who shall give us flesh to eat?*" (Díaz).

In this chapter, and throughout this project more generally I have considered the discursive construction of the climate migrant *as an individual*. But more than the individual face of climate change, climate migrants and refugees are represented in aggregate. The threat of climate migration is often represented by portraying migrant collectives as "waves," "rising tides," or "floods." For instance, the dust jacket of Gwynne Dyer's *Climate Wars* reads: "Waves of climate refugees. Dozens of failed states. All-out war." In the montage of images this advertisement primes a reader to see, the climate refugees are the only threat conveyed through figurative language. By eliding a multiplicity of individual refugees and migrants— themselves more prone to be victims of violent crime and structural violence of poverty than citizens of countries they migrant to— such depictions disintegrate the individual into a larger and more impersonal collective. While a migrant, or a migrant's family, may arouse sympathy, *so many*

unchecked migrants constitutes a larger force of nature that menaces through its enormity and chaotic unpredictability. The image of the "rising tide" is a potent one in climate change discourse as seas literally rise to reclaim the land where 70% of humanity resides. While bulkheads and seawalls may forestall destruction, the erosive persistence of the tide is implacable and cannot be reasoned with. The imagery of "waves" and "tides" connote relentless natural force, and floods convey the sense of disaster as well as the biblical imagery of destruction and renewal. The flood is the perfect metaphor to punch out the fantastic domed enclaves represented in so many cli-fi stories. Climate refugees are not only a factor of these rising tides, but described as a human tide that performs similar functions as the rising seas themselves. In *Climate Refugees* this human tide is further abstracted through the substitution of swarming red arrows that erupt from across the Global South to first careen into and penetrate the Global North. The arrows come in their own waves in attack, provoking the war-like posture Baldwin asserts the Global North takes in the face of future climate migrants.

The tidal imagery associated with climate refugees highlights the conflicting metaphors by which we often refer to globalization's benefits and burdens; crashing the metaphorized flows of people and ecological change against the walled-off enclaves that can reap resources and access capital between other enclaves without coming into contact with the contiguous communities and aftermath of their neocolonial influence. Waves of climate migrants penetrating national borders embody the precarity of this system from the perspective of those living inside the enclave, and further Otherize the migrants excluded from the enclave. In "Monstro," the infection of La Negrura signifies off these associations, positing the infected as drops in a rising ocean that will disregard and

destabilize political and structural boundaries placed in the way of its flow. As La Negrura progresses the narrator relates that riots begin in the camps and that "Haitians in the DR were getting deported over a freckle" (Díaz). After the infected begin butchering the uninfected over 200,000 Haitians seek refuge over their eastern border in D.R. Thus, the crises that arises from refugees produces more refugees, who are in turn demonized by the DR government. The army is instructed to meet these "invaders" with "maximum force" to prevent the contamination of the DR. It is left between the lines if this strategy can or could work, other than that the "end of the world" is nigh (implying that these actions are not helpful).

As the "slow leprous spread" of La Negrura abruptly mutates or matures into the exponential violence of the camp massacres and later, the forty-foot-tall cannibals, La Negrura offers a number of category crises, resisting western medical and scientific study and even bombs and bullets. But in doing so, and in giving a Dusselian wail beyond language, and fusing human and nonhuman bodies together into the cultural body of the monster, La Negrura brings with it apocalyptic revelation as well as devastation. La Negrura is the creation of the world it emerges from, a form of politically mobilized bare life that contains the remnants of the life it once was (Ziarek):

> Monsters are our children. They can be pushed to the farthest margins of geography and discourse, hidden away at the edges of the world and in the forbidden recesses of our mind, but they always return. And when they come back, they bring not just a fuller knowledge of our place in history and the history of knowing our place, but they bear self-knowledge, *human* knowledge— and a discourse all the more sacred as it arises from the Outside. These monsters ask us how we perceive the world, and how we have misrepresented what we have attempted to place. They ask us to reevaluate our cultural assumptions about race, gender, sexuality, our perception of difference, our tolerance toward its expression. They ask us why we have created them. (Cohen 20)

Arising from the normalized state of exception and exclusion of the Port-au-Prince relocation camps, La Negrura appears to emerge from the margins of the world, from the periphery of the periphery. It emerges from the black body of the refugee. Yet more than the sociogeographic location, the disease spreads precisely because it remains "hidden away at the edges of the world," outside the scope of care and concern of capital and empire.

Díaz's "Monstro" depicts climate refugees as both threat and victim, and given the apocalyptic events, it is tempting to read the story as emphasizing the threat side of the climate migrant paradox. But more than depicting climate refugees as a threat, "Monstro" highlights how the climate migrant brings together different concerns of anticipatory action. In the different iterations of La Negrura, "Monstro" gives monstrous forms to Western fears of atmo-bio-terroristic emergence in the 21st century. La Negrura, and its apocalyptic outcome, signify the insurgent kinds of threats COIN-style adaptation recognizes and combats, and gives voice to the anxiety that imperial police actions, the fabric of environmentality in the U.S. security state, is not adequate to its own imperial mission. La Negrura is not a monster born to show the inadequacy of global management and power to confront threats *from the Outside*, but rather of the very processes that define both the hegemony of the global security state and neoliberal capitalism. The wailing zombie-like Possessed are so many chickens coming home to roost for hundreds of years of imperialism and exploitation, and their ability to thwart conventional military firepower and overwhelm border defenses shows a kind of exaltation in the destruction of unjust power.

This chapter has shown that the climate migrant plays a number of roles—often contradictory and paradoxical— within climate discourse of the Global North. In the genealogy of this figure, tropes tying climate migrants to national and international security discourse emerge from Malthusian and Neo-Malthusian concerns of overpopulation and white fears of miscegenation, and later the figure of the climate migrant's visage increasingly took on a strong likeness to the starving Indian or Ethiopian, and later the Haitian or Syrian refugee. *Climate Refugees* offers an emblematic depiction of this dual identity, the migrant as both threat and victim of complex social and environmental forces. Yet I do not see this formulation of the climate migrant as a "destabilizing" subject. Instead of "destabilizing" dominant modes of thought or policy regimes, constructing the climate migrant/refugee as a racialized threat to national security— the "barbarian at the gate" side of this discourse— or the abject in desperate need of humanitarian assistance— the so-called "human face of climate change aspect of this discourse— works to *bolster* and *rearticulate* hegemonic modes of thinking. Eric Holthaus, a journalist who is also a prolific blogger, podcaster, and public commentator on issues related to climate change and culture pins the recent rise of the nationalist far right movements in the US and EU on anti-immigrant sentiment augmented by "climate induced migration" (2017). I find Holthaus' argument, on the one hand, overly focused on climate change in explaining the rise of Trump, whom another journalist calls "the first demagogue of the Anthropocene" (Meyer). Nativist sentiment is nothing new to the US nor, as my discussion of Lester Brown's *Redefining National Security* shows, mainstream environmentalist views of migrants and refugees. Still, Holthaus identifies a

chilling positive feedback loop in the nascent days of Trump's presidency. In a tweeted imaged of a Post-It™ note sketch, Holthaus lays out the following causal loop:

> Escalating climate change—> increased climate induced migration—> anti-immigrant rhetoric—> rise of Far Right—> Climate denial—> No climate action—> [Escalating climate change].

At the center of the diagram is a crudely sketched Earth with a series of scribbles on top of it, showing it to be on fire with "run away climate change +6 degrees." The causal map's phenomena are not easily supported nor refuted. Migration is complex, and while climate change is and will continue to spur human movement, most will be within countries' borders, not across them. Holthaus doesn't support the idea that climate induced migration will necessarily lead to an increase of anti-immigrant rhetoric with any specific evidence. And yet, as my discussion of "Monstro" shows, climate change is culturally articulated within a broader spectrum of social anxieties. It is not that fear and hate of the climate migrant is supplanting other racist, anti-immigrant, Islamophobic rhetorics and actions within this or near-future nativist moments. Climate migration doesn't "destabilize" these formations, but rather adds to the feeling of insecurity and instability in which militaristic, and even authoritarian modes of action and adaptation seem necessary, even inevitable. In a world of terrorism, biotic emergence, and climate change, the militarization of a broad variety of institutions— from the police, to the carceral system, to US Customs and Border Control— seems an obvious imperative of government, even if that imperative is being challenged by social movements such as #blacklivesmatter and climate justice organizations.

On the other side of the climate migrant paradox, viewing climate induced migrants through the lens of humanitarian crisis similarly works to re-inscribe dominant modes of thinking and problem solving. Again, *Climate Refugees* is emblematic of this narrative. The film evokes the suffering of others as a means of forging a bipartisan consensus to better fund and more intentionally manage the movement of people. Although pitched in apocalyptic images of disaster and close-cropped appeals from unnamed victims of climate change, this pathos ultimately amounts to telling world leaders to do their jobs a bit better and bit more humanely. While redoubled funding for humanitarian assistance and climate adaptation, particularly in the Global South, is a critical tool to a just climate future, these actions are not in and of themselves evidence of destabilized institutions, but instead a strengthening and modernization of long-standing tools of power. While the concept of "climate migrants" has called the legal definition and intention of "refugee" into question, *Climate Refugees* advocates for a stronger, but similar approach to climate migrants as any other "wave" of displaced people. Climate refugees are a problem of governance and the need to find viable and feasible solutions within our current economic and political systems.

La Negrura in "Monstro" is closer to truly destabilizing current social systems; the word "monster," Cohen reminds us, comes from "Monstrum"— that which shows, and that which warns (Díaz). Apocalyptic monsters are doubly revelatory, as they overtly tear down world order as a means of showing a different world of potential. La Negrura is the bogeymen of anticipatory counterinsurgency logics embodied and emboldened by histories of colonialism and neocolonialism in a warming world. The monstrous disease emerges from the global shadows at the margins of the world to violently overthrow the

social conditions of the present. It is a monster created by and resistant to the logics and outrages of modernity, and its horror-story arises from other representations (such as zombie stories in general) that mobilize subtle fears and anxieties born within the public. If Dr. DeGraff could find a fear-imaging gun and point it on Díaz's audience from within the pages of the *New Yorker*, she may well find bodies flickering a deep blue color, indicating patterns of fear infecting the 21st-Century American populace. The monster violates taken-for-granted modes of regarding the separation of bodies, space, and time within a globalized world economy that often occludes our shared yet uneven vulnerabilities and risks (Alaimo 20).

Conclusion: New Stories of and by Climate Migrants

But these imaginings of the future-oriented subject do not constitute all of the climate migrant's stories. Increasingly in the Global North this identity is formulated as a part of a broader coalition of marginalized "frontline" communities bearing the brunt of climate change but also positioning themselves "at the forefront" of political and adaptive change. In the 2014 People's Climate March[49], easily the largest single mass demonstration focused on climate change in history, the vanguard of the largest march in

[49] Composed of over 2,600 marches across 162 countries, The People's Climate March of September 23rd,2014 was easily the largest protest march in the history of the climate justice movement and climate change environmentalism writ large. At the center of the events was the march in New York, where somewhere between 125,000-400,000 people marched to urge on world leaders attending the United Nations "Climate Summit 2014: Catalyzing Action." The Summit, billed as a space to consolidate the groundwork for a meaningful and ambitious climate plan in the UNFCCC 23rd Conference of Parties negotiations in Paris in 2015, hosted many high-profile leaders such as US President Obama, and resulted in renewed funding and support by UN agencies for climate-related actions in areas as disparate as food security and climate-change related insurance markets (UN Summit site). The marches were organized by the Peoples' Climate Movement, a consortium of civil society organizations including national and international environmental organizations (e.g. Power Shift Network, 350.org), and environmental justice organizations (Indigenous Environmental Network and Climate Justice Alliance), unions (like the SEIU), and racial and social justice organizations (such as the NAACP, Grassroots Global Justice, Hip Hop Caucus). The large and diverse steering committee organized more than 1,500 *additional* organizations which took part in the New York City march.

New York City led the way carrying two massive banners. One banner read "at the Frontlines of Climate Change" and the other, "at the Forefront of Change." They were carried by indigenous organizers and marchers from around the globe, flanked by those displaced by Superstorm Sandy in New York City and northern New Jersey, as well as those living in the crosshairs of fossil fuel extraction (Peoples Climate March Press Release). This group highlighted the fact that while climate change affects all humans, it also entails disproportionate risk and harm for those facing other forms of social oppression and marginalization. Although climate change is often figured as a problem comprised of future effects, this particular "frontline" showed that people are already experiencing the brunt of climate change's physical and social impacts. In the press releases and social media of the March itself these marchers were heralded as "indigenous and frontline communities," placing the issue of climate and social justice both literally and figuratively front and center of the movement.

The term "frontline community" evokes several militaristic resonances. The phrase "frontline communities" refers to both a geographic location as well as specific bodies engaged in war. The frontline is the first group of infantry to enter battle, and thus are simultaneously those most likely to be killed or wounded as well as those who necessarily advance the position of their army forward in an offensive maneuver. As opposed to the rearguard, the frontline is where not only the danger of war lies heaviest, but also constitutes the point of advancement for combatants in one of Clauswitz's duel-like war. The frontline is also a location; it is the neutral plane over which a battle is waged, the precise point of friction between opposing sides. The idea of the frontline is, in the context of the global ecological security state, an anachronism. Clausewitz wrote of

what was for him "modern war," a description that aptly described the tactics of European warfare from the Napoleonic Wars up to World War I:

> What do we do now usually in a great battle? We place ourselves quietly in great masses arranged contiguous to and behind one another. We deploy relatively only a small portion of the whole, and let it wring itself out in a fire-combat which lasts for several hours, only interrupted now and again, and removed hither and thither by separate small shocks from charges with the bayonet and cavalry attacks. When this line has gradually exhausted part of its warlike fire in this manner, and there remains nothing more than the cinders, it is withdrawn and replaced by another. (Clausewitz 4.2)

This is hardly the character of modern small wars battles, and even more so is this description estranged from the kinds of emergent threats that COIN and anticipatory security state actions militate again. Yet the People's Climate March, like other mass demonstrations, appropriates the outdated military technology of the phalanx and battalion to engage in the art of politics. Like Clausewitz's "great masses," this specific "vocabulary of protest" concentrates strength of force through the solidarity of numbers. Direct action is always more than material movement, but also always "struggle over meaning" with both "utilitarian and expressive dimension[s]" (Guha and Martinez-Alier 13). They constitute a metaphoric army led by those already displaced by climate change and those facing multiple forms of social oppression. This wave is figured as a seachange, pushing the world to adapt to its reality.

In the top-level negotiations of the UNFCCC, the AOSIS countries have repeatedly rallied around forced climate migration as a bargaining position. In the lead up to COP 15, for example, the parliament of the Maldives donned wetsuits and SCUBA gear to hold an official meeting under the rising seas threatening their nation. While these efforts across the Global South to lobby the Global North in formal climate negotiations are an important and high-profile way that climate migration has been taken up as a form

of political strength, this appropriation of the climate migrant identity is always a bit of political theatre in these contexts; the delegates flown to COP15, for example, work as a part of formal political channels, and themselves enjoy forms of unforced mobility that run contra to narratives of forced climate migration.[50] Increasingly, however, migrants are being identified and identifying themselves as a broader patchwork climate justice movement. The movement for climate justice is really a movement of movements, a coalition and coalescing of different social movements for justice recognizing the importance of climate change to thwarting or realizing a more just and peaceful world. To find the true "frontlines" of the fight for climate justice, look not to the UN negotiations and monitoring of the nonbonding Paris Accord. Instead, look to the "outpost[s] of a territory some have taken to calling 'Blockadia'" (Klein *This Changes Everything* 254). Klein describes Blockadia as "a roving transnational conflict zone… wherever extractive projects are attempting to dig and drill" (254). The projects are being met, Klein argues, by more diverse coalitions of people saying "No!" to extractivist projects. The same grassroots organizations fighting in Blockadia stood alongside displaced people in the frontline of the People's Climate March.

The narrator of "Monstro" says that "they call those of us who made it through [the apocalypse] 'time witnesses'" (Díaz). What does it mean to be a time witness? Does the term simply mean the narrator was present for a significant historical event as defined

[50] I feel I am being overly harsh on COP delegates, particularly from African and small island nations, in order to draw distinction between these high-profile expressive gestures around climate migration. Writing from the United States it's easy to imagine delegates negotiating towards treaties and accords across the world as a coterie of privileged elites, attending the UNFCCC COPs is poorly supported by many of the world's poorest countries. When I was participating in COP16 in a civil society delegate (a distinction COP makes), I met several official delegates from East Africa and Oceanic Countries that were all sharing a cramped hotel room far away from the designated strip of suites to afford the trip to Mexico. Many delegates are mid-level government scientists or health officials.

by some people in the future? Being a time witness might be and embodied state, especially given the prominence of bodies within "Monstro" more generally. The climate migrant, as an identity, and as a body, is also a "time witness," a kind of indexical figure in the cultural stratigraphy that coincides with the start of the Anthropocene. The Anthropocene working group has recommended that the mid-20th century demarcate the start of the Anthropocene, as the detonation of atomic bombs (two in war, and thousands more in tests and military bravado), proliferation of plastics and domestic meat consumption, and clouds of soot have indelibly changed the earth. Beyond these physical markers are the ideas, world views, and subjectivities that have entered the world since the start of the Anthropocene. The fears La Negrura embodies are fears of a body's integrity within a rapidly changing and radically connected world, even though those connections are often occluded, distanced, and uneven; a far cry from the "web of nature" tropes that marked environmental writings of the 19th and 20th century (L. Buell 284). The individual body's security is linked discursively with the larger biopolitical project of the state, and time witness is yet another biopolitical body demarcated by the exercise of sovereign power. And yet as these political movements show, even the discursive construct of the climate migrant and refugee are not entirely *homo sacri*, banished to the outer limits of political life:

> As we have seen, bare life cannot be regarded in a complete separation from all cultural/political characteristics. If bare life emerges as the remnant of a destroyed human form of life, then, according to Agamben's own emphasis on its inclusive exclusion in the political, its formulation has to refer, in a negative way, to the racial/sexual/ethnic/class differences that used to characterize its form of life. In other words, bare life has to be defined as the remnant of a specific form of life that it not yet, or no longer, is. (Ziarek).

At the frontline of mass demonstrations, in art collectives, and in numerous individual non-profit organizations, so-called climate refugees are asserting political agency through their identity as "frontline communities" that have already had their "old" lives "destroyed" by climate change, global inequality, and rising militarism (Parenti 11). Climate change, and the concept of climate migrants, is changing the ways lives are viewed and valued by US publics. Even as migrants are demonized and made monstrous by opportunistic politicians tapping into white nationalist sentiments, climate justice organizations, and artists are turning to the climate migrant as informant and actor in and on the Anthropocene.

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