

Traumatic Tourism and the Tide: Human and Planetary Futures in Selected Stories of Drowned Worlds: Tales from the Anthropocene and Beyond

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ABSTRACT: This paper applies scholarship in the environmental humanities specifically related to oceanic imaginary in order to examine tourist narratives portrayed in two science fiction stories from the anthology, *Drowned Worlds: Tales from the Anthropocene and Beyond*. The two stories in question are Ken Liu’s “Dispatches from the Cradle: The Hermit—Forty-Eight Hours in the Sea of Massachusetts” and Nalo Hopkinson’s “Inselberg”. Both stories explore the intersecting difficulties brought about by tourist demand and rising sea tides. The meeting point of these two phenomena in the context of “Dispatches” and “Inselberg” depicts traumatised individuals, communities, and landscapes. These stories are unique in their portrayal of the particular vulnerabilities of islands. They explore both individual and collective trauma set against the backdrop of climate catastrophe, which acts as an allegory for the real-world uncertainty faced by humans due to climate change. While the futurity in each story overlaps in a shared narrative of traumatic existence for the individuals and communities they depict, there is one key difference: “Dispatches” emphasises large-scale, exterior systems of power, while “Inselberg” looks inward to one island’s struggle for autonomy. Together both stories criticise systems of social and environmental exploitation, which binds the narratives, settings, and characters in cycles of trauma.

KEYWORDS: tourism, trauma, climate catastrophe, oceanic, islands.

INTRODUCTION

The short story anthology *Drowned Worlds: Tales from the Anthropocene and Beyond*, edited by Jonathan Strahan, follows a tradition of Anthropocentric science fiction that emphasises the central role humans play in the domination of Earth's environment. Where each story utilises tropes of science fiction to address impending planetary trauma brought on by disruption to and manipulation of the climate, bleak projections of a threatened biosphere offer apocalyptic transformations of human and natural environments. Two stories in particular, Ken Liu's "Dispatches from the Cradle: The Hermit—Forty-Eight Hours in the Sea of Massachusetts" ("Dispatches") and Nalo Hopkinson's "Inselberg," explore the vulnerability of planetary and human futures against the backdrop of an exploitative tourism industry. Although they are not the only stories in the collection to explore the harmful effects of tourism, they nonetheless provide the deepest engagement with the traumas of tourist commodification not only on the environment but also on human life. Both writers highlight the ways in which tourist consumption exacerbates the effects of natural disasters on the lives and livelihoods of people and their environments. Rising seas in "Dispatches" and "Inselberg" mirror real-world, contemporaneous experiences of climate change. Although set in either distant or unspecified futures, each story shares an attempted recuperation of the human through its submerged identity, which is forced under water to escape the traumatic experiences of tourist exploitation. While the futures depicted in each story are far-fetched, characters are rendered as fallible, sympathetic, and, for the most part, self-aware of their actions; their experiences of the eco-catastrophe they must ultimately live with personalises the trauma of climate change. The environmental and emotional distress brought on by the tourism-induced climate disaster resembles Caruth's definition of trauma as an "overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena."¹ Characters' responses to eco-catastrophes in both stories are instant and delayed. Liu and Hopkinson reveal that the effects of the violence are felt not just "gradually and out of sight"² but also immediately in a visible and visceral way. Each story emphasises the ways in which the human body and landscape bear the effects of trauma. Similar to

Erikson who argues against the clinical medical usage of the term ‘trauma’, that is “not to the *injury* but the *blow* that inflicted it, not to the *state of mind* that ensues but to the *event* that provoked it,”³ this paper traces the interplay between injury, blow, state of mind, and the event.

“Dispatches” explores ocean-mining and a spiralling refugee crisis in the twenty-seventh century. The story follows the unscrupulous protagonist, Asa Whale, a former managing director for the Venus branch of JP Morgan Credit Suisse, as she travels the sunken ruins of “sea-inundated Massachusetts.”⁴ Asa’s travel writing captures the touristic exploitation of the natural environment while the narrator comments upon human attempts to reverse the climate crisis. Both Asa and the narrator reflect on the consequences of political interference in the island-state of Singapore, which has been affected by climate disaster and tourist commodification. In this apocalyptic future, human life has been transformed into its own species—the Refugee Collective. The depiction of the refugees as non-human aligns them with the non-human environment: both human and their environment become submerged during the story as rising seas overpower them.

“Inselberg” is set in an unspecified future where a tsunami has wiped out most of the unnamed island on which the story is set. Through the infusion of Jamaican Patois and references to the tropics, Hopkinson, a Jamaican-born Canadian writer, implies the island’s location is Jamaica. The deliberate concealment of the name of the island universalises the experience of its eco-catastrophe to incorporate similar instances of exploitation and endangerment. Named after the isolated landform which protrudes from a level plain, “Inselberg” highlights the real-world vulnerability of island states in the face of rising seas. As the only remaining structure left in the wake of the “duppy tide,” the inselberg represents the pride of the islands as the most profitable product for tourism. As visitors take a fantastical journey through what is left of the island, their tour guide highlights the natural beauty that is threatened by the tourism industry. Although tourism adversely affects the island’s natural environment, the island depends on tourism for economic survival. Through the guide’s self-reflection, which overlaps with anecdotes of the island’s transformation, the relationship between human and geological history is revealed. Hopkinson’s consciousness of an island threatened by tourism reaffirms the link to its inhabitants’ vulnerability and, conversely, their resilience. Like “Dispatches,” “Inselberg” depicts the destructive impact of tourism on the human and natural environment.

VIOLENCE

Liu and Hopkinson expand the effects of immediate and gradual environmental injustice in a manner that resembles Nixon's advocacy of the need not only "to engage the representational, narrative, and strategic challenges posed by the relative invisibility of slow violence"⁵ but also the pervasive, yet overlooked, visibility of immediate catastrophe. By providing a social critique of tourist commodification in different parts of the world, "Dispatches" and "Inselberg" direct attention to what Clingerman refers to as the "hermeneutical orientation" of the Anthropocene.⁶ For Clingerman, the Anthropocene "names the contemporary event of overhumanization of the world" where the event is "the materialization of an all-encompassing human alteration of the planet."⁷ However, Liu and Hopkinson present the effects of environmental violence on differing scales: "Dispatches" portrays a world where the sunken Singapore islands mirror the world-wide effects of rising flood tides, whereas "Inselberg" depicts an isolated but recurring tsunami on an unnamed island. The more expansive world of "Dispatches" reflects Clingerman's argument of Anthropocentrism's "overhumanization of the world."⁸ As one of the displaced Singaporean characters, Saram, states, "An ice age is hardly comparable to what was made by the hands of mankind."⁹ The United Planet's geoengineering of Earth and Mars is another example of "overhumanization." Clingerman's argument for the "locatedness" of human being "to overcome the danger of the Anthropocene"¹⁰ is depicted in "Dispatches" and "Inselberg" through the assertion of resilient communities and people. However, both stories capture the enormity of climate change through futures trapped in cycles of apocalyptic disaster. The inescapable dread that ends each story adds exigency to the social critique of tourist exploitation of vulnerable environments. Where Clingerman characterises the Anthropocene "as much about possible human futures as it is an analysis about the past and present of the natural world,"¹¹ Liu and Hopkinson depict a dark future based on historical practices of tourist consumption that continue into the present.

Nixon's description of "slow violence" as that which "occurs gradually and out of sight"¹² resembles Hopkinson's depiction of the island as exemplifying the "postcard Caribbean."¹³ As such, the island is subjected to continuous marketing schemes that enact an imperceptible yet detrimental violence on the landscape. The tourists become consumed by the markers of paradise which clouds their awareness of the violence they

enact on the island by their mistreatment of the natural habitats. Walcott's critique of tourism argues that,

visitors to the Caribbean must feel that they are inhabiting a succession of postcards ... [and] to sell itself, the Caribbean encourages the delights of mindless, of brilliant vacuity, as a place to flee not only winter but that seriousness that comes only out of culture with four seasons.¹⁴

This same packaged island-experience and commodification of the environment is highlighted early in "Inselberg." The tourists expect a certain version of the inselberg in exchange for the price of their vacation. The perceptive tour guide of the story alludes to the tourists' expectations. She says, "me know say you paid for an all-inclusive tropical vacation here on the little nipple of mountain top that is all left of my country, but trust me. Some things you don't want all-included."¹⁵ While the tour guide ensures the safety of the tourists, she is content to give the tourists the piece of the island they have seen in their vacation catalogues. Hopkinson suggests that tourist consumption of the inselberg leads to an internalisation of the postcard Caribbean trope. However, selling the expectations of the island comes at a cost. Along with the rising sea tides that have already submerged much of the island, its inhabitants are also tasked with asserting their identities. It is not a matter of, as Thompson asks, "Can black histories ever be built on fragile postcard infrastructures?"¹⁶ Rather, "Inselberg" investigates possible futures resulting from tourism-reliant infrastructure. Selling the island's history for profit echoes one of the "new tourisms" discussed by Mowforth and Munt.¹⁷ The unnamed island retains the legacy of the plantation system in the form of this tourism. As the tour guide indicates, this legacy is ascribed to the island. The island's history, or what the tour guide refers to as the script he has to follow, is mapped onto the native body. She tells the tourists: "Koo here, see how the script get tattooed on the inside of my bottom lip, in peeny little letters? The whole script fix deh-yah in my mouth, so you understand I don't have no choice but to speak it."¹⁸ The passive acceptance and rote recital of the script indicates not only performativity but also the dehumanising nature of this self-referential nature story. The script follows the argument put forward as it concerns what Thompson calls the late twentieth century "tropical experience" which portrays locals "primarily as servants to tourists."¹⁹ As the

tour guide explains, the local inhabitants live to serve the needs of tourists who flock to the island to marvel at the inselberg.

In the same way that the tourists expect a polished, postcard island vacation, so too do they expect the people to speak in ways that make them authentic. Before the tour guide takes the tourists on their journey through the remains of his island, she asks them to provide him with a “password”—a key expression to establish his authenticity as a native. She says, “is you people from foreign who come up with the new passwords! You know, a code phrase you always want us to say to you at irregular intervals?”²⁰ She eventually decides to use “yahman”—a Jamaican Creole word that translates to *okay*. The need for an authentic language to complement the experience is a coded critique levelled at the tourist enterprise which masks the living conditions of local inhabitants. Mowforth and Munt argue that “it is the promotion of primitiveness within which authenticity becomes the principal commodity.”²¹ During the performance of the tour guide script in “Inselberg,” the tour guide is careful to exaggerate the features of her nationality that the tourists expect. Before the tour begins, she tells her eager participants, “oonuh haffee tell me if the password change... You know, a code phrase you always want us to say to you at irregular intervals?”²² Notwithstanding Hopkinson’s critique of tourists who exercise power over locals and locals who defer to tourists, the tour guide also highlights Mowforth and Munt’s point that authenticity is the island’s greatest commodity. The consumption of an authentic island life is further emphasised by the tour guide who reminds the visitors to “drink your phrasebooks this morning”²³ in order to reproduce the primitive language of the island. Mimicking the locals’ linguistic culture works to reinforce how exploitative the island’s tourism industry is. Furthermore, the commodification of island culture is portrayed as transactional and enabled through the performance of linguistic identifiers. Although the story of the island is a tragic one, the tour guide is expected to perform the island’s history in a digestible manner for tourists’ pleasure. As the tour guide takes the tourists higher up the inselberg, she cautions them against risking their safety just to capture a perfect image of the island’s remains: “The bridge we crossing on right now is taking us over some famous ruins of former industry. This new body of water, we call it Sugar Lake. No, you can’t get out the bus to take pictures.”²⁴ Along with the commodification of disaster brought on by the duppy tide, the tour guide directs attention to the dangers embraced by the tourists in order to get a lasting image of paradise.

NON-HUMAN TRAUMA

Part of each story's critique of exploitation in tourism sees local people take on non-human shapes through metaphors of water. Liu's post-apocalyptic vision of submerged Massachusetts depicts an exploitative system of "refugee tourism."²⁵ The violent tourism industry highlighted in "Dispatches" uses water metaphors such as "floating refugee collectives"²⁶ and "waves of refugees"²⁷ to emphasise the volume of refugees as well as their inextricable ecological connection to the ocean. Similarly, the representation of refugees in "Dispatches" reflects media coverage of real-life refugee crises which likewise use water metaphors to construct subjectivities that arouse fear, apprehension and hatred.²⁸ In the story, rising seas motivate Asa Whale to travel the globe while documenting the lives of climate refugees. The earliest of Asa's travelogue entries describes the remains of the island-state Singapore along with its citizens who have been displaced. Singapore is rendered in a state of collapse. With "floating family habitats" that "detach and sink beneath the waves," we are told that "the refugees remain stateless."²⁹ Asa's portrayal of the refugees in their now submerged and squalid habitats inadvertently leads to a thriving tourist industry that exploits the degradation of the refugees' former civilisation. It creates an insular community referred to as the "refugee collective" which is unable to compete with the tourism industry. Refugees are likened to the "booming algae populations"³⁰ which are considered dangerous to the ecosystem and, therefore, to be exterminated in order for tourism to blossom. Ironically, the violence suffered by refugees affects the ecosystem's "fragile marine animals and their photosynthesizing symbiotes"³¹ on which the tourism industry depends. Liu's illustration of a complicated, ecopolitical interconnection of race, class, capitalism, and nature gives prominence to the otherwise peripheral role that refugees occupy in the story. The tourists who visit the stateless island consume ruins of ancient civilisations without understanding the people who were once its inhabitants. Eventually, Asa's travels take her to the "sea of Massachusetts"³² which is not only a prominent tourist destination but also a place of refuge for displaced people, including Singaporeans. With the help of the tour guide, Jimmy, Asa documents the conversion of the sea-inundated state of Massachusetts whose future is portended by the fate suffered in Singapore.

The water metaphors underscore discrepancies in wealth between refugees and tourists. Refugees are described as undesirable "barnacles,"³³ whereas the tourists and their money are portrayed as necessary for the survival of the local economy, despite

the impact on the coral ecosystem. Described as “selkies” who “gracefully floated down like mermaids,”³⁴ the significance of the tourists’ presence is underscored by their mythical allure. The overcompensation of their stature corresponds to the servile local economy which depends on the income of the tourist industry to survive. As the narrator admits, “No doubt the influx of tourist money is welcomed by the locals, however conflicted they may be about Asa’s portrayal of them.”³⁵ Conflicted emotions surrounding the romanticisation of the refugees is what deepens refugees’ dependency on tourism in spite of its adverse effects. Similar to Jimmy—who succumbs to the realisation that without Asa the remains of the local community would be completely wiped out—readers are left with an unchallenged opinion of the impact of tourism on the local community and its environment.

In “Inselberg,” colonial perceptions of enslaved people as non-human leave a traumatic residue that transforms into a “big sugar plantation duppy.”³⁶ The duppy, a spirit of dead ancestors, originated in Africa and was transposed into Jamaican lore where it became less of a haunting presence and more of a protective spirit. Hopkinson uses the duppy to channel the historical sugar plantation which has survived centuries of colonial exploitation as well as ongoing climate catastrophes. Although the former plantations become submerged with the majority of the island, the spectre of the duppy represents the island’s lasting African heritage, one that cannot be washed away. References to submerged sugar plantations memorialise the island’s brutal history while ensuring the continuation of that ancestry. The tour guide’s attempt to retell the history of the island takes on performative proportions aimed at satisfying the tourists’ postcard expectations. Through an embellished storytelling spectacle, the island’s history isn’t only converted into fiction but also reveals the gaps in the people’s memory. Their inability to recall the island’s true history overlaps with Caruth’s exploration into the unknowable experience of trauma, which itself borrows from Freud’s concept of traumatic neurosis.³⁷ As such, the tour guide’s recital of the island’s history takes the form of a “reenactment of an event that one cannot simply leave behind.”³⁸ While Hopkinson makes the tour guide’s reenactment less “unwitting” than Caruth makes trauma out to be, “Inselberg” depicts “the enigma of the otherness of a human voice that cries from the wound.”³⁹ This wound, as the tour guide explains, has been carried over from slavery and hovers over the island in the form of its “sugar plantation duppy.”⁴⁰ The island’s inability to wrest itself away from its dependence on selling sugar translates into the commodification of its inselberg.

TRAUMATIC VOYEURISM

Both stories illustrate their settings with a voyeuristic gaze from the perspective of outsiders. The Inselberg and the taiji become products for commodification as well as objects placed within the tourists' gaze. In "Dispatches," when the narrator and Asa pass the cruise ship, the narrator notes, "some tourists saw us but did not pay much attention—probably thinking that the drifting refugee bubble was a prop added by the cruise ship to provide atmosphere."⁴¹ The comparison of refugees to a prop establishes the performativity of the show for tourists. As props, the refugees are reduced to objects, not people. Their description as props echoes the narrator's earlier observation that tourists were given "what appeared to be paper books—props provided by the cruise company."⁴² The refugees are made into tourist attractions. Like in "Inselberg," the narrator of "Dispatches" admits to consuming the ruins of the sunken refugee habitats. During one of Asa's excursions to the refugee ruins in the solar-powered craft, the narrator describes how he "greedily drank in the sights passing beneath the transparent floor."⁴³ Liu implies an extensive insatiability for the refugee civilization which, as indicated by the narrator, occurs from within and by the people who share the destination as well as the tourists. "Dispatches" draws attention to acts of mimicry this time portrayed by the tourists who attempt a "modern incarnation" of the Chinese martial art form – taiji⁴⁴. Alluding to the tourists' "languorous, clumsy movements,"⁴⁵ the narrator comments that "the cruise ships just make up whatever they want for the tourists."⁴⁶ Later, we are told some tourists dressed in "refugee-chic"⁴⁷—an attempt to look authentic. Like the tour guide in "Inselberg," who sells a contemporary version of life in the tropics, the cruise ship sells a modern version of Chinese art. Both stories highlight the performativity of indigenous culture as a product of tourist demand. Although Mowforth and Munt read authenticity and otherness as "united in a desire to ensure that culture and ethnicity are preserved and aestheticized,"⁴⁸ Liu and Hopkinson show that performativity in each story operates to generate profit and not to increase awareness of the need for preservation.

RESILIENCE AND RESISTANCE TO TRAUMA

According to DeLoughrey et al., resilience “has come to play a central organizing role in environmental management, and, increasingly, in discourses of development that emphasize the interdependence of culture, environment, and capitalism.”⁴⁹ This resilience is also rendered through water metaphors. The “people hang on, as stubborn as the barnacles on pilings revealed at every low tide”⁵⁰ while their island gradually erodes. Later in the story, the resilience attributed to Singapore is extended to the “Great Barrier Reef” and the “legends of the long dead Caribbean.”⁵¹ However, unlike refugees who remain “stateless,” the coral is portrayed as adaptable. Asa notes that coral “migrated to higher latitudes north and south, gained tolerance for stressed environments, and unexpectedly, developed new symbiotic relationships with artificial nanoplate-secreting algae engineered by humans for ocean-mining.”⁵² By distinguishing between the ecosystem and refugees in this way, “Dispatches” implies the planet will survive the climate crisis while humanity’s fate is less certain. In the end, the refugees’ resilience, like their once stable Singapore, will gradually wear down. If, according to Orr, “the inhabitant and place mutually shape each other,”⁵³ then “Dispatches” highlights the mutual degradation owing to their codependency. Given the tourist industry’s domination of human life, refugees are forced under water where they are able to exist without interference. “Inselberg” also draws attention to the resilience of the communities that have been submerged. Unlike tourists’ “tender life”⁵⁴ which, according to their tour guide, makes the island’s water unsafe to drink because tourists “don’t have the resistance built up,”⁵⁵ the submerged communities continue to survive. While the tourists are marked by fragility, the island and its inhabitants are imbued with resilience. As the tour guide says, “nothing that get drowned is really gone.”⁵⁶ The residue of the submerged plantation is an indication that the island has always been exploited by external forces but has, nevertheless, persevered.

Both “Inselberg” and “Dispatches” locate resilience in the water even though it facilitates disaster. Whether it is the rising sea levels that engulf Singapore or the tides that submerges everything except the inselberg, the water functions as an atopia. According to Carroll, atopic space “works to erode the structures of law and society ... [and] can serve as a (temporary) refuge for outlaws, monsters, exiles, indigenous peoples and Others.”⁵⁷ The ocean as atopic refuge resounds with “Dispatches” in particular because the Singaporean refugees are forced to migrate from their homeland. Although the people of “Inselberg” are also forced into a submerged livelihood, it becomes less about escape and more about maintaining their close-knit community

and ensuring the survival of their island-history. Hopkinson's illustration of a submerged community resembles the claim of "sea ontologies" proposed by DeLoughrey, who explored oceanic imaginary in the twenty-first century⁵⁸. Arguing for a different theory of the ocean, away from the "violent convergence of environment and history,"⁵⁹ DeLoughrey uses the term sea ontology to "characterize the connection between ancestry, history, and non-Western knowledge systems in submarine aesthetics."⁶⁰ Sea ontologies, according to DeLoughrey, emphasise "the ocean as an evolutionary and cultural origin in the wake of the brutal loss of ancestral memory."⁶¹ Hopkinson locates the evolutionary capacity of the fictional island in its "duppy tide" which is destructive but also evolutionary in the way that DeLoughrey theorises. Half-weary, half-eager to see what the next duppy tide brings, the tour guide reveals being "so excited to see what changes she [the duppy tide] will bring this time."⁶² At the story's conclusion, the island survives a duppy tide just as it has before, despite its state of ruin. Therefore, "Inselberg," just as in "Dispatches," depicts submerged communities that continue to thrive in the face of disaster, thus bearing witness to the ocean as an atopia.

SYSTEMATIC TRAUMA

Both stories, though concerned with the effects of climate catastrophes in the future, reflect the historical role that exploration, economics, and science play in altering humanity and the environment. In "Dispatches," Asa navigates the seas in order to discover indigenous people and their new habitats. She exemplifies the modern conquistador who objectifies the dislocated communities in order to generate wealth. The narrator sums her up as "merely engaging in the timeless practice of intellectuals from privileged societies visiting those less fortunate and purporting to speak for her subjects by 'discovering' romanticised pseudo-wisdom attributed to them."⁶³ Although Asa's travelogue makes her the target of romanticising the refugees, it is John, the Federation of Maritime Provinces and States "tourist czar,"⁶⁴ who has the job of boosting tourist arrivals to Massachusetts. As the czar, John's role symbolises the larger wielding of geo-political power over the refugee communities. Although Asa accepts her toxic romanticising of the refugees, she consoles herself by arguing that the institutional powers are far more destructive in their rhetoric of climate change denial. Her critique that Harvard of yesteryear may not be any better than its current version⁶⁵ implicates educational institutes in continuing to legitimise environmental injustice.

Asa goes on to say: “The university and others like it once also nurtured the generals and presidents who would eventually deny that mankind could change the climate and lead a people hungry for demagoguery into war against the poorer states in Asia and Africa.”⁶⁶

The propagation of leaders who deny climate change is what binds the planet in cyclic forms of traumatic ecological devastation. The power structures that manipulate the environment are represented by an unnamed group of countries referred to as the “Developed World” which “had polluted the world the earliest and the most.”⁶⁷ The United Planets, a futuristic, more encompassing parody of the United Nations, consolidates the political influence of the Developed World. Asa tells us that the United Planets assumed the responsibility of the “Grand Task—the terraforming of both Earth and Mars”⁶⁸ in an unethical manner that neglected the people who were most affected by it—the refugees. The geoengineering of the environment associated with terraforming leads to further complications: “heavy deposits of mercury, arsenic, lead, and other heavy metals; runaway coastal development as the developed nations built up the machinery of death against waves of refugees.”⁶⁹ Like the United Planets who claim responsibility for manipulating Earth’s ecosystem, Asa is complicit in the touristic exploitation of the refugees.

In “Inselberg,” Hopkinson emphasises the influence of global superpowers in determining the lifeblood of the island’s economy. The tour guide assures the tourists that their money is well-spent and risk-free because the currency is indexed to the American dollar. “In case of sudden tropical depression,” she tells them, the dollar will “remain relatively stable”⁷⁰ The double-entendre of “depression” signals a shared incapacity brought on by natural and economic disaster. According to the tour guide, the wealthy nations are safe from both types of disaster affecting the lesser-developed island. Due to economic immunity guaranteed by the status of the American dollar, Hopkinson points to the inherently disadvantaged island-economies that bear the brunt of US-centric economic policies. Hopkinson’s critique of economic exploitation resembles the argument made by Adamson in her analysis of global capitalism and its impact on biodiversity. Adamson finds a system of impoverishment created by “wealthy First World nationals” who rely on activities such as “tourism, mining, logging, and oil extraction” which “draws the economically disadvantaged into participation in the exploitation of their own environments.”⁷¹ Hopkinson directs attention to an island consciousness that acknowledges its impoverished state and

therefore justifies its compliance in being exploited. Through scatological references, “Inselberg” emphasises the island as a dumping ground for the tourists who come from wealthy nations. The tour guide tells them: “Any other bodily fluids you care to donate while you in there are gratefully appreciated. Or any bodily solids. You don’t even have to remove any bones first.”⁷² Reverence for tourist money translates into an internalisation of their superiority, summed up by the tour guide’s cynical, yet disturbingly serious request. Hopkinson’s disguised critique of the richer economies reflects the tour guide’s reluctance toward scolding the tourists for harming the island’s natural environment.

Meanwhile, Liu’s language of critique directly implicates wealthier nations in the systemic creation and maintenance of privilege. According to Asa in “Inselberg,” “It was the Developed World that had polluted the world the earliest and the most.”⁷³ This pollution, unlike the bodily excrements described by the tour guide of “Inselberg,” takes the form of “heavy deposits of mercury, arsenic, lead, and other heavy metals.”⁷⁴ Although these pollutants threaten the natural environment, the refugee collective poses a greater threat—to the tourist industry. In the story, the Developed World considers the refugees as the origin of the planet’s contamination rather than as victims of a deteriorating environment. Liu masks the subordination of the refugee collective with a politically motivated system of global exploitation that overlays the micro-level degradation of the island that occurs at the hands of the tourists. Liu and Hopkinson share the portrayal of either the refugee collective, or the entire island as the human waste of the tourist industry. As such, both stories condemn the indiscriminate acts of pollution perpetuated by the Global North which affect the most vulnerable regions in the world.

In “Inselberg,” the monetisation of the island’s *inselberg* is expanded to the solicited use of the body. The tour guide says to a male tourist “If you tell me your room number, you and me could spend a little sweetness later. Ten percent surcharge, of course....”⁷⁵ In this story of an island being exploited by tourist demand, Hopkinson retains the ubiquitous theme of sex tourism to emphasise the body as an add-on product to the all-inclusive vacation package. Exploitation of the refugees in “Dispatches,” and of the island along with its inhabitants in “Inselberg,” mirrors real world environmental injustices issues that affect countries today. Ross predicts that, “In the ‘climate wars’ to come, the threat of global warming will increasingly be used to shape immigration policies around a vision of affluent nations or regions as heavily

fortified resource islands.”⁷⁶ “Dispatches” illustrates this with references to the “Second Flood War”⁷⁷ and the “wars to come.”⁷⁸ Their effects on the refugees are illustrated through the way in which they are encouraged to participate in a lottery in order to escape squalor. We are told by the narrator that Sarah, a refugee from Singapore, “succeeded by winning one of the coveted migration visas to Birmingham” (74). Unlike “Dispatches,” “Inselberg” does not gesture toward an alternative home. Instead, Hopkinson ends the story with the future of the island and its inhabitants in limbo. The tour guide admits that she doesn’t know how to escape the tide because she herself “never did escape” (Hopkinson 2016, 369). Hopkinson alludes to a deeper form of violence that can be traced to the trans-Atlantic slave trade. While the tourists will eventually pack their bags and leave for their affluent homes, locals have to endure the waves of disaster brought on by the sea.

THE CURRENT CLIMATE

“Dispatches” and “Inselberg” uses tropes of science fiction to show that acts of violence brought on by the demand of tourism are connected to the actual processes of ecological degradation taking place in the world today. The narrator of “Dispatches” informs us that owing to culinary demands, restaurants have farmed the wild lobster into extinction⁷⁹. Farming of the lobsters into extinction occurs alongside the United Planet’s preoccupation with terraforming Mars in the likely event that Earth is no longer inhabitable. The refugee crisis out of which develops the niche market for refugee tourism further emphasises the extent of human and environmental injustices that are interconnected in the story. Through lobster farming, terraforming, and refugee tourism, “Dispatches” shows that degradation of the environment in the future is a result of the same issues faced today. The effects of climate change on people speaks to the interconnectedness of the human and natural environments and the relationship between global economies and local communities.

Both stories foresee the current ecological crisis as being driven by the race among affluent nations to control and privatise the natural and physical resources belonging to lesser-developed countries. “Dispatches” overlays the exploitation of Singapore’s natural resources with the use of technology to accelerate the profiteering of the island’s ruins. Asa’s journal describes Singapore’s remains as “an algal mat composed of metal and plastic, studded with glistening pearls, dewdrops or air

bubbles—the transparent domes and solar collectors for the habitats.”⁸⁰ The exploitation of Singapore’s natural resources forms the backdrop to larger processes of exploitation being engineered by the United Planets. Liu emphasizes environmental degradation on a planetary scale through the terraforming of Mars to make it a habitable alternative to Earth. Although the “American Empire”⁸¹ has waned, its influence on the technological manipulation of the environment persists into the twenty-seventh century. The United Planets forms a “public-private partnership for restoring Earth” while simultaneously developing the technology to manipulate the ecology of Mars.⁸² Both acts of environmental injustice reveal a political system that is complicit in the humanitarian crisis which objectifies the refugees as codependent on the very water that ruined their origins. The inevitable force of climate change is worsened through the manipulation of technology by the planetary organisation which assumes power over the environment.

By emphasising the impact of resource exploitation, primarily for the sake of satisfying tourism demands, Liu urges readers to view a mutual degradation of humanity and the environment. This simultaneous wearing down of the human body and the natural landscape reflects the claim made by Orr.⁸³ Liberal Arts education in the context of environmental studies, Orr argues, must be attuned to the inseparability of the place and person: “the inhabitant and a particular habitat cannot be separated without doing violence to both.”⁸⁴ This can be seen in “Dispatches” where the mining of Singapore’s natural resources leads to the stateless existence of its people, now deemed refugees. Hopkinson highlights similar processes of mutual degradation, albeit through disguised representations of a disaster-prone inselberg. The deliberate focus on the inselberg as the only commodifiable land diverges attention away from the submerged island and its people. As a submerged and objectified species, the inhabitants’ existence places them outside the category of the human.

The imminent catastrophe that ends each story emphasises the insurmountable task that affects humankind and by extension the spaces they call home. Although the destruction of Earth is alluded to in “Dispatches” and the irreparable degradation of the island in “Inselberg,” the characters of each story are left in a state of limbo regarding the likelihood of it happening. They are apocalyptic not in the sense of ending complete destruction but in the sense of a transition. According to Magid, “The texts predict and describe the end of the world, but the text does not end, nor does the world within the text end.”⁸⁵ Both texts deliberately leave the futures of their worlds uncertain insofar as

they allow readers to reflect on current environmental injustices. Both stories show that climate destruction is not really the end, but that it could be if no action is taken. The critique of forms of exploitation found in each story operate according to Garrard's "environmental apocalypticism."⁸⁶ According to him, the apocalyptic event "is not about anticipating the end of the world, but about attempting to avert it by persuasive means."⁸⁷ Liu and Hopkinson both create improbable futures that are the consequence of past and present-day environmental injustices.

CONCLUSION

Both "Dispatches" and "Inselberg" remain faithful to their anthology's title. They illustrate different types of submerged communities that struggle to rise above the surface due to the human manipulation of the natural environment. Exacerbating this threat to the environment are systems of tourist exploitation. To recall Caruth's description of traumatic events which "intrude repeatedly,"⁸⁸ the effects of rising sea tides and continuing demand for destination tourism bind the individuals and their communities in cycles of traumatic experiences. Liu and Hopkinson implicate larger political systems of exploitation through the critique of tourism. Presented through science-fiction tropes of planetary manipulation, each story envisions a dark future for the planet as well as humanity. In "Dispatches," a niche tourism industry is created out of displaced refugees—displaced because of exacerbated environmental manipulation by the United Planet's terraforming of Earth. "Inselberg" depicts the island's tourism industry as an extension of colonial domination. In both stories, the tourism industries create traumatic living conditions for the permanent residents while the visitors casually mistreat the environment. Although set in far-fetched futures, the stories illustrate acts of violence that are rooted in present-day environmental and social injustices. By emphasising the traumas associated with violence, Liu and Hopkinson invite us to question the ongoing impact of tourist commodification, resource exploitation, and impending climate disaster that blight the future of the real-life climate crisis. Whether it is the refugees who struggle to find a new home in "Dispatches," or the islanders of "Inselberg" who have to perform their exoticism, there is the common thread of a shared state of trauma brought on by a global system of tourist exploitation. Although the ending of each story suggests little by way of reclamation by the disenfranchised groups, the authors motivate a deeper engagement

with exaggerated forms of impending climate doom to transform our sensitivity to environmental justice.

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NOTES

¹ Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 11.

² Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2011), 2.

³ Kai Erikson, "Notes on Trauma and Community," in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, ed. Cathy Caruth, (Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 184.

⁴ Ken Liu, "Dispatches from the Cradle: The Hermit—Forty-Eight Hours in the Sea of Massachusetts," in *Drowned Worlds: Tales from the Anthropocene and Beyond*, ed. Jonathan Strahan (Oxford, Solaris, 2016), 87.

⁵ Nixon, *Slow Violence*, 2.

⁶ Forrest Clingerman, "Place and the Hermeneutics of the Anthropocene," *Worldviews: Global Religions, Culture, and Ecology*, Vol. 20, No. 3 (2016): 229.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Liu, "Dispatches," 84.

¹⁰ Clingerman, "Place and the Hermeneutics," 233.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 228.

¹² Nixon, *Slow Violence*, 2.

¹³ Derek Walcott, *What the Twilight Says: Essays*, (New York, Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1998), 72.

¹⁴ Walcott, *Twilight*, 72.

¹⁵ Nalo Hopkinson, "Inselberg," in *Drowned Worlds: Tales from the Anthropocene and Beyond*, ed. Jonathan Strahan, (Oxford, Solaris, 2016), 417.

¹⁶ Krista A. Thompson, *An Eye for the Tropics: Tourism, Photography, and Framing the Caribbean Picturesque*, (Durham, Duke University Press, 2006), 275.

- ¹⁷ Martin Mowforth and Ian Munt, *Tourism and Sustainability: Development, Globalisation and New Tourism in the Third World*, (New York, Routledge, 2015), 11.
- ¹⁸ Hopkinson, "Inselberg," 424.
- ¹⁹ Thompson, *An Eye for the Tropics*, 280-281.
- ²⁰ Hopkinson, "Inselberg," 419-420.
- ²¹ Mowforth and Munt, *Tourism and Sustainability*, 81.
- ²² Hopkinson, "Inselberg," 419-420.
- ²³ *Ibid.*, 423.
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*, 422.
- ²⁵ Liu, "Dispatches," 64.
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*, 61.
- ²⁷ *Ibid.*, 63.
- ²⁸ Svetlana Nedelcheva, "On the Balkan Route: the Image of Migrants in Bulgarian Online News," *International Journal of Media and Information Literacy*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (2018): 21.
- ²⁹ Liu, "Dispatches," 64-65.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*, 77.
- ³¹ *Ibid.*, 71.
- ³² *Ibid.*, 62.
- ³³ *Ibid.*, 60.
- ³⁴ *Ibid.*, 72.
- ³⁵ *Ibid.*, 65.
- ³⁶ Hopkinson, "Inselberg," 423.
- ³⁷ Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, 2.
- ³⁸ *Ibid.*
- ³⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.
- ⁴⁰ Hopkinson, "Inselberg," 423.
- ⁴¹ Liu, "Dispatches," 77.
- ⁴² *Ibid.*, 76.
- ⁴³ *Ibid.*, 70.
- ⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 76.
- ⁴⁵ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁶ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 78.
- ⁴⁸ Mowforth and Munt, 81.
- ⁴⁹ Elizabeth DeLoughrey et al., *Global Ecologies and the Environmental Humanities: Postcolonial Approaches* (New York, Routledge, 2015), 21.
- ⁵⁰ Liu, "Dispatches," 61.

⁵¹ Ibid., 71.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ David W. Orr, *Ecological Literacy: Education and the Transition to a Postmodern World* (Albany, State U of New York Press, 1992), 102.

⁵⁴ Hopkinson, "Inselberg," 427.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 423.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

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⁵⁸ Elizabeth DeLoughrey, "Submarine Futures of the Anthropocene," *Comparative Literature* 69, no. 1 (2017): 33.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 36.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Hopkinson, "Inselberg," 429.

⁶³ Liu, "Dispatches," 64.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 65.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 78.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 60.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 56.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 71.

⁷⁰ Hopkinson, "Inselberg," 419.

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⁷² Hopkinson, "Inselberg," 425.

⁷³ Liu, "Dispatches," 60.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 71.

⁷⁵ Hopkinson, "Inselberg," 421.

⁷⁶ Andrew Ross, "Climate Change," in *Keywords for Environmental Studies*, ed. by Joni Adamson et. al., (New York, NYU Press, 2016), 39.

⁷⁷ Liu, "Dispatches," 71.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 85.

⁷⁹ Liu, "Dispatches," 57.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 59.

⁸¹ Ibid., 70.

⁸² Liu, "Dispatches", 66.

⁸³ Orr, *Ecological Literacy*, 102.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Annette Magid, *Apocalyptic Projections: A Study of Past Predictions, Current Trends and Future Intimations as Related to Film and Literature* (Cambridge, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015), 228.

⁸⁶ Greg Garrard, *Ecocriticism* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 99.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 99.

⁸⁸ Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, 92.