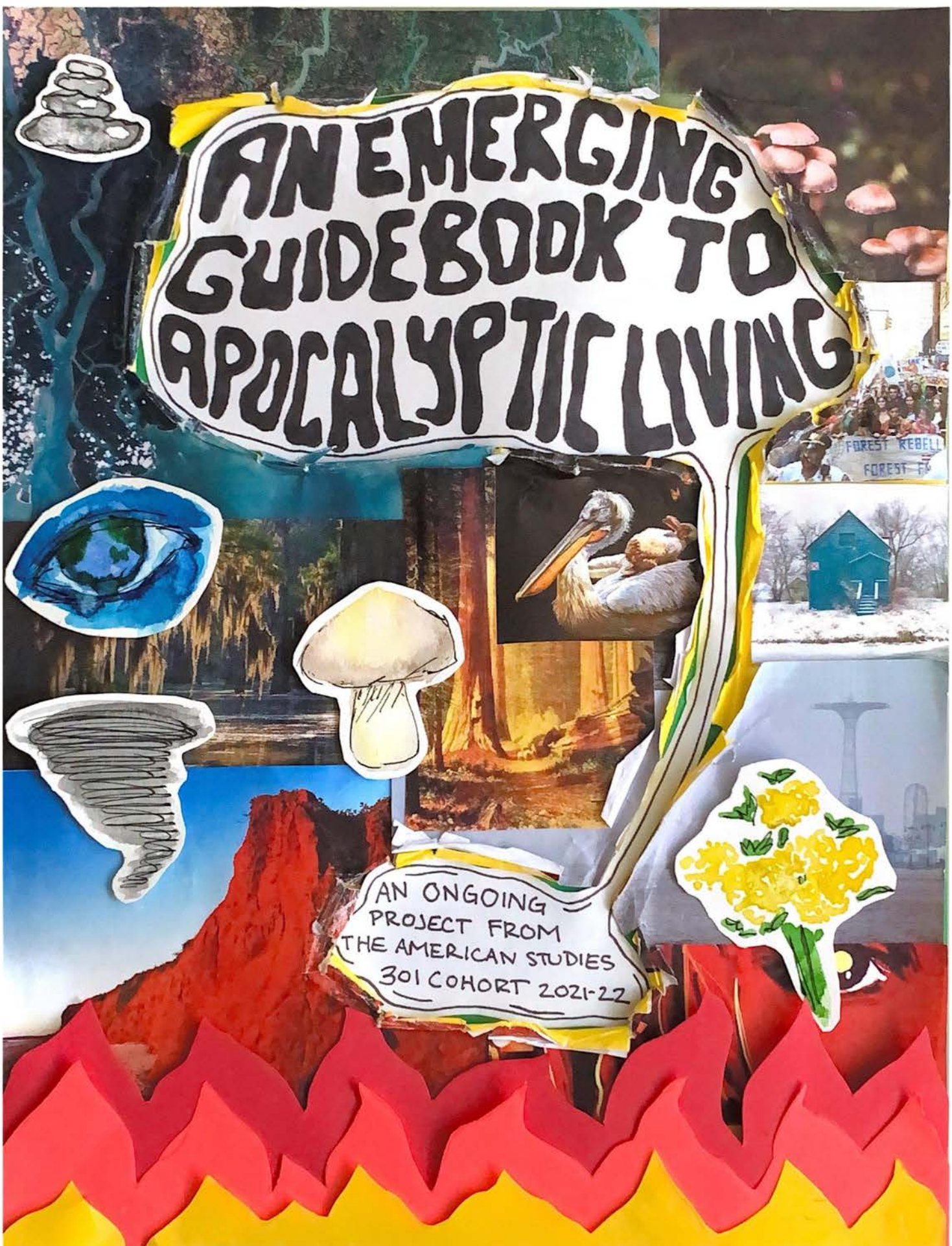


# AN EMERGING GUIDEBOOK TO APOCALYPTIC LIVING

AN ONGOING  
PROJECT FROM  
THE AMERICAN STUDIES  
301 COHORT 2021-22





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# LETTER FROM THE COHORT

Dear reader,

We have no choice but to live with the gnats. Yes, this campus is gorgeous, but this school's insistence on "reclaiming" land on the water's edge has a price. Northwestern's frontage of Lake Michigan features a fortress of sandbags, a flimsy attempt at halting the inevitable. The lake is rising. The ground is buckling. In the pools of standing water that result, gnat larvae increasingly hatch, clump, and thrive. But we still go to class every day, even if the gnat clouds are so thick they obscure the sun. What other choice do we have?

The gnats are just one symbol of the apocalypse in which we currently live. The emerging apocalypse has developed, is developing, and will continue to develop. Gradual yet perpetual. Bearing the potential for things to get much worse. (Also, the potential for hope). In the face of this uncertainty, only one statement rings true: "The only way to go is to keep going."

This emerging guidebook for apocalyptic living is an affirmation of the community we've formed as we grapple with the unfathomable (the climate crisis, "The Problem," the crumbling Anthropocene, etc.) This is a tangible representation of our discussions in class, covering every facet: analyses of assigned texts,

lessons we've learned (or hope to learn) from engaging with course themes, and ruminations on the ways in which we live, grieve, and hope.

Our journey is collective – encompassing beings human and nonhuman alike – and will never cease. In participating, most of us are not hindered by apathy but by uncertainty on how to act. In these pages, we'll get as close as we can to answers.

This guidebook is not a definitive key to survival. Rather, it is an invitation to take notice of the present, to understand and plan, to join together in joy and mourning.

Together, we'll work towards an understanding of our pasts, presents, futures and their innumerable intersections. Complete success is impossible, but we can try our best. It's the only choice we have.

This conversation needs as many voices as possible. Thank you for joining us on this journey.

American Studies 301 Cohort, 2021-22

*Armaan Ajani, Olivia Alexander, Alex Chun,  
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# SELECTION OF URGENT TEXTS

## THE HOTTEST AUGUST

The Hottest August is a mosaic of glimpses into life in New York City's five boroughs during the hottest month on record. As the narrator of the documentary notes, August in NYC is reliably a miserable month in terms of weather. The film captures this viscerally. However, in 2017, the situation was unprecedented, in that it was amplified to an extreme degree. On the heels of Donald Trump's inauguration, set against the background of white supremacist riots and solar eclipses, with Hurricane Sandy nearly five years in the past but its aftereffects still intensely apparent, New York's humid air vibrated with the populace's dread and uncertainty. The filmmakers draw from all corners of the city to paint the story of the summer that teetered on the edge of apocalypse. We travel from still-battered, rural-adjacent corners of Staten Island to precariously rebuilt boardwalks on Rockaway Beach; from the expansive presumably high-up Manhattan apartment that doubles as a gallery for an investment banker's art collection to shingled shacks on the edges of the Bronx and all dwellings in between, all facing the same threat of imminent destruction. This journey takes place in under two hours. It's an ambitious undertaking to try to understand a problem that requires immense ambition to solve. There are no conclusive answers, except that even in the face of the unthinkable, life in New York City does not cease.

## THE GREAT DERANGEMENT

*The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable* by Amitav Ghosh explores climate change from a new perspective, using a philosophical lens to critically analyze our culture's capacity to understand and cope with a warming planet. Ghosh, a novelist, first examines the ability of fiction to deal with climate change; he then uses history to explain the logic and illogic of climate reparations; finally, he delves into the world of politics and morality. Repeatedly Ghosh argues that our culture has an inability to process the scale of climate change, to deal with the "unthinkable." From our novels to our politics, Ghosh says, there is a "Great Derangement" about the effects and violence of climate change. Only a radical cultural and political expansion of our imagination and understanding of modernity can rescue us from the brink.

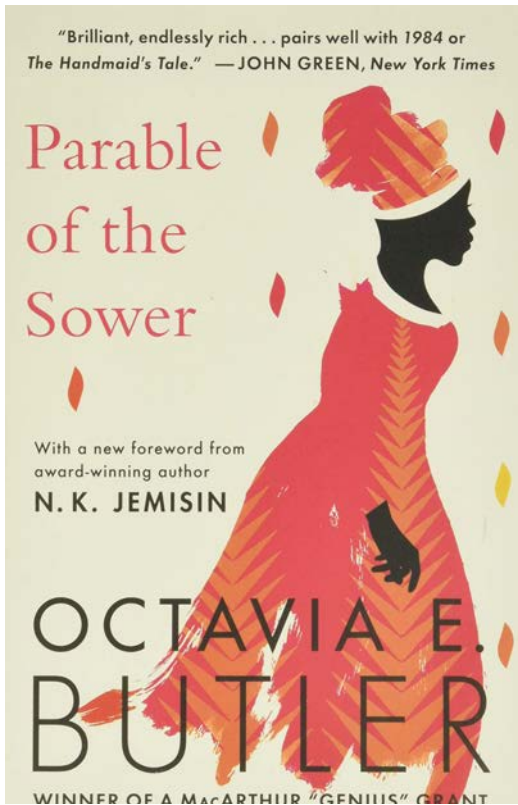
*The Great Derangement* was the first of many books we read in American Studies 301-3, and Ghosh set the tone for the rest of the class. The text is central for any teaching and learning about climate change because it sets the scale of the problem larger than most readers are used to thinking about, and introduces ideas of the non-human, culture, individualism, and scale. Ghosh's book pairs well with any other on this list.



## WARMTH

*Daniel Sherrell's Warmth: Coming of Age at the End of Our World* is more than a book; it is a letter and a personal journey. With the fate of the future becoming more and more uncertain, Sherrell spends this memoir recounting his life experiences with the climate crisis in order to answer one fundamental question: is it worth it to have a child? Rather than come off as scholarly or fictional, Sherrell chooses to write to this potential child of his in a manner that will leave readers with a warmed heart at some times, as well as tears in their eyes at others. As the son of a climate scientist, a former student activist, and a current political organizer, Sherrell has constantly had experiences with *The Problem* whether with a professor, as a spectator for a debate, in a cabin with friends, or even in isolation with nothing but a rock. Although Sherrell feels consistent stress over dealing with *The Problem* and some guilt for considering bringing a child into this doomed world, he concludes his letter with a strong sense of hope and perseverance that will leave readers confident that he will continue to fight for and to create a future for humanity. As Sherrell affirms his decision to hope for a future, his call on others to do the same leaves readers wondering whom the real audience of the book was all along.





# PARABLE OF THE SOWER

In Octavia Butler's novel *Parable of the Sower*, we follow Lauren Olamina as she lives (and survives) in an apocalyptic United States. The story begins in the year 2024 and the U.S. has been reduced to a near-lawless land. Those who are lucky enough to have community or shelter protect themselves with guns and rarely venture beyond the literal walls of their town. It isn't immediately clear whether Butler's novel is a cautionary tale or a prediction of the future. The novel's protagonist, Lauren, is the daughter of her community's Baptist minister, and she loves her father dearly. Despite her reverence, she strays from Christianity and begins conceiving of her own religion: Earthseed. In a sentence, Earthseed may be simplified to the understanding that "God is Change."

In an interview, Butler said that she wanted *Parable of the Sower* to read as a fictional autobiography, "of Lauren Olamina, who begins a new religion and who, sometime after her death — after people had time to forget how human she was — might easily be considered a god" (Butler, 335). In this way, *Parable of the Sower* may be read as a fictionalized religious text — a rich history, and parable, that tells of Earthseed's origins and the god-like figure who started it. In the context of this guidebook, *Parable of the Sower*, is one of the books you should grab if you need to flee your house when disaster strikes. It is just as much a guide to survival as it is a collection of rumminions on thinking.

## TENTACULAR THINKING

"Tentacular Thinking" is the second chapter of Donna Haraway's book *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*. In this chapter, Haraway emphasizes the importance of interconnectedness and relationships to both the earth and its ecosystem for humans in an era when humans and their actions have become a geological force of equal power and importance as shifting tides and forest fires. She articulates these ideas with two new words: "tentacular," using the concept of tentacles to imply the broad, myriad influence of the actions of humans and other living agents, and "Chthulucene," a word she uses to describe our present geological era in place of the more commonly used anthropocene. Chthulucene comes from the species name of an orb-weaving spider found in the West Coast of the United States, and Haraway uses this allusion to the spider as a means of emphasizing the the tangible collateral effects of human action in much the same way that any motion in a spider's web can be felt across the entire structure.

Lisa Wells' book, *Believers: Making a Life at the End of the World*, doesn't focus on the traditional environmental activists. Rather it centers the stories of outliers, visionaries, pragmatists, and iconoclasts who have dedicated themselves to repairing the earth. The point of no return "is the backdrop, the central prophecy" of the book, (6) though it is not centered. While the book doesn't claim to be a guide on how to live, from Finisia and the Prairie Faeries who travel through out the American desert planting edible roots for generations to come to a mans alter-ego, the Urban Scout, who aims to inform the public of the survival skills needed for apocalypse using absurdity to Lisa's one journey of dropping out of high school and finding her own way of living, the stories in *Believers* detail many inspirational ideas and lessons about how to use wild plants, find resilience, and much more. Though Lisa Well's is an atheist, she also spends time discussing how religion and christianity especially play a significant role in some people's environmental journey's/efforts. Overall, Well's book is one that leads by example.

## BELIEVERS

## STRANGERS

In *Strangers in their Own Land*, Arlie Russell Hochschild climbs over "the empathy wall" and lives among members of the Tea Party movement in small-town Louisiana. Through immersing herself in the Louisiana way of life, she learns the stories of several characters who reveal to her a "great paradox." While Louisianans experience a significant number of cancer diagnoses, a phenomenon attributable to oil company-driven pollution, the state continues to elect Republican representatives who do nothing to regulate the oil industry and promote public health. Hochschild shows that people act due to what they believe or feel to be true, which she defines as a person's "deep story." Those she met in Louisiana believe they can build a better life with hard work alone.

We read Hochschild's book in this seminar to better understand how those living in apocalyptic times must work with unlikely allies in order to survive. Throughout *Strangers*, Hochschild argues that the best way forward is to go together.

# Glossary

## Anti-Natalism

The view that humans should stop procreating because it is morally wrong. Daniel Sherrell refers to anti-natalism in his book *Warmth* when wondering if it is ethical to bring a child into the world.

## Anthropocene/Capitalocene/Chthulucene

Several potential words to describe our current geological era. Anthropocene is the most commonly used word and purports that humans have become a geologic force, diverting water and carbon on a scale usually accomplished only over millennia. Capitalocene is an alternative to Anthropocene that centers capitalism and industrialize as the new shaper of the earth, rather than blame all humans for our present of environmental devastation. Chthulucene, the most new term coined by Donna Haraway, is about decentering the human, in addition to the cynysm of the other two terms and describes an era made up of ongoing multispecies stories that necessitates new kinds of relations between humans and nonhumans alike.

## Contamination

An idea conceptualized by Anna Tsing in her book, *Mushroom at the End of the World* that “we are contaminated by our encounters; they change who we are as we make way for others.”



# Glossary

## The Great Derangement

Coined by Amitav Ghosh referring to a state of mind held by people living in the era of climate change. Despite existence in the face of global warming and an influx of natural disasters, many are resistant to the thinking and imagining needed to grasp the scale and violence of the climate crisis.

## Non-Human

Beings, other than humans. Including plants, all other animals, and for some users of the term, the elements like rivers and the wind.

## Hyperobject

Introduced by Daniel Sherrell in Warmth, any object, problem, or idea whose multifaceted nature, intersectional complexity, or grand scale puts it beyond the individual's capacity to grasp, comprehend, or articulate fully.

# Glossary

## The Problem/The Trouble

More expansive terms for the existing and growing realities of the climate crisis and its impacts. The crisis of our planet we are facing does not just impact our climate, but our geographies, livelihoods, and bodies. Additionally, Given the politicization of terms like 'climate change' and 'global warming' as well as their effects on everything from natural disasters to biodiversity, it becomes easier for an author to group everything together under a less connotative umbrella term than they constantly feel the need to defend. Daniel Sherrell uses the term "The Problem" while Donna Haraway chooses to instead use "The Trouble."

## Sentimental Education

Also referred to as "an education of the heart," sentimental education is a deep appreciation and understanding of emotions, empathy, and ethics.

## Sympoiesis

Defined by Donna Haraway as the "making with." Looking at the autopoiesis, in which a system produces its own elements to maintain efficiency, Haraway counters the term with a claim that nothing and no one is actually alone in its organization and therefore autopoietic. The Chthulucene requires this focus on sympoiesis in order for the earthling community to world-build together and overcome the Trouble.



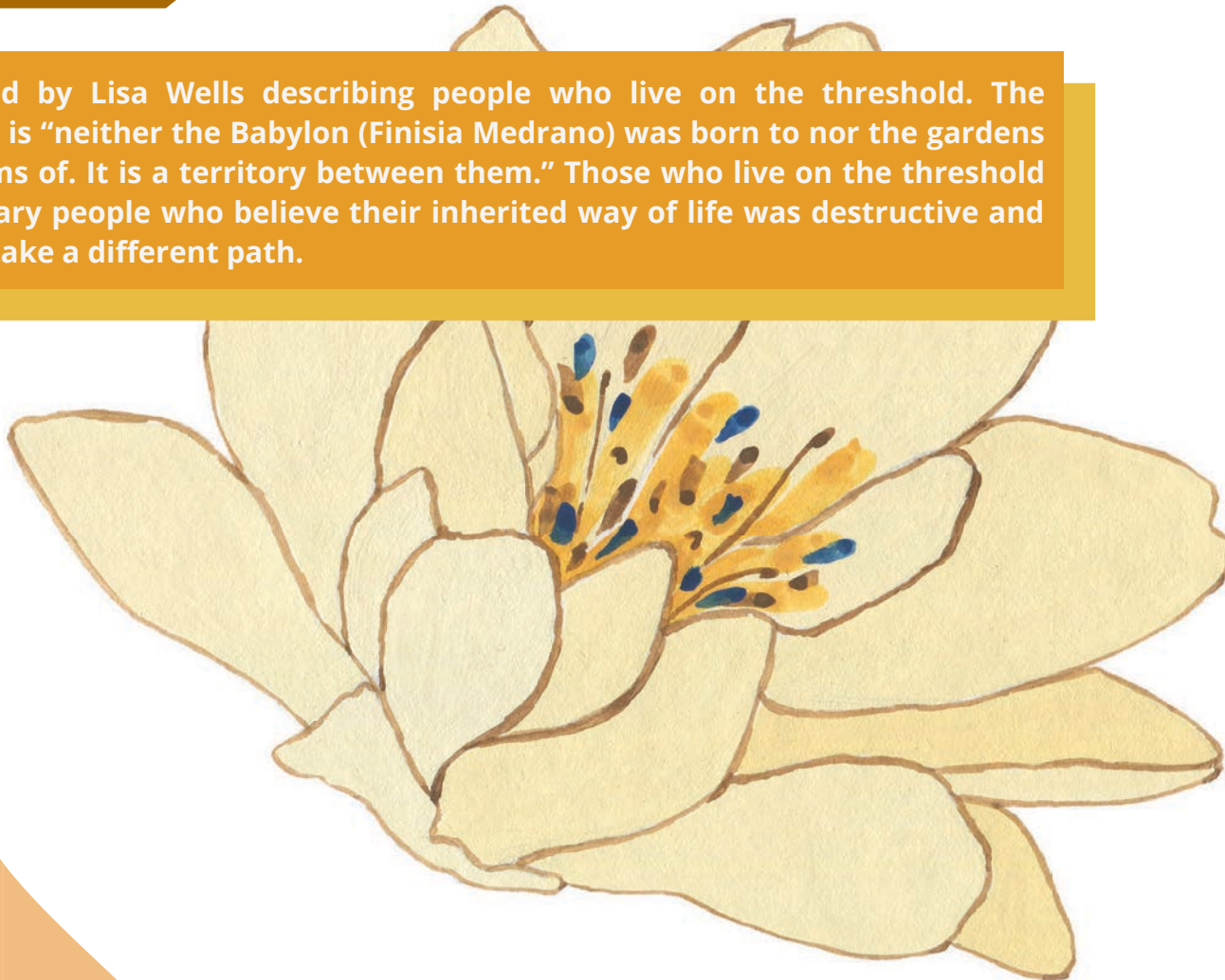
# Glossary

## Tentacular (Thinking)

From Donna Haraway, a perceptual method of thinking that emphasizes the interdependent relationships between individual entities and the other members of their ecosystem. Her thesis: all living things and their ecosystems are interdependent and integral to one another's continued survival.

## Threshold Being

Introduced by Lisa Wells describing people who live on the threshold. The threshold is "neither the Babylon (Finisia Medrano) was born to nor the gardens she dreams of. It is a territory between them." Those who live on the threshold are ordinary people who believe their inherited way of life was destructive and chose to take a different path.



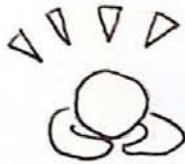
# ME AND US AT THE END OF TIME



**JANE CLARKE**

**MAY, 2022**

Me. Me me me me. You are all you're guaranteed in the world; you are all you can control.



I don't think I'm a self-centered person or a vain one, and you likely don't believe you are either. But we all think in the unit of a single person, of a "me." I've come to learn that this individualizing perspective is going to kill us and send our planet up in flames.

It's not just that individualizing centers those who can escape the effects of climate change, although that is certainly true. Even those who want to help, though, fall into the trap of thinking that solutions come packaged in a single serving.



"Be the change you wish to see in the world."  
Changing the world is up to you; it's on your shoulders alone.

In Warmth, Daniel Sherrell calls out this culture of individualism. "If it was just me out here, just my mind, then the problem could be on my shoulders alone— a terrible weight to be sure, but still bounded, strictly personal," he says. At best, this self-centering aspires towards selflessness, an attempt to take on the existential threat of climate change alone and spare your family and friends from the burden.

At worst, the individualizing narrative is a narcissistic one. We fashion ourselves as saviors, so that, as Amitav Ghosh notes in *The Great Derangement*, "politics become[s], for many, a search of personal authenticity, a journey of self discovery." Climate change is a challenge, like some sort of massive Outward Bound program, a chance to prove ourselves. It is a moral adventure, packaged as an existential threat.

It is a trap I fall into often. I see the world crumbling around me – elementary school students murdered, women's bodies under attack, forests on fire, sea levels rising, and I want to make a difference. As a child, I harbored a fantasy that I would become the next global political figure, taking on all the issues myself.



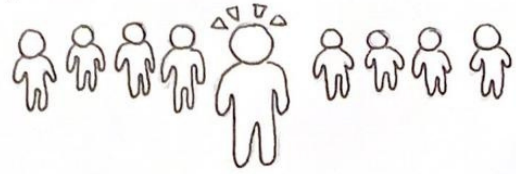
It was comforting to think that I alone could solve all the world's problems if I just worked hard enough. It meant that I didn't have to depend on other people. But I know now that this logic is deeply flawed.

“What we need,” Ghosh says in *The Great Derangement*, “is to find a way out of the individualizing imaginary in which we are trapped.” It's not hard to see how this is true. How can one person take on the collective issue of climate change? They can't. Collective problems require collective solutions. While frustrating and upsetting, this is also essential to embrace.

Some thinkers, like Anna Tsing, want us to scale up quickly from the *me* to the collective *us*. We are all contaminated, Tsing says, contaminated and changed by each other. In a world of contaminated diversity, it doesn't make sense to think at the individual level. Humans are all part of networks, much like trees or mushrooms, and connected to the nonhuman as well.

It's hard to scale up quickly, though. Arlie Russell Hochschild spends much of her book, *Strangers in Their Own Land*, exploring why poor, white Louisianans who are affected by climate change vote with the Tea Party. Part of the problem Hochschild finds is that her subjects don't see themselves reflected in the identity politics of the left. Tea Party members move to claim their identity in a different way, gravitating towards political figures like Donald Trump. They need to feel included on an individual level.

The central dilemma, then, is how to keep individuals invested in the fight against climate change, while recognizing that only the collective can solve the globally scaled problem.



My suggestion, and one of the main takeaways from this class, is that local communities provide a solution. If we need something less abstract than global contaminated diversity, we can turn to our neighbors and friends. Lisa Wells explores such communities in Oregon and New Mexico in *Believers*. Religious communities, which Hochschild finds as well in *Strangers*, or urban ones provide ways to move beyond the individually oriented solutions to which we are so adjusted. Wells finds communities on the outskirts of society, in “the ruin of empire.”



It's hard to think small, especially when a problem like climate change feels so existential. At the very least, it's been hard for me to come to grips with. But, as we have found repeatedly in 301-3 with Professor Orsi, thinking beyond the individual is the most certain way to stave off destruction and make change. It is an essential task that we practice stretching our imagination beyond the *me*, to the immediate or the collective *us*.

# How to be a Contributing Member of Our Earthen Society

By Jordan Muhammad

In these times, many of us are concerned about the state of our world in the face of The Problem, but are stuck at what to do. In attempt to not be paralyzed by dread we often go about our daily lives even when they directly contribute to environmental devastation and try our best to ignore our complacency. Then, when we do try to help the environment we often do so with the assumption that the presence of us humans is the problem.

This latter perspective is just as dangerous as the first because it denies our role as a purposefully created organism in our ecosystem. What if there was another way of being aside from ignore the world around us or trying to delete our presence from the world.

Below are some recommendations drawn from *Parable of the Sower* (P), *Warmth* (W), and *Believers* (B) about how to reject a “leave no trace”/“I don’t care what trace I leave” mentality and live as a contributing member to our community of not-just-human beings:

## First it is essential to consider these baseline ideas

- “We are all Godseed, but no more or less so than any other aspect of the universe” (77-P) Consider rejecting your ideas of human supremacy and paternalism to other living beings. We are just another animal in the ecosystem after all.
- Remember that you can never really go out into nature. You are nature and so is everything around you, even if it is “manmade.” Consider that our world is “much more like a society of actors, each with its own influence and intent, its own private dream of the others.” (222-W)



Now for the many optional things you can do:

**Be a good neighbor to plants by learning what helps them grow and thrive.**

- When gathering roots, wait until the seeds have ripened so they can fall into the cracks you make. (25 - B)
- Shit the berry seeds you eat in a place where they will grow. (")

**Adopt a grammar of animacy.** Consider referring to animals, plants and other natural beings with the same pronouns you would use to refer to a person.

- “Killing an ‘it’ is far less loaded proposition than killing a ‘him,’ a ‘her,’ or a them.” (110-B)
- Consider using these pronouns instead of “it”: **ki** (singular) /**kin** (plural) - ki is an abbreviation of the Potawatomi word for earthly being coined by Potawatomi botanist Robin Wall Kimmerer. Kin is the plural pronoun she suggests. **them/them** - how humans refer to other humans they don’t know, **she/he** - if you really just can’t get behind anything non-binary

**Talk less observe more**

- Daniel Sherrell was recommended this by one of the fathers of the Goolarabooloo clan, “**Sometimes silence is the best thing...** it lets you pay closer attention to the country you’re walking, lets you notice things you wouldn’t otherwise” (223-W)

**Dig in the ground**

- Literally! “Digging around a root recycles nutrients, aerates the earth, increases its moisture-holding ability, and creates better growing conditions for seeds.” (28-B) This is one of many ways you can practice reciprocal care: you are benefitting from root like carrots that you eat and they benefit because you help them grow and spread!
- To learn about other cool edible roots like Biscuitroot (24-B) to Bitterroot (27-30-B) to Camas prairies (33-36-B) see Well’s book or the internet!

# Love, Partnership, and Family at the End of the World

Alex Chun

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My partner Max and I sit on a swing bench on a sandy cliff. Lake Michigan is a hundred feet below us, reflecting the clouded sky above. Wind gently tosses the waves, and the ambient crash of rolling water against sand is the only sound we hear. We rented a small cabin for the weekend, accessible only by a small dirt road that has pushed its way through a grove of trees.

The cliff we're sitting on used to extend out 30 feet further than it currently does. Three years ago, rising water levels brought it crashing down. Climate change has made Lake Michigan's water levels volatile. High-water cycles are getting higher and the lows lower; alternation between the two has become increasingly erratic.

Max is reading beside me; an old cardigan he found at a nearby antique store keeps him warm. Looking at him, I wonder what would happen if we stayed here. Local farms keep the small town fed. The land is rich with wildlife. We could start our own sustainable garden. There's room for children or a dog if we want them.

Maybe the world could continue to crumble around us, and we wouldn't even know.



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## **At the end of the world, why do people choose to keep surviving?**

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But this haven of ignorance can't exist, and frankly, my fantasy resembles a retirement dream rather than a contingency plan for apocalyptic living.

"An Emerging Guidebook to Apocalyptic Living" with Professor Orsi changed the way I think about the world and its inhabitants. The planet is on fire, and we're slowly sinking back into the ocean. So what do we do?

This quarter, we read stories about people who lived through an apocalypse, are living through one, or are preparing for one. As I read, I kept returning to the same question: at the end of the world, why do people choose to keep surviving?



This quarter, we read stories about people who lived through an apocalypse, are living through one, or are preparing for one. As I read, I kept returning to the same question: at the end of the world, why do people choose to keep surviving?

There was never a simple or singular answer in peoples' stories. Some wanted to leave behind a better world for their children; others wanted to build community away from the societies poisoning the earth. Some people wanted to start and spread a new religion; others wanted to better understand themselves through strangers.

The stories are seemingly different, but there are some commonalities. In many, love and partnership encourage people to continue surviving and give them the will to do so.

It's through these stories that we may begin to understand what love, partnership, and family mean at the end of the world, and how we may begin to find it.



In *Warmth: Coming of Age at the End of Our World*, Daniel Sherrell writes to his unborn child. The memoir is a lengthy letter detailing Sherrell's climate change activism, ruminations on the present state of the world, and hopes for the future. Sherrell seeks out joy and purpose despite feeling hopeless despair at many points in his story. He finds it imperative to leave behind a better (or at least not burning) world for his children to live in.

Because Sherrell writes in the second person, addressing his novel to "you" (his unborn child), it is reasonable to read *Warmth* from the perspective of a child. However, as I read *Warmth*, I couldn't help but notice that Sherrell's feelings of frustration and grief mirrored my own.

I almost felt as if I were reading my own journal, rather than reading from the perspective of someone who has inherited a documentation of the past. Sherrell felt more like a friend than a fatherly figure.

In this way, I too wondered about the world I was leaving behind for my children. How might they come to know this world, and how will they understand the part I played in shaping it?

Outside of assigned class readings, I also read *The Overstory* by Richard Powers. Winner of the 2018 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction, *The Overstory* is a rich prose about a group of activists who protest deforestation across the United States.

To prevent the cutting down of a legendary redwood named Mimas, two central protagonists — Olivia Vandergriff and Nicholas Hoel— live in the tree for over a year, making a home in the unlikely of places.

While the two are united in their desire to preserve the trees, it's their love for each other that keeps them rooted in this act of resistance. One night, as the two zip their sleeping bags together, Olivia remarks that if one person falls, the other will fall with them.

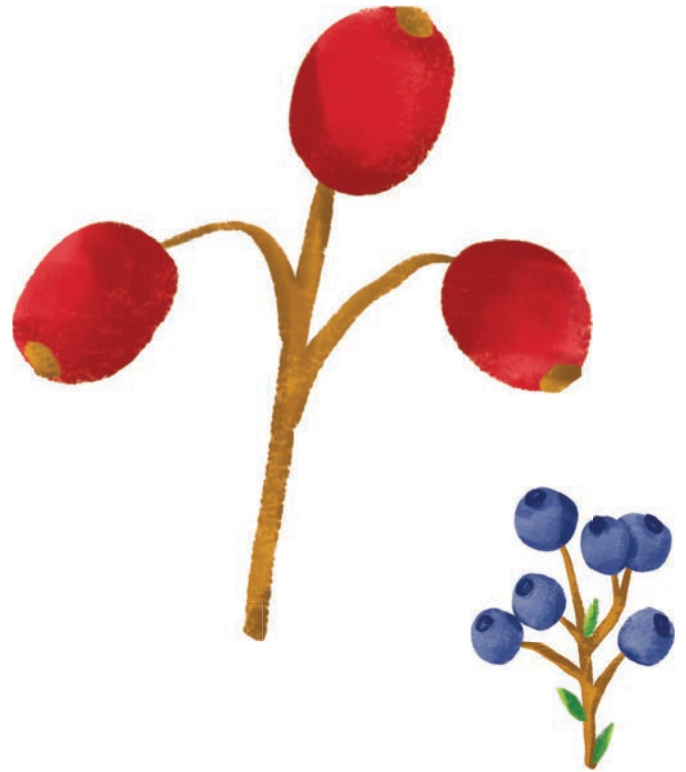


"I'll follow you anywhere," Nick replies.

Love is a throughline through *The Overstory*, and it applies to more than just people. Powers' characters exhibit a deep love for trees. Olivia and Nick often refer to Mimas by name and personify the tree. They see Mimas as a being not unlike them. Furthermore, one character named Patricia Westerford researches the way that trees communicate with each other, sending nutrients to nearby neighbors and warnings when danger may be near.

The love that all the characters have for trees is abundant and drives them to continue protesting deforestation.

Many of the characters find love and partnership with each other along the way.



The literature from this quarter encouraged me to consider the role of love, partnership, and family at the end of the world.

We have the power to imagine and build a better future. If we can't prevent the end of the world, perhaps we can slow it, or at the very least, invite more joy into what we've built.

When Max and I returned from our trip, I worried that we'd leave some joy behind in the little corner of the world we found. But I'm not too concerned about that anymore. The best part of the trip came home with me. Max and I didn't find our own little corner of the world that weekend. We built it.

I'm not entirely sure what world my children will inherit, or if there will even be a world to inherit. I don't even know what the world will look like as I continue to grow up.

But for now, I'm just glad I have someone to worldbuild with me.







# Shifting Off-Center: Alternative Lifestyles Under Apocalypse

Isabel Podolsky

Living in these times requires an interrogation of living itself – its meanings and methods. A group of individuals has responded to this question by going “off the grid.” As I’ve learned, going “off-the-grid” (or “off-center,” my preferred term) refers to an infinite set of possibilities.

In this limited space, explaining the myriad of ways you could choose to live beyond how you live now is impossible. I don’t aspire to this unrealistic goal. To borrow the words of Anna Tsing, this exploration isn’t a cure-all, “but it might open our imaginations.”

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**"Going “off-the-grid” (or “off-center,” my preferred term) refers to an infinite set of possibilities."**  
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Going off-center can mean living in spaces of abandoned empire. In Philadelphia, mere miles north of the oldest continuously “settled” neighborhood in the nation, what the media portrays as urban decay and destruction blossoms into a vibrant community. The Simple Way, a collective based in the neighborhood of Kensington, occupies a row of self-rehabilitated once-vacant homes, nurtures a park and greenhouse for community crops on the ruins of a seven-alarm fire, and runs its own gun buy-back program that converts weapons into tools for construction and cultivation.

Nestled in an area with high rates of crime, The Simple Way envisions and enacts an alternate way of life where community is self-sufficient and primary. Life is given, not taken, never taken.

Going off-center can mean forming a self-sufficient community in the desert. In Taos, New Mexico, the TiLT House operates much as The Simple Way does. Its surroundings are more rural but plagued with similar issues to the urban counterpart.



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**"Life is given, not taken, never taken."**  
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Both the intentional communities are grounded in religion. To believe in a higher power is not a prerequisite to going off-center, but possessing the capacity to believe (in something, anything) is.

Going off-center can mean assuming temporarily the characteristics of a rock. Daniel Sherrell, a climate organizer who must intimately grapple with the realities of climate change to make a living, finds solace in rejecting his human form.



Sherrell possesses the resources to attend meditation retreats, to take extended breaks from work, to exist in a body that is easy to lose awareness over. Most don't have these privileges. But we can all build mental spaces for self-regeneration. We'll be better members of the collective as a result.



Acceptance of this ethos can take any form that the acceptor desires. For Haraway, it's enmeshing herself in life-as-writhing-compost-pile. For me, it's walking for hours with no clear destination, passively cataloging all that engages my senses.

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**"To believe in a higher power is not a prerequisite to going off-center, but possessing the capacity to believe (in something, anything) is."**  
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Going off-center can mean letting smell chief the other senses. This is one of Anna Tsing's arts of noticing: using scent to ground oneself in the present and in all of the moments that constitute it. Her olfactory journey centers on the matsutake, a mushroom with a highly divisive scent. One's opinion on the smell tends to derive from their birthplace and geographical ancestry. There, encapsulated in one scent, the scent of growth in a burned-down landscape, are an innumerable number of personal histories.



There is power and potential to acute awareness – perhaps, it is the awareness we need to keep living.

Going off-center can mean rejecting traditional notions of space-time – or it can be taking a moment to live in the present without pretense. I struggle to wrap my mind around every tentacle of Donna Haraway's philosophy, but her chthonic notions resonate with me. My takeaway is that on this Earth we are all one – not just beings, but spaces and temporalities.

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**"On this Earth we are all one – not just beings, but spaces and temporalities."**  
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Going off-center means embracing a life bursting with possibility, constrained only by the limits of ever-opening imagination. I'll be the first to admit that I've lived a very on-center life. I enjoy being busy, value my own independence, and like to ponder my future in such a way that detracts from my absorption of the present. I've come to understand over the course of the last ten weeks that this could be my coping mechanism against what I perceive to be the terrifying void of apocalypse.

But there's something appealing to me about these off-center lifestyles: the hope that underlies them. All champion the idea that something else is possible if we consider societal constructions to be bendable. Those who are willing to go off-center are willing to de-center themselves. I'm inspired to do the same, and if you're reading this, I have a feeling you are too.

# Worried about societal collapse? Tips to be prepared!

*By Jordan Muhammad*

While we were reading *Believers: Making Life at the End of the World* I began to think more and more about apocalypse. The “inevitable collapse of infrastructure” as put by someone in Wells book. (122) I started to think about what would happen if some kind of disaster or emergency happened where technology failed and college became unattainable. My family had watched lots of apocalyptic movies in my lifetime, from *World War Z* to *Contagion* and those were on my mind as well, but most prominent was the apocalypse that would result from nothing so extreme, just the inability for industrial civilization to last forever + the climate crisis. At the same time I was imagining this apocalypse I was also becoming more and more aware of how reliant on technology I was. I rely on my phone to communicate with my long-distance significant other (s.o.). I rely on planes to take me home to my parents in New Jersey (my preferred place to weather the apocalypse. One thing that soothed my anxiety was making a contingency plan with my s.o. We decided that if any kind of apocalypse were to happen, before attempting to make my way to New Jersey, I would wait up to 20 days for them (about the amount of time it would take for them to walk from where they live in Arkansas to here in Evanston, IL if they walk from 12 hours and day and rested for 12 hours).

Whether you're already making plans or are just interested in what I'm thinking, so many of the books we read were filled with tips that I thought might be nice to compile. And spoiler alert, many of these are a great consideration whether or not you are afraid of society collapsing soon or not.



## Build your knowledge to live autonomously

- Learn survival skills like foraging and gardening from books or local experts
- One man in Well's book *Strangers in Their Own Land* mentioned getting a second hand medical book from Goodwill
- A good science fiction novel will also do you well or even cli-fi (Climate fiction)
- If you plan to be catching and eating fish that may be contaminated with chemicals this diagram from Protocol for Issuing Public Health Advisories for Chemical Contaminants in Recreationally Caught Fish and Shellfish (111-S) might be helpful

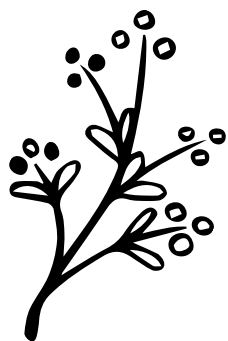


## Consider living as if the inevitable as already happened!

- if you are less reliant on industrial civilization you will be less thrown off if it collapses
- The Transition Town Movement is a great thing to look into. It is all about producing food locally, limiting waste, and becoming energy independent and, overall, transitioning to more resilient and sustainable alternatives (B 123)
- An easy start is creating or increasing your community garden

## Set a meet up spot and make a plan to find your loved ones in times of emergency

- I know this seems silly but this can apply to any kind of emergency (ex: fire, earthquake, zombie apocalypse) and this is the number one thing Lauren Olimina regretted not doing when the ultimate disaster struck her community



## *If things feel really intense consider making a survival/grab-and-run pack*

- Lauren gives a detailed description of the content of her pack on page 80 of *Parable* so I won't crowd this zine with an exhaustive list, but here is an overview of what she put in her pack make a pack bag like in *Parable*: Cooking utensils, a weapon, clothes and shoes, toiletries, money, seeds

***To end, please remember that getting prepared for collapse doesn't mean giving up on making things better. In many ways the transitions one can make to get prepared are already working to make things better. Collective survival and thriving is the goal!***





# So you decided to have kids.

that's your choice, we respect it, and here's how you should raise them.

Olivia Alexander

1 If you're going to raise children, it's important to understand that these children are going to experience anxieties and uncertainties about the future. Knowing this, it is your responsibility to be a person they can confide in both the good times and bad. At other times in history—of war, pandemics—parents have been called to console and comfort their children. And now today, when things get bad, have that hard conversation with them. Don't shy away from the questions they'll have. If it gets uncomfortable, sit with that. **Think** about it. **Ask** yourself why things are the way they are. As we've learned in our seminar, building trust is essential in these times of unique urgencies. This starts with you.

2 Parents have always been called to model good behavior ... but more than ever, your kids are going to look to YOU to be a person who gives a shit about what's going on. The climate crisis, we've said in this class, has always been an issue characterized by generational differences. Gen Z has sadly been the generation charged with cleaning up the messes our parents made.

First of all, fuck that, but if it's true, I hope that you are doing something. Teach your child to love the earth. Teach them to respect other people who experience climate change in different ways than you do. I also hope you teach your child how to take a break. Although I expect you to make an effort, breaks are important, too. Rest. Show your children that the best efforts for change involve resting and refueling in preparation of what's to come.

3 By now, you likely understand that times are changing. If you're doing it right, your parenting is going to reflect this. Only one thing is for sure in these times: nothing is certain. With this, some traditions and ways of life might change. The status quo is in flux now. Don't be afraid to let go of traditions that aren't relevant anymore. Just because something has always been done doesn't mean it needs to continue. I invite you to be creative: consider the best way to do something rather than doing what you were taught.



# To be a child at the end of the world.

kids, here's our guide to being your best self in the era of the climate crisis

*\*words inspired by Parable of the Sower by Octavia Butler*

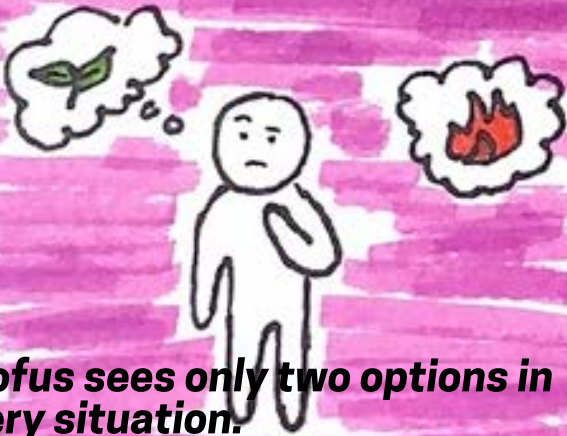
**Goofus puts himself first.**



**Gallant helps others get through tough times.**



**Goofus sees only two options in every situation.**



**Gallant sees the possibilities as limitless.**



**Goofus believes he's reached a dead end when things get hard.**



**Gallant understands that things can get better with his help.**







MAY 2022

# IMMERSED IN THE PROBLEM YOU WANT TO ESCAPE

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By Armaan Ajani

When all something does is give you stress, most people would want to avoid it at all costs. But “most people” are not everybody, and not everybody has the choice to avoid a stressful situation. I find this to be especially true for the ongoing climate crisis, in which some regions of the world are currently experiencing the effects of climate change and the rest of the world still fights to prevent the crisis coming their way. When you know the apocalyptic conditions are on their way, should you not work your hardest to stop such conditions from becoming inevitable? And when you are already feeling such effects, what is there to do now?

As I reflect on this, I think of three identities that I hold: a youth, a Southerner, and a student with ambitions to work in the political world. Anyone who shares even one of these identities has to be especially worried about what is to come as climate change’s doom becomes more imminent. With each identity, you’re forced to be immersed in the biggest, more stress-inducing issue, and all that most people, including some part of you, want to do is escape from having the thoughts of an apocalypse live in your head rent-free. And here I am with three of those identities, facing nothing but anxiety and tragedy in my future. Now what do I do?



## Youth

“It’s up to you all now.” We’ve all heard it. The older generations have given up on change and progress, and they’re under the impression that there’s enough sand in the hourglass for their children to handle things as adults. But gravity doesn’t stop; every hour, every minute, and every second without change means more sand — more time — has been lost that cannot be regained. With each moment we hold onto the status quo, we move closer and closer to the dystopian futures that we all read in our favorite fiction novels, and they’re looking less and less fictional now. It becomes more and more inevitable that we will not only be here but be in charge when the peak of the crisis hits our world. The possibility of us living a life like Lauren Olamina becomes stronger and stronger. How, then, do you avoid a stressful topic when it has invaded your relationships, your faith, and your survival? And even if we could avoid it, why burden another generation with the stressful decision-making we are facing now?

## South

It’s pretty unlikely that we will avoid the Problem though, because some regions of our country — my region of the country — are already facing the aftermath of waiting too long. I live somewhere between 250-300 miles from the coast of Georgia, but I’ll never forget the destruction of Hurricane Irma in 2017. I got 2 days of school canceled. I saw friends and neighbors lose cars to fallen trees. And, I had distant family who drove up from Miami to stay with us in order to stay safe. I didn’t think there was a choice; the storm was so bad that everyone in Miami needed to evacuate if they could. We had 2 dogs staying with us at a time where much of my family was terrified of pets. We had never met some of these family members before, two of whom could only speak Spanish which definitely created a language barrier. It was an awful experience that no doubt came from a storm that was exacerbated due to climate change.



But afterwards, everyone went back to their normal lives — to the same emission levels and unsustainable lifestyles that they had always been living. I also had an aunt who didn’t even bother to leave Miami during the hurricane. She just powered through it with her same normal living habits and ignored the warnings from government officials because how bad could it really be? I wonder today if she regrets that decision. I wonder if that same storm happened today — a very possible reality — if different decisions would be made.

After reading Arlie Russell Hochschild’s *Strangers in Their Own Land*, my guess is no. Even in Louisiana and Arkansas where the fish are too dangerous to eat and the river water should not be drunk, people continue to live life how they want to. They adapt in order to continue to survive, but they don’t want to stop the problem at the source, to find an actual solution to the problem that surrounds them. They don’t even want to acknowledge it as a real thing as they vote for the candidates that stand against environmental protections. Is that how they cope? Even as the Problem has invaded every aspect of Southerners’ lives, many of them have found a way to escape it. But... I don’t know if I can just pretend like Irma didn’t happen.





## Politics

I may be from the south, but I definitely relate to the likes of New Yorker Daniel Sherrell more than to the likes of Lee Sherman and the Arenos. Sherrell is the epitome of a young, educated adult in politics. He acknowledges that he is not facing the direct consequences of the Problem like many BIPOC communities throughout the country. He can fully escape the stressful situation if he wants to. And yet, he has chosen to immerse himself in such an anxiety-inducing career. Knowing that he could do something, his guilt and his morals overtook him. I'd like to hope that anyone else in politics is in it to help people and create positive change. Knowing that the climate crisis is probably the most dangerous and most urgent issue of our times, how could you not devote your political career towards resolving it?

After taking this course on apocalyptic living, I've learned a lot about the climate crisis and just how big of a threat it imposes. In knowledge, in my homeland, in my age, and in my ideal career, I too am immersed in the problem that I want to escape. I know I *could* avoid it if I wanted to, but I feel obligated to remain immersed. Sherrell's strong messaging of hope may be a little bit cheesy at times, but any other attitude will do no good. This crisis may be inevitable, but hope that it isn't is all we have. We're immersed in a problem we want to escape, so let's permanently escape it.



## THINGS TO BEWARE:

- **Dependence on the empire:** “One can’t be free and simultaneously dependent on the empire and its industrial infrastructure for meeting basic survival needs. The empire has intentionally fostered this dependence by criminalizing self-determination through the privatization of property. In a nutshell: control the resources, control the people” (93-B)
- **Empathy walls:** “an obstacle to deep understanding of another person, one that can make us feel indifferent or even hostile to those who hold different beliefs or whose childhood is rooted in different circumstances.” (5-S) Know that we need everyone in the fight for better.
- **Complacency:** It is easy to become a frog in a pot, to focus on day to day tasks and follies, not realizing you are being boiled. Whether it is large or small, do *something* to reject normalcy





## TOOLS TO OVERCOME:

- **Want to bring people with you who might disagree?** Lauren Olimina's father has great advice: "It's better to teach people than to scare them, Lauren. If you scare them and nothing happens, they lose their fear, and you lose some of your authority with them. It's harder to scare them a second time, harder to teach them, harder to win back their trust. Best to begin by teaching."
- **Immensely frustrated by other beings or things in this world?** Daniel Sherrell offers this "predictable and deeply felt cliché: that it is more powerful to love the things you might lose than to loathe whoever's trying to take them" (251-W)
- **Feel like quitting?** Consider these tools
  - "Even if it's ongoing and inevitable, there's still a world of difference between two degrees Celsius and six degrees Celsius in terms of human suffering and general chaos, and so every marginal bit of good we do in the present allays some of that pain in the future." (153-W)
  - "'We're fine' and 'we're fucked' are not answers, they're expressions of fear, walls we put up to avoid having to look at The Problem ourselves." To face the problem will be "hard work, which is to say heart work" (167-W)
  - "Grab grit from the dirt that outlasts us" (214-W)
- **Feeling bad for feeling lazy?** Remember that non-stop working hard, even for a good cause still comes from a work prioritized about all mentality. In a better world we all need to slow down. Laziness needs to be the exalted ethic (106-7-W)

# An End To Endings: Living with an Eye Towards the Future

By Noah Seth

May 2022

There is nothing more disruptive to my sense of well-being than the experience of powerlessness, of being without agency. In my own life, in moments of great stress, importance, or pain, it is the knowledge that I can plan, that I can act, and that I can do whatever is necessary to improve or actively shape the circumstance troubling my peace or the peace of my loved ones that brings me solace. The discernment to identify the root cause of an issue accompanied by the agency to do something about it, to create a different, better circumstance, is what brings me comfort in chaos, confidence in the midst of uncertainty, and peace of mind while experiencing personal apocalypse.

But when dealing with an apocalypse that extends beyond any single individual's capacity to comprehend, a phenomenon that Daniel Sherrell describes as dealing with the "hyperobject" in his memoir *Warmth: Coming of Age at the End of the World*, discernment and agency cannot be exercised to bring peace in the ways that I've described above. Far too much is at stake. The agency to act, to do something, is far too diffuse for any one person to single-handedly improve the circumstance, if our global circumstance at this point can be improved at all. But

while the solution to our modern apocalypse, what Sherrell calls "The Problem," extends beyond single-handed solutions, its severity and proximity can at times be just as severe as a personal crisis of grief, mourning, and loss. Indeed, for the victims of Katrina, Irene, Sandy, Maria, and Irma, those around the world whose homes and fields are burning and subsiding into the sea, this crisis is intensely personal. Climate change, the crisis, or "The Problem," can bring forth the same painful, personal endings and experience of apocalypse without the solace of individual capacity, the hope to avert or at least to postpone it. The feeling of powerlessness in the midst of such a profound and ungraspable experience can be crushing. How might we justify our efforts and our hope in the face of what seems like an inexorable ending? What can sustain us, how might one move forward in the midst of the apocalypse?

Daniel Sherrell and I agree that a good place to start is in reassessing our relationship with time. The word apocalypse presupposes an ending: the end of a world (or in the case of *The Problem*, the World). Critically, the notion of an ending, especially of this magnitude, introduces the same problem offered by a



hyperobject: the individual is immensely limited in their capacity to comprehend it. Unlike our individual ability to think and to experience, time is not bound by the duration of our lifetimes.

While our lives are finite, the consequences of the work that we do and the relationships that we establish live long after us. Our legacies and our imaginations create far beyond the ending that we as individuals may experience on this earth. For this reason, it is imperative that we as individuals cease to experience our agency in time frames that are finite. Sherrell comes to realize this while conversing with members of the Goolaraballoo, an indigenous Australian tribe while visiting the Australian Outback. He notes that just as the earth and its physical features, habitats, and ecosystems tell stories that endure beyond the lives of their constituent members, so too can people. In fact, we must.

In his closing comments to his hypothetical child, he explains that, “to live in the anthropocene is to realize that your attention must be broadened far beyond the bounds of your individual circumstance— expanded to encompass people, species, objects, and eras with which you are both utterly unfamiliar and inextricably bound...This practice is both daunting and divine, quotidian and unending. In this, it resembles religion. As the philosopher Simone Weil wrote,

‘attention, taken to its highest degree, is the same thing as prayer. It presupposes faith and love.’”

Our attention, our imaginings, values, and creation, must extend beyond that which we can see and perceive within our lives and lifetimes. The projection of our attention, of our faith and love into the future and across time is what can sustain us beyond our temporal endings. The weight of “The Problem,” of the apocalypse, is far less a burden to bear when its heft and the responsibility of a solution rests not on one individual’s shoulders alone, but is commonly borne by the efforts of those who came before you and those who yet may follow. Living while granting equal emotional and spiritual value to past, present, and future may yet sustain when ending seems inevitable. In reality, there is no ending coming, only the inevitability of change and of imagining new ways of feeling and being. To sustain, we must live while keeping these futures front of mind.



# Ruminations

Grief is letting go. Grief is looking at a situation and thinking to myself, “How could it have been any different?” In the face of endless tragedy, I grieve by just accepting the losses and coming to terms with the patterns present in the world around me. I grieve by surrendering my control to my own mortality and the people who hold power in my communities, whether big or small. In grief, I honor those impacted, and I come to understand that death and destruction define the life in which I live.



The class syllabus ended with a warning from Professor Orsi:

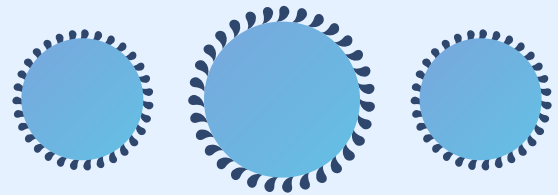
“I am fully aware that the topic of this course is deeply unsettling. I have spent weeks this summer and fall reading around widely in the literatures of the apocalypse in advance of making my selections for the course, and I have been unnerved, saddened, frightened, and at times rendered hopeless. Please be aware of emotional challenge of the course and be prepared throughout the quarter to address these emotions as they arise, with me, with each other, and with the people you turn to in difficult times.”

There were many times when I sat in feelings of despair and grief after class. It was hard not to. The eight of us spent nearly three hours discussing the present and future state of the world and the danger facing us. I don't have any quick fixes for grief or tips and tricks for navigating the feeling. But I have learned that centering hope is a step toward doing so.

The line “what is grief if not love persevering?” in WandaVision will forever be called cheesy, but to me, it meant a lot. There isn't a singular way to love, and there also isn't a singular way to grief or to cope.

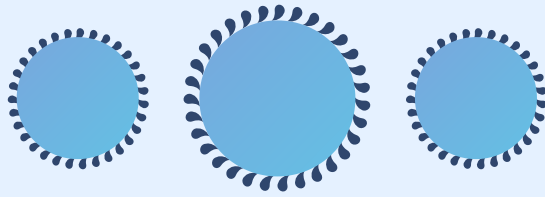
I hate thinking that I should be doing something a certain way. Wondering which of the 5 stages I'm in, thinking that the grief has to be temporary, feeling that I can only truly grieve when there is a permanent loss of someone close to me. But grief... is perseverance.

Grief will remain in my life for as long as I live. But to me that's not a bad thing. I will continue to demonstrate my grief by demonstrating my continuing love for what I've lost... and fighting for them and what they stood for.



I don't cry often. I always feel like I should, like my grief isn't valid if there aren't physical manifestations of this knot inside my chest. Sometimes, I'll sit on my bed and try to bring tears to my eyes, to exile the sadness to tiny droplets of salty water. Or sometimes, when my grief is on a planetary scale, I decide to turn away from it, to unthink the unthinkable. This class has shown me another way to grieve, a way to grieve where we sit with the discomfort. Together, we embraced our grief, rubbed its back, whispered “I'm here with you,” and that didn't make the grief disappear but it made it a little more tolerable. Climate change is not going away, and neither is our sorrow about our future, no matter how many tears are shed. But we should all take time to cry, or simply sit in sadness, before crawling back out towards hope.

# on Grief



Summer 2021.

My dog wears a cone and a cast. There are scars on her paws and her belly. She refuses to go into the park. She loved that park once. I still love that park – I work there. She growls at any dog larger than her. She growls at a lot of dogs. My dad buys a new pair of glasses. His old ones were twisted beyond recognition. There's a scar on his face from where a shattered lens cut his cheek when he threw himself over my dog to protect her. He won't talk about it.

I see my grandfather at his birthday brunch.

He's stoic, the same as always. It's at a restaurant I used to love, back when I could eat an entire pan of their cheesy pull-apart bread without a second thought. Now, I sip on a glass of orange juice. It's the only thing that's safe.

My throat stings.

One month later, there is no memorial service.

My grandfather didn't want one. There's no food I can eat at the Shiva either. I don't talk about it.

I fear loss tremendously because I don't like endings.

The notion that a person, an experience, a feeling, can come to an end is distressing because to me, endings are final. If a thing is to have an ending, this ending implies that every bit of meaning and spiritual substance found in the experience also ceases with the ending. I experience grief as the tremendous pain of loss, the loss of the spiritual substance that I found in the feeling, experience, or the relationship that has ended. But perhaps the pain is also a visceral feeling of transition, a sort of growing pain, one that signals to us that we are now responsible for actively carrying and living out the meaning, the spiritual substance that we found in the experience that has just ended. For me, this transition gives meaning to grief. It abates the pain and fear of endings because it embraces the uncertainty that comes with change.

The tragedies come too fast and too often. There is less and less time to grieve. Yet grieve we must. Never fear grief. Grief is not the antithesis of action, numbness is. Grief is a form of emotional flow. Numbness comes from our emotions clogging that flow. Sometimes I feel clogged. Feel nothing. Other times I cry a lot. Cry for the suffering of people and beings I don't know but still love. Grief is love, I think.

One time I cried because our arugula got soggy and I was going to have to compost them. It sounds silly to do, but that arugula had been nurtured. They were fed by the sun and water. They were likely carefully planted. By the miracle of life that arugula survived all the hardship they endured. Only to rot away, concealed in a plastic container. Perhaps this is not the perfect example because it is possible that arugula wanted to live their full life.

Grief is love.

The only time I don't want a hug is when I'm crying on behalf of another tragedy. Especially one that has already happened (ex: when I watch movies or read the news) Even when I watch fictional movies about something sad I will still be struck with grief because even though it is fiction, I know someone has experienced the same tragedy. Sometimes I fear my tears do nothing. But I must remind myself that my tears are grief which is love. It is only doing nothing that does nothing and I always have the choice to do something and am often doing it already.



# Ruminations

Hope is an action. In the midst of darkness, hope suggests that things can get better.

Hope leaves open a door to endless possibilities and gives life to those who are grieving. I believe hope is hard to come by these days, but it often appears where one would least expect to find it. Hope is interconnected with inspiration, longing, and dreaming. When those with hope find one another, the outcomes are limitless.



In one of our first classes of this seminar, I argued that “hope is a state of denial.” I consider myself realistic. I do not want to live in an ignorant mindset, hoping and wishing for the impossible rather than being practical in solutions, improvement, and adaptation.

But why are hope and realism mutually exclusive? We may be confined in what is actually possible, but we can still imagine, dream, and strive for better futures within what is possible. We can hope without being in denial, and I will hope for the dreams that I see as still possible. If we all do the same and act on that hope, then maybe more of our wishes are in reach than I think. Maybe it’s denial, but I’ll never know if I don’t at least try.

Spring 2022.

My dog drags us towards the dog run whenever we set out for a walk. We only let her go in when it’s empty. We don’t want her to be attacked again. But it’s so wonderful to watch her bounce around, tongue lolling, eyes sparkling, free to move in a way that’s impossible in a tiny, hardwood-floored Manhattan apartment. She has forgiven, maybe even forgotten. She and my dad’s scars have faded. My dad’s new glasses look better than his old ones.

My grandfather had a memorial service a few months ago, held at the hospital where he worked as a doctor up until his death. He never talked about it, but he was an incredible teacher. There’s a whole generation of doctors out there who are practicing because of him. Even if he didn’t want fanfare, we think an acknowledgment of his brilliance is warranted. The world (meaning the family) needs it.

My mom will teach a course at Columbia next year while she completes her MFA thesis. She gets to build the syllabus from scratch. Her father would be proud. I know I am. I also know that I’ve never seen her happier. I tell her that.



Seeing those I love make positive impacts on the world gives me hope.



# on Hope

This class gave me hope. I used to think that hope about our climate future looked like a mass political movement, and I still believe that's part of it. But this tiny thing we grew together, the three hours that were carved out for us to share each week, gave me a new kind of hope. The texts we read planted little seeds, sure, but I was constantly impressed

by you all, my cohort. Your intellect and creativity gave me hope. Because of our conversations, my hope for the future has expanded to the nonhuman, to temporality and modernity, to a hope for a new imagination. Hope is not a singularity, I have learned. And in that case, hope sure as hell looks like Tuesday afternoons in Kresge.



By the time I learned about Aumad Aurbury in 2020 I was very numb and therefore, immobile. I wasn't sad. I wasn't angry. I was just so tired of the systematic, structural, preventable murders. After George Floyd though, things change. It was not his death that gave me hope. I had actively avoided watching the video because I didn't need it to grieve. It was the desire of so many people around the country and in my community specifically to protest and organize that reinvigorated me. It was that hope that allowed me to come out of a moment of dormancy in my activism and get excited, get hopeful about what change we could make. In this way, I continue to find hope when I recognize I am not alone in the fight for better.



I don't like to hope, not because I am cynical, but because I believe that our desires deserve, and in fact require, more from us. From Merriam-Webster, to hope is "to cherish a desire with anticipation; to want something to happen or be true," or "to desire with expectation of obtainment or fulfillment."

Central to both notions is the element of desire, implying a goal, a mission, something to be experienced, felt, or achieved. But the notion of hope alone does not presuppose the active effort required to experience the things that we desire.

For this reason, I do not believe that hope alone can sustain. A more substantive hope, one in which our actions, our relationships, our way of being in and with the world forge pathways to experiencing our benevolent desires, is the sort of hope I think worthwhile. Hope looks like patience and perseverance, kindness and curiosity. Hope, I think, ought to be a way of being.

