Article

Producing Solidarities: Theological Reflections on Humanity and Ecology in *Animal's People*

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Abstract: This article examines Indra Sinha's novel *Animal's People* for insight into the intersection of theological anthropology and ecological theology. Set in the wake of a man-made ecological crisis, Sinha's novel probes the definition of humanity, the interconnectedness between humans and the environment, and the toxic effects of the neoliberal order for humans and their environment. Drawing on Joerg Rieger and Kwok Pui-lan's notion of an ecclesiology of solidarity, with insight from Rob Nixon's work on ecological violence in the neoliberal order, this article considers the rich theological resources residing in Sinha's work. Through a close reading of the text, the article highlights Sinha's novel as a reflective resource both for eco-theology and for theological anthropology. It demonstrates that Sinha's expansive vision of humanity effectively challenges the colonial hierarchy of humanity and the global system of borders which reinforces it. The witness of *Animal's People* suggests that theological anthropology and eco-theology are inseparably interrelated and that responsible praxis in both spheres is necessary for developing global human and ecological solidarity.

Keywords: eco-theology; theological anthropology; empathy; Bhopal; literature; solidarity; environmental crisis; borders

1. Introduction

This paper analyzes the intertwined theological anthropology and ecological theology embedded in Indra Sinha's novel, *Animal's People* (Sinha 2007). It will begin from the Christian theological affirmation of the inherent worth and value of each person as created in the *Imago Dei* and from the connected assertion that God's creation is both gift and resource for which humans have a critical stewardship responsibility. Christian theology, especially theologies of liberation (Gutiérrez 1988; Sobrino 1994; Cone 1997; Althaus-Reid 2000; Cone 2010), affirm that God has a "preferential option" (Gutiérrez 1988) for the vulnerable, the oppressed, and the poor. Instead of assuming that God's material creation is expendable, a mere resource to be exploited until it is depleted, progressive Christian eco-theology affirms that humans are responsible for preserving, caring for, and cultivating the land (Keller 1994; Tanner 1994; McFague 1994; DeVries 1994). Neither wealthy and powerful nations nor transnational corporations share these Christian theological affirmations (Klein 2007).

An important function of Christian eco-theology, then, is its role in theorizing divinely inspired human ecological responsibility, which in turn effects solidarity among humans in response to ecological crises. However, various forces conspire to thwart responsible ecological stewardship and the related efforts to forge bonds of human solidarity across the global network of borders (Miller 2019). These borders operate in favor of powerful people and corporations who benefit from ecological destruction by isolating the various human partners who could work together to resist their depredations. In addition to articulating theories of responsible human stewardship and the imperative of creation care, responsible eco-theology can work to develop a robust theological anthropology that addresses attempts by the powerful to isolate and divide through dehumanizing propaganda and the geographic externalization of ecological suffering. Such theology emphasizes the humanity of those suffering from ecological devastation and fosters relationship and empathy, which

transcend and penetrate borders for the sake of both divinely mandated stewardship and divinely mandated human solidarity.

Set amidst the lingering ecological devastation caused by a chemical factory explosion in a fictional Indian city modeled after Bhopal, India, Sinha's novel offers a sustained meditation on what it means to be a human in the wake of environmental catastrophe. The characters who populate Sinha's novel exist along the bottom of Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's "Pyramid of Global Constitution" (Hardt and Negri 2000, p. 309ff). Sinha compellingly brings the otherwise invisible and nameless poor and oppressed victims of human-caused ecological crisis to life and offers readers (especially Western readers) an opportunity to expand their circle of human and ecological concern as broadly as possible.

The characters in Sinha's novel have the potential to become his readers' neighbors. Sinha's narrative offers his readers a way to attend to the ecological plight of "the least of these" (Matt 25: 45), and in so doing, he offers pathways toward cultivating solidarity in a church beyond the strictures of physical walls and national borders. In this way, his work connects to the concept that Kwok Pui-lan and Joerg Rieger have called an "ecclesia of the multitude" (Rieger and Pui-lan 2012). Sinha's audacious goal is to encourage readers to move beyond internal emotional connections to his novel's characters and their ecological situation and into meaningful political action on their behalf.

Compassionate attention to and active engagement on behalf of oppressed peoples is both a critical emphasis within Christian theology and a recurring emphasis within the discourse of eco-theology (e.g., DeVries 1994; Keller 1994; McFague 1994; Tanner 1994). Not only do the Hebrew Scriptures depict a God who values humans as created in God's own image and this creation as holy and sacred, but Jesus emphasizes these Hebrew Scriptural themes throughout his ministry and particularly emphasizes the interconnected dignity and worth of all humanity in his parables (e.g., Luke 10: 25–37). Christian theology and liturgy call upon all believers to "seek and serve Christ in all persons, . . . [to] strive for justice and peace among all people, and [to] respect the dignity of every human being".[1]

This article argues that success in this goal can be aided through forging theological connections between Sinha's readers and his characters[2], which are strong enough to sustain a sense of transnational and transcultural (and even multifaith) ecclesial solidarity. Additionally, it proposes that Sinha's expansive vision of humanity effectively challenges the colonial hierarchy of humanity and the global system of borders (Miller 2019) which reinforces it. Though he does not self-identify as a Christian, and his characters are Hindu and Muslim, his work offers rich theological insight for Christian theology, specifically in the interconnected areas of theological anthropology and eco-theology.

2. Literature as Eco-Theological Resource

2.1. Niebuhr and the Problem of Remote Sympathy

Almost a century ago, Reinhold Niebuhr observed that egoism combined with geographic separation thwart human sympathy and ethical responsibility for others. He asserted that ethical concern and human sympathy rely "upon personal, intimate, and organic contacts" for their development (Niebuhr 1932, p. 171). In other words, proximity to a human or ecological problem elicits sympathy, ethical concern, and even remedial action to improve the situation whereas remoteness thwarts those same sympathies because the distance obscures and reduces the apparent gravity of the crisis. For Niebuhr, reason's resources prove inadequate to overcome these obstacles to human and ecological solidarity, whereas religious resources offer more effective possibilities for forging deep and meaningful solidarity across the barriers of geography.

As Niebuhr suspected, globalization has not resolved the difficulties in imagining the full humanity of our far neighbors, even as it has rendered us increasingly interconnected and interdependent. Furthermore, the task of imagining our remote neighbors' environmental realities remains difficult. The privileged people of the world are typically insulated from the most devastating situations of ecological devastation even as multitudes of poor people remain imperiled. This insulation further impedes engagement in a sustained

practice of ecological and human imagination and empathy. However, without precisely such an imaginative engagement with the ecological realities that negatively impact the most vulnerable citizens of the world, our entire global community is gravely endangered. Deliberately cultivating a richly interconnected anthropological and ecological imagination offers a crucial antidote to these challenges that is capable of generating both human and environmental flourishing.

2.2. Literature as Sympathetic Bridge

Novels function to catalyze precisely this kind of theological imagination and development. Though world travel to become intimately familiar with diverse groups of people and ecologies remains inaccessible to many individuals, it is possible to develop familiarity and emotional connection with others through literature. Novels contain rich possibilities to mobilize a reader's empathy and imagination. Simultaneously, they penetrate the borders which separate humans from each other. When readers immerse themselves in the fictional worlds inhabited by characters whose situations differ from their own familiar lives, they can develop emotional connections with those characters and familiarity with their different circumstances. Immersion in different worlds and different lives expands readers' capacity for understanding and imagination, and therefore, for empathy. Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore (2020) has written on the theological resources of Richard Powers's ecologically focused novel *The Overstory* (2018) for her field of pastoral theology. In short, novels have the potential to enable readers to develop empathy for global neighbors (Keen 2007; Osmer 2011).

2.3. Animal's People as Bridge to Bhopal

Sinha's novel is but one example of the novel's power to engage empathetic connection. He mobilizes empathetic and imaginative dynamics in his fiction to combat the challenge of geographical separation and transcend the barriers of distance and national borders. He sets his novel, *Animal's People*, in the fictional city Khaufpur (meaning "City of Terror") in the aftermath of a spectacular ecological disaster which had long-lasting, deleterious effects on the health its of citizens (Sinha 2007, p. 383). The fictional city is based on the Indian city of Bhopal, which was the site of a disastrous chemical explosion at the Union Carbide India Limited (UCIL) Pesticide plant in December 1984. Approximately 40 tonnes of methyl-isocynate gas leaked out of UCIL's storage tanks, the maintenance of which had been long neglected. The cloud of gas dispersed over the surrounding land, poisoning the people of Bhopal as they slept. In the aftermath of the explosion, thousands of people died. Rob Nixon writes, "Estimates of those killed immediately vary widely, from 4000 to 15,000 people. In the years that followed scores of thousands of deaths and life-threatening disabilities were linked to exposure to the gas cloud. By some estimates, 100,000 residents continue to be afflicted" (Nixon 2011, p. 51). While the scale of devastation threatens to anesthetize us to its true impact, Sinha succeeds in humanizing otherwise dry and forgettable statistics. Through Sinha's authorial skill, his readers experience the terrors and the joys of living in Khaufpur, and the previously invisible Khaufpuris enter their circle of human and ecological concern.

In the absence of deep, everyday personal connection with others (Niebuhr 1932), it becomes easy to dehumanize others and easy to conceptualize their associated remote environments as available for use or resource extraction (Jennings 2010; Douglas 2015). Their environment/ecology is not imagined as being connected to and used by its inhabitants but is instead conceived of as "unused" and therefore available for exploitation. When the people on the land are assumed to be less than fully human, their land is then assumed to be unoccupied. It is necessary to reimagine the intimate connections between people and their land, and this task begins with the reimagination and reaffirmation of the humanity of the people on that land. Sinha's novel provides one resource for this critical reimagination and reaffirmation of an expansive humanity in the *Imago Dei*, which includes those people who have too long been excluded from the category of human in the Western colonial

imagination, which Willie James Jennings calls "Christianity's diseased social imagination" Jennings (2010, p. 9). Sinha's characters, including his ironically named narrator, Animal, bear the *Imago Dei,* and he insists that his reader see them as fully human. Through his story, Sinha confronts his readers with a literary ecology replete with characters just as real as their own selves and, therefore, just as precious in God's sight as they assume themselves to be.

3. Animal's People

Sinha's tale transports readers into the depths of Khaufpuri city life, as seen through the eyes of his narrator, Animal, a nineteen-year-old boy who lives in the city slums. In his meandering, beautifully offensive fashion, Animal tells of his birth, which occurred just days before the chemical explosion that killed his parents. He is left abandoned in a doorway "that night", the night that haunts his story and infuses the city of Khaufpur with a palpable terror. At first, Animal admits, he was reluctant to tell his story, because as a victim of the chemical disaster who was visibly disfigured, he has experienced ogling by strangers and foreigners. He initially suspected that the Australian journalist who wanted to interview him was

> like all the others, come to suck our stories from us, so strangers in far off countries can marvel there's so much pain in the world. Like vultures are you jarnaliss [sic]. Somewhere a bad thing happens, tears like rain in the wind, and look, here you come, drawn by the smell of blood. (Sinha 2007, p. 5)

In other words, Animal suspected that the journalist viewed him not as a human but as an artifact of disaster. He suspected that the journalist merely wanted to extract[3] his story for entertainment or consumption.

Eventually, Animal overcomes his reluctance and records his story for the Jarnalis [sic]. He tells of how he became an Animal, bent double by the toxic aftereffects of the poisonous vapors released in the Kampani's[4] explosion. He describes the process of his transformation in the following way:

> I was six when the pains began . . . The pain gripped my neck and forced it down. I had to stare at my feet while the devil rode my back and chafed me with red hot tongs. The burning in the muscles became a fever, when the fevers got bad I was taken to the hospital, they gave me an injection. It did no good. After that my back began to twist. Nothing could be done. It was agony, I couldn't straighten up, I was pressed forward by the pain. Before this I could run and jump like any other kid, now I could not even stand up straight. Further, further forward I was bent. When the smelting in my spine stopped the bones had twisted like a hairpin. (Sinha 2007, p. 15)

From this point in his life, Animal must learn to walk on his hands and feet. As a result, other children in the orphanage and throughout the neighborhood ridiculed him by calling him "Animal".

For Animal, telling his story is simultaneously an intentional reclamation of his humanity and an expression of his wish to become visible to Western eyes. By recording his perspective in the first person, Animal intentionally becomes visible as a human. Instead of addressing the journalist, he imagines himself surrounded by Western eyes. He says:

> I am saying this into darkness that is filled with eyes. Whichever way I look eyes are showing up. They're floating round in the air . . . turning this way and that they're, looking for things to see. I don't want them to see me . . .

> The instant I began talking the eyes came. I tried to hide . . . The eyes remained, they were wondering where the words had gone. They watched quietly, blinking now and again, waiting for something to happen. (Sinha 2007, p. 12)

He searches for friendly eyes until he settles on one pair which he imagines to be his reader. He speaks directly to the reader: "You are reading my words . . . I've no

name for you so I will call you Eyes. My job is to talk, yours is to listen. So now listen"
(Sinha 2007, p. 14). He invites their sustained gaze on him at the same time as he allows
the Eyes to gaze through his eyes to see the world he inhabits, including his closest friends
and neighbors and their environment. The "Eyes" to which Animal speaks highlight the
theme of visibility and invisibility within the text.

By means of Animal's "tape-recorded" words spoken "to you", Sinha facilitates a
direct connection which cuts across space and inserts Western readers into the landscape of
Khaufpur, insisting that we see Animal's humanity and hear his voice as authoritative. His
readers ought not to betray the trust that Animal extends by sharing his story and opening
his heart to them. By sharing his tale, he breaks down the barrier between the visible and
invisible people of the world. In believing that the eyes represent a real person reading, he
sees Westerners as more than just characters in a Hollywood movie, while simultaneously
allowing the Western world to *see* Khaufpur and Khaufpuris more fully than any Western
news source would permit.

3.1. Animal's Transformation and a Theological Anthropology

Animal's first utterance, "I used to be human once. So I'm told" (Sinha 2007, p. 1),
emphasizes the simultaneously elegiac and resentful tenor of his narration. By the time he
records his story, he no longer remembers his birth name, so strongly does he identify as
(non-human) "Animal". Furthermore, Animal claims he does not even want to be a human.
This claim seems to be based on his experience of rejection by humans and his judgment of
humans as cruel, profit-driven, selfish beings. It was humans who rejected him from their
midst and called him "Animal" once he had begun to walk on all fours. He cannot shake
the label given to him by other children. Instead, he does what so many outsiders do: he
appropriates the pejorative. Ironically, as Animal, classified as "other", he gains the ability
to pass judgment on the humans who have rejected and ridiculed him throughout his life,
to observe without partaking of their hypocrisy. Yet, his insistence on self-definition and
his refusal to obey societal norms express the very humanity he denies he possesses.

Animal's tenacious insistence that he is "just an animal" underscores one of the
recurring questions Sinha is posing through this novel: What does it mean to be human?
Who are the humans and who are the non-humans? Furthermore, do some humans and
their environments count more than others? If so, who decides which humans and which
ecologies are worthy of care and which are exploitable? Though the Kampani executives
and government officials are the self-appointed arbiters of human and ecological value,
Sinha answers their pretense by illuminating the humanity, vitality, and resourcefulness of
the terrorized and forgotten Khaufpuris.

Despite seeming to embrace his status as a non-human outcast, Animal gradually
accepts his own humanity throughout the novel. The change in his self-identification
begins when he meets Nisha, a young Hindu student. He is begging outside the restaurant
where she is eating lunch with her friends. Instead of ignoring him or telling him to go
away, as if he were a street dog, she approaches him and engages him in conversation. To
Nisha, Animal is a human, not an object worthy of only disgust or avoidance, and she
treats him as such. Nisha's care and attention disrupts the life Animal has carved out for
himself in the streets and ignites in him a new desire to reimagine himself as human:

> What was it about Nisha . . . ? I think it was that from the first she took me exactly
> as I was. When she called me Jaanvar, Animal, it was a name, nothing more. She
> never seemed to notice that I was crippled, nor pretend I wasn't. She was the
> only person who treated me as completely normal. (Sinha 2007, p. 22)

While the other girls with her at the coffee shop do not approach him, Nisha gets up
from her table to talk to Animal. Not only does she talk with him as if he is a human like her,
but she offers Animal and his dog food at her home and tells him she will find him some
work to do, because she recognizes his intelligence (Sinha 2007, p. 19). In contrast to most
people, who avoid or deride Animal, Nisha invites him into the most sacred space that
humans cultivate: her home. As a result, Animal begins to embrace his own humanity and

increasingly invests energy, time, and emotion in relationships with other people, especially with Nisha, her fiancé Zafar, her father Somraj, and the American doctor Elli Barber.

As Animal comes to embrace his own humanity, he compels others to see him as human. Readers' recognition and vigorous affirmation of Animal's humanity requires two things. It requires that Sinha's readers truly see Animal and his environment, both its beauty and its terror. As already discussed, readers must look at Animal unflinchingly and sympathetically to appreciate his humanity in spite of his marginalization. However, more than that, readers must look at what Animal observes about his home—his own marginalized ecology. Readers must hear Animal's voice as expert on his environment— they must hear him as authoritative, intelligent, insightful, and powerful.

3.2. Seeing the Slow Violence in Animal's Ecological Reality

Throughout his novel, Sinha incorporates the phenomena of attention and gaze.[5] When humans see something grotesque, they are gripped simultaneously by desires to stare and to look away. Sinha identifies his narrator as grotesque and his narrator's ecology as devastated. Sinha challenges his readers to look and to resist averting their eyes from the horrors that stalk the streets of Khaufpur. Thus, the readers' eyes peer through Animal's eyes, seeing everything he sees, both around him and within him. Sinha's skillful prose entrances his readers and holds their gaze, which is precisely the point. Only by holding the horrors of what Rob Nixon terms "slow violence" (Nixon 2011) within sight continuously can we hope to do justice to our fellow humans who groan under the weight of such monstrous circumstances. In narrating Animal's world, Sinha "deploy[s] his imaginative agility and worldly ardor to help amplify the media-marginalized causes of the environmentally dispossessed" (Nixon 2011, p. 5). What we have seen with Animal should and must haunt us, so that it can change us.

In his book, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*, Rob Nixon (2011) engages numerous genres (including fiction, memoir, and non-fiction) to emphasize the already extant body of literature that confronts the intertwined human and environmental tragedies of the Anthropocene age. His book serves as a guide to various landmark works which address slow forms of violence as compared with spectacular violence that garners media attention and holds the attention of distracted TV news viewers. He acknowledges a trend that has only become more entrenched since his book was published in 2011—digital culture is a war for attention in which spectacle and drama invariably eclipse slow violence and the delayed aftereffects of tragedy. The news cycle moves on, although human beings still suffer in the wake of catastrophic floods, environmental dispersed toxins, radiation, nuclear fallout, and desertification. In his effort to combat this phenomenon, Nixon seeks "to address our inattention to calamities that are slow and long lasting, calamities that patiently dispense their devastation while remaining outside our flickering attention spans—and outside the purview of a spectacle-driven corporate media" (Nixon 2011, p. 6). Nixon acknowledges the prevalence of lurid, macabre tales of ecological devastation that unfortunately have the effect of instilling a negligent "thank God that's not me" mentality in readers—they anesthetize readers to the tragedy rather than cultivating solidarity across cultural and national borders or opening readers up to greater empathy. However, attending to what Nixon terms "slow violence" serves the dual purpose of broadening our ecological awareness to include even the most remote spaces and homes and cultivating greater human empathy and solidarity that crosses national borders. Sinha's novel enables the development of reader sympathy by making the reader's gaze dwell upon the ecological destruction of Khaufpur/Bhopal.

While those outside of locations such as the fictional Khaufpur might forget the terror after the shock of the initial event has dissipated, Khaufpuri's have no such option. Animal and the citizens of Khaufpur exist in what Nixon terms "terror time",[6] always in danger of reexperiencing the terrors of "that night" (Sinha 2007, p. 14). Terrors haunt the city and permeate the landscape. Nixon explains the sequence of environmental terror as follows:

> The initial toxic event that kills thousands instantly; the fatal fire that erupts years later; the contaminants that continue to leach into *the communal blood stream*; and the monsoon season that each year washes abandoned chemicals into the aquifers, re-poisoning the wells and producing new cycles of deferred casualties. Thus the initial airborne terror morphs into a waterborne terror that acquires its own seasonal rhythms of heightened risk". (Nixon 2011, pp. 60–61, emphasis added)

Nixon's description of the "blood stream" as communal functions to highlight the fact that the lingering toxins poison not isolated individuals, but the entire group of humans who cannot escape the chemicals' effects. In any community, people share life experience, joys, and sorrows. However, in environmentally traumatized communities, such as Khaufpur, inhabitants also share toxic aftereffects which result in typical disease profiles and chronic symptoms.

Animal guides the reader through the skeletal remains of the factory, an area through which only he is brave, or foolish, enough to wander. Animal's description compellingly evokes the terrors of living in the shadow of this structure:

> Eyes, imagine you're in the factory with me. See that thing rising above the trees, those rusty pipes and metal stairs going nowhere? That's the place where they made the poisons . . . All that's left now is its skeleton . . . Inside the warehouse I never went, they were full of rotting sacks that poured out white and pink powders. (Sinha 2007, pp. 30–31)

The factory's skeleton constitutes a spectral, ghastly reminder of the terrors of that night, its decaying structure hiding even more poison in powdered form. By illuminating the spectral dimensions of these environmental toxins, Sinha's work reveals the conflation of the spiritual/terror and material/ecological realms for those who dwell amid such threats. Because both terror and toxin lurk beneath the surface of normal life, which inexorably resumes after catastrophe, these threats are difficult to perceive, especially for those who live at a distance from their immediate influence. Nixon writes, "In a world permeated by insidious, yet unseen or imperceptible violence, imaginative writing can help make the unapparent appear, making it accessible and tangible by humanizing drawn-out threats inaccessible to the immediate senses" (Nixon 2011, p. 15). Sinha's book is a vehicle for perception—a means by which readers can turn their gaze on the otherwise invisible threats that exist for people across the globe.

3.3. Perspective from Below in Animal's People

Animal's perspective as a poor victim of ecological terror is already marginalized, but combined with his forced posture, he offers a doubly marginalized and subjugated perspective. This heightened marginalization serves to emphasize the necessary relation of eco-theology and theological anthropology. Animal's posture, which he is forced to maintain because of his spinal disfigurement, gives him a unique ability to move undetected throughout the neighborhoods of Khaufpur, and combined with his facility with languages (he speaks Hindi, French, and some English), enables his story to include scenes, characters, and details from all over the city. He insists throughout his story that "in all the world there is none like me" (Sinha 2007, pp. 172, 342, 366). No other character can travel where he does, see what he does, nor understand quite the way he does. He is the only one in the city who dares to visit the remains of the factory. He is the only one who can translate for the nun Ma Franci, who, since the explosion, has ceased to be able to understand any language but the French of her childhood. He is the first person to enter the new doctor's clinic. He is the only person able to spy on the meetings between executives and lawyers happening in the luxury hotel across town. Animal's view of the world, from below the average human's eye level, allows him to see beneath, below, and between what others around him notice. Therefore, his perspective offers privileged, Western readers a rare look at life from the bottom, and further suggests the imperative of recognizing the *Imago Dei* in even (or especially) the most marginalized humans and its necessity for ecological theology.

4. Solidarities on the Bottom: Across Disruption, Borders, Distance, and Difference

4.1. Solidarity on the Bottom

Biblical scholar Davina Lopez provides relevant insights into such "perspectives from the bottom" through her interpretation of Paul's mission to the Galatians (Lopez 2010). Her work suggests a theological imperative of solidarity with modern subjugated peoples in imitation of the Apostle Paul's own solidarity with ancient, subjugated peoples,[7] who Lopez characterizes as conquered and subjugated by (or, on "the bottom of") the Imperial Roman hierarchy of humanity. Lopez begins her critical reimagination of Paul's mission to the Galatians by recounting Nero's premonitions of losing political power. According to his biographer Seutonius, Nero dreamed that the "images of the nations dedicated in Pompey's theater surrounded him and kept him from moving" (Lopez 2010, p. 1).

Lopez connects Nero's nightmares to the statuary representation of the conquered nations in the Sebasteion at Aphrodisias. These depictions of subjugated peoples (such as Britannia, Gaul, Judaea, etc.) employ visual tropes to communicate imperial power (Lopez 2010, p. 50). The statues constitute Nero's visual surround, as emperor, and haunt him. Their presence constitutes a threat, a spectral reminder of the resentment of Rome's subjugated nations and of their potential for catastrophic rebellion. In this context, the spectral dimension of reality operates as a foil to the shadow kingdoms in which the nations live. These statues are the ancient analogs of subjugated peoples within the modern-day neoliberal order. Where Rome subjugated Gaul, Britannia, and Judaea, among other nations, transnational corporations and powerful nations collectively subjugate previously colonized people in countries such as India, former European colonies in Africa, and indigenous peoples in South American nations. Just as in ancient Rome, the modern-day elite systematically dehumanize and subsequently designate subjugated peoples as enslaveable, disposable, or invisible.

Through her analysis of Galatians, Lopez reveals that the Roman political meaning of the Greek term, τὰ ἔθνη, carried the connotations of having been conquered by Rome. She proposes a shift in understanding this term within Paul's writing to account for these additional connotations of τὰ ἔθνη, and suggests

> seeing these constructions of difference [Jew-Gentile] as occurring on the bottom, *among minority groups* in relation to the Romans in charge, and not between Jews who are positioned to be in charge and Gentiles who are not. Therefore, the Gentiles are others to the Jews and to the Romans, to whom the Jews are *also* others. (Lopez 2010, p. 177, n. 19, [sic])

In recognizing the solidarity between the Jews and the other nations conquered by Rome, Lopez argues that Paul's mission occurs *on the bottom* and, as such, sets a theological and political precedent for further connections between and among the global conquered peoples under a modern imperial incarnation. The potential for the solidarity *on the bottom* that Lopez discerns within the biblical text also exists in the present day, even if some modern people fail to recognize their relative position within a hierarchy of humanity imposed by the global elite for their own benefit.[8]

This modern human hierarchy has been powerfully elucidated by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri. They envisioned modern empire as globally vast and constituted of a hierarchy of the world's populations (Hardt and Negri 2000). In the general scheme of Hardt and Negri's "Pyramid of Global Constitution", most of the human beings in the world exist on the bottom of the pyramid, in the Tier of Peoples and Multitudes, with little to no power, and in varying degrees of obscurity (Hardt and Negri 2000, p. 309ff). Only the people who exercise power over the multitudes operate in the upper echelons of global networks and governments, within the Tier of Global Command.

Incorporating Hardt and Negri's insight into a theological reimagination of human solidarity and *ekklesia*, which they term *Occupy Theology,* theologians Joerg Rieger and Kwok Pui-lan (Rieger and Pui-lan 2012)[9] argue that notions "like 'the poor', 'the oppressed', or 'the marginalized' need to be expanded and refined as economic wealth is increasingly amassed

and controlled by a tiny global elite, the so called 1 percent" (Rieger and Pui-lan 2012, p. 4). In such an understanding, those who exist in the 99% have much more in common with each other than with those who boast extreme wealth or who are in positions of global power. As such, Sinha's readers have much more in common with Animal and his people than we typically acknowledge.

Furthermore, most of the global population, even in privileged Western contexts, do not have the wealth or power of someone such as Jeff Bezos, for example, or Elon Musk. Thus, most of the global population exist to some extent in the lower tiers of Hardt and Negri's Pyramid of Global Constitution and, in spite of geographic or cultural separation, ought to cultivate empathy and solidarity with each other in light of their shared humanity instead of allowing borders constructed by the global elite to separate and isolate humans from each other. These borders, their function, and the possibilities for transcending them are the focus of the next section.

4.2. Disrupted Human Solidarity and the Modern Empire of Borders

Journalist Todd Miller writes on the role of borders in disrupting this type of solidarity and the ways borders function to prevent populations from recognizing their shared humanity across cultures and geographic spaces (Miller 2019). He characterizes the "global system of borders" as an "empire of borders" constructed by the global elite and functioning to separate humans into separate categories. One category of humans are, in the eyes of the global elite, the "desirable" humans who move across borders freely and easily. The other category of humans are the "undesirables", humans who are considered by the global elite to be subhuman or disposable. They become invisible behind the system of borders which separates the desirable, globally mobile humans from the undesirable humans, condemned to live out their lives in ecologically devastated locations, which are also concealed from view by the global system of borders. This system operates, functionally, to strip the *Imago Dei* from such "undesirables".

According to Miller, the current "global border system" is more porous for some people than for others. The United States has worked with countries worldwide to establish agreements "about who can and cannot move across borders, who will be included and who excluded" (Miller 2019, p. 149). This system simultaneously allows representatives from the "Kampani" [sic] to come and go from Khaufpur as they please but ensures that Animal and his people are essentially trapped in Khaufpur, unable to escape the environmental toxicity left in the Kampani's wake. In comparison, representatives of a transnational company, such as Union Carbide (on which the Kampani is based) or Dow Chemical (which acquired Union Carbide in 2001) (Nixon 2011, p. 63), are able to move across borders in a perpetual state of "Happy Flow".[10]

The lawyers for the fictional "Kampani" in *Animal's People* exist in this state of "Happy Flow". Within Sinha's story, they breeze into town from America and will leave just as easily once they have negotiated terms with the Indian courts and government officials. Their status as part of the global elite allows them to escape legal and ethical liability. Sinha juxtaposes the public outrage against this new injustice with the self-serving and intentional ignorance of the Kampani's representatives. For those stuck on the wrong side of this border system, it functions as an agent of open-air incarceration, keeping people deemed "undesirable" by border control systems out of spaces designated as "elite-only" while simultaneously allowing employees of the Kampani to take advantage of their ability to vanish and escape culpability for whatever disasters they leave behind.

The network of systematically created, maintained, and enforced borders around people groups also functions to suppress information about disastrous environmental conditions hidden in neglected or sacrificial ecologies. In other words, when people across cultures, ecologies, and geographic spaces are unable to *see* other humans and to remember that their existence and value is just as real to God as their own, those other humans become less human, less visible, and therefore more disposable. The central themes of slow violence and ecological terror connect *Animal's People* more broadly to the environmental terror

perpetrated by transnational corporations against those humans considered so invisible that they are considered expendable. Rob Nixon refers to this expendability as "imagined displacement" and "administered invisibility" in his discussion of peoples who are forcibly removed from their ancestral land and "imaginatively removed . . . from . . . a national memory" for the sake of developmental progress (Nixon 2011, pp. 151–52).[11] The people on the land become, in Nixon's words, "surplus people".

4.2.1. Borders Reinforce a Hierarchy of Humanity

Animal exists at the bottom of what Todd Miller calls the "Global Caste System" (Miller 2019, p. 149). This system is discernable alongside the global border system, and among undocumented migrants. These borders serve to separate according to an ever-evolving "global classification system—the sorting of people into categories of admissibility and inadmissibility, of low and high risk, that exist even among the relatively privileged" (Miller 2019, p. 150, emphasis original). The entire global classification system flows out of the racialized divisions created during the British Colonial era, beginning in 1807, as examined in depth by Lisa Lowe (Lowe 2006).

Miller depicts the modern continuation of deliberately orchestrated racialized divisions. The global border system still serves to enforce the racial barriers created in the wake of the British Slave Trade and refuses to admit the innate humanity of peoples who were either formerly subjugated under the British Empire or who were formerly subjugated and enslaved in the Americas. Americans and Western Europeans struggle to see their fellow humans (such as the characters depicted in *Animal's People*) as fully human and deserving of the full honor and justice associated with all made in the *Imago Dei*. We struggle because we have been taught to forget the humanity of those not admitted to the social contract of Western society.

If our amnesia was intentionally cultivated, however, it must be possible to cultivate an inclusive, even an expansive, alternative vision of shared humanity. In opposition to this calculated forgetting, Sinha's novel creates the opportunity for readers both to cultivate solidarity across the global system of borders and to combat the ongoing ecological depredations of the global elite. Instead of reinforcing their individuality and separation from other humans, readers recognize their shared humanity in the various characters in Khaufpur. By recognizing their fictionalized humanity in the literary world, and by empathizing with their plight, readers practice compassion, which is then transferrable to real-world relationships, material reality, and political activism. Sinha's novel provides one example among many literary possibilities. By reading stories of other human beings, made visible and audible through authorial agency and creativity, those who are separated from ecologically harmed communities such as the fictional city of Khaufpur can imagine themselves into relationship with Khaufpuris such as Animal, Nisha, and Zafar and, by extension, the real places and people they represent. Through immersion in such stories, it becomes possible to cultivate empathy.

4.2.2. Animal's Disruptive Human Voice Penetrates Borders

Through Sinha's authorial skill, Animal's voice cries out from Khaufpur, "Eyes, are you listening?" His unique and powerful voice compels outrage on his behalf. This sense of outrage combined with compassion has the potential to kindle and sustain human solidarity with real people such as the fictional Animal, whose existence is typically obscured by the combined power of the global system of borders and the calculated global media silence. Animal's narrative voice is singularly appropriate for communicating a story which encompasses chaos and tragedy melded with beauty and hope. He does not speak with a silver tongue, nor does he deploy euphemistic language to make his points subtly. His style is occasionally nostalgic or poetic, but more frequently vulgar and shocking. He is brash, honest, insulting, disgusting, and inappropriate. "If you want my story", he says, "you'll have to put up with how I tell it" (Sinha 2007, p. 2). His unique, picaresque (Nixon 2011, p. 55) voice penetrates borders, displaces the proper and palatable

narrative voices of empire, and disrupts "the cover of the media's . . . complicit silence" (Miller 2019, p. 159). Sinha writes as an agent of revelation, in its full apocalyptic sense, lifting the veil to expose the reality beyond. When writers such as Sinha[12] expose the negligence of the media and the oppression of governments or corporations, the previously invisible poor can become what Lopez calls the stuff of Nero's nightmares (Lopez 2010, p. 1): a seething, spectral presence which perpetually combats the deliberate amnesia cultivated by the global elite.

In addition to its disruptive power, Animal's narrative voice is crucial for forging the reader's empathetic connection both with Animal as narrator/guide to Khaufpur and with the people of Khaufpur themselves. This empathic connection with fictional characters and their situations forms a bridge between imagination and reality, which functions to build solidarity between actual humans across diverse ecologies, cultures, and geographic spaces. This empathic connection has the potential to grow more powerful than the borders which disrupt its development.[13] Sinha's powerful tale is but one starting point for such a task. Without this connection, the story of Bhopal and its people might remain merely statistics reported in an obscure column of the newspaper, too removed from Western consciousness to make much of a difference in a person's worldview. They would remain still not quite human. In Nixon's words:

> Even the most eloquent social scientific accounts of the underclass, like social scientific accounts of environmental disaster, veer toward the anonymously collective and the statistical. Such accounts thus tend to be in the same gesture humanizing and dehumanizing, animating and silencing. (Nixon 2011, p. 66)

Yet, Animal's narrative voice has the power and the presence to cut through this tendency. He is "all charismatic voice" (Nixon 2011, p. 66). Even as he protests that he is "a small person not even human" (Sinha 2007, p. 3), his story contradicts this statement. His very *anima*, his unquenchable spirit, leaps off the page, and imbues his story with life and energy despite being suffused with desperation, illness, and tragedy.

4.3. "Model" Character Responses of Solidarity

Three additional central characters—Zafar, Nisha, and Elli Barber—operate to model the kind of solidarity and compassionate community of activism that Sinha envisions. By learning from their choices within the world of the novel, readers can begin to imagine how to enact material and spiritual solidarity with non-fictional humans living in the wake of actual ecological devastation. Animal's entire story is suffused with the grim hope that the people of Khaufpur will prevail against the overwhelmingly persistent and terrible ecological circumstances resulting from the power of the neoliberal order. Life itself, and the ability to continue to love those who are alive with us, constitutes and animates Khaufpuri hope (Sinha 2007, pp. 284, 309).

Compared with the individualism and selfishness of neoliberal "free-trade" which facilitates ecological degradation—exemplified in the novel by the Kampani—Zafar, Nisha, Elli, and even Animal engage in a community of resistance, deep solidarity, and love. Their identification with those on the bottom of the Global Pyramid, as in Rieger and Kwok's "multitude", allows them to see through the veneer of "free-trade" to the exploitation perpetrated by the "1 percent" in the upper echelon of the Global Pyramid: "The multitude knows that individualism is a lie, and that relationship is a fact of life, for better or worse. We owe everything to others, including the things we take for granted" (Rieger and Pui-lan 2012, p. 64). As Rieger and Kwok emphasize, "individualism is the creed of the elite because it allows them to cover up the relationships that favor some and not others. The 1 percent want everyone to believe that success is self-made because this belief hides their debt to the community" (Rieger and Pui-lan 2012, p. 63). In contrast to individualism, Sinha depicts our interconnectedness across humanity. This interconnectedness, attested by Lopez in her analysis of Paul's letters, is expressed by Sinha in his portrayal of Animal's relationships with his fellow Khaufpuris. The characters Zafar, Nisha, and Elli are engaged in the restorative environmental justice of bringing him back

into the community of humans as they fight against the ecological injustices that caused his deformities. Their efforts at restorative environmental justice echo biblical notions of justice. Rieger and Kwok describe biblical justice in the following way:

> The notion of justice in the Bible is embedded in the affirmation and restoration of such relationships; it is not an abstract principle of fairness, personified by a blindfolded woman holding a pair of scales. Instead, justice is bringing those who have been treated unjustly back into community while challenging those who have promoted injustice and curbing their transgressions. (Rieger and Pui-lan 2012, p. 64)

Within the literary world of *Animal's People,* Zafar, Nisha, and Elli Barber also navigate human, ecological, and social challenges. Their characters all grapple with such questions as: "What can we do against such rampant neglect and lack of compassion? How can we assert our humanity to those who would deny it?"

4.3.1. Zafar

Zafar's character is a gifted university student who gave up his academic career and position of privilege in society to live in solidarity with the poor people of Khaufpur and to use his intellectual gifts to fight for justice on their behalf. He has kept the legal "case against the Kampani alive . . . So many times they have tried to stop him. He's been threatened, beaten, but Zafar is not afraid of anything or anyone. He speaks the truth and he never gives up" (Sinha 2007, p. 27). Zafar functions as a moral center of the novel, and his persistence gives courage to the rest of the characters as well as to the anonymous neighbors and townspeople who know of his struggle against the Kampani. His compassion for the ordinary people of Khaufpur and his life among them express commitment to and deep solidarity with their cause. Zafar embodies what Rieger and Kwok have called "theology of the multitude" (Rieger and Pui-lan 2012). A persistent irony of Sinha's novel is that Zafar, who is in many ways the spiritual leader of the multitude, consistently asserts that he does not believe in God (Sinha 2007, pp. 207, 308).[14]

4.3.2. Nisha

In addition to being the first person to treat Animal as a human, Nisha's character exercises and embodies radical hospitality throughout the novel. She cooks for Animal, for Somraj her father, and for Zafar and his gang. One imagines that her romantic love for Zafar and her agapeic love for her community are key ingredients in her cooking. Her father's house functions as the central command for organizing protests to the Kampani's negligence. Though she remains fully committed to the struggle for justice in Khaufpur, she dreams of moving to the seashore with Zafar and having a family. She refuses to have children while she lives in Khaufpur because "the poison . . . is not only in the soil and water, it's in people's hearts". (Sinha 2007, p. 196). Though the court case against the Kampani seems likely to drag on interminably, she holds out hope that one day, they might prevail. "When there's justice and no more need for us, we'll leave this city . . . We would live in a little house by the sea, we'd grow vegetables and have lots of children". (Sinha 2007, p. 196). When she eventually marries Zafar and lives in Khaufpur, their union could be interpreted as hopeful because they marry across a religious divide—Nisha is Hindu and Zafar is Muslim—often exploited by neoliberal mouthpieces in the novel to dismiss and dismantle the legitimacy of their protests (Sinha 2007, p. 282). Her commitments to love, family, and hospitality amid the everyday struggles of life in Khaufpur constitute her challenges to injustice.

4.3.3. Elli Barber

The character Elli Barber is an American doctor who leaves her husband to open a clinic in Khaufpur for poison victims. Over the course of the novel, her entanglement with the Kampani becomes clear. From her arrival in Khaufpur, the ordinary people she has come to serve suspect her of collusion in a nefarious medical data fraud on behalf

of the Kampani. Their overwhelming fear, which results from living in a constant state of environmental terror, poisons their ability to trust Elli and accept the potentially life-changing medical care she offers (Sinha 2007, p. 160).

Eventually, Elli reveals that her ex-husband works for the Kampani and has come to Khaufpur to defend corporate interests at the expense of the poisoned multitudes. Elli's revelation displays her own resistance to the neoliberal order represented by the Kampani. Her life, though initially remote from Khaufpur, was nonetheless entangled with the Kampani's transnational reach because of her marriage to a Kampani lawyer. By leaving her husband to live in Khaufpur among the "least of these" exposed to the slow violence of the Kampani's unwillingness to mitigate the long-term effects of chemical remnants through an industrial cleanup effort, Elli offers a powerful example of resistance to neoliberalism. She is not content to live in America knowing that her husband's Kampani refuses to give necessary medical care to those suffering the effects of slow violence. She learns Hindi, leaves her life of comparative comfort in America, and relocates to provide that medical care herself. It must be acknowledged that she would probably not have been able to accomplish this move if she were not American and affiliated with the Kampani. Her ability to relocate at all demonstrates her relative freedom to move across borders as an American doctor.

Because of their previous harmful experiences with Westerners, Khaufpuris are willing to suspect with Zafar that Elli must be among them for nefarious purposes (Sinha 2007, p. 73). This suspicion operates slowly throughout the novel, colluding with the slow violence and pervasive fear which Khaufpuris negotiate daily, until just before the climactic fire that reignites the remnants of poison to make their threat immediate. Only the elite company officials manage to escape the consequences of their callous disregard—Khaufpuris remain trapped in terror time and toxic space. Through contemplating the disparate choices within the world of the novel, the reader is faced with a choice between empathy and solidarity on the one hand, and callous forgetting in the face of what they have experienced on the other.

4.4. Solidarity across Distance, Difference, and Borders: An "Ecclesia of the Multitude"

Built on the hendiadys of love and justice, Rieger and Kwok's idea of the "ecclesia of the multitude" (Rieger and Pui-lan 2012, pp. 111–32) contains numerous connections to the community of resistance in Khaufpur. Not only do Khaufpuris meet regularly, as do churches and other explicitly religious communities, but their meetings express the non-hierarchical mutuality of the Trinity (*perichoresis* as expressed by the Cappadocians) (Rieger and Pui-lan 2012, p. 66). The intimate connections forged by Khaufpuris in community with each other over time in response to a shared experience or memory of disaster constitute the kind of mutuality and connection expressed in Rieger and Kwok's perspective on the Trinity. The Khaufpuris could also be interpreted as the body of Christ, as expressed by Paul: "the body of Christ models the multitude, where 'if one member suffers, all suffer together with it' (1 Cor. 12:26)" (Rieger and Pui-lan 2012, p. 67). Sinha can be interpreted as integrating his readers into this body by trusting in their capacity for empathy. Becoming aware of the situation of the Khaufpuris, the reader is haunted by their suffering. This opens the real possibility for the reader to be spurred to action on behalf of not only the citizens of Bhopal who suffered from the historical disaster upon which the novel was based, but on behalf all those who suffer similar injustice.

While participation in the *Ecclesia of the Multitude* can take a variety of forms, for Rieger and Kwok, worship in this "church" involves working for justice for the multitudes (Rieger and Pui-lan 2012, p. 117). They describe a "church ... beyond walls" (Rieger and Pui-lan 2012, p. 118) which has burst out of the confines of buildings and into the streets and common spaces as a river in flood bursts its banks. Kwok and Rieger imagine

> the church [as] the community or matrix in which the multitude is being formed and nurtured. It is where the gospel that God stands in solidarity with the 99 percent ... is proclaimed. It reverses the cultural logic of the 1 percent and

celebrates the agency and productivity of the 99 percent through songs, rituals, symbolic actions, and the sacraments. The church of the multitude is a gathering of diverse people and it orients them toward service in the world, particularly toward the least among us. (Rieger and Pui-lan 2012, p. 117)

Even as the "church of the multitudes" is working for the liberation of the oppressed from suffering and bondage, it is itself liberated from the institutional strictures and barriers to effective action and justice-oriented activism in the world. All spaces and ecologies become sacred, suitable for ecclesial engagement.[15]

Animal's parting words inspire readers shaped by Christian theology to seek the church of the multitude, the church without walls, the church of humanity that stands united against the powers of empire and the neoliberal order. On the final page of the novel, Animal exhorts the listening eyes to "Remember me. All things pass, but the poor remain. We are the people of the Apokalis [sic]. Tomorrow there will be more of us" (Sinha 2007, p. 366).[16] Following the ancient Greek usage of the term apocalypse, Animal is an agent of an apocalypse in the sense that he has revealed what was hidden and made known what was previously unknown. With Davina Lopez, we can realize that *we* (not just they) *are the nations*. With Joerg Rieger and Kwok Pui-lan we can realize that *we are the multitude*. Thus, with Animal, we can affirm that *we are indeed the people of the Apocalypse*, and tomorrow, there will be even more of us.

Reading Sinha's novel opens readers up to greater awareness of the human and ecological struggles of people made invisible by media underreporting, dehumanized in a hierarchy of humanity that designates them as expendable, less than human, and geographically remote from the everyday awareness of Western readers. While reading novels does not entirely solve the problems pointed out by Niebuhr, novels offer one powerful strategy to bring the realities of other humans into everyday awareness and action. While Niebuhr does not think that sympathy alone is adequate to form ethical capacity, it is a vital component of ethical development. Animal's voice convinces the reader that he is just as real, just as human, just as formed in the *Imago Dei* as they are. He penetrates the cultivated amnesia and punctures the self-centered focus of privileged readers. In doing so, Animal inserts himself into the reader's circle of ethical concern. Furthermore, Sinha's fictionalized account reveals the extent of the ecological terror visited upon residents of "Khaufpur" and gives the readers an imaginative basis upon which to understand the real-life plight of the citizens of Bhopal.

5. Conclusions

Indra Sinha's *Animal's People* offers a powerful lens for expanding a Christian theological understanding of humanity in a world divided by a network of borders. Western European colonial projects created and enforced a hierarchy of humanity which continues to influence reality on a global scale. Those humans designated in the colonial imagination as primitive or bestial continue to be most harmed in ecological crises. Christian theology has traditionally affirmed that *all* humans are made in the *Imago Dei.* However, this affirmation is not so easy to practice. Sinha invites his readers to fix their gaze on characters designated by the neoliberal order as less than human, to listen to a narrator ironically called "Animal", and to contemplate the reality of living in the wreckage of environmental terror.

In mobilizing the novel's capacity to engage empathy, Sinha challenges his readers to see and understand the humanity of his characters and their connection to their environment. Though he writes from outside a purely Christian perspective, his work resonates with Christian ecological theology and asserts that humans cannot imagine themselves as separate from and therefore unaffected by ecological devastation. On the contrary, global human health and flourishing is intertwined with and determined by global ecological flourishing. In other words, we destroy the Earth at our peril and reject solidarity with those most affected to our own detriment.

Notes

1   BCP (1979, p. 305). These precise words appear as part of the Baptismal Covenant in the Episcopal Church's *Book of Common Prayer,* though other liturgical formulations echo the same basic commitments.

2   And the people and environments upon which they are based.

3   Animal's words recall the resource extraction practices of transnational corporations operating in developing nations.

4   This paper will employ Sinha's spelling "Kampani" for Company.

5   This phenomenon has been explored in depth by theorists such as Edward Said, Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, and George Yancy. However, their theoretical work is beyond the scope of this paper.

6   Nixon (2011, p. 60). "In 'terror time', environmental threats operate . . . on a spiritual level as well, combining and recombining to form a sense of imminent, unpredictable peril which poisons the psyche with prolonged, unresolved anguish".

7   As expressed in Paul's epistle to the Galatians.

8   It has been notoriously difficult to establish simultaneously cross-racial and cross-class solidarity in the U.S. See McGhee (2021) on Bacon's Rebellion and the legally enshrined consequences of cooperation across racial lines.

9   Rieger and Kwok wrote primarily in response to the Occupy movement (2011–2012). However, their insights are strongly linked to empire-critical studies and post-colonial perspectives such as those expressed by Hardt and Negri, as evidenced by Rieger's earlier work *Christ & Empire* (Rieger 2007).

10   Miller (2019, p. 152). Vision-Box owns Happy Flow. "Vision-Box describes itself as the number one 'provider of automated border control systems.' And Happy Flow, as its website states, is 'the first 100% self-service passenger experience, based on traveler-centric biometric technology, from curb to boarding!'"

11   The example of developmental progress Nixon addresses is mega-dams such as Chixoy Dam in Guatemala or the Sardar Sarovar Dam on the Narmada River (on which Arundhati Roy has written both essays and fiction). Other examples of developmental progress exist in the forced removal of indigenous peoples from their ancestral lands in the southeastern United States under President Andrew Jackson (Indian Removal Act, 1830) or the forced resettlement of Black South Africans to townships during apartheid beginning in 1948.

12   Some of the other writers whose work draws attention to the human cost of ecological devastation are Arundhati Roy (*The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, 2017), Ken Saro-Wiwa (*A Month and a Day: A Detention Diary*, 1995), Wangari Maathai (*Unbowed*, 2006), and Abdelrahman Munif (*Cities of Salt*, 1984). Sonia Nazario has written on the harrowing journey undertaken by Honduran refugees attempting to reach the U.S. in *Enrique's Journey* (2003). Both Maathai and Saro-Wiwa's work are memoirs, rather than fiction. Saro-Wiwa's letters from prison were published after his execution. Maathai recounts her own ecological activism in Kenya. Roy, Munif, and Nazario build upon journalism or activist involvement to create fictional accounts which draw the reader into connections with characters and their ecological crises otherwise ignored or underreported by global media outlets. With the exception of Nazario's work, Rob Nixon includes each of the above-mentioned authors in his book, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*.

13   An accounting of the dynamics which would enable this development are well beyond the scope of this paper, but are certainly addressed in Keen (2007).

14   See Rieger and Pui-lan (2012, p. 88). "Although many religious people hate to admit it, atheism has a point. Images of an all-powerful supreme being who controls everything from the top down, and who is also impassible and immutable, are laden with problems". They clarify further: "The deepest problem of our common images of God, supported by conservatives and liberals alike, is that images of the divine as omnipotent, impassible, and immutable tend to mirror the dominant powers that be, from ancient emperors to modern CEOs". See also, Rieger (2007).

15   Rieger and Pui-lan (2012, p. 117), "Traditionally, sacred space is . . . associated with houses of worship . . . For the church of the multitude, sacred space is not bound by a place or dwelling, and sacred time is not hovering above, or transcending, historical time. Jesus liberated the monopoly of sacred space in his theological conversation with the Samaritan woman at the well . . . 'True worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth' (John 4: 21–23)".

16   Cf. Mark 14:7, Matt 26:11, John 12:8, *NRSV*. I hear his final words set to the music of Lin-Manuel Miranda's *Hamilton* score: "Raise a glass to the four of us./Tomorrow there'll be more of us./Telling the story of tonight". Miranda and McCarter (2016, p. 35). Miranda's score highlights themes of solidarity and human cooperation within the context of the American Revolution against overwhelming odds of defeating the British military forces and achieving national independence while his multiracial casting reimagines traditionalist and white supremacist conceptions of the national polity of the United States.

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