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CONTENTS

Contents

Contents

FIGURES

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THE ROUTLEDGE COMPANION TO TRANSNATIONAL AMERICAN STUDIES

*Edited by Nina Morgan, Alfred Hornung
and Takayuki Tatsumi*

30

POST-APOCALYPTIC GEOGRAPHIES AND STRUCTURAL APPROPRIATION

Hsuan L. Hsu and Bryan Yazell

Introduction

Post-apocalyptic fiction, with its dramatic re-imaginings of environment, space, and geopolitics, presents distinctive problems for the field of Transnational American Studies. The massive influence of post-apocalyptic narratives on US culture makes this genre a key site for orchestrating public thinking about the geographies of environmental catastrophe. Historically, US-led patterns of production, consumption, and militarization have been a driving force behind twentieth- and twenty-first century environmental crises. The most devastating consequences of these environmental changes have generally occurred beyond US boundaries, affecting vulnerable populations in the global South (as well as poor, racialized, and Indigenous US communities). Yet despite the transnational dynamics of environmental devastation, post-apocalyptic narratives frequently center the future suffering and struggles of US spaces and characters without sufficiently attending to how apocalyptic environmental violence has already affected a range of colonized and post-colonial populations. Drawing on postcolonial theory, Indigenous studies, and ecocriticism, this chapter will argue that the centering of US Americans in post-apocalyptic fiction constitutes what we term *structural appropriation*—a process in which the world-threatening structural violence that has already been experienced by colonized and postcolonial populations is projected onto American (and predominantly white) characters and readers. Whereas cultural appropriation has been the subject of considerable research in Indigenous studies and critical race studies, the more insidious technique of "structural appropriation"—which obscures histories of colonialism and racism even while restaging them in dystopian plots—has received much less critical attention. To better understand the colonial and postcolonial experiences of environmental apocalypse that are occluded by structural appropriation, we compare the temporal and spatial dimensions of a range of US, post-colonial, and Indigenous post-apocalyptic narratives.

Structural appropriation

Whereas cultural appropriation detaches narratives and practices from both their original producers and their social and material contexts (see Ziff and Rao 1997), structural appropriation detaches structural violence from its historical entanglements with colonialism and

racism. Unlike cultural appropriation—which is generally overt in claiming and recirculating the cultural productions of other groups—structural appropriation tends to be covert, projecting conditions of structural vulnerability that have been experienced by colonized and post-colonial populations on to imaginary and predominantly white Americans inhabiting dystopian futures. Simultaneously drawing on and occluding an already existing transnational archive of environmental catastrophes, post-apocalyptic narratives evoke a sense of proleptic mourning for the disappearance of privileged, unsustainable modes of consumption pioneered by the US.

Structural appropriation is especially relevant to the framing of environmental apocalypses in dystopian fiction. The planetary scale of much environmental discourse, and particularly discourses concerning global climate change, frequently focuses on preventing future disasters while passing over climate disasters that have already transpired, such as the displacement of Inuit and Solomon Islanders by shoreline erosion and the role of drought in Syria's Civil War. The notion of the "boomerang effect"—Ulrich Beck's term (Beck 1992, 37–38) for how environmental risks supposedly (eventually) return to harm their originators as well as their recipients—transforms an Indigenous hunting implement (one that was never intended to harm the thrower) into a metaphor for the putative universality of environmental devastation. But the actual effects of environmental externalities that are disproportionately produced by the US are unevenly distributed, because underdevelopment, dispossession, poor infrastructure, and other structural inequities resulting from colonialism leave colonized and postcolonial nations vulnerable to both emerging environmental risks and the long aftermath of previous waves of environmental devastation.

Gordon Fraser has argued that apocalyptic thinking was central to US military logic during the Cold War: "the contingency of annihilation—the uncertain possibility of a holocaust—structures how United States Americans have been conditioned to think about nuclear war and war more broadly" (Fraser 2015, 602). Fraser leverages this "coupling of power with potential annihilation" to explain both the popularity of post-apocalyptic narratives such as *On the Beach* (1957), *Dr. Strangelove* (1964), and *The Road* (2006) and the critique of this military apocalypticism articulated by Native American authors such as Sherman Alexie. Whereas conventional post-apocalyptic scenarios focus on a small group of survivors endeavoring to regenerate US culture and society, Alexie's Indigenous discourses of apocalypse underscore the environmental "slow violence" (Nixon 2011, 2) wrought by both nuclear and conventional warfare. Fraser thus argues that "Alexie addresses the apocalypticism of United States power…by critiquing its presence on the Spokane Reservation and connecting this presence to sites of United States military power around the world" (Fraser 2015, 608).

Fraser attributes Alexie's critical perspective on apocalypticism to the fact that the apocalypse, for Native Americans, is not a future scenario but a historical experience. This framing of Indigenous history was first developed in the writings of Indigenous studies scholars Sidner Larson (Gros Ventre) (2000) and Lawrence Gross (Anishinaabe) (2002). For Larson, "postapocalypse theory" suggested that "[t]he ways in which American Indian people have suffered, survived, and managed to go on, communicated through storytelling, have tremendous potential to affect the future of all mankind" (Larson 2000, 18). Gross coins the phrase "Post Apocalypse Stress Syndrome" to capture the psychological and institutional devastation wrought by the end of Native American worlds: "American Indians in general have seen the end of our worlds. There are no Indian cultures in the United States that remain wholly unaffected by the presence of Euro-Americans…. In effect, the old world of our ancestors has come to an end. Thus, American Indians are living in a postapocalyptic environment…" (Gross 2002, 449). More recently, Indigenous scholars including Grace Dillon (Anishinaabe)

(2012), Cutcha Risling Baldy (Hupa et al. 2014), Zoe Todd (Métis) (2016), and Kyle Powys Whyte (Potawatomi) (2017) have drawn on this postapocalypse model to frame the settler colonial referents of the zombie apocalypse, connections between Indigenous genocide and the Anthropocene, and "indigenous perspectives on how to respond to anthropogenic climate destabilization based on having already lived through local losses of species and ecosystems" (Whyte 2017, 8). Our theorization of structural appropriation is inspired by Dillon's incisive observation about "the dominant themes that mainstream sf has drawn from the real history of Eurowestern and Indigenous encounters" (Dillon 2012, 9).

While there are important differences between settler colonial and postcolonial conditions, postcolonial scholars have diagnosed similar processes of cultural and ecological annihilation throughout the Global South. Partha Chatterjee has detailed how globalization intensifies the centralization of power "in the metropolitan cities of the industrialized world" while further entrenching the geopolitical gap between center and periphery (Chatterjee 2004, 90). Rob Nixon has documented the proliferation of attritional "slow violence" across a range of postcolonial sites as "ecosystem people" are displaced from both temporal and spatial landscapes (Nixon 2011, 62). Describing environmental "slow violence" as "a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space," Nixon shows how transnational projects such as oil extraction, deforestation, pesticide production, imperial wars, megadams, and the establishment of eco-parks derange place-based ecologies and temporalities that are essential to the survival of people who live off the land (Nixon 2011, 2). Neoliberal projects across the Global South thus gradually erode the basic ecological conditions of social reproduction for vulnerable postcolonial populations, effectively bringing about the end of established worlds. In his novel dramatizing the long aftermath of the Bhopal catastrophe (to which we will return below), Indra Sinha reflects this process by framing the population of a city affected by a catastrophic chemical spill as "the People of the Apokalis" (Sinha 2007, 366).

If, as Lawrence Buell has noted, "[a]pocalypse is the single most powerful master metaphor that the environmental imagination has at its disposal," we should keep in mind that narratives of apocalypse can conceal and obscure as much as they reveal (Buell 1995, 285). Post-apocalyptic narratives have been widely critiqued for their potentially paralyzing fatalism, as well as for staging a state of emergency intended to legitimize military aggression and other aggressive interventions. The concept of structural appropriation further illuminates how these speculative narratives occlude the colonial and racial underpinnings of structural violence by delinking it from actually existing geographic and historical referents. Rather than exploring environmental apocalypses that have already happened to populations outside the US (or to sovereign Indigenous nations putatively located "within" the US), post-apocalyptic fiction re-inscribes colonial and racial logics in imagined futures that, in many cases, have been unmoored from histories of race and empire. In the readings that follow, we will consider some of the racial and colonial implications of post-apocalyptic fiction exemplified by Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* (2006) and Paolo Bacigalupi's *The Water Knife* (2015), then explore how the postcolonial and Indigenous authors Indra Sinha and Benjamin Ross Hayden critically re-imagine apocalyptic geographies and temporalities in *Animal's People* (2007) and *The Northlander* (2016).

The third-worlding of the West

Post-apocalyptic fiction provides a crucial basis for viewing not only the economic but also the environmental manifestations of global inequality. Structural appropriation has been both a crucial component as well as an underlying point of tension for texts that consider the global consequences of environmental collapse. McCarthy (2010) and Bacigalupi's (2015)

post-apocalyptic novels provide readers with the means for visualizing the material manifestations of global climate change to the extent they depict what Nixon calls the "delayed effects" of ecological catastrophe after "both the causes and the memory" of cataclysmic events "fade from view" (Nixon 2011, 9). These texts situate environmental catastrophe as a primary catalyst for US decline, whose geopolitical conflicts and internal violence eventually pushes population to a state of extreme poverty. In these novels, US subjects have been transformed into desperate refugees, at once vulnerable and dangerous.

As this last point suggests, critiques of neoliberalism and governmental policy in these sources operate in part by inviting a sustained comparison between the US and the Global South. The most apparent implication in these cases is that the US is not immune to the worst effects of climate change in particular and social-economic disasters more generally. Further, they argue that we need only look to the structural instability of foreign states to see how this crisis might play out at home. But this conceit also limits any figuration of crisis on a truly planetary scale. Instead, it situates the Global South as a template for disaster; a prototype for (what the novels imply) is the more critical moment when the US loses its hegemonic standing in the world. Such cases highlight what structural appropriation as a narrative technique can and cannot do to acknowledge transnational manifestations of the apocalypse.

Bacigalupi's novel embodies the tension inherent in how US speculative fiction often figures the global dimensions to catastrophe. *The Water Knife* depicts the violence that has engulfed Southwestern cities like Las Vegas and Phoenix as a result of a permanent drought on one hand and decades of counterproductive infrastructure planning on the other. The novel's "water knife", an agent for an unscrupulous water baron, exploits this frayed institutional fabric in order to redirect water rights from precarious communities to his employer. Bacigalupi stresses how factors including class and geography have led to the unequal distribution of the worst effects of this water crisis. For instance, the novel depicts Texas as a failed state, with Arizona teetering on the brink of complete social collapse. Geographic inequality extends beyond the US as well. Readers learn early in the narrative that "China knew how to see the world clearly and planned ahead. And because of it, China was resilient in comparison to the brokeback version of America" (Bacigalupi 2015, 25). Throughout the novel, Americans see themselves in a subservient role, both individually and geopolitically, to Chinese subjects and business interests.

This general framing of the US and China speaks to *The Water Knife*'s most evident figuration of third-worlding the West as a result of apocalyptic social collapse. Bacigalupi's sustained US-China comparison is one example of how his novel refers to foreign states as a way of visualizing the unequal damage brought by climate change. If Bacigalupi's critical observations about contemporary neoliberal and governmental practices shape his narrative, his vision of future Chinese neo-imperialism also draws from a long tradition of "techno-Orientalism" within the American speculative genre. But whereas speculative writers have deployed Asian cultural signifiers as an expression of techno-futurism, Bacigalupi signals a larger shift in the structural position of Americans vis-à-vis the global community.[1] In other words, the novel is concerned less with an ascendant China than it is with the US backsliding down the geopolitical ladder. The central component of this argument involves readers imagining the US as subject to—rather than a purveyor of—neo-imperial power. A counterpoint to the Chinese model, Mexico and the borderland plays a central part in making this point. Angel, the water knife agent, considers the "raining bodies" that precipitate Arizona's imminent collapse: "It reminded him of how it had been down in Mexico, before the Cartel States took control completely" (Bacigalupi 2015, 245). In this instance both present and (in the novel's framing) future structural violence in Mexico sets the stage for imagining what such violence might look like wholly within US borders. In the novel's codification of

national and cultural archetypes, China represents the future of state models while Mexico represents prior, failed ones. Such representations of social instability appropriate and re-encode typologies associated with foreign populations that have already been touched by structural violence.

Whereas Bacigalupi's surface narrative foregrounds the various governmental and private actors that contribute to inequality, McCarthy's novel largely avoids any such gestures. Instead, McCarthy emphasizes the shared—and presumably universal—implications of the apocalypse by framing his narrative in allegorical terms. As a result, *The Road* novel lacks *The Water Knife*'s voluminous references to political and economic actors, depicting instead an anonymous father's struggle to keep his son alive several years after an unexplained apocalyptic event. In particular, it foregrounds the environmental destruction that has wiped out all wildlife as well as agricultural production, which in turn has prompted the rise of large roving bands of cannibals. The simplified presentation in this case of the man, his child, and paternal responsibility reflects the atavistic social bonds—deriving from biological, familial and ethical obligations—that drive the narrative. The man later makes this last point expressly clear when he explains later in the narrative that he protects his son because he "was appointed to do that by God" (McCarthy 2010, 80). As this proverbial language should suggest, *The Road* figures its apocalypse in universalizing (and Biblical) terms, both in its geographical scope and its effect on humanity.[2]

But even as the narrative eschews specific references to time and place, it still draws on global and historical precedents for structural instability. These play out most immediately in McCarthy's staging of the dehumanizing violence that characterizes the post-apocalypse. In the narrative, the vestiges of civilization have devolved into a basic struggle for survival: the most pressing threat involves roaming cannibals that attack anyone they encounter. As a result, the father and son are thoroughly vulnerable subjects. At the same time, the cannibals' omnipresence and savagery stand in contrast with the father's singular commitment to protecting his son. Early in the novel, the father kills a cannibal in front of his child, who is left "covered with gore and mute as a stone" (McCarthy 2010, 69). In this instance, the cannibal's potential to commit violence calls for intervention at all costs. The novel adds to this characterization later, when the protagonists come across an old plantation house that has become a cannibal stronghold. Here in the novel's most gruesome scene, the man encounters a basement filled with still-living victims held captive (McCarthy 2010, 116). The staging of this scene encourages the reader to compare the dramatic discovery with the evocative history of the plantation house, where "[c]hattel slaves had once trod" (McCarthy 2010, 112).

The episode lays bare the contradiction at the heart of how McCarthy's novel figures vulnerability. At first glance, the allusion to slavery places the apocalyptic scene on a larger timeline, one that compares acts of inhumanity—chattel slavery, genocide, and mass murder—that specifically reverberate throughout US history. At the same time, this comparison only works inasmuch that it creates a negative model for humanity that contrasts with the father and his son. According to the narrative's reasoning, the cannibals are inhuman and, as a result, killable subjects; they are also in a position of power that makes all other people in *The Road* extremely vulnerable. The cannibal embodies the novel's overarching claim about the human condition, which fixates on symbols of evil for the purposes of delimiting what humanity involves in the first place. In another scene, the man recalls a childhood memory involving "rough men" unearthing a "great bolus of serpents" that had collected in a grotto "for a common warmth": "The men poured gasoline on them and burned them alive, having no remedy for evil but only for the image of it as they conceived it to be" (McCarthy 2010, 200). While the casual cruelty of the memory hints at the violence underlying

civilization in general, it also clarifies the role of the cannibal—as an omnipresent and highly mobile threat—in putting into relief the man's own ethical integrity.

By making cannibals both victims and beneficiaries of vulnerability, *The Road* asserts the father's singular embodiment of humanity. The vexed depiction of cannibalism—and especially its parallel with chattel slavery—extends from the problem inherent to the novel's universalism. Ultimately, the novel glosses the structural violence associated with plantation slavery not to explore the implied continuity between past and future apocalypses, but to amplify the humanizing relation between father and son. Critics have pointed out that McCarthy's focus on this specific relationship is central to his overall framing of environmental catastrophe, insofar as he "correlates parental care with human survival when the nonhuman environment has virtually ceased to exist" (Johns-Putra 2016, 531). The man's struggle to protect his child should, the novel argues, register something of affective and humanistic bonds between humanity and the environment more generally. Thus he frequently reminds his son that they are the "good guys" who "don't give up" (McCarthy 2010, 145). However, the contrast between these characters on one side and nearly every other human on the other further distinguishes and valorizes the man's specific features. The universalizing framing to the novel consequently runs up against the explicit (and conservative) encoding of the father's masculinity, individualism, and his commitment to faith and family.

If the apocalyptic scenarios of *The Road* and *The Water Knife* intend to rouse readers to action, then structural appropriation plays a key role in making the apocalypse both plausible and visible. The limitations of this approach are apparent elsewhere in American speculative literature. For instance, Octavia Butler's Earthseed novels likewise build on real-world precedents of structural vulnerability, from historical cases like "Nazi Germany" to the observable phenomenon of "throw-away labor" in the Mexico-US borderland (Butler and Francis 2010, 198, 44–5). In view of these examples, Butler's fiction highlights what she claimed are the "various things that… are going to lead us to living in a world that we really don't want to live in" (Butler and Francis 2010, 198). The reference to "throw-away labor" underscores how neoliberalism's present fundamentally shapes imaginings of future social dysfunction in the Global North. But even as such writings acknowledge this legacy, they still frame the apocalypse as a "world" that can only emerge (or remerge) in the US. Lived experiences of structural violence—and the US's current role in perpetuating the most devastating components to regimes of global neoliberalism and colonialism—remain relegated to the background of these texts. The following section turns to Indigenous and postcolonial narratives of apocalypse that engage more directly with historically grounded forms of structural violence, as well as the insights of populations that have already lived through apocalyptic transformations.

Post-apocalyptic geographies

Structural appropriation cuts both ways: If it references and extrapolates from already existing catastrophes in the Global South, it also occludes specific histories of racial and colonial violence in imagining future catastrophes affecting American settler populations. Structural appropriation frequently foregrounds the theme of environmental blowback (Beck's "boomerang effect") suffered by formerly privileged groups, while obscuring strategies of survival created by Indigenous and postcolonial populations who have already experienced apocalypse. As proponents of the "post-apocalypse theory" of Indigenous culture emphasize, the end of their worlds did not make these populations vanish so much as it pushed them to invent new methods of ecological and cultural reproduction. *Animal's People* and *The Northlander* exemplify how postcolonial and Indigenous artists frame the geographies of apocalypse

in ways that highlight the complex interconnections between colonialism, structural violence, and post-apocalyptic modes of life and futurity.

Animal's People focalizes environmental catastrophe through the perspective of Animal, an orphan whose spine has been warped by the effects of a toxic chemical leak in Khaufpur. The novel's setting invokes the environmental illnesses, lack of health care, and interminable law-suits that characterized the long aftermath of 1984 chemical disaster in Bhopal, India. Animal, who refuses to identify as "human," joins a group of activists organized by Zafar that struggles to hold the American "Kampani" accountable for reparations and cleanup in the wake of the disaster. Echoing the opinion of the Catholic nun who raised him, Animal repeatedly refers to Khaufpur as the site of the "Apokalis" (Sinha 2007, 63). Whereas McCarthy and the book of Revelation frame Apocalypse in universalizing terms, Sinha's vernacular rendering underscores the local and contingent nature of apocalypse. Thus, Elli Barber—a humanitarian doctor who serves as the novel's stand-in for Western readers—fundamentally fails to understand the apocalyptic temporality she witnesses in Khaufpur. Animal tells her that "[i]n the Kingdom of the poor, time doesn't exist…. Hope dies in places like this, because hope lives in the future and there's no future here, how can you think about tomorrow when all your strength is used up trying to get through today?" (Sinha 2007, 185) Khaufpur's "Apokalis" is characterized by both spatial and temporal differentiation: in Sinha's unexceptional, everyday scenario of dis-aster, it is "always now o'clock" (Sinha 2007, 185).

Nixon elaborates on the temporal complexities of environmental "slow violence" drama-tized by the novel. He explains that "*Animal's People* exposes the uneven timelines and multi-ple speeds of environmental terror," which encompasses "the initial toxic event that kills thousands instantly; the fatal fire that erupts years later, when the deserted but still–polluted factory reignites; the contaminants that continue to leach into the communal bloodstream; and the monsoon season that each year washes abandoned chemicals into the aquifers, repoisoning wells and producing new cycles of deferred casualties" (Nixon 2011, 61). These timelines of chemical toxicity interact with previously established dynamics of colonial occupation, post-colonial dispossession, and infrastructural violence: there is considerable overlap between the populations that Animal describes as the "Kingdom of the Poor" and the "People of the Apokalis" (Sinha 2007, 177, 366).

Sinha stages unexpected affiliations and conceptions of futurity forged amid debilitating waves of attritional violence. Hindus and Muslims, Khaufpuris and outsiders, the (temporarily) able-bodied and the debilitated collectively work through Khaufpur's ongoing trauma in the novel's extensive description of the local fire-walking ritual in observation of Ashara Mubarak, as well as in more political actions including a hunger strike and an illegal occupation of the contaminated (and prohibited) factory site. This apocalyptic solidarity, grounded in shared exposures to environmental violence, extends far beyond Khaufpur: "Is Khaufpur the only poisoned city? It is not. There are others and each one of [them] has its own Zafar. There'll be a Zafar in Mexico City and others in Hanoi and Manila and Halabja and there are the Zafars of Minamata and Sevoso, of São Paulo and Toulouse…" (Sinha 2007, 296). Sinha's decision to set his novelization of the Bhopal catastrophe in the fictional city of "Khaufpur" (a name that literally translates as "city of fear") establishes a different kind of allegory than McCarthy's: Khaufpur could reference any of a multitude of cities worldwide whose populations have been exposed to environmental violence, often through the machinations of global capitalism and/ or US militarization. The "Apokalis" thus names a process of uneven development calculated to gradually devastate vulnerable environments and populations. The novel's final lines lever-age this sense of global capitalism's unevenly distributed apocalypses to envision a post-human future dominated by debilitated, chemically or radioactively transformed populations: "All

things pass, but the poor remain. We are the People of the Apokalis. Tomorrow there will be more of us" (Sinha 2007, 366). Rather than employing apocalyptic discourse to warn readers away from a degraded condition characterized by pollution, disability, and death, Animal welcomes the expansion of his already apocalyptic world. For, as Animal's story has demonstrated, only the people of the Apokalis—rather than those whose way of living depends upon the quiet devastation of local worlds elsewhere—are in a position to imagine how to survive the end of the world.

As Grace Dillon has written, speculative "Native Apocalypse" narratives are similarly concerned with alternative conceptions of survival and futurity. "Native apocalyptic storytelling," she writes, "shows the ruptures, the scars, and the trauma in its effort ultimately to provide healing and a return to bimaadiziwin [the state of balance]. This is the path to a sovereignty embedded in self-determination" (Dillon 2012, 9). *The Northlander*, a post-apocalyptic film by the Métis filmmaker Benjamin Ross Hayden featuring an all-First Nations cast, inverts the conventional marginalization of racialized populations in post-apocalyptic narratives in order to center the question of Indigenous futurity. Whereas many post-apocalyptic stories focus on the relationship between the present and its dystopian future, *The Northlander* underscores the past in order to drive home the point that the apocalypse is nothing new for Indigenous nations like the Métis. According to Hayden, "The film is inspired by…the 1885 Battle of Batoche…where [the Métis leader] Louis Riel challenged the colonial ways of life…. The same struggle is reflected in the film" (quoted in Kinnari 2016). Instead of focusing on the battle itself, the film focuses on its protagonist's personal quest for metaphysical "answers" that will enable his people—the community of Last Arc—to survive. The historical connection is further evident in the filming locale, which "took place in the Alberta Badlands near Montana, where Riel took refuge before returning to lead the Métis rebellion" (Kinnari 2016). *The Northlander*'s subtle references to Riel are encoded in both oblique historical parallels and the specificities of landscape.

The theory of Native Apocalypse offers ample context for Hayden's unusual decision to set a work of historical fiction in a post-apocalyptic future: the problems of identity, survival, and survivance[3] posed by the end of the world are not new for Indigenous nations. As Larson notes, "temporal unification of the past and future with the present"—or a form of narrative that attends to present and historical apocalypses as well as future threats—is among the most distinctive contributions of Native American stories (Larson 2000, 38). Hayden reimagines the historical Riel as Cygnus, a solitary hunter and fighter who was taken in by the community of Last Arc. When the settlement is attacked by roving "Heretics," its matriarchal leader asks Cygnus (in the film's characteristically oblique dialogue) to explore uncharted terrain in quest of knowledge left behind by "humans"—"to go somewhere dark, where there is light that has an answer." During his quest, Cygnus is captured by a vicious group of Heretics who are also in search of what is effectively a time capsule containing "Everything their world had, and their children do not." After Cygnus escapes with a fellow captive named Mari, they find the dark place and enter separate rooms with technological interfaces. Here, the "light that has an answer" turns out to be surprisingly like film: moving images and recorded sounds that instruct Cygnus about the vital role of "love." These short recordings overwhelm Mari with grief, but Cygnus discovers in them the "answer" he was sent for: "Anywhere in the world will be your home; it's just a long walk you're going on." When Cygnus sees an illuminated globe, he realizes there is no place beyond the desolate world they inhabit: "There's nothing more. All we can do is move across this place. All we can do is move, and survive." Although this "answer" appears as bleak as the scenario of McCarthy's

The Road, the imperative to "move, and survive" reads differently given the Métis's history as a migratory society that followed the buffalo they hunted. Cygnus and Mari make love in the dark place, and eventually return to Last Arc with new perspectives on love, time, and movement. "I see time differently now," says Cygnus. Despite the impossibility of escaping the apocalypse, Cygnus affirms that "we are not out of time. To feel is to live. To feel is to continue."

If the dark place with the "light that has an answer" functions as an analogue of film—a medium that has played a powerful role (particularly in the genre of the Holly-wood Western) in consolidating settler national identities while marginalizing and deni-grating Indigenous nations—it presents apocalyptic scenarios distinct from the domestic, national, and racial ideologies that characterize settler film traditions. The dying "human" (i.e., settler) voice saying to her child "Anywhere in the world will be your home" affirms the long-denigrated nomadic practices of many Indigenous nations as the (post-) human condition in the wake of the apocalypse. The knowledge that is transmitted by cinema here is not settler ideology but the vital importance of traditional Métis mobility. As the historian Michael Hogue writes:

> The mobility of such Indigenous peoples as the Plains Metis was…an obvious reminder of the preexisting territorialities and sovereignties that new national bor-ders such as the forty-ninth parallel sought to overwrite. The ongoing movement of the Metis laid bare one of the central fictions of new national geographies: that Indigenous peoples were internal subjects who had accepted their place within the nation, rather than sovereign peoples.
>
> *(Hogue 2015, 6)*

Hayden's film is less concerned with questions of physical survival than with psycho-logical and cultural survival in the face of "Post-Apocalypse Stress Syndrome." The "Heretics" who threaten Cygnus's community are an inverted reference to those who accused Riel of heresy for believing himself to be a divinely chosen prophet and leader of his people. The film's Heretics have no apparent sense of empathy, community, or common purpose. By contrast, Mari and Cygnus learn the importance of both feelings and the Métis people's traditional migratory mode of life. For a nation oriented around migration and hunting, "All we can do is move, and survive" is an affirmation: not a struggle for biological survival but a realization that movement is essential to the survival and resurgence of Métis culture.

As this chapter has shown, American post-apocalyptic fiction exemplifies both the possibilities and common problems with structural appropriation: the way it is used to simultaneously reference problems of geographically uneven environmental violence and obscure their historical conditions. Structural appropriation pushes actual racialized and colonized populations into the margins even in the course of rehearsing the environmental violence those populations have suffered. And more often than not, the purpose of structural appropriation is to present cautionary tales about the future third-worlding of the West with the aim of motivating Western readers to avert conditions that are already being lived in the Global South. By contrast, postcolonial and Indi-genous narratives frame the apocalypse as a condition to inhabit and learn from—a condition that profoundly transforms humanity itself. For authors like Sinha and Hayden, the apocalypse is not a threatened end but an event that has already occurred, that continues in the present and pushes us to reimagine narratives of postcolonial and Indigenous survival and futurity.

Hsuan L. Hsu and Bryan Yazell

Notes

1 Wendy Hui Kyong Chun describes how high-tech Orientalism "seeks to orient the reader to a technology-overloaded present/ future (which is portrayed as belonging to Japan or other Far East Countries) through the promise of readable difference, and through the conflation of information networks with an exotic urban landscape" (Chun 2006, 77). See also the comprehensive overview of this tradition in Roh, Huang, and Niu's *Techno-Orientalism*.

2 Indeed, various critics have read the narrative as a redemptive parable with Edenic, messianic or Arthurian parallels (see, for example, Josephs 2013).

3 For Vizenor, "Native survivance is an active sense of presence over absence, deracination, and oblivion; survivance is the continuance of stories, not a mere reaction" in the face of attempted genocide (Vizenor 2008, 1).

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