Articulating Partial Connection: Prefiguring Alternative Futures in the Anthropocene

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Introduction

With increasing urgency, scientists and activists warn us that we are on the brink, if not already in the midst of ecological catastrophe. Our actions have been deemed the very catalyst to the dawning of the Anthropocene, a proposed geological age defined by detrimental human impact on earth systems. With the earth no longer standing as a backdrop to human activity, we are witnessing "[t]he transformation of our species from a mere biological *agent* into a geological *force*" (Danowski and de Castro 2017, 14). The world as we know it is consequently muddled by the violent upheaval of a foundational distinction between natural and human histories.

Such a collapse between natural and human histories or nature and culture complicates the contemporary climate discourse which seeks to discover definitive solutions to impending crisis. Suddenly, our place and our relation to worlds and dystopian realities previously deemed separate from our own are called into question. A certain conundrum subsequently arises wherein our focus must orient itself towards the future, and yet, this necessity for action is accompanied by a growing awareness that we cannot forge an alternative future with the tools of the present, the very tools and ontologies which have invited such environmental devastation in the first place. The invocation of perspectives outside of our own is essential and at this point inevitable. How the Western world and the subset of humanity largely responsible for the environmental crisis at hand meets such perspectives is what remains to be addressed.

What we need now are challenges to this coming dystopia, to this harrowing reality of the Anthropocene. Such challenges to this inevitable future are what Jason Cons refers to as "heterodystopias" (Cons 2018). Within the context of Bangladesh, often considered the 'ground-zero of climate change,' Cons employs the concept of heterodystopias to illustrate

certain counter-imaginations and counter-possibilities for life arising in the midst of ecological transition to the unknown. Cons is directly inspired by Foucault's notions of heterotopia, a "sort of mixed, joint experience, which would be the mirror" reflecting utopian visions of life back onto spaces beyond physical boundaries (Foucault 1986, 24). "Windows of life into a warming world and, as such, opportunities to manage future crises," heterodystopias as Cons then describes them, are the very sites from which we can experience the effects of dystopia unraveling and simultaneously anticipate better strategies to contend with dystopias to come (Cons 2018, 271).

This being said, it cannot go without mention that sites like Bangladesh are not alone in experiencing a premature manifestation of climate dystopia. The story of dystopian anthropogenic environmental change is something that ought to be treated with historical precedent, for it is something that certain subaltern groups, but particularly Indigenous groups in the Americas have long known and encountered. On the topic of Indigenous conservation and the Anthropocene, Potawatomi Indigenous scholar Kyle Whyte writes, "Indigenous conservation approaches aim at negotiating settler colonialism as a form of human expansion that *continues* to inflict anthropogenic environmental change on Indigenous peoples — most recently under the guise of climate destabilization" (Whyte 2017b, 2). Settler colonialism in combination with capitalism has always, since its inception, forced Indigenous peoples to reckon with significant cultural losses by finding new pathways to engaging with their environments. As earth systems shift, this form of constant renegotiation with one's environment is something that many millions more people will be forced to reckon with, yet within the Indigenous perspective, it is part of a process long known and carried out. As such, Indigenous struggles as they relate to the environment ought to be treated as primary examples of dystopia now (Whyte 2017a).

For centuries, Indigenous peoples of the United States have been and continue to be mercilessly entangled in varied iterations of anthropogenic environmental change. Whyte elaborates that, "for many Indigenous peoples, the Anthropocene is not experienced as threatening in precisely the same sense because the particular era of settlement I am describing forced many of our societies to let go of so many relationships with plants, animals and ecosystems at a wrongfully rapid pace" (Whyte 2017b, 3). Whyte thus argues that unlike the very future-oriented Anthropocene narrative currently being dispelled as something that will lead to dramatic and unprecedented species downfall, the Anthropocene, as it has been experienced by native people, is already and has long been dystopian in itself. Far ahead of the climate migration and ecosystem devastation that non-Indigenous people presently anticipate, those who have always wrestled with the immediate implications of colonialism continue to produce resilient lifeways and environments in response to anthropogenic environmental change.

Revisiting Cons' use of heterodystopias now situated in an Indigenous context, my question becomes how a particularly Indigenous consciousness can help us to anticipate the forms of governance, understanding, and relationality which might emerge *or which we would like to see emerge* amidst uncertain futures. Unlike contemporary Western technocratic solutions and capitalist temptations to buy our way out of crisis, this pathway forward will necessitate a reckoning with our very understanding of humanity and its capabilities. Likewise, in questioning the trajectory of the Indigenous, one must ponder existing pathways for us supposedly rationally-minded individuals to relate back to people and systems that we have long deemed irrational, unagentic, and natural outsiders. The subaltern is undoubtedly a relational category that our standard mode of reportage does not know how to contend with. However, the point at which the subaltern relates back to the modern subject in an active and agentic form is the point

at which the hierarchy that deems one futures approach more viable over another finally crumbles. It is a deconstruction that transforms "the conditions of impossibility into possibility" (Spivak 1985, 201).

On this topic, Marisol de la Cadena says that "the world that sees itself as 'everything' [is] insufficient" (Cadena 2011, 15). Indeed, there is so much that we cannot see. Emotion, imagination, memory, time, relationality — these things cannot necessarily be identified via method or equation, but they represent the silences and the lapses of the climate discussion. They represent the gaps between Indigenous and Western worldviews that so fruitlessly elide collusion in spite of imminent planetary destruction. Furthermore, de la Cadena says, "The unthinkable is not the result of absences in the evolution of knowledge; rather, it results from the presences that shape knowledge, making some ideas thinkable while at the same time canceling the possibility of notions that defy the hegemonic habits of thought that are prevalent in a historical moment" (Cadena 2011, 76). The historical narrative of the West demonstrates how certain modes of thought have been rendered *"unthinkable,"* and therefore unviable solutions to the climate crisis. Nevertheless, it is this thought that suggests that the unthinkable is not a void, it is, rather, a conscious choice. The responsibility to distinguish these categories, the "rational" and the "irrational," technology and science versus emotion and relationality, nature and culture, exists within our own capacity to create and uphold the very "the possibility of notions." If we are to seek notions of freedom and inclusion, justice and equity in the context of climate change, we must begin our work from the very tensions that we cannot name. The ingredients of the liberal climate project will not solve its problem, it is, instead, the silences and the gaping holes in this undertaking that yield the greatest source of opportunity. Heterodystopias are the planes on which we attempt to bridge these gaps.

What follows is an invitation to shift our thinking, putting aside conceptions of probability for the brief consideration of possibility. I begin Chapter 1 with the foundational ontological divisions which underlie the contemporary climate crisis wherein predominantly white, Western individuals are largely spared from the premature environmental pressures faced by Indigenous populations today. Questioning the ontological limitations of the Western nature-culture dichotomy, I ask where the binary yields to more relational modes of viewing the world, and particularly, what role climate change may play in this necessary ontological concession. Confident in this capacity to yield to postures different from our norm, I posit that there is room for inclusion in our narrowly constructed vision of the world. And while this inclusion of other ontologies, of other worldviews, will entail a concerted practice in bridging knowledges and reconciling incommensurabilities, it will also be the portal that launches us towards the putting into practice of heterodystopias.

Chapter 2 applies the concepts and methodologies of the previous section to present two case studies of heterodystopias and (re)making in action. Such case studies serve to ask how we might destabilize dichotomous conceptions of nature and culture to embrace difference without separation. The Standing Rock Sioux's fight against the Dakota Access Pipeline serves as the primary representational zone where Indigenous dystopias meet lessons in resilience. Following this case study, I include a shorter ethnographic example of Indigenous women's fight against extractivism in Amazonia to further discuss points of contact and disjuncture between worlds and worldviews. In either case, I begin by framing the example within the particular ontologies of the group in question. Such framing then enables further discussion of the tensions that arise between non-Indigenous and Indigenous interpretations and where convergences can be located amidst the tensions to unveil heterodystopia-inspired actions for alternative futures. I emphasize

here, however, that this undertaking towards laying the groundwork for different futures must be carried out without the expectation to be saved or even welcomed by Indigenous peoples.

The third chapter entitled, Fiction and Futurisms, ventures into just one of many methods of what future-making between the material and the abstract looks like. I use this chapter to concretize the sort of worlding and decolonizing work that I am suggesting through the concept of heterodystopias. Indigenous futurisms and speculative fiction like cli-fi are one way by which Indigenous and non-Native writers alike are mobilizing lessons from the suffering and resilience of the past to forge pathways to imagining not only environmental catastrophe, but also, resurgence. The existence of growing artistic and literary spaces wherein such strategies of dreaming about alternative futures is possible serves as testament to the possibility of the impossible.

I finish on the topic of imagination, dreaming, and enriching our subjectivities. It does not suffice to merely gather the lessons presented by dystopian worlds existing amidst our own. Rather, these representational zones are but points of departure in a much larger project of imagining how to prefigure futures that are truly alternative, truly unique in their effort to restore and transform worlds. What opportunities do the convergences between and among worlds afford us? How do we lean into these convergences, embracing uncertainty, and putting faith in our capacity to walk, to dream into being worlds not fully formed? How do we gather the pieces and the curiosities to tell but one more story of what can be in a last-ditch effort to postpone the end of the world?

Chapter 1 | Between Ontological Division: Locating Points of Relation

In his reflections in *How to Postpone the End of the World*, Ailton Krenak questions the normativity of "Humanity" as a group envisioned as markedly separate from Indigenous communities in particular:

> How can we find a point of contact between these two worlds, which share the same origin but have drifted so far apart today we have, at one extreme, those who need a river in order to live, and, at the other, those who consume rivers as mere resources? (Krenak 2020, 51)

One earth. Two worlds. Immediately, the Western mind assumes struggle and violence as though coexistence necessitates disjuncture, as though coexistence begets the necessary triumph of one over another. Still, Indigenous activist Aiton Krenak, of the Brazilian Krenaki tribe, in spite of his observation of one group's capacity for survival being directly threatened by another's greed for resources, asks not about a most obvious point of disjuncture. Rather, he asks how we might arrive at a newly imagined point of *contact*. As Krenak suggests, we are at the crossroads of a nature-culture ontological divide wherein the lack of contact between existing worlds portends dystopian implications on not only ecosystem functioning but on the very lifeways of certain people. At such a point in history, a seemingly contentious reality does not elude the fact that these worlds are, in fact, capable of partial connection. It is, however, perhaps only in arriving at some shared understanding of this convergence that will push the worlds in question towards an intersection that avoids a privileging of one environmental approach over another.

The goal in questioning existing ontological dichotomies as they relate to the environment is not to wash the contemporary climate discourse over with a broad brush, simply advocating for the universal adoption of Indigenous practices and ontologies in place of our own. One universal cannot replace another, for it is not a model of sameness that will advance visions

of coming futures. Krenak elaborates in proclaiming, "We're not the only interesting people" – that is, a shift in our comprehension of ontological boundaries does not and will not locate Indigenous people at the center of emergent worlds. He continues, "we're just part of the whole" (Krenak 2020, 35). Each world, no matter its use of the river, exists within one Earth. Likewise, each ontology, no matter its investment in terms like nature or culture, exists within one amalgamation of diverse ontologies. Boaventura de Sousa Santos further clarifies this point adding that alongside ontologies, the epistemologies of the Global South do not strive to merely reverse positions in respect to the Global North. He says, "The issue is not to erase the differences between North and South, but rather to erase the power hierarchies inhabiting them" (Santos 2018, 7). To erase the power hierarchies, the objective is then to focus intently on the differences, asking what caused them, what maintains them, what these differences entail in the most material sense, and for whom.

This said, the project at play in destabilizing an already insecure nature-culture conception is to move beyond universal, all-encompassing terms such as humanity, environment, and nature to edge towards a grand diversity of worldviews, a diversity so great that it affords us glimpses into future lifeways previously left unexamined and unexplored. Such an entrance into the realm of possibility is the very first step in employing a heterodystopic approach as the point of exploration into the creation of worlds more empathetic, more ethical, and more resilient.

Nature & Culture

For much of the duration of Western civilization, humanity has positioned itself in direct opposition to the Earth. The Anthropocene and the notion of a coming dystopia, however, muddle humanity's project by very violently upheaving a foundational distinction between

natural and human histories. Dipesh Chakrabarty elaborates further on this point of historical crumbling. He says, "Philosophers and students of history have often displayed a conscious tendency to separate human history… from natural history, sometimes proceeding even to deny that nature could ever have history" (Chakrabarty 2008, 201). As a derivative of Cartesian or Post-Enlightenment theory, this assumption mirrors the necessary cleaving of the world, the necessary separation of nature from reason. At the mercy of man, nature is deemed non-agentic, incapable of producing and thus dictating its own history. This being said, it is not only the natural environment that is regarded as effectively inferior to Western humanist logic, but it is all those people exhibiting different ways of being human who may also fall into this inert category of "nature."

The problem now is that such distinctions fail to serve this singular notion of humanity as we are scientifically rendered geologically powerful and simultaneously biologically power*less* in the destruction of our own species and planet. History's ideological groundwork and its very carefully crafted politics of time that has upheld the modern subject, profoundly individuated from nature, suddenly engenders its own demise. As Danowski and de Castro spell out, this historical conundrum and the concurrent transformation of human capability makes us privy to "the collapse of an ever more ambiguous environment, of which we can no longer say *where* it is in relation to us, and us to it" (Danowski & de Castro 2017, 14). No longer can one "enlightened" subset of humanity dictate the right or wrong way of being in the world. This collapse of space and time strips the modern subject of a very fundamental need to locate herself in a linear narrative, and she is effectively cast into the perilous throws of a future unwritten, a future unforeseen, a future unforeseeable. The inevitable dissolution of conceptual boundaries that ensues leaves us no option but to reckon with notions of continuity and relationality that

necessitate a near negation of presiding unilinear and universal understandings of self, society, history, and environment.

Evidently, we are accustomed to employing nature in the modern context to rationally individuate ourselves. But being that the Anthropocene effectively puts an end to this project of individuation, we may now be forced to confront nature's lessons as a potential lifeway, and not as a mere tool, to gain a newly grounded perspective. Simply put, the catastrophic conditions of our era have invited a rethinking of the very ontologies which have upheld Western conceptualizations of humanity. It is effectively the demise of the "one-truth humanity" as some critics might call it (Krenak 2020, 16). Consequently, systems of knowledge seemingly incommensurable with our own can be and must be considered with a new embrace. Such forms of knowledge that might arise as necessary adoptions to our own lifeways are subaltern in nature and particularly Indigenous in origin. Yet, how do we bridge the gap between the mere aspiration to integrate perspectives and the literal action of integrating non-dualistic comprehensions of nature and culture into a Western consciousness entirely predicated on such a binary? How do we unravel the guiding principles of Western approaches which allow for a compartmentalization of environment from culture and which allow for an incommensurability in global discourses?

Relational Modes

I argue that while the Western individual is legitimized by his use of reason and rationality above all else, this individual is not and never has been confined to the very categories that he so strictly imposes. Though we distinguish the rational as the exclusive territory of the modern subject, it is not to say that this subject is unfamiliar with modes of being that transcend logical limitations. Other modes of understanding have always existed, but what Gayatri Spivak

highlights is how the Enlightenment effectively defined the "public use of reason" as *the sole mode of understanding* (Spivak 1992, 2). Extending this notion into the global landscape, de Sousa Santos elaborates further on the reign of reason. He writes, "From the standpoint of the epistemologies of the South, the epistemologies of the North have contributed crucially to converting the scientific knowledge developed in the global North into the hegemonic way of representing the world as one's own and of transforming it according to one's own needs and aspirations" (Santos 2018, 5). The public centering of reason as Spivak describes is thus the very basis to the imperial domination of the global North in the realms of science, economy, and military. As a universal mode of understanding, reason is consequently deployed as justification for the many harms that these categories engender.

Regardless of reason's centrality, however, it is but one lens through which we may see the world. Contrary to the Western world's apparent dominion over reason, Spivak states that "Reason is contained within *all kinds of cultural production* which acknowledges alterity, which acknowledges otherness" (UCTV 2008). She elaborates that we, as Western citizens, have fetishized reason as our master when, in fact, we ought to "protect reason as our *ally* contained within other sorts of systems" (ibid). Reason is capable of abstraction, and therefore, that which is nature, that which is subaltern, is capable of being integrated into a more culturally or logically-informed understanding of the world. This is not to say that subaltern or Indigenous understandings ought to be appropriated, but rather to emphasize that they do not completely resist cohesion with other seemingly dissonant worldviews. Only at this point, may we acknowledge that neither the "rational" nor the "irrational," the cultural nor the natural, demarcate the conceptual confines of the modern subject or the subaltern consciousness.

This said, we have yet to collectively manifest this seemingly utopian social cohesion. The question thus remains – how do we effectively integrate ourselves into a non-historical and a non-binary comprehension of the world? Within the context of the Anthropocene in particular, at what point do we relate back to the subaltern to not only acknowledge but to relate to a different conceptualization of environmental relations in the world? While I argue that our worlds are not divided along perfectly binary lines demarcating the confines of the Western environmental approach, I acknowledge that learning from Indigenous approaches often comes with difficulty for the Western individual. Perhaps the greatest difficulty in coming to understand Indigenous heterodystopic visions of environment and futures is that the Western individual regards many of the 'solutions' purportedly located within these existing dystopias as all but reasonable and rational within a non-Indigenous context. From the non-Native perspective, to propose an intermingling of the self with the marked Other in hopes of achieving an objective as grand as global climate solution is to naively invite inaction in the face of urgency. Such an act is not only naive, it is effectively impossible.

In regards to this frustration, Saidiya Hartman's advice is particularly poignant. She states, "The task of writing the impossible … has as its prerequisites the embrace of likely failure and the *readiness to accept the ongoing*" (Hartman 2008, 14). While failure, in this case, alludes to a world devastated by an allegiance to ontological division, Hartman's reference to a "readiness to accept the ongoing," speaks to a necessity to accept life beyond and life after the "Anthro" – that is, life beyond the particular subset of humans responsible for the ecological shift at hand. The phrase alludes to a future wherein the Enlightened reason-bound human as we know it is irrevocably decentralized. Indeed, the project of integrating Indigenous dystopias into our comprehension of future worlds seems impossible because it breaches the confines of the

normative human, pushing our comprehension of the liberal individual to its very limits. Against all temptation, this project of discovery in heterodystopias entails our very own negation. Failure to maintain the norm is effectively inevitable.

Sitting with this discomfort in accepting worlds beyond the self, I argue that from this point forward, progress towards alternative futures is no longer incumbent on our personal success as Western subjects. An undefined space is accordingly created to explore a domain that is not of reason nor of the individual. The scope is suddenly broadened, and in regards to our rational historical narrative, we realize that "What has been said and what can be said … *take for granted* the traffic between fact, fantasy, desire, and violence" (Hartman 2008, 5). The story that we are often told about the world takes for granted the many instances when fact and violence, domains of the "rational," have collided with resistance to these facts in the form of fantasy and desire, domains of the "irrational." As such, when we again interrogate sources of difference between worlds, it becomes increasingly evident that the friction between these categories discloses an amalgamation of worlds that exist in continuous *simultaneity.* It is this friction that ultimately enables us to acknowledge not only an entanglement of worlds but also to acknowledge a plurality of worlds.

It is our confrontation with the end of the world as we know it that invokes this very necessary openness to a continuity beyond the collapse of the culturally individuated human being. It is this inevitable deconstruction that transforms "the conditions of impossibility into possibility" (Spivak 1985, 201). The relationality that we thenceforth experience is a relationality that is also approaching the subaltern. It serves to call into question who we think we are, thus opening the opportunity for perspectives that we may have always harbored but now merit a sort of embrace. Reflecting on the limitations of excess and nothingness in the narratives that exist

between herself and her interlocutors, Marisol de la Cadena states simply, "the world that sees itself as "everything" [is] insufficient" (de la Cadena 2011, 15). The Western world is inherently "insufficient," for our very understanding of humanity as universal fact denies the co-presence of alternative. The biases of our own ontologies reflect their own shortcomings, but it is these very gaps in our world as we know it that open the door to the presences that illuminate the totality of a consciousness that is not exclusive to the self. It opens the door to the unthinkable.

It opens the door to what geographer Juanita Sundberg calls the "pluriverse," a location-based tool wherein we can both decolonize and destabilize the seeming universality of the nature-culture divide and Western ontology. In effect, the pluriverse is the multiplicity of ontology. Referencing the Zapatista practice of "walking the world into being," Sundberg remarks that the pluriverse, within this context and others based in Indigenous principles, builds "a world in which many worlds fit" (Sundberg 2014, 39). In other words, invoking notions of the pluriverse confirms Boaventura de Sousa Santos's assertion that "The epistemic diversity of the world is potentially infinite," and therefore, "There are no complete knowledges" (Santos 2008, xlvii). What the Western individual might learn from the Standing Rock Sioux or the Indigenous women of Amazonia in an effort to prefigure the conditions of coming dystopia does not serve as an addendum to a knowledge that already considers itself complete. Rather, such a venture into heterodystopias encourages "an equality of opportunities to different kinds of knowledge" as they all relate back to the emergence of possibility (Santos 2008, xx).

Translation

At this point, if we are to consider different kinds of knowledge existing in simultaneity, we must face the obstacle of translation, for the act of questioning seemingly incommensurable discourses does not necessarily imply an eventual arrival at commensurability. Again invoking

Krenak's example, the Indigenous people of the river can explain that their conception of the river differs greatly from that of non-Indigenous people. Engaged and curious about this different understanding, a Non-native person may follow and nod her head sympathetically, inching towards concepts that she has never once considered. Yet, ultimately, a recognition of unfamiliar concepts and even an articulation of such concepts does not equate to understanding. In the same sense, when discussing the potential for learning by way of Indigenous climate and environmental dystopias, one cannot assume that even in our best effort, translation will resolve dissonance. Heterodystopias are representational zones. That is, they re-present, re-articulate realities that we cannot necessarily know in their entirety. They are merely planes upon which we arrive to prefigure change. This being said, recognition need not equate to perfect understanding for such changes to occur.

Brazilian anthropologist Eduardo Viveiros de Castro describes this phenomenon behind translation in greater detail through his discussion of Amerindian perspectivism. Alongside Western relativism, Viveiros de Castro explains the importance of equivocation in the anthropological project of cultural translation. Applying the concept within her ethnographic work, de la Cadena writes, "Equivocations cannot be canceled. However, they can be 'controlled' and avoid transforming what is dissimilar into the same" (Cadena 2015, 27). Applying Viveiros de Castro's interpretation of equivocation in an Andean context, de la Cadena uses one word, "Ausangate," to describe sacred mountains as they exist in two different worlds. In one world, Ausangate is "nature" as the Western world would understand it, and in the other, Ausangate is an 'earth-being,' and an *apu*, a sacred Andean lord, a concept which does not share meaning with the term's definition as it would be described by de la Cadena's interlocutors. No matter the final translation, what successfully bridges the gap in understanding is a collaborative

effort to prevent any fundamental departure of essence. It is this collaborative effort that invests

faith in the knowledge that there is "an essential similarity… between what the Other and We are

saying" (Cadena 2015, 27).

Another example of this imperfect practice of translation from de la Cadena pertains to

the understanding of land. Though land is a term that universally describes productive ground

from which people cultivate crops, de la Cadena clarifies that within the world of her

interlocutors, land is "not only" this (Cadena 2015, 110). Land, according to the Andean

peasants, is imbued with the presence of both *runakuna*, people like de la Cadena's interlocutors

who are active participants in modern institutions, as well as *tirakuna*, or earth-beings like

Ausangate. In one sense, these two worlds captured by two radically different conceptions of

land and the life forces that it contains are firmly distinguished, and thus, separate from each

other. In another sense, however, these worlds can be partially connected via translation. As de la

Cadena describes, the leftist politicians who understand land as it is described in the first

definition inhabit a world public and therefore intelligible to broad communities of people. On

the other hand, the *ayllu*, composed of *runakuna* and *tirakuna*, or humans and

'other-than-humans,' who subscribe to the second definition are not public. That is, they are not

public until their existence is translated, equivocated into something capable of being known by

other worlds.

Partial Connection

I interpret these sites of partial connection as worlds within themselves, worlds where

some element of shared experience can inform a new experience. Marisol de la Cadena

continually acknowledges that, because of partial connections, even though her world and that of

her interlocutors are not exactly commensurable, the capacity for communication between such worlds is never rendered impossible. Describing her approach to this topic, de la Cadena writes, "relations do not only connect through similarities; differences also connect" (de la Cadena 2011, 27). This premise is in fact the very essence underlying anthropology. It is the promise that in spite of a foundational understanding of difference in the world, the anthropologist can facilitate ethnographic conversations to the point of translation. Effectively, anthropology demonstrates that difference determines connection. Translation is then pluriversality in action, for the articulation of concepts between differences assumes the possibility of overlap and coexistence. Thus, albeit containing certain gaps and lapses, incommensurable knowledges do not equate to an inability to communicate.

Finally, in preparation for the case studies to follow, I emphasize that translation and articulation must "enact the co-presence of particular and universal interest" (Choy 2011, 95). With particular interests representing those of Indigenous populations and universal interests representing those of the West, it is the anti-linear movement between the two that I am suggesting. Returning to Con's definition of heterodystopias as "windows onto life in a warming world and, as such, opportunities to manage future crises," I posit that this co-presence makes a primary appeal to the particular, in this case the Indigenous (Cons 2018, 271). These "windows" into the particular then inform our management of a crisis conceived to be universal in fashion. This being said, heterodystopias are ultimately ventures into forms of understanding which transcend both the universal and the particular. As such, I anticipate that the search for ethical relationality amidst the climate catastrophe will force us to stretch ourselves beyond that which we believe to be possible. Otherwise put, heterodystopias must stretch us in both directions between particular to universal and back to finally ask – what is exceeding translation in the

Anthropocene? As Marisol de la Cadena writes, what is the "Anthropo-not-seen" (de la Cadena 2014, 253)?

      In this chapter, I have argued that although Western ontologies emphasizing a division of nature and culture do indeed have irrefutable, serious implications on the physical world, the sense of truth touted by such a worldview can and will be challenged by the climate crisis. It is this disintegration of ontological boundaries drawn between worlds that heralds a heterodystopic approach into pluriversal realms of possibility. I pivot now to the application of such concepts within the context of two Indigenous groups standing against the extractivist manifestations of inherently divisive Western ontologies to ultimately identify points of contact and convergence between ostensibly discordant lifeways.

Chapter 2 | Applying Heterodystopia: Case Studies of Indigenous Resistance in the Americas

In their discussion on how to act pluriversally as opposed to universally, Collard et al. cite Mario Blaser who "frames ontology in terms of practices and performances of *worlding* — of being, doing, and knowing." It entails a practice in which reality "is *done* and *enacted* rather than observed" (Collard et al. 2015, 327-328). Through the lens of heterodystopias, we begin in the act of worlding. That is, we begin in the act of prefiguring the conditions necessary to bring new worlds into existence. Echoing the notions of both Indigenous and Western theorists, conceptualizing pluriversality, or "The World as a Plenum" as Da Silva puts it, is not an original idea. I posit that it is instead the very difficult practice of relating to infinite compositions of the world under the pressure of climate instability that requires our immediate attention (Da Silva 2016, 58).

Putting ethical relationality into example, I now enter into two case studies demonstrating the representational zones enabled by heterodystopias. I argue that the following cases are heterodystopian in nature and therefore useful in the prefiguring of alternative futures in the Anthropocene for three reasons: 1. The case calls into question the normalization of dystopian conditions as they have existed and continue to exist within Indigenous communities. 2. The subjects of the case have already used their past and ongoing experiences of degradation, dismissal, and discrimination to suggest particular methods of withstanding cultural and environmental violence. 3. Elements of the case converge to create a representational zone wherein others, particularly non-marginalized Western individuals, can at least *partially* locate themselves within broader themes of impending social, cultural, and environmental threats. Ultimately, it is this representational zone where the Western individual actively relates back to some element of the Other's experience of climate and environmental catastrophe that invokes

Sundberg's "pluriverse." In other words, I interpret these cases such that with each representational zone created by partial connection, there emerges one more universe, one more possibility of a future previously unimagined.

Standing Rock #NoDAPL

I transition now to describe one particular example of many Indigenous dystopias. The case of the Standing Rock Sioux's fight against the Dakota Access Pipeline is a story of anthropogenic environmental change, much like many are familiar with when discussed under the pretext of the Anthropocene. Yet, unlike the mainstream treatment of anthropogenic climate change being posed as a relatively new threat, this Indigenous story of anthropogenic environmental change is, in fact, something that can be and ought to be treated with historical precedent, for it is something that Indigenous groups in America have long known and encountered.

Before venturing into just why #NoDAPL demonstrates an example of contemporary climate dystopia, it is necessary to frame the conversation with an overview of Lakota ontology as it relates to environmental concerns. Much to the discomfort of Western ontological perceptions of nature and culture discussed earlier, there is, in fact, no word for nature in the Lakota language reminiscent of the "passive, unchanging, impersonal, abstract domain of objects subject to autonomous laws that is antithetical to culture or society" (Posthumus 2018, 42). Rather than something observed and speculated upon from a distance, nature, in the Lakota sense, is immediate to and inseparable from everyday life. Nature is not the totality of everything outside of man. Instead, nature subsumes the manifold relationships between man and a mountain or man and a forest thereby dissolving hegemonic notions of self as distinctly separate

from Other.

Such ontological underpinnings are central to a particular phrase heard throughout Lakota history and echoing into the teachings and rituals at Standing Rock — *mitákuye oyás*. Meaning "all my relatives, we are all related," *mitákuye oyás* speaks to the animist principle within Lakota ontology. The phrase in itself reaches beyond the self to imbue all humans, non-humans, and more-than-humans with a sense of aliveness and thus an intrinsic sense of relatedness (Posthumus 2018, 39-42). As Philippe Descola states in his definition of animism, all environments, all that is nature have a "similar interiority," exhibiting "spirit, life, personality, subjectivity, intentionality, common energy" in itself (ibid, 38). Within this ontological context, humans are also conceived of as possessing the least amount of power and knowledge within their networks of relations. Therefore, counter to the Western fetish of the near-invincible human, standing individuated in his conquest of lands and peoples deemed inferior to his capacity, Lakota ontologies result in a humbling of the human to those relatives greater than he. Contrary to the dominant Anthropocene discourse, the human is thus not inherently bad nor is his existence entirely antithetical to the Earth's functioning.

As is made increasingly clear in the following discussion of #NoDAPL, the culmination of this interrelatedness and mutual species respect is what enables the "ongoing (re)creation of the living cosmos" in Indigenous communities like those at Standing Rock (Posthumus 2018, 25). It is what Vine Deloria calls the "moral universe" (Deloria 1999, 46). In such a world upheld by the tenets described in Lakota ontology, mutual respect contributes to the reproduction of collective identity. From these feedback loops are generated, not progress as the Western individual might assume, but rather time-withstanding Indigenous sovereignty and survivance. These Lakota ontologies prove central to the forms of environmental stewardship and protection

executed both in times past and in this ongoing process of dystopia now.

Beginning in April of 2016, thousands of water protectors led by Standing Rock Sioux tribal members gathered to stop the construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline, a 1,172-mile-long pipeline running from the Bakken/Three Forks production area in North Dakota to Patoka, Illinois for the transport of crude oil. As a cheaper alternative to rail transport, proponents of the pipeline argued that it would increase American energy independence, jobs, and charitable donations. Regardless, members of the Standing Rock Sioux resisted all construction as the pipeline posed major risks to water quality and threatened cultural heritage. On top of this, the pipeline route runs through territories that the native people of the region never willingly ceded to the United States (Whyte 2019, 1-2).

It is within this context of ongoing violence against a people and their land that the heterodystopic element of this case emerges, for this particular situation serves as a window into contemporary Western concerns regarding climate migration and environmental displacement. Comparing this Indigenous reality to future fears projected by the Anthropocene narrative, major similarities emerge in the dystopian form of land loss resulting in people being forced into alternative lifeways, unfamiliar with their traditional means of subsistence. Set within a historical context, this form of forced removal speaks to the expulsion of Indigenous peoples onto reservations for the purpose of colonial extraction on native soils. This history is again strikingly representative of the migration and limited movement often referenced in relation to contemporary climate change projections. Together, the conditions historically and currently being inflicted on Native peoples by exploitative colonial interventions on their homelands illustrate a reality of dystopia now.

With an acknowledgment of what has been done to their land in times past, this example

outlines a proactivity amongst the people at Standing Rock that seeks to end all possibility of further environmental damage and subsequent evacuation from the area. Most notable about the Standing Rock Sioux's stance is that, at this point in history, resistance is ingrained in their cultural tradition. Accordingly, these resistance practices are less focused on the outright battle against the settler-colonial outsider and more so focused on reconnecting to what is essential to the culture. Whyte writes, "While the resistance to DAPL appears as direct action, a standoff, and a conflict fought by lawyers, many Indigenous persons whose work created the #NoDAPL movement say it is really about ceremony, prayer, and water protection" (Whyte 2019, 5). The Ghost Dance movement in the aftermath of the 1890 Wounded Knee massacre, the Red Power movement of the 1960s in response to broken treaties, and now, #NoDAPL follows in a continuity of Indigenous resistance practices couched in two centuries worth of colonial oppression.

Such understandings of historical trauma and resurgence are deeply internalized by Indigenous peoples across America like Lee Plenty Wolf, an Oglala Lakota elder from the Pine Ridge Reservation. In 2016, while mentoring the newly elected headmen of the Oceti Sakowin Camp at Standing Rock, Lee Plenty Wolf reflected on what kept him grounded at the site of protest. He remarked, "Usually I get up and I look to the east to pray …But [on the third morning I was here], I glanced at the east, and I looked to the north, and the first vision that came to me was Wounded Knee, the first massacre… That's when I decided I couldn't leave" (Alexandra & Zambelich 2016). Nearly 130 years after the murder of upwards of 200 Lakota people by the United States Army in 1890, the significance of Wounded Knee was not lost on Lee Plenty Wolf, for his vision was clear (Brown 2007). Knowing the historically brutal response to any and all forms of Indigenous resistance, Lee Plenty Wolf among countless others at Standing Rock

foresaw the colonial violence that would soon take place.

In this sense, I emphasize that it is not about conceptualizing Standing Rock within a linear notion of history but rather through the lens of a deeply ingrained, timeless sense of place, sacredness, resistance, and continuity closely allied with the environment. As Whyte elaborates, "Settler colonialism is an 'environmental' injustice, for the US settlement process aims directly to undermine the ecological conditions required for Indigenous peoples to exercise their cultures, economies, and political self-determination" (Whyte 2019, 16). To DAPL proponents, the Standing Rock Sioux lands are but open earth and waters, yet to the Indigenous peoples of the lands, their relations, their cultural integrity, their governance, and their economic vitality are all intertwined within the ecosystem. If the ecosystem is exploited, it does not cause a mere economic or ecological stress. Rather, an exploited ecosystem is a sign of an entire Indigenous lifeway undermined.

Again acknowledging the pattern in this cycle of environmental injustice, the story of the Standing Rock Sioux's ongoing battle to protect their lands, must be couched within a narrative of "colonial déjà vu" (Whyte 2019, 15). It is only in placing this example within a larger story, a longer story, that it becomes apparent that these people are familiar with the stakes, they are familiar with the threat, and if the earth's clock cannot be turned back and the carbon cannot be sucked out of the air, they know what to do in order to survive with integrity. In any case, surviving with integrity does not suddenly render climate precarity easy.

The question now becomes what non-Indigenous people do with the knowledge of such dystopian conditions. I argue that for visions of future action to emerge clearly, unclouded by the fog of white guilt and settler moralities, we must begin with the most fundamental tensions that arise between Indigenous and non-Indigenous approaches to #NoDAPL. At the heart of the

standoff is a departure in the understanding of what land is and what land means. While non-Indigenous people may attend the water protection ceremonies and echo chants shouting "water is life," an act of imperfect translation is in the works. This is because Western ontologies provide no basis for the Indigenous understanding of ceremony which surpasses the performative aspect to enter into the sacred. Therefore, even when standing in solidarity with the water protectors, truly believing in the phrase "water is life," non-Indigenous activists are not necessarily exhibiting an identical understanding and relation to the cause. I note here that #NoDAPL also attracted crowds of non-Indigenous people inauthentic in their allyship. Prioritizing their own notions of what activism ought to look like, these individuals demonstrated a resounding lack of respect for traditional Indigenous knowledge and protocols. This said, these people are not central to my discussion, for their actions are manifestations of an ontological incommensurability that does not seek to translate nor bridge differences of understanding.

The Indigenous conception of water as something different and distinguishable from a Western conception of it as a resource is further encapsulated by Zaysha Grinnell. Zaysha is a member of the Three Affiliated Tribes located on the Fort Berthold Indian reservation in North Dakota, and she was only 15 years old when she formed the youth pipeline protest group, Modern Day Warriors. During the initial standoff at Standing Rock, Zaysha countered the extractive and invasive practices sanctioned by energy companies and supporters of DAPL saying, "There is no alternative to water. There is no alternative to this Earth. This fight has become my life, and it's not over … Do you want a future for your children and grandchildren? If you want them to have a future then stand with Standing Rock because this is just the beginning of a revolution" (Dhillon 2016). After her own experience, Grinnell positions water far beyond the immediate to encompass the Earth, its processes, and the generations of beings

that rely on water as a sacred and unrivaled source of life. Water, a resource so often taken for granted by non-marginalized people, is presented by Grinnell as the start of a "revolution." Again, the struggle at Standing Rock reverberates beyond the confines of the standoff itself to invoke questions of both past and futures.

Drawing from the words of seasoned leaders like Lee Plenty Wolf to budding activists like Zaysha Grinnell, I briefly mention the emerging theme of place and placed-based understandings of moral narratives in Indigenous conceptions of the world. While Western practices of resource extraction automatically render places with a sense of expendability, the importance of place as something more than an inanimate opportunity for profit is a significant point of contention in the #NoDAPL movement. Keith Basso's ethnography of the Western Apache, though not representative of all Indigenous peoples, speaks to just how notions of the sacred are ingrained in places and place names. Reminiscent of Lee Plenty Wolf's remarks, Basso writes:

> Places possess a marked capacity for triggering acts of self-reflection, inspiring thoughts about who one presently is, or memories of who one used to be, or musings on who one might become. And that is not all. Place-based thoughts about the self lead commonly to thoughts of other things - other places, other people, other times, whole networks of associations that ramify unaccountably within the expanding spheres of awareness that they themselves engender … When places are actively sensed, the physical landscape becomes wedded to the landscape of the mind, to the roving imagination, and where the mind may lead is anybody's guess. (Basso 1996, 55)

Place, as it is described here, is a mere point of entry into space – that is, all the memories, feelings, emotions, and wisdoms that are contained within physical and natural monuments. As Basso explains, it is then only in a "wedding" of the landscape with the mind that individuals can effectively be opened to new possibilities. Place is indispensable to knowledge production so much so that there is seemingly no knowledge without it. On this same topic, one Apache man recounts, "Wisdom sits in places. It's like water that never dries up. You

need to drink water to stay alive, don't you? Well, you also need to drink from places" (Basso 1996, 70). Unlike Western perceptions of knowledge being a product of culture and cultivation of the mind above all else, the Indigenous project is twofold, relying on not only the mind but equally the vitality of beings and systems beyond the self. The necessary capacity for imagination, especially in this era of the Anthropocene, cannot thrive where the natural environment has been degraded.

Building on these tensions between worlds, differences also arise in the discussion of tactics. Again, even while Indigenous and non-Indigenous activists may stand hand in hand in the face of pipeline workers, the foundational motivation behind their stance differs. This reality harks back to the innate sense of conflict or opposition ingrained within the Western ontological tradition. Nature and culture, as aforementioned, are often pitted against each other, necessitating the triumph of the latter over the former, thus leading to a constant outward reinforcement of one's power. In other words, Western ontological dichotomies engender a perpetual making of self in contrast to.

While non-Indigenous activists frame this struggle in terms of a fight against or a clash between opposing forces, the Indigenous perspective puts far greater emphasis on working and animating from within. These ontological differences manifest themselves in varied ways as Mexica and Otomi Indigenous Futurist, multidisciplinary storyteller, and photographer, Josué Rivas, expresses in the very literal imagery coming out of the media at Standing Rock. He says, "My images presented outside of the story were often overlooked and misunderstood by the non-Native photojournalists. These photos honor and celebrate the resilience of the Water Protectors and focus on the prayer instead of the controversy. They depict less of the conflict with the police and more of the historical power of the movement" (Rivas 2017). All the way

down to the different camera angles positioned by Indigenous versus non-Indigenous photographers, the most fundamental conceptualizations of this one event differ drastically by worldview. What we want to see consequently informs our entire understanding of the struggle at hand. This view that we take, however, is a choice, and in spite of our ontologies and positionings in the world, we may all make the choice to change our angle, our perspective to intentionally capture glimpses of alternative visions.

Ultimately, a discussion of such tensions leads us to an understanding of just what exactly non-Indigenous approaches are lacking and what it is that may recreate resilience within this example of heterodystopia. Whyte argues that at the heart of this unresolved matter, we are missing a tendency towards modes of deep reciprocity. Where Indigenous groups like the Standing Rock Sioux have always and continue to foster a cultural and environmental resilience by way of relational qualities such as "consent, trust, accountability, and reciprocity," the environmental crisis as it involves both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people is ignorant of its own need to equally integrate such qualities into its approach (Whyte 2020, 1). Emphasizing this sort of relational blockage as a consequence of Western ontologies, Whyte continues that "The entwinement of colonialism, capitalism, and industrialization failed to affirm or establish these qualities or kinship relationships across societies" (ibid). Because of the historical and continued harm that such failures have propagated across Indigenous peoples and lands, Whyte suggests that a critical relational tipping point has been surpassed before the ecological tipping point that we now await within the context of the Anthropocene. Simply put, it takes more time than we theoretically have before the planet warms into an unprecedented climate catastrophe to merely switch to developing consensual and reciprocal relations between and across groups.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, this consideration of the prior harms intimately ingrained in

the environment and generational memory of Indigenous peoples is precisely why heterodystopias cannot serve as mere blueprints to the future. We cannot suddenly choose to recognize that kincentric understandings of the world are less damaging than anthropocentric or biocentric understandings and without consequence move on to a better future from there. Effectively, this way of thinking, of approaching catastrophe with a strictly solution-based orientation, only perpetuates the problem at hand. That is, if we only attempt to build without concerted effort to mend, we might forever enter into a cycle of dystopian visioning, always searching for prior transgressions in order to prefigure slightly better progressions.

It is in the effort to avoid this positive feedback cycle that I return to the importance of translation and relational modes. We cannot make that which is dissimilar into the same. That is, we cannot suddenly conflate disparate environmental approaches to propose one solution. Yet, what we can do within and outside of this example is search for the partial connections between these dissimilar worlds. That is, we can identify those convergences between two seemingly separate worlds to mobilize our tensions and our lessons from Standing Rock to arrive at some idea of where healing concepts such as kinship and networks of deep reciprocity can be integrated into our own transitioning perception of the world.

These partial connections are multiple. In my own estimation, however, one of the greatest convergences that can be mobilized between Western and Indigenous ontologies within this context of #NoDAPL comes in the form of the environmental justice framework. Environmental justice activists focus on the disproportionate negative environmental impacts concentrated in communities of color and low-income communities. Many of these self-proclaimed environmental justice advocates were among the non-Indigenous allies standing in solidarity with the Standing Rock Sioux in 2016. When discussing the environmental

movement in America, Julie Sze writes that environmental justice is crucial to analyze "because racial minority communities are at the front lines of resistance to these policies and discourses valorizing the market and the private sector at the expense of the public and community interests" (Sze 2006, 10). At its most fundamental level, environmental justice as a movement and as a philosophy centers the community, their health, their concerns, and their experience as a collective systemically targeted by the politics of neoliberalism and capitalism. Thus, the project of the environmental justice advocate is to, as Aaron Mair, President of the Sierra Club's board of directors, says, "articulate the freedoms" of frontline communities such as those bordering the Dakota Access Pipeline (Hudson River Sloop Clearwater 2021). Environmental justice organizations are effective vessels through which Indigenous methods of resistance including more kincentric relations can be allied with non-Indigenous activists' notions of achieving justice in the settler-colonial state.

Deeply embedded in such central ideas of the environmental justice movement as a movement started by non-Indigenous activists are quite inevitably the anthropocentric ontologies which guide the Western worldview. Yet, what advances the ambitions of all actors is the shared lean towards the decolonization of Earth and landscapes contained within the environmental justice framework. In their "Manifesto for Abundant Futures," Collard et al. write that "Creating conditions for abundance necessitates enacting alternatives to imperial capitalism" (Collard et al. 2015, 323). Environmental justice responds to this call, creating the conditions from which coalitions and a plurality of voices lead to direct and concerted attention to the very people upon whose backs imperial capitalism finds expansion. No, environmental justice does not extend its scope beyond the human victims of imperial capitalism, but it does take the first steps in asking what relations have been severed between and among people in the process of environmental

ruin.

   As such, environmental justice leads to an expansion of personhood as a definition

historically informed by the white Western male standing individuated at the center of the world.

Environmental justice leads to an expansion of notions demoting who is worthy of "consent,

trust, accountability, and reciprocity" (Whyte 2020, 1). The framework only seems to not go as

far as to include what, beyond the human, is worthy of such treatment. Due to its own

ontological limitations, the environmental justice philosophy as it exists in non-Indigenous

activist circles can not be equivocated to Indigenous philosophies such as *mitákuye oyás*, but I

argue that it is by way of this particular justice approach that we may arrive at convergence.

Through this lens, we may arrive at a representational zone that affords us a glimpse into futures

intentionally shaped with plurality, relationality, and ontological shifting in mind.

Extractivism in Amazonia

   I pivot now to Indigenous struggles against extractivism in Amazonia to provide another

ethnographic example through which we can explore the possibilities for prefiguring alternative

futures. Going into lesser detail on the ontological underpinnings of Indigenous Amazonians, this

case serves to supplement my discussion of partial connection, identifying concrete examples of

what these convergences have led to. The past twenty years have seen unprecedented levels of

natural resource extraction in Latin America. Since the 1990s, the amount of political and social

mobilizations against such practices has intensified with both people Indigenous to the region as

well as outside actors intervening in the struggle. Amidst this collective effort against extractivist

intervention, I focus particularly on the allyship that has emerged between Amazonian women

and ecofeminist activists in groups like the Acción Ecológica (Ecological Action) and the

collective Miradas Críticas del Territorio desde el Feminismo (Feminist Critical Views of Territory). Similar to #NoDAPL, this case serves to zoom in on the convergences and partial connections between these two groups to ask how they influence each other and what alternative pathways towards resistance have emerged from their co-laboring.

As in the case of Standing Rock, this example enables a heterodystopian approach, for the circumstances being challenged by Indigenous Amazonian women are dystopian in themselves. As Andrea Sempértegui remarks, the Amazon, often referred to as the Oriente by local Ecuadorians, "historically evokes a mystical space of uncivilized prehistory or an invisible, allegedly empty area" (Sempértegui 2021, 206). Crafted by colonial outsiders, this connotation of a territory devoid of history has enabled the near-constant intervention of colonial powers from the sixteenth century to the present day with previous colonial powers now being replaced by the Ecuadorian nation-state and oil corporations. Such interventions highlight the invisibility and disposability attached to the Amazon's inhabitants as they are entangled in the political and economic engagements of the state. Even after Ecuador gained independence from Spain in 1830, the state's actions have continued in a tradition of colonial violence. Take for example in 1858 when the Amazon, officially declared *tierras baldías*, or barren wastelands, by the state, was parceled and sold off by the Ecuadorian government in order to repay foreign debts. Or in the aftermath of the 1970s oil boom when Northern Amazonian communities were displaced and neglected access to infrastructure, health, and education resources while half of the state budget was being derived from the exploitation of local people and oil fields. For centuries, marginalization and violence against Indigenous communities have been essential to the growth of the presiding state.

I argue that such a history of marginalization is not only unethical, it is also dystopian.

This dystopian reality manifests itself in several ways. First, much like in the case of Standing Rock, the threat of forced migration due to anthropogenic changes on the environment mirrors predominantly white, Western fears of premature displacement due to climate migration. Secondly, and perhaps even more prominent in this case than the one at Standing Rock, is the dystopian element of invisibility. Throughout history, the inhabitants of the Amazon have not been granted any semblance of personhood in that their proximity to "Humanity" has been blockaded by a landscape rendered wild and uninhabitable by outside others. Revisiting the idea of the post-Anthro and the ongoing, it becomes evident that the sense of invisibility shrouding the existence of these humans speaks to a very dystopian fear of a decentering of human-ness and hegemonic notions of humanity in the post-apocalyptic era. More than anything, the most dystopian reality for the Western individual is one in which his personhood is no longer rooted as a universal focal point, and yet, this remains the reality of Indigenous Amazonians.

I now emphasize the strategies for survival that have emerged from Indigenous communities' ongoing existence within this site of contemporary dystopia. Locating the benefit in the state's neglect of Indigenous communities, Sempértegui writes that "Amazonian indigenous politics are also rooted in unique spaces of self-organization and ways of living that are invisible to modern politics" (Sempértegui 2021, 207). This self-organization, equally invisible in the eyes of the state, has led to the continuation of autonomous Indigneous practices. For instance, in the southeastern Amazon, non-capitalist lifeways in conjunction with local mobilization and resistance have enabled standoffs and confrontations against extractivist actors attempting to profit off of the region (ibid).

Particularly important in these instances of resistance are the Indigenous political proposals which have surfaced to challenge hegemonic notions of nature, land, and territory.

During these public political mobilizations, Indigenous conceptions of morality as they relate to these topics are extending to "the idiom of human rights and nationality" (Sempértegui 2021, 208). An act of translation comes into play in such scenarios as ontologically disparate worldviews are examined to articulate points of convergence. The 1992 CONFENIAE march from Ecuador's Pastaza Province in the central Amazon to the capital city of Quito is one of several examples demonstrating this work at achieving partial connections between Indigenous peoples and the state. The march was motivated by demands to institute the communal titling of two million hectares of Amazon territory and a constitutional reform recognizing Ecuador as a plurinational state containing within it several Indigenous nations. A written territorial agreement from Indigenous peoples incorporating language from the United Nations Declarations on the Rights of Indigenous People followed. Sempértegui continues, "This 'extension' exceeded the terms of the debate the state offered at that time, requiring the state to recognize indigenous territorial rights and the principle of plurinationality in the 1998 and 2008 Ecuadorian Constitutions" (ibid, 208).

This recognition went so far as to incorporate the Amazonian Indigenous concept of *sumak kawsay* which translates to "good living" into the 2008 Constitution. This said, the context surrounding the adoption of this term emphasizes the inability to achieve full, rather than only partial, connection while bridging notions of survivance and dystopia. The government proceeded to use the term *sumak kawsay* as a method of pushing a progressive and environmentally-conscious agenda while all the while never wavering in resource extraction plans. *Sumak kawsay* was thus interpreted in a most narrow sense, only barely exceeding the limits of what the nation-state can represent as a largely Western institution whose power is derived from exploitative and extractive tendencies. Indigenous activists commented on this

handling of the term, highlighting that *sumak kawsay* is much more than a good life as defined

by liberal Western institutions, *sumak kawsay* represents territory as sacred, ancestral sites that

are the living spaces to generations of relations (Sempértegui 2021, 209). Reminiscent of the

ontological tensions discussed in the case of #NoDAPL, this definition of *sumak kawsay* is one

that is likely impossible for the nation-state to ever entirely comprehend.

Similar partial connections and acts of translation are present in the relationship between

Indigenous peoples and environmental organizations. Much like the state follows in a colonial

legacy of exclusionary practices against Indigenous peoples, environmental organizations

function in the legacy of colonial missionaries motivated by the civilized versus savage trope.

Environmental organizations in the region today continue to mobilize images of the "noble

savage" or imaginaries of Indigenous peoples as "natural" guardians of the Amazon to bolster

messaging in international appeals. After the increased introduction of international

environmental organizations since the Amazon oil spills in the 1970s, however, Indigenous

people of the region have reclaimed a more agentic position in co-laboring with those

organizations that overlap in agenda (ibid).

The mobilization of convergences between Indigenous and environmental groups is best

exemplified by Amazonian women and ecofeminist urban activists. Amazonian women have

long been on the frontlines of anti-extractivist resistance, but their position as women has often

caused their activism to be overlooked by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people alike. The

aforementioned invisibility of people native to the Amazon is thus amplified with the included

element of gender. For centuries, the co-presence of colonialism and patriarchal institutions in

Ecuadorian society has depicted Indigenous women as natural outsiders. Even more so than

Indigenous men, native women have been excluded from the political realm of resistance in spite

of ongoing organization around the protection of their lands (Cielo et al. 2016, 127).

Within the past two decades, these Amazonian women have found allyship with urban ecofeminist activists. In 2006, the Ecuadorian government expanded plans for extraction in the Amazon, revising its previous stance on relative absence from the region. Not only did this event mark the beginning of the Amazon's strategic employment in the state's development plans, but it also marked the beginning of collaboration between seemingly disparate groups. Specifically, it is the emergence of groups such as Acción Ecológica and the Miradas Críticas de Territorio desde el Feminismo collective that demonstrate a crossover of Indigenous and ecofeminist positions. Ecofeminism is a feminist activist framework that addresses the link between the simultaneous oppression and exploitation of nature and women. Acción Ecológica is one ecofeminist organization that uses an ecofeminist framework to publicize this relationship under the context of capital accumulation in the Amazon. Working with feminist scholars and activists from the Miradas Críticas de Territorio desde el Feminismo collective, Acción Ecológica has reframed extractivist struggles in ecofeminist terms to incorporate the impacts of extractivism on the lives and bodies of women from varied backgrounds, including Indigenous backgrounds. Most importantly, Acción Ecológica has allowed Indigenous activists to lead anti-extractive movements, making space within a broader movement that previously excluded their voices (Sempértegui 2021, 214).

This being said, the allyship between Indigenous women and ecofeminists is not an alliance (ibid, 217). While alliances refer to the cooperation of all parties for the purpose of achieving some common goal, the allyship that defines this relationship is only partially connected. That is, the ecofeminist organizations do not necessarily share the same goals and values as the Indigenous women. This inability to form an alliance is rooted in histories of

colonialism and power that continue to permeate relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, making it difficult to achieve an absolute equality in the partnership. As many Indigenous women of the Amazon have already stated, the structure of these urban activist groups makes it such that they profit from the voices of Indigenous women. When their ecofeminist platform becomes too reliant on Indigenous women to draw attention from public audiences and resources, the pattern of Indigenous exploitation and marginalization within an unchanging power hierarchy continues to reproduce itself (Sempértegui 2021, 217).

Nonetheless, just as I have discussed Indigenous methods of resisting the state, Indigenous women have maintained methods of resisting similar power structures through a renarrativization of ecofeminist discourse in Indigenous terms. This is best exemplified in the "Living Forest" or Kawsak Sacha proposal presented before the Ecuadorian National Assembly in 2013. In this proposal, Amazonian women declare just why extractivism is unwelcome on their lands:

> KAWSAK SACHA is a living being, with consciousness, constituted by all the beings of the Jungle, from the most infinitesimal to the greatest and supreme. It includes the beings of the animal, vegetable, mineral, spiritual and cosmic worlds, in intercommunication with human beings, giving them what is necessary to reanimate their psychological, physical and spiritual facets, thus restoring the energy, life and equilibrium of the original peoples. (Kichwa Native People of Sarayaku 2018)

This proposal not only brings Indigenous Amazonian ontologies directly into the sphere of public, non-Indigenous institutions, but the messaging of the proposal is also bolstered by linkages to ecofeminist discourse. When only considered based on the above description, Western or non-Indigenous audiences would likely struggle to relate to the form of animism being defended. When this description, however, is accompanied by remarks on extractivism's harms against women who fall victim to the degradation, alcoholism, and domestic violence that are all symptoms of extractivist culture, another channel of relation is created.

Important to note here is the understanding that these ecofeminist-oriented inclusions in Indigenous proposals are not simply placed for the purpose of making their worldviews intelligible to non-Native peoples. While Indigenous spokespeople of the region have previously been criticized for being "inauthentic" in their claims for the inclusion of Western frameworks and equivocations, "Creative mixing in language and other cultural domains is typical of native Amazonians' practice and has been a factor in their historic adaptivity" (Graham 2021, 183). As Graham clarifies, the integration of previously non-Indigenous environmental activism into contemporary Indigenous proposals is not evidence of one worldview 'winning' over another. Instead, mentions of ecofeminist critique in Indigenous acts of resistance like the Kawsak Sacha proposal are evidence of a co-laboring between activist groups who have found a principle upon which they can advocate for alternative futures in their own respective, through partially connected, ways.

This back and forth movement between Indigenous and non-Indigenous activists as they integrate elements of each others' worldviews ultimately lends itself to a pluriversal understanding of feminism and environment. Neither one approach triumphs over the other while their constant engagement necessitates the constant innovation of methods of relating to and, if need be, critiquing the other. A similar case can be made in the previous study of #NoDAPL where an environmental justice framework is better suited to arrive at partial connections between approaches. In this chapter, I have attempted to present these convergences each as potential pathways to worlding in themselves. Furthermore, my exploration of tensions, differences, and incommensurability in these two ethnographic examples, demonstrates not only the difficulty in arriving at such potential pathways but also the very fundamental need to locate faults and harms so as not to reproduce or reinforce them moving forward.

I end this chapter with the notion of a plurality of possibilities before us not because we can create new Earths or new environments, but because we can stretch the substance further, we can expand notions of what we, if the Anthropocene forces us to talk in terms of collective, are evolving towards. If reason explains reality, however, then we must surpass reason to explain that which is beyond our conception of reality, that which is dystopian. I conclude this essay in the following chapter with further elaboration on how exactly we might surpass the realistic to ultimately produce broader networks of the types of convergence and heterodystopia described in these studies.

Chapter 3 | Fiction and Futurisms: Confronting a Dystopian Reality

I envision the Anthropocene as a roaring wildfire. The areas of the forest habituated to routine burn remain largely resilient to the blaze. However, other areas in which such fires have historically been repressed burn with greater, more dangerous intensity. The landscape changes irrevocably, and still, under smoldering ashes and seemingly catastrophic conditions, the germination of new seeds proceeds. What follows are seeds of resistance. With similar sentiment Da Silva writes, "Because only the end of the world as we know it, I am convinced, can dissolve cultural differences' production of human collectives as "strangers" with fixed and irreconcilable moral attributes. This requires that we release thinking from the grip of certainty and embrace the imagination's power to create with unclear and confused, or uncertain impressions" (Da Silva 2016, 58). What follows fire cannot be predicted but instead anticipated, and anticipation, however uncertain, almost always appeals to imagination. As such, "Unlimited new visions of life" are undoubtedly upon us (Krenak 2020, 64).

As demonstrated by the case studies, heterodystopias as we recognize them in spaces of subalternity and marginality today project lessons and takeaways out into the physical and ontological landscapes which have yet to critically grapple with life amidst climate dysfunction. From this point, mere visions of more ethical lifeways must be rendered into reality. Imagination becomes responsible for the modeling of something new with dreams then becoming building blocks. For some, as Krenak suggests, "there is no meaning of life unless informed by dreams… Dream as a path to learning, self-knowledge, and awareness of life, and the application of that knowledge in our interaction with the world and other people" (Krenak 2020, 52). However irrational this invitation appears, I emphasize that it does not evade our capacity as individuals of the "modern" world to be malleable and to be entangled in life processes beyond our physical,

biological, and logical comprehension. Rather, it merely requires a contemplation, an openness, and most of all, an imagination for a consciousness that elides the technological, rational framework of saving the world.

I depart here in a brief discussion of speculative fiction, climate fiction, and Indigenous futurisms to concretize what imagination can mean in the decolonial project. It seems necessary to round out this discussion with a call to action of sorts, a way of falling deeper into partial connection without feeling bound to that which has already been done. This putting into action of some of the very abstract notions posited above is particularly important given Tuck and Yang's criticism of similar topics. They assert that "When metaphor invades decolonization, it kills the very possibility of decolonization; it recenters whiteness, it resettles theory, it extends innocence to the settler, it entertains a settler future" (Tuck & Yang 2012, 3). My intention here is not to wallow in the privilege afforded to those of us still speculating upon future disasters, nor do I intend to take part in what the authors term "settler moves to innocence" in directing the conversation towards futures without reconciliation of ongoing harms (ibid). In that Tuck and Yang stress decolonization as a process entailing both the repatriation of lands and the acknowledgment of land relations beyond the symbolic, I strive to provide an example of how imagination can be operationalized to actively recenter Indigenous land, body, and temporal sovereignty amidst contentious Western worlds (ibid, 10). Fiction and futurisms are one of many pathways from which these material changes can be explored.

Before elaborating on the forms of Indigenous and speculative literature which might inform the decolonial project at hand, I clarify that there do exist uniquely white, Western visions of what the future amidst and after climate catastrophe will entail. Regardless, I refuse to call such musings "imaginations," for they do not depart in the least from dominant Western

ontologies. They, instead, burrow further into existing worldviews to reinforce the presiding

nature-culture divide and colonial tropes. They cling desperately to the humanist ideals that

foreground their current global superiority. Reflective of this growing field of

'forward-thinking,' Canadian political scientist Thomas Homer-Dixon writes, "using reason and

science to guide decisions… human society can progress to higher and higher levels of

well-being and development… But that requires resisting the very natural urge… to become less

cooperative, less generous and less open to reason" (Mitchell & Chaudhury 2020, 316).

Homer-Dixon alongside other white apocalyptic thinkers reiterate such notions of maintaining

separation from the irrational Other, refusing to fall 'backward' in time and progress, and

preserving a certain purity of white culture. Often understood as the "pinnacle" of whiteness and

Western society, contemporary life and governance are framed within these narratives as rightful

targets *for all* (ibid, 315). Thus, in spite of ecological systems rapidly crashing downwards, the

Western predestination toward an ever upward social trajectory remains of paramount concern to

white apocalyptic writing.

       While on the topic, I do not hesitate to equally call out the hypocrisy of such literature.

The fact of colonialism and capitalism's direct correlation with ecological devastation is turned

on its head placing the blame for planetary downfall on Indigenous peoples and people of the

Global South. As Mitchell and Chaudhury elaborate, "The use of BIPOC communities as

cautionary tales for planetary destruction strongly suggests that the redistribution of global

power, land ownership, and other forms of agency toward BIPOC structures would result in

ecological disaster" (Mitchell & Chaudhury 2020, 315). Note here the authors' word-choice of

"cautionary tales." Unlike the reflexivity and plurality innate to the definition of heterodystopias,

representational zones poised to learn from both the convergences and disjunctures between

approaches, such phrasing of "cautionary tales" shuns the entirety of BIPOC actions and perspectives. Their stories, much like their bodies and their lands, are rendered disposable under the ignorant assumption that their participation in future-making in any capacity will only engender the further accumulation of waste and ruin. With visions of the Other effectively deemed worthless and even counter to the Western post-apocalyptic project, white speculations of what is to come are often resolute in their self-sufficiency.

Contrary to white apocalyptic visions, Indigenous futurisms effectively exceed the very dimensions of the 'end of the world.' While both approaches use the past to inform the future, one approach uses extractivist, colonialist historical patterns as blueprints for futures while the other uses such historical patterns as interventions in futures. Time and again, the Indigenous resistance to anthropogenic environmental change is reoriented to generational beliefs and traditions that when nurtured become strong enough to withstand the colonial pressures pushing in from the outside. This is exactly the objective of Indigenous Futurisms, or *Biskaabiiyang* in the Anishinaabe language. Meaning "returning to ourselves," *Biskaabiiyang* "implies a sense of reencounter and pride in Native traditions, not simply to preserve them but to push them towards better futures" (Dillon and Neves Marques 2021). Grace Dillon, an Anishinaabe cultural critic and a leading contributor to the field of Indigenous Futurisms elaborates on this area of thought which integrates multimedia visions of science fiction, storytelling, and world-building with critiques of colonialism's imprint on science and technology.

In line with the conservation and restoration projects described by Whyte, Indigenous Futurisms consider convergences between Western scientific understandings and traditional Indigenous knowledge. It is "sciences in the making" as Bruno Latour might put it (Dillon and Neves Marques 2021). Above all else, however, Indigenous Futurisms, particularly in the context

of Grace Dillon's own work, demonstrate Indigenous life beyond dystopia to tell stories of overcoming tragedy and then imagining the traditional not only re-invoked but also transformed. Summarizing these guiding ideas, Dillon remarks, "To me, that is the hope that underlines the reality of Native apocalypse: you lived through it, so you may know how to pull together as an Indigenous community through any kind of crisis" (Dillon and Neves Marques 2021). In this, Dillon addresses the presiding question of what it means to live in the ongoing processes of colonization, apocalypse, and the Anthropocene.

Further challenging the material and social realities of colonialism, Indigenous speculative fiction is inherently decolonial in its direct intervention in the historically Western genre of science fiction. In regards to this literary disruption, Dillon writes, "Writers of Indigenous Futurisms sometimes intentionally experiment with, sometimes intentionally dislodge, sometimes merely accompany, but invariably change the parameters of sf" (Siepak 2020, 58). In publishing these particular and alternative visions of future alone, Indigenous authors contribute to a structural change that forges new spaces for the further envisioning of decolonial futures. With regard to Tuck and Yang, I assert that as the genres of Indigenous Futurisms and speculative fiction continue to expand, decolonization gradually ceases to stand in as a metaphor and increasingly diminishes the chances of uniquely settler futures.

Trail of Lightning

Rebecca Roanhorse's 2018 novel, *Trail of Lightning,* is one of many recent works in Indigenous Futurism to demonstrate the decolonizing potential embedded within the movement. I preface an analysis of this novel by noting here that Roanhorse presents a fantasy based on Diné beliefs and stories in spite of the fact that Roanhorse is only Diné by marriage. She comes

from a mixed and ambiguous background. Half Black and half native, belonging to the Ohkay Owingeh people of New Mexico, and the adopted daughter of white parents, Roanhorse is an Indigenous author very much caught between worlds (Shapiro 2020). Though her identity has drawn criticism from some Indigenous literary circles, her book remains a bestseller in the Indigenous Futurism genre, and as such, I choose to examine its poignant portrayal of Indigenous survivance that has touched both Indigenous and non-Indigenous audiences alike.

Trail of Lightning tells the story of Maggie Hoskie, a Dinétah monster hunter with supernatural powers living in what can best be described as a "post-post-apocalyptic world" (Siepak 2020, 58). At this unspecified time in the future, much of the world has drowned beneath the floods of earthquakes and climate catastrophe. Dinétah, formerly the Navajo nation, becomes an independent state with certain members developing magical clan powers based on the identities of their ancestors. Gods, heroes, and monsters now roam the Earth. Using her gifts for speed and hunting, Maggie joins forces with medicine man, Kai Arviso, and together they revisit the reservation to uncover ancient legends and battle witchcraft to solve the mystery of a missing girl. Maggie soon realizes that in order to stop the monsters behind the disappearances, she must first make a difficult decision to confront her past, a task far more difficult than she ever imagined.

Though a simple synopsis of the story reads much like a contemporary sci-fi thriller, contained within the world that Roanhorse describes is a story of rebirth beyond the immediate wreckage precipitated by settler-colonial life. Trail of Lightning imagines life beyond the U.S., the nation-state, and colonized Indigenous territories. Also transcending colonial binaries, the introduction of supernatural powers placed in relation to ancestral tribes and clan identities foments the unraveling of a nature-culture dichotomy that seeks to differentiate the good and the

bad as objective categories by which the world can be neatly divided. That which has historically been denied entry into the Western narrative of civilization finds access upon a necessary revisiting of traditional ancestral knowledge. Congruent binaries are similarly challenged in the centering of an Indigenous female protagonist using her powers against both monsters and other manifestations of patriarchal norms.

Much like I have previously stated, heterodystopic visions and speculative fiction alike acknowledge the harms and resurgence already endured by Indigenous communities. As Maggie says in the novel, "the Diné had already suffered their apocalypse a century before. This wasn't our end. This was our rebirth" (Roanhorse 2018, 23). Speculative fictions and futurisms then proceed in acknowledging that the potentialities that emerge in representations of the future are comprised of what Desi-futurist Ryan D'Souza calls "an always-unfolding 'recovery project' in which the acts of re-building worlds and futuring are fused." The aim is thus plurifocal in that such endeavors oblige "the mixing of temporalities, the rhythms of reversal and renewal and the contingencies that these create" (Mitchell & Chaudhury 2020, 325). This form of literature demonstrates a forward and backward movement so unnatural that it borders the supernatural in itself. It embraces the unsettling emergence of "monsters" in the quotidian by shedding light on the dormant evils perpetrated by our own ignorance. Through these methods, the story elides univocality. I thus present *Trail of Lightning* as but one Indigenous example of building futures with the concepts of heterodystopia in mind.

Future Home of the Living God

Anishinaabe author Louise Erdrich is another leading contributor to the genre of Indigenous speculative fiction. Her 2017 novel, *Future Home of the Living God,* expands the

breadth of topics contained within discussions of climate catastrophe. Set in a distant apocalyptic future where global warming and environmental devastation have permanently altered Earth's evolutionary processes, Erdrich's fiction concentrates on the worsening conditions of women, oppressed and exploited by the radical religious state. The trajectory of women and the environment are linked as Erdrich draws direct inspiration from the socio-political context transpiring during her writing process. Written between the election of George Bush Jr. in 2000 and Donald Trump in 2016, Erdrich likens the dual regression of progress in women's and environmental rights transpiring before her to her novel's dystopian reality. Not only is the socio-political landscape of the novel devolving, but such wild changes manifest in the form of human and non-human hybrids and defects. Species like quasi lizard-birds thrive without the ability of humans to control the conditions of this biological shift. As Siepak comments, these changes "deconstruct the metanarrative of scientific progress characteristic of Western societies… the thriving of other species decenters the human and returns the agency to non-human subjects" (Siepak 2020, 67). This world that Erdrich describes contains elements of everyone's worst nightmare.

Future Home of the Living God follows the journey of Cedar Songmaker, a 23-year-old, pregnant Indigenous woman attempting to come to terms with her identity as the adopted daughter of a non-Native family. Victim to Indigenous stereotypes and colonial tropes like the "Indian princess," Cedar is often fetishized in her environment and imagined as living closer to nature. This said, Cedar admits to experiencing the privilege of only knowing Indigenous struggles in the theoretical and not in any material sense. She nonetheless makes an attempt to reconcile her Indigenous identity through Saint Kateri Tekakwitha. Saint Kateri is the first North

American Indigenous saint claimed by the Catholic Church, and she is often celebrated by contemporary Indigenous women for her hybrid portrayal of Native femininity.

This hybrid understanding of femininity and Indigeneity becomes the portal through which Cedar navigates the challenges of this particular dystopia where the governing institutions oblige the imprisonment and forced impregnation of women for the prolongment of humanity. These conditions lead to the unethical extraction of genetic material from the broader public by Womb Volunteer centers collecting genetic material to meticulously control the human reproductive process. This process invoked on a large scale in Erdrich's novel is reminiscent of historically exploited Indigenous DNA research (Reardon & Tallbear 2012). Keeping in theme with colonial violence and Indigenous resilience, Cedar again relates to her femininity and Indigenous background this time through genetics. Considering the fate of her unborn child, Cedar recognizes the resilience born into the cells of her very being. She says, "Nine of every ten of us died of measles, smallpox, what-have-you. As a descendant of that tough-gened tenth person I had some natural inherent immunity" (Erdrich 2017, 58). While the human world desperately attempts to stay intact in spite of a mounting threat of mutation, Cedar recognizes the sort of mutation that her people have already endured. This mutation has enabled continuance against the formerly dystopic threats of disease and epidemic, and it is this mutation that will enable her child, the "Living God's," survival.

Indigenous survival thus becomes one of the novel's most prominent themes. Amidst the chaos of the world being pushed beyond comprehension, Erdrich describes how the Anishinaabe nation is suddenly more capable of organizing in support of Indigenous sovereignty as an outcome of the political climate. Provoking feelings of familiarity, "The dystopian present sparks radical resurgence and decolonial aspirations," inspiring the Anishinaabe people to reclaim

stolen territory (Siepak 2020, 68). Cedar's stepfather, Eddy, describes this enduring capacity in a conversation with her. He remarks, "Indians have been adapting since before 1492 so I guess we'll keep adapting." Cedar retorts, "But the world is going to pieces" to which Eddy responds, "It is always going to pieces… We'll adapt" (Erdrich 2017, 28).

Though the novel does not ultimately reveal the fate of Cedar nor that of the rising Anishinaabe people, *Future Home of the Living God* ends having disrupted settler visions of linearity and universal progress. Regardless of collapse, everything is effectively multiplied. Foremost in the narrative, we witness the increasing hybridity of Cedar's identity as an Indigenous woman gradually embodying both the generational trauma and resistance ingrained in her very DNA. Self-identifying as "a theoretical Native," Cedar also explores both inner and outer perceptions of Indigenous and Western worldviews, invoking both personal and collective histories in her and her child's fight for survival. Because Cedar's identity is effectively multiple, she is able to navigate worlds seemingly at odds with one another. In this same theme, the end of the world is defined by a multispecial field of other-than-human beings. Finally, a multiplicitous understanding of space and land is called into question as Indigenous peoples seek to revindicate particular territories defined dissimilarly from the new territorial boundaries demarcated by the state. Such themes are equally prevalent in Roanhorse's work and are purposely mobilized as decolonial tools bridging contemporary dystopias with future projections into realms of pluriversality and co-existence.

I reiterate here that the plural worlds described by Indigenous Futurisms and speculative fiction are direct interventions in settler-colonial futures that simultaneously seek to return back to Indigenous tradition. In regards to people of the Global South and those deemed outside of the dominant conception of humanity, de Sousa Santos writes, "Since such subjects are produced as

absent through very unequal relations of power, redeeming them is an eminently political gesture" (Santos 2018, 2). The redemption of Indigenous stories and powers both mythical and not in literature present survivance not as a possibility but rather as an indisputable fact. To therefore place Indigenous dystopias alongside Western notions of dystopia is to agree that the intervention of the Other is in fact a viable alternative to normative future formulations. Returning to my discussion of translation, articulation, and partial connection in Chapter 1, to write speculative fiction with the inclusion of Indigenous and subaltern subjects as agentic protagonists is to undermine the hierarchy of people, values, and ontological distinctions that privilege certain approaches to Earthly redemption over others.

Articulating the connection between dystopia and our aspirations for alternative futures, storytelling emerges as a useful convergence through which both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people can make sense of the world. The world as we know it may rupture, but I write in the hopes that the world as something much more than us will never end as long as there is the chance at one more story, one more interpretation of who and what we might become. While stories and storytelling might not be as central among Western audiences as they are among Native communities, we all share in a human tendency to tell stories in order to make sense of our worlds. Stories make it make sense, and it is the stories that we tell ourselves about climate change that will ultimately determine our actions. Speculative fiction writer Margaret Atwood says, "It's not climate change – it's everything change" (Atwood 2015). This notion of "everything" that she refers to includes "how humans (specifically, those humans who have dominated members of their own and other species) view their place in the world" (Jennings 2022). Accordingly, if we are to challenge our place in the world, partially connecting in some

spaces and renouncing our space in others, we need imagination, dreaming, stories, and a greater

sensitivity to our subjectivities to successfully actualize alternative futures.

Conclusion | The Future as Alternative

In his closing remarks during the 1996 National Indigenous Forum, former military leader and spokesman for the Zapatista Army, Subcomandante Marcos said, "It is not enough to refuse to die; this we have learned for five centuries. Now, it is necessary to live, and to live together with the others who are also us" (Marcos 2001, 92). Within the context of climate catastrophe or not, Indigenous and subaltern existences do not persist with the sole purpose of being invoked as heterodystopias or quasi-solutions to environmental change largely provoked by the Western world. As such, it is not enough to say that these spaces *are only* representational zones for Western individuals to dabble in the practice of worlding, for Indigenous dystopias will not produce Western utopias. Rather, such representational zones are but points of departure in the ethical restructuring of our societies to not only prevent death and dystopia but to enable the entrance of the Other. For those in worlds that we may consider windows of opportunity into a future beyond dystopia, it becomes the responsibility of the observers to now transcend ontological limitations to finally acknowledge alterity as companion not only in times of necessity but in perpetuity.

In this paper, I have attempted to establish the problem of a future rendered unknowable to the Western world by current climate projections. Mainstream contemporary debates on how to proceed into such an ominous void suggest an amplification of business-as-usual, ramifying capitalist and colonialist routines of exclusion and exploitation. All the while, critics of such world systems present Indigenous practices and ways of relating to the world as the answer to saving ecosystems in demise. Regardless of the concern for a right answer, one approach cannot replace another, for our ontologies and differing worldviews will not dissolve overnight. Consequently, I suggest not unity, but rather coalition, that is, the co-presence of many projects

of looking both within and without, both forward and backward to consider climate dystopia between and across worlds.

Heterodystopias ground this notion of learning, projecting, and creating anew. As such, I treat each ethnographic example as a potential heterodystopia within itself. Both the case of #NoDAPL and the movement against extractivism in Amazonia teach us how the partial connections between seemingly incommensurable environmental approaches converge to make progress towards ethical worlding. At the heart of the ontological disparities exhibited in these case studies is a fundamental divergence in how different people relate to land as either a life source or a resource. While this division cannot necessarily be solved, methods of collaboration can be found elsewhere. In the case of Standing Rock, an environmental justice framework provides a partial connection whereby non-Native activists can forefront Indigenous voices while simultaneously dismantling systemic racism against BIPOC minorities. In terms of Amazonia, an ecofeminist framework has proved a useful partial connection for channeling the voices of Indigenous women, most directly affected by extractivist culture, into public discourse. Both frameworks forefront or integrate the voices of BIPOC who have been rendered disposable by the state and therefore disproportionately exposed to environmental threats. This premature exposure to the environmental conditions deemed dystopian by typically white, Western individuals is what renders both of these cases heterodystopic. The representational zone that is subsequently created finally allows for the anticipation of the forms of governance and restoration that we would like to build towards in dystopian times to come.

With these cases in mind, I end by suggesting that no matter how we proceed in heterodystopian worlding, we must forefront the knowledge of Indigenous peoples who have long articulated the concepts theorists and academics often claim as their own. As the earth

continues to warm everyday, new suggestions for ethical entries into a changing world are published. Much like my own suggestions here, these contributions seek to reconcile differences and build towards better futures for all. These contributions, however, cannot be seriously considered without mention of the ongoing forms of resistance and reconciliation that Indigenous activists have long touted. Reiterating the reflections of Métis anthropologist, Zoe Todd, we, myself included as a non-Indigenous person, must live up to the words we present before academic audiences. In other words, it is not enough to merely propose Indigenous-inspired imaginations as the answer. We must give credit where it is due and to whom it is due.

In acknowledging the existence of Indigenous dystopias now, we must follow the advice of Indigenous scholars like Todd. She writes, "Indigenous peoples, throughout the world, are fighting for recognition - fighting to assert their laws, philosophies and stories on their own terms. When anthropologists and other assembled social scientists sashay in and start cherry-picking parts of Indigenous thought that appeal to them without engaging directly in (or unambiguously acknowledging) the political situation, agency, legal orders and relationality of both Indigenous people and scholars, we immediately become complicit in colonial violence" (Todd 2016,18). Our imaginations into different futures cannot come at the expense of further harms inflicted on Indigenous peoples. Creativity and innovation in the Anthropocene thus necessitate a renegotiation of how we make progress and upon whose work this progress arises.

All this said, one must beg the question of whether or not we should be excited for such a change to transpire. After all, "new visions of life" do not necessarily guarantee the survival of our own, and the contemplation of dystopian realities does not in itself imply utopian realities to follow. It is all a question of how we ethically develop our societies by communicating across ontologies as we face environmental catastrophes. This is not a proposal for the climate fatalists

of the world collecting SUVs and binging on steak dinners for the mere sake of enjoying life while it lasts. This is a proposal to those unwilling to give up on their dreams. It is not about winning nor building excitement that things will suddenly get better. It is about raising consciousness and grounding responsibility.

Without the very contemplation associated with heterodystopias, we remain stuck in ontologies that have upheld the conditions for the demise of not only those belonging to the Western branch of humanity but also ecological systems which all humans require as conditions of existence. The future I argue then is not a cultural fact. By this, I mean that a mere repetition of historical practice in extraction, colonialism, and universalizing ontology will effectively do nothing to prefigure a future any different from past and present dystopias. In other words, futures that replicate futures are not in fact futures at all. They are but the past repeating itself. It is only in making the decision to learn from heterodystopias as they exist now that the future can become a true alternative to present circumstances. The future in this context is thus not a mere reflection, but instead, a refraction of light bending and blurring as it travels from one medium to another. The future is not fact, it is but one of many bending alternatives.

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