DISSERTATION

DEATH BECOMES US:

CONSTITUTING DEATH AND IMAGINING WELLBEING THROUGH GLOBAL YOUTH ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVIST DISCOURSES

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ABSTRACT

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In this study, I analyzed death as a rhetorical strategy and emphasized the speaking power of youth environmental activists and their unique contributions to public discourses. I argued that the stories we tell about death constitute particular identities, ways of living/life chances, and ways of imagining the world. I explored the persuasive power of death in and of itself—death as rhetoric—and how rhetoric constitutes death, even as death functions to elide and enable the very discourses that call it into being. I narrowed my focus by consciously "placing" death on the edges of environmental issues and highlighting the ways discourse about the natural world constructs ecological realities and gives shape to environmental ideologies and human/environmental interaction. To enlarge the existing rhetorical criticisms of youth voice, I featured the discourses of three individuals: Greta Thunberg, Autumn Peltier, and Isra Hirsi. Each orator's intercultural and international contexts ensure that the relationships and experiences each girl has with their environmental context are diverse and span a variety of ecological and intersecting social issues. My study suggests that when youths employ the persuasive power of death, they do one or more of the following: (1) Constitute a space of inbetweenness and a process of becoming; (2) Harness the rhetorical significance of the material, spatial, and temporal aspects of everyday life; (3) Highlight the consequences of placelessness, disconnection, and detachment; (4) Call forth a politics of relation centered in an ethic of

responsibility, intersectionality, and shared accountability; and (5) Imagine more just, sustainable, and flourishing futures for all our relations. Considering the rhetoric of this diverse set of young women rhetors, I synthesized the significant findings and key implications of my analyses to suggest a rhetorical theory of *eudaimortia*, which reveals the persuasive power of death to challenge and reconstitute how to live, how to become, and how to make, move, and imagine bodies, worlds, and time.

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Adhered to one of three monitors on my desk is a Post-it that reads, “I would rather write a dissertation than die.” While I always thought my dissertation would be my “first baby,” shortly after my son was born, it was no longer the most important thing in the room. Completing this project would take more than talent and discipline—it would require desire, tenacity, and others.

To write is to be in dialogue. To read. To research. To walk and to think. To speak and to be silent. To listen deeply and to question unapologetically. Writing requires pleasure, rest, and joy as much as it requires laundry, emails, and the mundane. To write is to ache and to elate. To write is to experience the fullness and hollowness of living and dying. The opportunity to write is both an act of independence and a great communal dance. In a word, to write is a gift. A gift bestowed upon me by far too many to name and to whom I owe my deepest gratitude.

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Thank you, all, for indulging my commentary about how this dissertation was made and my reminder that the making itself matters. Look at what we made together.

DEDICATION

To Brian and Asa. In you lies my becoming.

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CHAPTER ONE: MATTERS OF LIFE AND DEATH

In April 2020, global interest in "death" reached peak popularity as a search term since Google started analyzing and publishing search query data in 2006.[1] Though suggestive, at best, these "death data" seem to articulate a proliferation in humanity's unwavering fascination with "the final exit."[2] The COVID-19 pandemic simultaneously raptured an already morbidly obsessed world with the threat of death and ruptured any delusions that the phenomenon of death and dying is in any way abstract or invisible. Prior to the pandemic, a culture of death already defined the zeitgeist of our time across an array of public spheres. For instance, the prominence of death, dying, and the dead in popular culture since World War II[3]; the rise in frequency of mass shootings and their discussion in the news[4]; and the prospect of the death of democracy and political decorum[5] all demonstrate a preconditioned thanatological concern for symbolic and actual death(s).

As COVID-19 continued to transform our personal, institutional, and global futures, however, the virus left in its wake the lifeless bodies of nearly seven million individuals by mid-2023.[6] As the death count mounted by the thousands every week, the fear of contagion and the awareness that life and living "as we knew them" would never be the same as the "pre-COVID" era. By most accounts, the virus, and the threat of death it posed, affected nearly every aspect of life. Discursive constructions of death dominated media platforms, institutional messaging, dinner table conversations, and everyday encounters. On a global scale, the threat of death transformed our vocabularies, consumption habits, wardrobes, anxieties, coping mechanisms, and everyday activities into what was often referred to as the "new normal." At one time, these

transformations might have been "unimaginable," but the threat of dying revealed new ways for living and the lengths the world was willing to go to resist death.

In marking the one-year anniversary of the COVID-19 shutdown, President Biden described "A collective suffering. A collective sacrifice. A year filled with the loss of life—and the loss of living for all of us."[7] Highlighting a double death—a loss of life in and of itself and the loss of living as a state of being—Biden suggested that in the loss, "in the darkness," shines a light and a gain in "appreciation, respect, and gratitude." Urging Americans to continue "finding light in the darkness…the most American thing we do," Biden pulled a card from his pocket with the number of Americans who had died from COVID to date. "As of now, the total deaths in America: 527,726. That's more deaths than in World War One, World War Two, the Vietnam War, and 9/11 combined." More than a commemoration of the dead, Biden focused on that which the living must do to save lives: "Follow the scientists and the science. Work together . . . get vaccinated." These acts of living abate the continued loss of "family . . . friends . . . businesses . . . dreams . . . and time—time with each other." Since Biden's remembrance speech, the total number of deaths in the United States has more than doubled, accounting for the greatest number of cumulative deaths in the world at 1,125,209.[8] Indeed, on February 7, 2023, Biden mentioned in the State of the Union address that while "COVID deaths are down nearly 90% . . . we will remember the toll and pain that will never go away for so many . . . Families grieving. Children orphaned. Empty chairs at the dining room table . . . We remember them, and we remain vigilant."[9] The discursive and material spread of COVID-19 is an exemplary model of the persuasive power of death. As the virus spreads and kills, the material bodies of the dead (re)articulate death. This (re)articulation, in turn, calls upon the living. For many, contracting the virus became and continues to be a possible death sentence.

Rhetorics of death, like all discourse, compel us "not simply to believe something, but to *be* something. We are solicited by the discourse to fulfill its blandishments with our very selves."[10] The rhetoric of COVID-19 has certainly amplified our collective attunement to the significance of death and the epidemic risk factors that place our perceived survival on the edge of the reaper's scythe. But death is always already an integral part of our lives. Put plainly, none of us make it out alive.

Preoccupations with death transcend disciplinary boundaries, cultural contexts, and collective memories.[11] A mapping of the study of death must chart the fault lines dividing historical, cultural, epistemological, philosophical, and axiological approaches. This cartography results in a topographically diverse and infinitely layered view of death.[12] Undertaking an analysis of death, then, is to explore a richly contoured, theoretically dense, and highly contested landscape. Across these approaches, however, inquiry generally starts (implicitly or explicitly) by asking, "what is death?" and continues with the question of "why does death matter?"[13]

These questions have charged philosophical and theoretical conversations dating back to antiquity.[14] Many of these conversations are concerned with the relationship between death and truth, or the pursuit of knowledge. Literary and environmental philosopher Joshua Schuster notes, for example, that Socrates considered the practice of philosophy as the art of dying and the undoing of the soul from the body.[15] In this view, pure knowledge exists in the realm of the dead. For Socrates, the "good person" has nothing to fear because death is either a state of nothingness or a "migration of the soul from this to another place" and, as a result, "a wonderful gain."[16] Socrates's construction of death, then, served as an exemplary model of the "good death" and equipment for living the "good life."[17] However, the suggestion that the pursuit of knowledge—a primary goal of Western epistemology—occurs in death, not life, is a contentious one.

Native American philosopher Shay Welch notes traditional Western epistemologies' tendency to commodify knowledge as a critical distinction between Western epistemological frameworks and Indigenous ways of knowing and Native American epistemological frameworks.[18] Far from propositional and eternal, Cherokee scholar Brian Yazzie Burkhart asserts that "knowledge is knowledge in experience . . . the kind of knowledge we carry with us."[19] Knowledge in experience is "lived," embodied, needs no justification, and supplies us with the ability to live our lives and make sense of the world.[20] Knowledge in experience shifts away from orientations (like that of Socrates) that suggest that knowledge is only attainable at the end and inherently connected to the immortality of the soul. Moreover, as an epistemology, lived knowledge demands that ideas and meaning exist only in context. Or, as Jicarilla Apache philosopher Viola Cordova argues, "in order to fully understand an idea and its implications and ramifications it becomes necessary to understand the context."[21] The "Indian thought-world" then contrasts with Western philosophy, which some Indigenous philosophers consider "abstract, anthropocentric, binary, dualistic, incomplete, and 'I-centered' with Native philosophies, which is seen as holistic, contextualized, relational, personal, concrete, and 'We-centered.'"[22]

Investigating death from this point of inquiry—beginning with a description of what death *is* and why that description of death *matters*—implies a relationship between discourse and ideology, a relationship between the language that constructs death's subjectivity and the processes of building meaning and making sense of death. Clearly, there is something about death's *mattering* that motivates these orientations, and in my view, that something is rhetorical.

Despite the gestalt of death discourse, few scholars have considered how death functions rhetorically, and we know little about how speakers call on death as a rhetorical strategy.[23] Defining *death* is less important than clarifying the ways I identify death as rhetoric and expose

how rhetoric, in turn, constitutes death. As my review of the literature will reveal, there are manifold definitions of death. Each variant of death suggests that an individual's perception of what death "is" and, more importantly, what death means to them gives shape to how death functions rhetorically. I locate my project alongside scholarship that seeks to understand the relationship between death, being, and ethics. In this dissertation, I argue that the stories we tell about death constitute particular identities, ways of living/life chances, and ways of imagining the world. I explore the persuasive power of death in and of itself—death as rhetoric—and how rhetoric constitutes death, even as death functions to elide and enable the very discourses that call it into being. I contend that death's rhetorical force lies in death's ability to make, move, and imagine bodies, worlds, and time (pasts/presents/futures). Indeed, to study death is to explore life and the liminal space that exists between them. Death, understood in this way, shapes how individuals and communities make sense of knowing, becoming, and everyday living. The purpose of this study, therefore, is to examine death as a rhetorical strategy. I do this by analyzing three examples of youth environmental activists speaking across difference at the intersection of social, cultural, and ecological injustices: Greta Thunberg, Autumn Peltier, and Isra Hirsi. I argue for the significance of death in rhetorical studies and explore how these youths invoke death as a rhetorical strategy to call forth pasts, presents, and futures. In sum, this dissertation contributes to rhetorical studies by enlarging the thematic of death as an area of research and examining death from cross-cultural perspectives, furthering the study of environmental rhetoric, and troubling the perception that adults serve as the rhetorical authority for addressing publics on important civic issues.

In this introductory chapter, I canvass the relevant scholarly literature on the concept of death from three vantage points. First, I offer a panoramic view of thanatological discussions of

death.[24] Here, I highlight how ideological orientations towards death construct meanings and languages of death over time. I use these thanatological explorations of death as a means to chart the primary treatments of death in communication and Indigenous studies scholarship and align my dissertation with studies that explore the discursive power, politics, and relations of death. Second, I narrow my focus by consciously "placing" death on the edges of environmental issues. Scholars in the subfields of environmental communication and environmental humanities focus on the ways discourse about the natural world constructs ecological realities and gives shape to environmental ideologies and human/environmental interaction. From this view, constructions of mastery over/care of place suggest that gendered environmental discourse animates death significantly. Finally, I discuss how death is accountable to time. Theories of temporality contest the fixing of death as a particular moment and consequence. Together, these conceptual categories set the course for examining the rhetorical force of death and its capacity to make, move, and imagine bodies, worlds, and futures into being. Then, I describe my critical methods and conclude with a preview the remaining chapters of this dissertation.

Making Sense of Death

While death casts an ever-present and inevitable shadow on life/living, the term "death" is itself polysemous.[25] For instance, thanatologist Robert Kastenbaum suggests three primary and often competing definitions of death: death as a condition, a distinctly biomedical and bioethical orientation that centers observable, nonreversible signs that establish the cessation of life; death as an event, or that which occurs at a particular time, place, and in a particular way; and/or death as a state of existence or nonexistence, which refers "not to the event that ended life nor the condition of the body at that time, but rather to whatever form of existence might be thought to prevail when a temporal life has come to its end."[26] Numerous secondary definitions of death,

according to Kastenbaum, tend to be figurative in nature where death "serves as a dramatic intensifier of meaning."[27]

Thanatology, the institutionalized study of death, however, is a relatively young discipline. While the discipline indeed reckons with traditional and historical definitions of death that suggest a separation of a soul and a body, the discipline tends to focus on "the up-close-and-personal situations of dying people, their families, and caregivers."[28] In other words, thanatologists often focus on how death functions as a societal and biomedical construct, thereby impacting how dying and grieving people receive care. Moreover, historical, cultural, religious, and socioeconomic forces compete for (re)definitions of death to incite new ways of living/dying. For example, differing religious or spiritual beliefs about what constitutes life/death impact which legal biomedical definitions of death align (or not) ideologically and, therefore, the definition of death ("what death *is*") is of political and material consequence (death *matters* in its ability to constitute bodies and, as such, oppress/liberate).

The multiple meanings of death, as I describe above, invoke and imbibe varying epistemological, ideological, and ontological perspectives. To demonstrate Kestenbaum's assertion that these definitions often compete with one another and that they set the course for how scholars reckon with death, I overlay the three topoi of death onto the field of rhetorical studies. I categorize rhetorical studies of death into three groups: (1) Studies on end-of-life rhetoric; (2) studies on the rhetoric of eulogies and funeral oratory; and (3) the study of death's discourses. In what follows, I review the first two categories, pointing to scholarship that supports my project from the periphery, but begins from a site of inquiry that defines death as a condition or an event. In my project, I am certainly interested in exploring the implications of

actual deaths in the past and the threat of death over time. Still, I move to align with scholarship that treats death as a constant state of being, evidenced in the third group.

Death's Conditions

End-of-life rhetoric, or rhetorics of euthanasia, tends to focus on communicating death and dying in palliative care contexts. Situated within the field of health communication, these studies investigate a range of topics pertaining to death including end-of-life decision making, framings of physician-assisted suicide, and death narratives across a variety of end-of-life contexts. Numerous health communication scholars further emphasize the ethical imperatives of communicating (or not) death, often paying particular attention to topics such as cultural stigmas surrounding death and dying, terminology and euphemisms used to discuss death and dying, and the role that socialization plays in constructing meaning about death and dying.[29] Two pieces of rhetorical criticism emerge within the field of health communication are particularly relevant to this study. Foremost, Michael J. Hyde's foundational article, "Medicine, Rhetoric, and Euthanasia," initiated an inquiry into the rhetoric of euthanasia.[30] Hyde argued that discourses coming out of the medical profession, dating back to Hippocratic physicians, serve as powerful governors on matters of life and death in that they "define and defend their *techne* during public debates," thereby making private medicine a matter of public concern.[31] Hyde interrogated the rhetorics of medical authority and euthanasia by analyzing a physician's account of engaging in the act of euthanizing a young woman, "Debbie." Through his analysis, Hyde raised awareness around the consequentiality of "discourse that is associated with the 'good' life and the 'good' death" and emphasized the importance of rhetorical critics investigating the rhetorical inventions that surround discourses of life and death as un/ethical.[32]

Lisa Keränen expands on Hyde's exploration of how end-of-life discourses constitute notions of a "good death" and a "bad death." For example, in analyzing the rhetoric of "code status" in one hospital's "Patient" Preferences Worksheet, Keränen argues that the institutional forms shift end-of-life decision making from the private realm into the realm of institutional control.[33] Through technological euthanasia discourse, "the good death is the death removed from machines," suggesting that "end-of-life discourses that occur around the bedside of dying patients also powerfully shapes both private action and public opinion about the end-of-life."[34] Hyde and Keränen take a distinctly rhetorical approach to study end-of-life discourse and make important connections to how these discourses function to move individuals to make life decisions concerning living/dying. Though tangential to my project, this area of literature reinforces the significance of death as a site of discursive inquiry. Moreover, these studies bring to bear some of the epistemological and philosophical assumptions that animate the greater "death debate" in that they demonstrate how communication scholars can tend to treat death as a condition which, as I discuss above, implicates how the analyses themselves set the course for naming and framing life/death. The second category I identify in this review, the rhetoric of eulogies and funeral oratory, begins with defining death as an event.

Commemorating Death

Scholars interested in the rhetoric of eulogies and funeral oratory maintain, expand, or contest the traditional classification of funeral oration (eulogy) as exclusively of the genre of epideictic rhetoric. These studies tend to focus on emergent discourses that follow tragic events across individual and societal contexts. In this section, I pay particular attention to literature that highlights the role of communicating death through public address. Rhetorical scholars most often point to Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and Kathleen Hall Jamieson's work, which established the

eulogy as a genre with distinct substantive, stylistic, and situational characteristics.[35] They explain that the "eulogy responds to a situation in which a community is ruptured by death," noting that "the very act of eulogizing acknowledges the death. In doing so, it necessitates a juxtaposition to past and present tense which recasts the relationship to the deceased to one of memory."[36] In this way, eulogies function as appeals to the audience to live in a way that embodies and carries on the deceased's virtues, values, and works.[37]

Over the years, rhetorical scholars have studied eulogies as rhetorical artifacts because of how they (re)constitute the individual acts of citizens to behave and imagine themselves in a particular way. Moreover, the rhetoric of eulogies calls forth a collective memory, and therefore future.[38] As a result, there is a distinctly activist function of the funeral oration. The eulogist speaks contextually against a backdrop of death as an event that occurred in a particular time, place, and manner. Addressing a public about death, then, has the capacity to both reconstitute values and engage strategies in a way that Melissa Renee Harris and Ashley R. Hall describe as an effort "to remedy or right the wrong of loss of life."[39] Generally, rhetorical studies expand on an interdisciplinary interest in funeral oratory and the eulogy as cultural rituals that reaffirm and create individual and societal ideals.[40] The implication, once again, in many of these studies, is that communicating about death suggests a unique rhetorical situation. In the event of death, the discursive form and function of eulogy and funeral oration are to make claims about virtuous or unjust deaths and to move an audience to action. Like end-of-life rhetoric, studies of eulogistic and funeral rhetoric will be instrumental in anchoring my project's interest in discursive constructions of death. My final category, however, opens up opportunities to explore how rhetorics of death move through us ontologically, creating and governing our sense of *being* alive and living death.

Death's Discourses

The central animating feature of this area of inquiry is that scholars investigate death as an expression of political and economic struggle and a discursive practice of meaning-making and representation. Studies of death's discourses expose the relationships between material death/dying and discursive practices of meaning-making, representation, and memory work. These practices are intimately linked to political and economic power systems and function to "make sense of" death on individual and societal levels. Of significance to this dissertation is how studies of death's discourses explore death as a state of non/existence that is constantly becoming over time and space. In other words, there is a liveliness to death—a unique omnipresence. At stake for scholars that fall into this category is how discourses of life and death not only coconstitute one another but inherently make, organize, and govern *being* in itself.

Four theorizations of death's discourses are essential to this review: (1) bio-power/politics; (2) necro-power/politics; (3) thanatopolitics; and (4) cryopolitics. Scholars assemble these theorizations around political economies of death but challenge one another's use of several vital concepts— sovereignty, modernity, sacrifice, and disposability—all of which I describe in more detail below. The tenor of the conceptual conversation is raucous, and scholars vary in how they align with each theorization's promotion and preservation of "life itself" and the power to "make live" or "let die" in the name of life.

Michel Foucault's theorization of biopower relies on a shift from classical systems of control (sovereign power) to modern forms of power (biopower and discipline). Foucault writes, "the characteristic privileges of sovereign power was the right to decide life and death."[41] Sovereignty, then, for Foucault, "is not the right to put people to death or to grant them life. Nor is it the right to allow people to live or to leave them to die. It is the right to take life or let

live."[42] The essence of modernity, however, is in direct competition with absolutisms, broadly, and undisputed sovereignty, certainly. Modernity demands a belief in progress, a belief in a human's capability to shape their realities; a belief in change. An early product of modern political thinking is that humans are the central animating feature to change and transformation. As such, the modern, human-centered world displaced a world governed by a divine and sovereign power. Therefore, Foucault's theorizations of discipline and biopower work to describe the shift from classical forms of power that function to "*take* life or *let* live" with a modern biopower to "*foster* life or *disallow* it."[43] One consequence of this shift in power was that death, like sex, became taboo and pushed from public ritual to private anxiety. With modernity's appeals for life—for economic and political progress, power, and growth— "death becomes the most secret aspect of existence."[44] As a result, the power of biopolitical discourse is that it makes live and lets die in the name of life itself. Foucault's theorization of biopower, in other words, traffics in bodies.

The theory of biopolitics offers rhetorical critics an entry into understanding how the management of life and death is a function of state power. Many communication scholars have applied Foucault's conceptualization of biopolitics to understand how discourses of life and death normalize state apparatuses' ability to regulate and arbitrate agential life/living and death/dying.[45] Lauren Berlant, for instance, looks to variations of sovereignty to describe what she refers to as "slow death," or "the physical wearing out of a population and the deterioration of their experience and historical existence."[46] Eric King Watts uses Foucault's notion of biopower to build an argument that tropes of the Zombie signifying the Black body as a bio-threat serve as a specific biopolitical regime of racism.[47] Biopolitics frame the state or government as the sovereign entity (e.g., nation-states deciding on healthcare policies,

governments regulating public health and environmental measures, and political management of resources for the overall wellbeing of the population) which wields power over the biological life of individuals and society. The concept of biopower has also served as a significant starting point for further investigations of the politics of death's discourses.

Achille Mbembe's theorization of necropower and necropolitics calls into question the concept of biopower and its relationship to sovereignty by suggesting that "the ultimate expression of sovereignty largely resides in the power and capacity to dictate who is able to live and who must die."[48] For Mbembe, life is death's medium, and necropolitics is a discourse that generates a universally ambiguous naming of the human being, resulting in organized violence against those left nameless, centering death in subalternity, race, violence, and fear.[49] This discourse is a political mechanism of states and institutions that serve to target particular individuals, groups, and populations and the social, cultural, and economic capital they represent.[50] Theories of necropower focus our attention on the sovereign entities with the power to dictate death (the state or institutions that dictate who lives and who dies such as governments or leaders deciding on targeted killings, policies leading to genocide or mass extermination, and structures enforcing systemic violence) and emphasize the sovereign's authority to determine who and what is disposable or expendable. To move from biopower to necropower is to account for contemporary forms of subjugation of life such as politics of cruelty, the symbolics of profanity, and the discursive construction of "death worlds" and the "living dead." [51] This accounting enlarges the sacrificial economy that belies biopolitical discourse and calls for the significance of disposability. The power to categorize and define "who matters and who does not, who is *disposable* and who is not" is the mechanical difference between how Foucault and Mbembe build from the concept of sovereignty. Despite this distinction, however, both

biopolitical and necropolitical power depend on a sacrificial economy. Put differently, both biopower and necropower need to sacrifice lives in order to preserve life (read: the economy), and several scholars depart from this understanding of the politics of death's discourses.

Stuart J. Murray critiques these notions of sacrificing in the name of life and suggests thanatopolitics as a potential disruption of bio- and necro-political logic. Extending a theory of thanatopolitics, a politics of death, Murray "stands in opposition to biopolitics and its affirmative instantiations of 'life itself.'"[52] Thanatopolitics, for Murray, "imagine[s] the ways in which the actions of [the dead] are rhetorically productive" and "attend[s] to the rhetorical conditions in which the dead, the dying, and the disposed might rise up and speak."[53] In his scholarship, Murray uses his theory of thanatopolitics to interrogate the rhetorical power of suicides as political acts, troubling whether or not theories of death must rely on the deaths of material bodies as passive and collateral damage and challenging the presumption of biopolitical life as the negation of life. Thanatopolitics, then, is a rethinking of sovereignty and the sovereign entity by emphasizing the rhetorical power of the dead, which shifts our attention to the rhetorical conditions in which the dead play a role and challenges conventional notions of sovereignty.

Alexander G. Weheliye also critiques Foucault's biopolitics and Mbembe's necropolitics (as well as Giorgio Agamben's bare life and Orlando Patterson's social death)[54] in that taken together or considered separately, they "neglect and/or actively dispute the existence of alternative modes of life alongside the violence, subjection, exploitation, and racialization that define the modern human."[55] Weheliye's critical intervention demonstrates how race and the scripting of the Black body keep the disciplining of humans from political view. The very concept of the "human," for Weheliye, naturalizes violence. In turn, Weheliye offers the "viscus" or flesh" as a (re)validation of the human body that moves beyond culturally racialized

discourse. The broader critique that both Murray and Weheliye are raising against Foucault and Mbembe is that they rely on death and the dead to substantiate their claims. Put another way, biopolitical and necropolitical power are unnecessarily totalizing, negative, and decisive. These critiques call for a closer look at one's complicity in the death of others and turn scholarly attention to a system that kills in the name of life and progress; a system that justifies sacrifice and disposability as a precondition of the future.

Murray's conceptualization of thanatopolitics responds to the sacrificial economies that Foucault and Mbembe prop up in their theories. Murray takes issue with biopolitical sacrifice and necroeconomies because they deny the rhetorical force of death—the address *by* the dead, *by* those sacrificed biopolitically. As such, thanatopolitics reconstitutes the persuasive power of death as a means to think differently about how to live and how to become. In Murray's words, thanatopolitics, or the politics of death, is "both a response and a resistance to biopolitical power and to the Western conception of rational sovereignty with which biopolitics is allied."[56] This response/resistance connects back to two key features of the "death debate" I introduce above. First, we see a return to the relationship between death and truth. Murray, drawing on Aristotle's argument against Plato's and Socrates's conception of true knowledge as the realm of the dead, suggests that "both the living *and* the dead fall within the sphere of the political."[57] Murray's interpretation of Aristotle leads him to argue that "surely we lose some of our humanity if we see death as no more than the cessation or negation of life, little more than the registration and identification of determinate biometrical data."[58] This argument reanimates the philosophical struggle/desire to pin down and define death.

Second, Murray invites further exploration of how Western frameworks project distinct assumptions onto both the definitions of death and death's meanings/matterings. A return to

sovereignty demonstrates this point. Indigenous studies scholars Amy E. Den Ouden and Jean M. O'Brien describe "sovereignty struggles" to include "the political, cultural and legal strategies, along with the conflicts, debates, and transformations, that unfold as tribal nations and communities engage with federal and state governments to assert the right to govern themselves and to determine their futures."[59] Understood in this way, sovereignty contests the Western notion that the nation state exists as "the ultimate arbiter of its own fate in relation to the outside world."[60] Indeed multiple sovereignties come into view and exist "simultaneously as a political status in relation to other sociopolitical entities, an inherent right to self-governance and self-determination, and the core of the collective existence of a people."[61] The relationship between death and sovereignty is essential because discourses of sovereignty call the living into being. The acknowledgment of multiple struggling sovereignties is a critical intervention to studying death's discourses in two ways. First, the fragmented sovereign challenges the preeminence of sacrifice and disposability, thereby challenging claims to "who matters." Contextualizing the fragmented sovereign within the broader historical framework of settler colonialism deepens our understanding of how Indigenous peoples have engaged in persistent resistance against colonial encroachment. The emergence of a fragmented sovereignty exists because of centuries of structured domination, dispossession, and governance that profoundly shaped Indigenous political landscapes. Put another way, the nature of tribal sovereignty as engagement with or resistance to the state is not happenstance or spontaneous but an intentional response to colonial oppression. Furthermore, when bio- and necro-powers continue to sacrifice, dispose of, and kill (which they will), the "dead" prevail as a part of the political system, suggesting an upending of the life/death binary and concepts of non/existence entirely. In this way, the connection between

death and Indigenous peoples' perpetual vulnerability to extinction is inseparable from the broader dynamics of settler colonialism.

Kim TallBear's theorizing around cryopolitics serves to reconceptualize and challenge Western frameworks that categorize life and non/animacy hierarchically. The concept of "cryopolitics" describes the liminal and paradoxical political space between the life/death binary; the "conjunction of the 'cryo' and the 'political'—suspended animation and action—that produces a zone of existence where beings are made to live and are *not allowed to die.*"[62] Politics of the liminal further contest Foucault's theoretical construction of the biopolitical power to make life and let die by indexing the ways scientific practices of cold storage have industrialized the hope of evading death by preserving life. These efforts emerged from the severe anxieties climate change placed on the future but quickly moved from the ecological space and into a concern over cultural, spiritual, and relational extinction. As such, the sovereign entity exists in the political space between life and death at the intersection of scientific practice and cultural anxiety, focusing on the efforts to control the boundaries between the living and the non-living. TallBear and many other Indigenous and feminist thinkers harness the intersection of temperature and time by melting away the borders between life and death, human and non-human, self and other, past and future, animate and inanimate.[63]

In an effort to transform the relational politics that the Western life/death binary presses upon human and non-human beings, TallBear extends an "indigenous metaphysic: an understanding of the intimate knowing relatedness of all things."[64] The preservation of Indigenous peoples' DNA, for TallBear, is a form of power that figures the Indigenous body on the brink of extinction and seeks to control Indigenous knowledge and culture through future extraction. In the present, Indigenous peoples exist in constant sovereignty struggles. The threat

of cultural and physical annihilation looms large, and politics of assimilation, forced relocation, and systemic violence perpetuate Indigenous peoples' ongoing struggles for sovereignty and self-determination. An Indigenous metaphysics reclaims the Indigenous standpoint that all matter is lively; a *knowing* that the being in "me" is in relation with the beings in all; that the dying in one is a dying in all.

Inherent to this knowing, TallBear describes "social relations not only between human and 'animals,' but also between humans and 'energy,' 'spirits,' 'rocks,' and 'stars,' in the constitution of [indigenous] knowledge about the world."[65] TallBear's precision in disrupting the life/death binary reorients the ability to *know* and *be* in intimate relations across species and non/animacies demand a renewed seeing of what constitutes the living. "Seeing us as fully alive," TallBear contends, "is key to seeing the aliveness of the decimated lands, waters, and other non-human communities on these continents . . . Indigenous peoples cohere as peoples in relation to very specific places and non-human communities. Their/our decimations goes hand in hand."[66] TallBear's theorizing around an Indigenous metaphysics, along with broader conceptualizations of cryopolitics, offers a lens through which to investigate how discourses de-animate non-human beings and, in turn, deny the liveliness of Indigenous bodies, histories, and identities.

The implications of this Indigenous standpoint for the field of rhetorical studies on matters of life and death, and the liminal space between, cannot be understated. Feminist frameworks of situated knowledges argue that the body that knows is connected to its environment and that the "view from the body" is both partial and situated.[67] *Seeing* Indigenous peoples who know themselves to be in relation within a more extensive web of non/human connection reconstitutes *all* their rhetorical authorities. Put another way, all matter becomes

lively by seeing, not necessarily voicing, otherwise. Moreover, and for my purposes in this dissertation, the reclaiming of vision and witnessing enables me to draw upon youth standpoints in a way that assumes all their rhetorical authorities despite the gap in rhetorical records, a theme I return to in my critical methods section. In the study of public address, the youth body is often located in the audience, as witness, and the reconstitution of the seeing body's rhetorical authority supports this project in focusing on youth rhetoric. For now, the knowing and seeing of all matter as lively suggests a need to theorize about the thematic of death beyond its conditions, events, and economies to include the relational politics of death, and therefore, death as a process of becoming.

Becoming Death – Surviving Life

I utilize Aimee Carrillo Rowe's conceptualization of a politics of relation as a "placing" of subject formation in sites of belonging.[68] Carrillo Rowe's primary argument is that "whom we love is who we are becoming," and integral to this notion is the understanding that we become those "whose lives matter to us…whose well-being is essential to our own."[69] Conceived in this way, intimacy, affective investments, and sites of experience construct how we see and experience the world, what and whom we value, and significantly, who we are becoming."[70] For my purposes in this study, I extend Carrillo Rowe's theorizing around academic feminist belongings and coalitional political subjectivity. I suggest that how we theorize about the political conditions that constitute relation— "where we place our bodies and with whom we build our affective ties"— becomes more robust if we take TallBear's Indigenous metaphysics seriously.[71] A politics of relation that begins with the assumption that all matter is lively opens up the space to theorize beyond anthropocentric relations and subjectivity.

Making sense of death through a politics of relation that knows all matter as lively aligns with what feminist rhetorical theorists refer to as an "ecological mindset," or a reconstruction of *ethos*. Ethos as location rejects the traditional construction of ethos that privileges "voice," "persona," "character," and even "identity."[72] In their edited collection *Rethinking Ethos: A Feminist Ecological Approach to Rhetoric*, Kathleen J. Ryan, Nancy Myers, and Rebecca Jones argue that taking an ecological mindset and understanding ethos as spatial, relational, ethical, and liminal enlarges how rhetoric works.[73] An ecological mindset suggests an ethos that dwells. Much like TallBear's Indigenous metaphysics and Carrillo Rowe's politics of relation, "placing" ethos has theoretical and methodological implications for rhetorical studies because rhetorical authority emerges in situated knowledges, experiences, relations, and processes of becoming. These theorizations, taken together, reinforce the need to interrogate the persuasive power of death to make, move, and imagine bodies, relations, worlds, and time into being.

The situated knowledges of youth grant them the rhetorical authority to become death as an act of resistance and transformation, urging their audiences to move beyond merely surviving life. As Dana Cloud describes, one modality of survival in contemporary capitalist society involves "resignation to the contemporary conditions of imminent apocalypse, oppression, structurally distributed death and misery, professional hamstringing, and personal isolation, depression, illness, and morbidity."[74] Understood in this way, survival (as food, as water, as secure dwelling, certainly, but also as employment, protection against abuse, voice, representation, and love) is an "affective burden" on marginalized human and non-human individuals, communities, and places.[75] Through their exploration of various themes, including the intersectionality of struggles against oppression, the importance of labor movements in challenging capitalist rule, and the resurgence of social movements, such as Black Lives Matter,

MeToo, and climate activism in the wake of COVID-19, Cloud urges rhetorical critics to "think beyond mere survival, even beyond, as the Black Panthers put it, survival pending revolution." I believe that becoming death is one mode of reversing the "spiral of survival" to reimagine flourishing and futurity.

In sum, death constitutes everyday living. Variation in perceptions of and orientations toward death construct the subject through a politics of relation. In taking seriously the notion that all matter is lively, I suggest further interrogation of the significance of *all* relations, including the non-human, that call the subject into being. In the next section, I expand on the "placing" of subject formation in sites of belonging by joining environmental communication scholars interested in interrogating the discursive relationship between nature and human identity construction. I pay particular attention to scholars who make explicit the relationship between ethics, loss of ecological place, and gendered environmental discourses of mastery over and care of place.

The Dwelling Places of Death

I now turn to communication scholars who focus on the rhetorical practices used to communicate about the natural world. In this section, I draw on studies of environmental rhetoric that analyze the ways discourse constructs ecological realities and gives shape to environmental ideologies and human/environmental interaction. I identify two dwelling places of death in the field of environmental rhetoric that are of particular importance to my project: grief and gender. First, I place death in the relatively understudied research area of ecological grief, mourning, and loss. Scholars who are developing theorizations of "eco-grief" highlight the ways environmental loss works temporally, materially, culturally, socially, and rhetorically. I focus on studies that link ecological and social issues by interrogating narratives of living/life and dying/death. The

second dwelling place of death I explore is in gendered environmental discourses that mobilize rhetorics of mastery and care.

Ecological Grief, Mourning, and Loss

Theorizations of ecological grief center environmental degradation and loss as a critical site of analysis for understanding the lived experiences of climate change and how those experiences shape multi-species' knowing, being, and becoming. This area of research recognizes the ways multi-species relationship entanglement implicates human and non-human thriving. Defined as "the grief felt in relation to experienced or anticipated ecological losses, including the loss of species, ecosystems and meaningful landscapes due to acute or chronic environmental change," ecological grief acknowledges the emotional, cultural, spiritual, and epistemological mourning in an era of dramatically changing environments.[76] Ecological grief scholars often highlight broader ethical questions that emerge when taking multi-species relationship entanglement seriously. For example, Van Dooran exposes the ways human thriving (as individuals, as communities, and as societies), and the extinction of non-human species implicate what it means to care for or be obliged to the disappearing of other living beings.[77] In this way, at stake in the investigation of ecological grief are the sort of shared worlds and life chances that become possible in TallBear's Indigenous metaphysics and my expansion of Carrillo Rowe's politics of relation.

Environmental communication scholars, such as Joshua Barnett, incorporate notions of ecological grief into their work to reaffirm the significance of mourning when exploring the contours of being human alongside non-human species. Mourning, as Barnett puts it, "is essential to our sense of belonging-with-others on earth." Two scholars at the forefront of developing theories of ecological grief, health geographer Ashlee Cunsolo and professor of

landscape architecture, Karen Landman, reinforce this attitude by stating, "we need a new form of mourning, a new form of ecological ethics and politics to mourn beyond our species, beyond human bodies, to expand the boundaries of what constitutes a mournable body."[78] My dissertation responds to this call by bringing theorizations of ecological grief into conversation with my exploration of death as a rhetorical strategy.

Significant to this study, epistemologies that describe being in relation with the material and spirit beings of non-human species help make sense of ecological loss and death. Each of the case studies in this dissertation explores a nuanced politics of relation that exists between the orator and all her relations. In this way, theories of ecological grief facilitate what Barnett describes as the "discursive conditions of mourning for our more-than-human kin."[79] Following Barnett and environmental humanities scholars, I apply Derridean and Butlerian notions of mourning by exploring the entanglement of ecological loss, naming as a "foreshadowing of mourning,"[80] and the framing of life and death as a scripting of ontological status and a precondition of grievability.[81] Each orator describes environmental loss in ways that foreshadow death in ways that implicate the living. Judith Butler describes the significance of these framings of death: "Even when life and death take place between, outside, or across the frames by which they are for the most part organized, they still *take place*, though in ways that call into question the necessity of the mechanisms through which ontological fields are constituted."[82] For Butler, the framing of the grievable life is instrumental in creating the conditions for the living. The significance of this argument to my study of death is that without frames of loss, mourning, and grief, there is no life and living. The precarious lives of each orator exist in the balance of their ability to call upon, to bear witness to, to live in, and to become death.

As a conceptual dwelling place of death, ecological grief offers a frame for understanding the construction of the grievable body. First, ecological grief is felt *in relation*; it serves as an additional anchor to exploring the coconstitutive qualities of death as rhetoric and rhetorics of death that assumes a politics of relation beyond the Anthropocene. Second, grievability functions to name death and loss, which simultaneously calls into being a particular way of being in relation with non-human life. I relate the naming of the grievable body to Carrillo Rowe's naming of those whom we love, suggesting that whom we grieve is who are we are becoming, also. So far, I have argued for an understanding of the thematic of death as a process of becoming that occurs in a politics of relation that extends human and non-human relationships. Moreover, I have reviewed the relevant scholarly literature that suggests the stories we tell about loss and death across social and environmental issues have ontological implications. As such, I pay particular attention to the role gendered environmental discourses play in subject formation, broadly, and in the process of becoming death, specifically.

Gendered Environmental Discourses and The Death Drive

Naming the grievable body is more than an expression of grief. Many psychoanalysts and philosophers, for instance, consider the process of grieving and mourning as also a "working through" of experiences of loss.[83] A key concept in the scholarly literature regarding working through this process is the "death drive." Freudian psychoanalysts refer to the *death drive*, or what Freud called the "death instinct," as the "compulsive return to loss . . . or the subject's enjoyment of a symbolic regression to an imagined state, prior to the formation of the subject, and therefore prior to its traumatic entry into subjectivity."[84] The death drive is the byproduct of Freud's exploration of the human propensity to act in ways that are against their best interests, their desire to survive, and the repetition of self-destructive behavior. The wide deployment of

the death drive cannot be understated. I am concerned with scholars who investigate how the death drive serves as a "certain drive for mastery, power, propriety, sovereignty, indeed cruelty that is irreducible."[85]

One such scholar is Casey Ryan Kelly, and their examination of white masculinity takes up notions of the death drive and makes explicit connections between images of death, mayhem, destruction, and apocalyptic frames and fantasies of self-mastery.[86] Kelly's primary argument is that apocalyptic rhetorics and discourses of doomsday prepping preserve white male sovereignty and position of dominance over environmental and social order. In orienting themselves to a postapocalyptic future, according to Kelly, "the figure of the doomsday prepper cultivates a militarized version of white manhood capable of reclaiming the future from women and racial Others…offer[ing] a rebuttal to the progressive case for gender and racial equality."[87] As a gendered dynamic, the death drive structures white masculinity's compulsion, or what Freud refers to as "regression," to return to loss through the performance of mastery and destruction.

Feminist and queer scholars often bring gendered environmental discourses to the fore in order to challenge and deviate from the paternalistic markings of the death drive as a means to create opportunities for new life. For instance, critical eco-feminist thinkers bring to bear the relationship between the oppression and domination of marginalized groups and the oppression and domination of ecological systems. Though variation exists in eco-feminist positions, the root understanding is that paradigms and systems of power dominate at the intersection of gender, race, and class.[88] These conceptual conversations reveal the ways gendered frames of "masculine domination" over the maternal "mother earth" generate, justify, and elucidate environmental destruction.[89] Like the economies of death I review above, the domination of nature is often conceived as a product of modernity that sacrifices ecological place and extracts resources in the

name of life and progress. Gendered discourses constitute the bodies to be sacrificed or sustained and the bodies to be master over or take care of.[90] Taken together, these texts open up the space to explore environmental death through the lens of gendered politics of mastery and care.

Researching at the intersection of the temporal, ethical, and affective dimensions of care, Lisa Baraitser is concerned with how critical time studies and maternal subjectivities collide. Focusing on contemporary healthcare contexts, Baraitser critically re-evaluates "the maternal" as lived experience, social location, political and scientific practice, and economic and ethical challenge. One of Baraitser's major conceptions is the notion of a "maternal death drive" which describes mothering (an act of care) as a constant oscillation between feeling, "fluid, transferable, or 'full'" and "drained and empty, angry and depressed, and full of anxiety, in ways that may be difficult to share out."[91] Baraitser describes the process of returning "again and again" to the challenges of "maternal care" as a relationship to—and experience of—time that seeks a "life in death."[92] The maternal death drive, then, picks up on the temporal aspects of Freud's theorizing of the death drive, but seeks to account for a type of repetition that "retains a relation to the developmental time of 'life' but remains 'otherwise' to a life drive."[93] In other words, the maternal death drive accounts for a desire to repair, a living through, and a repetition under conditions of "mattering" that has the capacity for development.[94]

Baraitser's work is, perhaps, the most important to my project in that she contends with the figuring of the child as the bearer of anticipations and anxieties about the future. Working with notions of time and building on Lee Edelman's queering of the death drive in their proposition that futurity is a product of political imagination, Baraitser argues that "the urgency to act on the present in the name of the future is simultaneously 'suspended' by the repetitions of late capitalism, leading to temporal hiatus that must be embraced rather than simply lamented."[95]

Moreover, Baraitser develops her theory of the maternal death drive by looking at how Greta Thunberg, a key figure in my project, reflects Baraitser's notion of "grey time," or "an intensity of time that moves us beyond the impasse of action and no action, or blue and blank, by acting as a slub or thickening in the oscillation between the two."[96] Across these studies, gendered environmental discourse and the death drive are intimately connected to time, a theme I describe in more detail in my critical methods section because of the implications for my textual analysis.

A Timely Study of Death

In this literature review, I introduced the significance of death in rhetorical theory and criticism. I explored the persuasive power of death in and of itself—death as rhetoric—and how rhetoric constitutes death, even as death functions to elide and enable the very discourses that call it into being. These death concepts coconstitute one another and have the capacity to construct meaning and understanding on matters of life and death. The rhetorical force of death, in other words, lies in death's ability to make, move, and imagine bodies, worlds, and time into being. To study death, then, is to explore the epicenter of creation and destruction; the space that exists between toxic endings and generative rebirths. I narrowed my focus on death by joining environmental communication scholars who seek to better understand how discursive practices constitute mournable bodies beyond the Anthropocene. By examining environmental grief and loss, this discussion made explicit the connections between death and gender and constructions of mastery over and care of place.

By way of concluding my review of the scholarly literature, I bring these rhetorics of death into a conceptual space of inbetweenness. Following Murray, I believe that Aristotle's conceptualization of *eudaimonia* has the potential to be understood as such a liminal space. Eudaimonia, a key telos of Aristotle's position on human ethics, virtues, and moral excellence, is

often translated to mean "happiness." More than just happiness, however, many scholars liken eudaimonia to wellbeing and the human potential to flourish.[97] Following this line of inquiry, Deci and Ryan offer the following definition: [E]udaimonia is concerned with living well and actualizing one's human potentials . . . well-being is not so much an outcome or end state as it is a process of fulfilling or realizing one's daimon or true nature—that is, of fulfilling one's virtuous potentials and living as one was inherently intended to live."[98] Murray offers a critical engagement with traditional Aristotelian definitions of eudaimonia by broadening the scope beyond life and in consideration of death. Murray notes that "*Eudaimonia* seems to cross the threshold of life and death, suggesting a kind of political agency in death itself, a power that might act on us to bind together or sustain a living community in friendship and shared beliefs and values."[99]

As I detail more fully in chapter five, traditional notions of eudaimonia might lead rhetorical critics to focus on how communication constitutes *human* flourishing and "the good life" through the articulation of virtuous living and the moral dimensions of a message. This focus prioritizes the living, life in and of itself, and how the promotion of ethics impact the wellbeing of individuals and communities of the here and now. In contrast, I suggest a rhetorical theory of *eudaimortia*, which, following Murray, describes a state of flourishing and wellbeing that encompasses the transformative power of death in constituting identities, belongingness, worlds, and time. This framework encourages rhetorical scholars to analyze death as a process of becoming and asserts both theoretical and methodological interventions for examining how death as rhetoric and rhetorics of death coconstitute the material, spatial, and temporal matterings of everyday life. Counter to the imperatives of bio-, necro-, and cryo-politics to sacrifice/dispose of/freeze as a means to control and resist death while simultaneously profiting off of death

through past/present/future extraction, eudaimortia reconstitutes a politics of relation. A rhetorical theory of eudaimortia, therefore, examines the discursive practices and politics of relations that constitute all matter as living and the agential potential of becoming death.

Next, in my overview of the critical methods I deploy in this dissertation, I leverage the opportunity to be critically playful with time and suggest an important connection between death and youth. Theories of temporality contest the fixing of death as a particular moment and consequence of a biopolitical economy. Moreover, refiguring the timeliness of death upends claims of rhetorical authority on matters of life and death. Indeed, I argue that bringing together youth and death—an inherently paradoxical and uncomfortable pairing—is both timely and essential, for in death lies the future.

Critical Methods

Death is, for me, a curious and baffling text.[100] This project did not begin with a research question, rather a curiosity. Existing at the intersection of calm and chaos, the "culture of death" that COVID-19 (re)articulated around the globe generated a sense of awe, discomfort, and uneasiness in me. The uncertainty of death and the intensity with which I wanted to make sense of it set the foundation for this dissertation. Thomas S. Frentz and Janice Hocker Rushing describe a similar starting point in their rhetorical criticisms: "For us, criticism typically starts as this kind of gut-level, unexamined intuitive feeling about a text(s). If we don't feel intensely about it one way or another—we don't write."[101] As death discourses swelled to oceanic proportions, I perceived a weakening of the rhetorical authority of presidents, scientists, and world-wide reporting on matters of life and death.

In the pursuit of more nuanced accounts of death, I center the unexpected expertise and rhetorical authority of youth speaking at the intersection of social, cultural, and ecological

injustices. In this way, my project begins with the assertion that youth possess a unique rhetorical ability and authority to speak on matters of life and death. Studying youth discourses that address publics, however, presents unique opportunities and challenges. Youth inherently have spent less time as active political leaders than prominent voices in the public sphere, and there are often many barriers in place to keep youth from participating in "adult" affairs.[102] Despite these barriers, youth have the capacity to develop and articulate their own views on human and environmental issues and actively contribute to political discourses.[103]

In contrast to the voices of community members who have seemingly crossed the threshold into "adulthood," the dissemination and amplification of youth discourse—indeed, the invitation to speak publicly at all—is less likely. As a result, fewer youth texts are generally available for analysis. This inequity in message distribution suggests that youth contributions are of lesser value to society, which materializes in the failure to capture, transcribe, document, and share youth voices. A lack of available texts might explain, in part, why the bulk of scholarship emerging from the fields of communication studies and rhetorical criticism endeavor to type and qualify *how* youth do, or do not, participate in global political action, often in comparison to older generations.[104] This scholarship often focuses on generational divides and the study of changing norms in democratic engagement. Moreover, these studies tend to focus on the delivery and decorum of youth discourses rather than the content of their messages. Finally, these studies often begin with the conceptual categorization of youth "writ large" rather than focusing on young rhetors. While the scarcity of rhetorical records of youth corresponds with the gap in rhetorical analyses of youth discourse, it also suggests that when youth speak—when they submit their voices into the public forum—we do not listen.

An analysis of youth discourse must be rooted in some definition of *youth*. Conceptual and theoretical conversations in the fields of childhood and youth studies examine the ways "the child," "childhood," and "youth" are socially constructed, culturally situated, and mediated differently over time.[105] I do not engage in scholarly debates questioning "who children and young people are," nor is my study seeking to "know" childhood and youth in any particular way.[106] As noted earlier in this chapter, by *youth,* I mean an unstable, emergent, and often naturalized identity that is generally perceived as and placed in opposition to *adult*, but more appropriately conceived of as a continual process of becoming. This definition accounts for the ways that larger systems of meaning construct youth as a category (i.e., perceptions of youth are culturally specific and shaped by larger social, political, and economic contexts).

Another term I use in this study is *girl*. Certainly, youth and girl are linked, and both can carry with them pejorative connotations. As an intersectional identity category, the girl subject shoulders the double burden of proving her rhetorical authority. As a construction of a particular time in one's life, girlhood generally represents a tender, innocent, and transitional era that precedes the "grown woman." For example, the days of our youth are often associated with the perception that life is without care or worry. I contend that these framings of girlhood offer at least one explanation for why girls' rhetorics are taken less seriously in public discourse.

To enlarge the existing rhetorical criticisms of youth voice, I have chosen to feature the discourses of three individuals: Greta Thunberg, Autumn Peltier, and Isra Hirsi. Though I expand on the unique characteristics, texts, and contexts of each rhetor in the forthcoming overview of chapters section and subsequent analysis chapters, there are four primary reasons I believe these girls to be exemplary case studies for this project. First, these rhetors self-identify as environmental activists and/or name environmental issues as central to their activism. Each

orator's intercultural and international contexts ensure that the relationships and experiences each girl has with their environmental context are diverse and span a variety of ecological and intersecting social issues.

Second, media accounts, general publications, and discursive constructions frame these orators as young and/or youth. In many cases, the framing of these girls as a youth becomes a token of their rhetorical authority (both in perceptions of them and in how each youth make claims to their rhetorical authority). Though I center the framing of these orators as youth as a point of entry into my analysis, I do not assume that youth is an inherently avowed identity. To the best of my ability, and when appropriate, I incorporate how each of the youths in my study may embrace, resist, and/or contest this identity category. For my purposes in this study, I consciously ascribe each of the rhetors as a youth to expand the range of experiences the field of rhetorical studies engages, not to fix the orators on a youth-adult binary. As many childhood and youth studies scholars assert, I begin from the assumption that youth voice and agency are inherent to their humanness. Some scholars contest whether or not "youth agency" exists when considering varying processes of subjectification and hierarchically organized social, historical, political, and economic systems that work to control bodies according to their age.[107] Both implicitly and explicitly, my project amplifies the agential capacity of youth despite, indeed, in direct opposition to the systems in place that work to stifle them.

Third, in my review of the literature on death, the significance of one's epistemologies, cultural contexts, and social/geographic locations have in shaping how they define and make sense of death cannot be understated. To reveal as much complexity as possible, each case study affords several opportunities to explore rhetorics of death across varying belief systems, intersecting identities, and geographic locations. Moreover, as a collective and in and of

themselves, the girls in this study draw attention to how life and death emerge at the intersection of unique interlocking and interrelated systems of oppression and domination.[108]

Fourth, I chose these individuals because there is a reservoir of oratorical performances, contextual artifacts, and companion social media presence for each of them. The accessibility of youth-generated texts, as I mentioned above, is limited, and few models exist for how to best center youth voice without speaking on their behalf as a monolithic identity category. One strategy to account for the lack of available texts is illustrated in Jay Childers's research, which traces youths' ideological concerns over time by focusing on student journalism as a site of analysis.[109] Unlike the bulk of rhetorical analyses of youth discourse, and in the words of Kristy Maddux, "[Childers] lets young people speak for themselves."[110] Like Childers, I am methodologically committed to turning to youth discourses and letting youth speak for themselves. Still, student publications do not exist as a culturally relevant artifact to several of my orators, and these texts are limited in how they function as discourses that address publics. My strategy to amplify youth voice is to turn to Michael Calvin McGee's reconceptualization of texts as discursive fragments of context and resist the idea that a rhetorical critic evaluates "finished texts."

In this dissertation, I construct youth discourses from "scraps and pieces of evidence" to determine the contours of death as a critical object.[111] This approach enables me as a rhetorical critic to analyze how the youth activists explicitly and implicitly invoke death across the breadth of concepts and theorizations I reviewed above. In collapsing text and context, critics have a responsibility to account for the ways discourses are in constant conversation with the surrounding environment. This practice of selecting and analyzing con/texts considers how the structural relationships between discourse and its sources, its surrounding fragmented culture,

and its influence come together to develop a more complete understanding of the critical object. This approach to rhetorical criticism further emphasizes the significance of continually changing cultural conditions and the industries involved in producing the conditions for discourses to circulate in the public sphere. This treatment of the "text" as inherently incomplete and perpetually in motion is particularly well-suited for investigating youth voices because it decenters the idea that rhetorical critics work with discrete and singular texts, thereby opening up a more expansive discursive field. As a result, my analysis chapters piece together textual fragments ranging from speeches, social media profiles, documentaries, editorial features, journalistic accounts, visual images, and everyday life practices. By expanding what constitutes a valid critical object and working with textual fragments, I can achieve a more equitable rhetorical record of youth, broadly, and amongst the youths in my study, specifically.[112] Practically, this approach enables me to encompass a range of different dynamics and definitions of death: the *actual* death of people; the material death of the environment; the *symbolic* death of concepts and ideas; the *existential* death that these rhetors call upon in spoken and unspoken ways. Put another way, my gathering of textual fragments is not mechanical in identifying death as an exclamation or gravestone, but is generative in seeing, listening, and bumping up against other phenomena (e.g., crisis, denial of self-determination, inability to flourish, identity and habitat erasure, violence, etc.) as some of the many invocations of death.

The method I use for analyzing the textual fragments in this study is generative criticism. Sonja K. Foss conceives of generative criticism as a method that begins by "generat[ing] units of analysis or an explanation from your artifacts and your analysis rather than from previously developed, formal methods of criticism."[113] The process of generative criticism is well-suited for critical projects examining "curious and baffling" texts, analyzing subjects that do not share a

common conceptual framework, and artifacts that are hard to explain, disturb, and even anger the researcher.[114] Furthermore, generative criticism complements what qualitative communication scholar Sarah Tracey conceptualizes as a "phronetic iterative" approach to qualitative inquiry, whereby the researcher oscillates between existing theories and emergent qualitative data.[115] The generative and phronetic iterative approaches to qualitative inquiry encourage shifting focus, applying various explanatory schemas to make sense of the data (e.g., metaphors, ideologies, etc.), and continuously checking the interpretation of the data against the literature. In this way, my method of analysis is a free-form weaving of potential explanatory schemas of death; a picking up of the weft of my textual fragments and their distinct textures and identifying features; and a traversing of the stability of the warp, or existing theories of death. Despite the relative freedoms that the generative and phronetic iterative approaches afford the rhetorical critic in conducting their research, several critical and feminist assumptions anchor my investigation of death.

Critical researchers assemble around the idea that power relations mediate social life and knowledge. A critical orientation to research underscores the importance of critiquing and rebelling against regimes of power that naturalize immoral, unethical, violent, and unjust domination of individuals and communities. Across critical and feminist theories and methodologies, there exists an emphasis and a desire to bring about social change, shift inequity, and combat systems of dominance and injustice. By claiming *critical* theories and methods, the assumption is that the researcher is also claiming a sense of duty, reciprocity, and "ethical responsibility" to promote human [and non-human] freedoms, wellbeing, and compassion for the suffering of living beings.[116] Many of the choices I make in my qualitative inquiry of death overlap with these critical/feminist assumptions and approaches to doing rhetorical criticism.

Variation exists in how critical researchers characterize and interrogate power. Still, critical communication scholars tend to begin by assuming that language is a form of power with the capacity to control, shape, and resist. The rhetorical critic is concerned with how rhetoric calls forth, constitutes, or calls into being. Doing rhetorical criticism, therefore, investigates the ways rhetoric constitutes subjectivity through language.[117] Rhetoric matters because rhetoric shapes identity, moves bodies, and mobilizes ideologies and ideas into action.[118] In this way, as theory and practice, a critical rhetoric centers discourse as a site to better understand the dimensions of domination and freedom because discourse serves to oppress and silence competing realities and ideologies.[119]

I align with scholars who hold the body, positionality, and ethics accountable when doing rhetorical criticism.[120] In critical scholarship, accountability begins with recognizing inequalities as existing and asserts that issues of race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, ability, and material conditions are central to rhetorical scholarship. This critical practice often assumes that the very act of rhetorical criticism is a performative act in which the critic innovates and works with cultural fragments to construct texts.[121] Sara Ahmed describes this performance as a sense of will and commitment to point out and work against blockages, stasis, and unreflective flows that seek to maintain injustices.[122] This willfulness includes practicing self-reflexivity around the ways we invest and divest in the very injustices we seek to transform in our scholarship. Self-reflexivity is an imperative of critical/feminist research and considers the mind, body, experiences, and situated contexts of the researcher as constitutive forces and instruments in the research itself.[123] Holding the researcher body and positionality in constant context is essential to critical work because the researcher guides and influences the knowledge creation process.

In my dissertation, I deliberately focus on the rhetoric of girls and join feminist scholars in emphasizing girls' and women's contributions to public discourses. I anchor this choice in feminist assumptions that gender fundamentally shapes epistemology, but that feminist research is more than an orientation toward the study of women or gender. As a feminist rhetorical critic, I understand that "gender always already intersects with race, ethnicity, sexuality, and class."[124] I am committed to keeping the systemic, historical, ideological, material, and situated experiences of the girls in this study alive, dynamic, and constantly at the fore of my criticisms and analyses. I do this by working alongside other feminist critics, such as Bonnie Dow and Celeste Condit, who believe that "gender justice" is an ethical and political imperative in the field of communication studies and that beginning with the manifold axes of gender has the potential to result in more self-reflective and complex interrogations of larger systems of domination.

Furthermore, I consciously place death on the edges of the personal/public and adopt feminist perspectives that blur the lines between the private/political. In this way, I seek to disrupt notions of rhetorical authority on matters of death by offering discursive pathways that feature youth and their capacity to call forth new ways of imagining the world. In sum, my identity as a feminist rhetorical critic and the core assumptions of critical research I review above inform how I selected generative and iterative methods of analysis. Indeed, working from critical/feminist frameworks led me toward youth discourse, broadly, and the three girls in my study, specifically, as a rich and untapped site to explore more nuanced and holistic accounts of death.

Overview of Chapters

In Chapter Two, I analyze Greta Thunberg's climate crisis activism across thirty-three speeches, companion texts such as the documentary *I Am Greta* and her family's memoir *Our House Is on Fire: Scenes of A Family and a Planet in Crisis*, and social media posts including Instagram and Facebook. In my analysis, I explore how Thunberg evokes death by narrating a story of existential emergency—a crisis of life and death—that declares a moral responsibility to "unite behind the science." I demonstrate how Thunberg's activism evokes themes of crisis and strangeness, and constructs three figures of death: adults as a Walking Dead, a living Mother Science, and children as a Waking Dead.

In Chapter Three, I explore Autumn Peltier's depiction of water's ecological and spiritual significance as a living, spirited being, according to Anishinabek nibi inaakonigewin (water laws). I argue that Peltier constitutes a complex identity of the Water Warrior that weaves traditional perspectives of the role of women as water keepers, water walkers, and the intertwining of ceremony and politics. Peltier's identity as a Water Warrior transforms the traditional warrior trope from fighting to acts of nurturing and caring. I investigate Indigenous temporal concepts by comparing notions of kinship time with linear time as responses to climate change urgency and demonstrate how Peltier's advocacy focuses on "keeping kinship" and "keeping time" as a shared ethical responsibility in environmental activism.

In Chapter Four, I investigate how Isra Hirsi's identity as a young, Black Muslim woman shapes how she relates to climate change and informs how she mobilizes young activists of color living in urban contexts. I argue that the threat of death emerges in Hirsi's rhetoric as a compelling evocation of attachment loss that generates a sense of placelessness and disconnection from familiar environments. Through place attachments, Hirsi's activism

demonstrates the duality of attachments as a source of vitality and a conduit for harm. I analyze how Hirsi employs death as a rhetorical strategy by revealing the deaths of marginalized communities in the present (especially Black and brown populations) as warnings of dystopian futures. In turn, Hirsi promotes rekindling attachments as a form of activism that envisions resilient, resistant, and flourishing futures.

In Chapter Five, I summarize the analysis of each youth activist, their rhetorical situations, and how they called upon death as a rhetorical strategy in contexts of climate change. Considering the rhetoric of this diverse set of young women rhetors, I synthesize the significant findings and key implications of my analyses to suggest a rhetorical theory of *eudaimortia*, which reveals the persuasive power of death to challenge and reconstitute how to live, how to become, and how to make, move, and imagine bodies, worlds, and time. After describing the key propositions for how rhetorical critics might apply eudaimortia as a methodological and theoretical tool, I offer a "post mortem" and engage with more recent scholarship on climate rhetoric and explain how consideration of the rhetors/texts I examined in this project expands, challenges, and advances our understanding of climate rhetoric. Finally, I extend a rhetorical theory of eudaimortia and other tools, perspectives, and insights from this study to critics writing outside the contexts of ecological grief and environmental injustices, concluding with a brief discussion for further research.

CHAPTER TWO: GRETA THUNBERG AND THE DEATH OF SCIENCE

In December 2019, 16-year-old climate activist Greta Thunberg became the youngest individual named TIME's Person of the Year.[125] Indeed, Thunberg became the first teenager recognized by TIME since the franchise began the famous annual tradition in 1927.[126] Thunberg's journey to becoming "one of the most unlikely and surely one of the swiftest ascents to global influence in history"[127] began on Friday, August 20, 2018, when she sat in front of Swedish Parliament donning a hand-painted sign that read "Skolsterjk för klimatet" (School Strike for Climate). In a later account, Thunberg recalls "hand[ing] out fliers with a long list of facts about the climate crisis and explanations on why I was striking."[128] That same day, Thunberg posted on Instagram that "Vi barn gör ju oftast inte som ni sager å toss att göra, vi gör som ni gör. Och eftersom ni vuxna skiter i min framtid, så gör jag det med. Jag skolstrejkar för klimatet fram till valdagen." (We children usually do not do as you tell us to do, we do as you do. And since you adults shit in [sic] my future, I'll do it too. I am on school strike for the climate until election day.)[129] These first few rhetorical acts, according to Thunberg, "soon went viral. Then journalists and newspapers started to come."[130] While election day came and went, Thunberg's Friday school strikes have continued for more than 250 weeks. Over the course of her first year "school striking," Thunberg was no longer sitting in front of Parliament alone, and her activism initiated a global movement that would rally over 7 million climate activists around the world in September 2019.[131]

"Meaningful change rarely happens without the galvanizing force of influential individuals," explains TIME's editor-in-chief, Edward Felsenthal, regarding the selection, "and in 2019, the earth's existential crisis found one in Greta Thunberg."[132] In reading the Person of

the Year issue, Thunberg's swift ascent to mobilize millions worldwide is not significant because she was the first to do so, but because of the influence she garners as a young girl. Global fascination and commentary regarding *how* she was able to do so are far-reaching. Indeed, Thunberg's character has infiltrated global media, academic literature, and popular culture to such a degree that her impact is popularly known as "The Greta Effect."[133] Despite the fact that those who are more familiar with Thunberg are found to have higher intentions of taking collective actions to reduce global warming, Thunberg claims she is "not saying anything new" and "just saying what scientists have repeatedly said for decades."[134] What's more, Thunberg agrees with many of her critics that she is far from the most qualified to speak on the topic of climate change. "It's okay if you refuse to listen to me," Thunberg once announced, "but you cannot ignore the science."[135] Throughout her activism, Thunberg never offers innovative solutions, manifestos, or political demands. Instead, from her first school strike to today, her call is clear: "Unite behind the science." This call has resounded worldwide and rallied millions of schoolchildren to form what is now known as the Fridays For Future movement.

In this chapter, I first focus on Thunberg's personal and a/political history with the issue of climate change and broader themes of contemporary social order, normative values, and systemic shunning of difference. Here, I concentrate on how Thunberg positions herself as an activist to give insight into how she evokes death as a means of persuasion. I then discuss two overarching themes that anchor Thunberg's activism: crisis and strangeness. In this section, I demonstrate how Thunberg's activism functions as a narrative of crisis and explore how her framing of climate change as an existential emergency—a matter of life and death—points to the strangeness of her audience's everyday reality. In the following sections, I explore three primary identities that Thunberg constitutes in her story of existential crisis and strangeness. I introduce

Thunberg's construction of adults and decision makers/political leaders as the "Walking Dead" who behave mindlessly, as if they are incapable of listening and acting rationally, on the basis of evidence. Second, I analyze how Thunberg refigures a dying "Mother Nature" as a living "Mother Science," which complicates traditional gendered politics of nature and science and the common associations of each theme. Thirdly, I focus on the significance of youths in Thunberg's activism and explain how she constitutes children as what I call a "Waking Dead" who claim their rhetorical authority from the future to promote change in the present. I conclude this chapter by suggesting that throughout her activism, and inherent to her narration of an existential emergency that disrupts how her audiences understand themselves as living/dying, Thunberg depicts death (the figure of a child) as an instrument of time.

"I am Greta."

Accounts of Greta Thunberg's personal history and activism are perfunctory given her swift ascent to worldwide influence. By most biographical accounts, "Greta Thunberg was born in 2003. In August 2018, she started a school strike for the climate outside the Swedish Parliament."[136] The period between birth and global recognition and profound influence is seemingly unimportant. We discover by reading her family's co-authored memoir, *Our House Is on Fire*, however, in which Thunberg's mother, Malena Ernman, serves as the primary storyteller, the fifteen years leading up to her first strike were profoundly influential on her activism. Through short epigraphs depicting everyday family life, we learn that familial upheaval and reckoning with psychological uncertainty dominated the five years leading up to Thunberg's first school strike. Ernman describes her daughter as the "invisible little girl" with mutism who had been struggling for years to reconcile an "unbearable feeling of loneliness and hopelessness" because of how she understood and experienced the world.[137] Alongside her family, Thunberg

navigated intense episodes of mental illness and systems of diagnoses. Ernman depicts Thunberg's activism as the culmination of her inability to "reconcile the contradictions of modern life. Things simply just didn't add up."[138] Inspired by the United States-based, youth-led movement that engages, trains, and provides resources to budding young activists, Zero Hour, Thunberg began thinking about going on a school strike. From the perspective of Ernman, something began to shift when Thunberg was able to "question the foundation of the prevailing world order,"[139] an order that gave shape to the sustainability crisis and her own domestic crisis. These crises were related, even one and the same. In the context of doing something to confront climate change, then, Thunberg began to feel "seen and heard."[140]

Thunberg's physical presence as a public speaker makes it nearly impossible to imagine her as anything other than a child by most accounts, including her own. "I'm very tiny," she mentions in a 2020 Instagram post, "and I am very emotional, and that is not something people associate with strength."[141] Throughout her public addresses, Thunberg positions herself as a youth, frequently references her age, and consistently frames her identity as a "girl," "schoolgirl," and "child." As I will discuss in subsequent sections, Thunberg's focus on her identity as a youth functions to reinforce her rhetorical authority to speak on matters of life and death.

In addition to her identity as a youth, Thunberg places significant weight on how being a person with Asperger's syndrome impacts how she understands the world. Addressing London's Parliament Square on October 31, 2018, Thunberg extended what might be considered the origin story of her pathway to activism by describing the first time she heard about "something called climate change, or global warming," as an eight-year-old. Much to Thunberg's surprise, burning fossil fuels that were knowingly "threatening our very existence" was not illegal. Confessing her

early confusion about why humans were doing and talking so little about how they were altering the earth's climate, Thunberg attributed having Asperger's like the gift of seeing climate change for what it is, a crisis. For Thunberg, her identity as a person with Asperger's means that "almost everything is black and white . . . there are no grey areas when it comes to survival."[142] This gift persists in significance today. For example, in April 2021, Thunberg's Instagram tagline read: "Climate-and environmental activist with Asperger's. Born at 375 ppm."[143] More than a lens through which she sees the world, Thunberg refers to her Asperger's to explain why she began her activism and why she chose participatory demonstration as a mode of joining in and encouraging others to combat the climate crisis. Pushing back against people who mock her for her diagnosis and to contest the notion that a person with Asperger's would never position themselves so squarely in the public light, Thunberg argued:

> But that's exactly why I did this. Because if I would have been "normal" and social I would have organized myself in an organization, or started and organization by myself. But since I am not that good at socializing I did this instead. I was so frustrated that nothing was being done about the climate crisis, and I felt like I had to do something, anything. And sometimes NOT doing things—like just sitting down outside the parliament—speaks much louder than doing things. Just like a whisper sometimes is louder than shouting.[144]

Having Asperger's, then, influences both Thunberg's ability to see the world in a particular way and her capacity to behave and mediate that world by means that disrupt what the world perceives as "normal."

The gift of seeing the climate crisis in black and white reinforces Thunberg's key exigencies and goals in taking action. Thunberg's activist platform is two-fold: listen to the science and do as much as possible to reduce carbon emissions across the spectrum of global and personal contexts. That Thunberg can see no grey areas when it comes to survival means that she refuses to carry on as though she doesn't know that climate change threatened the future of all

life. In this way, several social, political, and cultural dynamics shape Thunberg's avowed identity as an activist.

First, Thunberg opposes being framed as "political" and often criticizes normative constructions of what it means to be "popular." Positioning herself as anti-politics is significant because it enables her to circumvent the argument that climate change exists on a spectrum of critical issues and can't always be the focus of various political agendas. Second, Thunberg openly contests political inaction and governments' unwillingness to take responsibility for climate change. For example, when addressing the European Parliament in Strasbourg on April 16, 2019, Thunberg remarked, "When I tell politicians to act now, the most common answer is that they can't do anything drastic because it would be too unpopular among the voters."[145] When speaking at the Brilliant Minds Conference a few months later, Thunberg argued that "We need to be brave enough to say and do things that may not increase our profits or our popularity."[146] These excerpts foreshadow some conclusions I make below that describe how pitting the economic and political cultures of popularity and self-interest against science is a key strategy for Thunberg.

Thunberg's focus on science as the single-most promising solution to climate change is central to her activism. Thus, the framing of being anti-political and uninterested in popularity is an essential aspect of how she positions herself as an activist. "I don't care about being popular. I care about climate justice and a living planet," Thunberg claims.[147] Furthermore, Thunberg suggests that to be political is to "only speak of green eternal economic growth because you are too scared of being unpopular."[148] More explicitly still, Thunberg directly resists any framing of her as politically motivated when she posts on Instagram, "I'm sometimes called 'political.' But I've never supported any political party, politician, or ideology. I communicate the science and

the risks of failing to act on it."[149] Taken together, these excerpts explain how Thunberg identifies as an activist who invests a lot of energy in distinguishing a world of politics and economics from a world of science. As a result, Thunberg's identification as anti-politics and her clear separation of science from politics invites other youths to claim activism in ways that only require them to listen (to science) and unite (behind science).

Another significant set of avowed identities that influence my analysis is how Thunberg identifies as a person of privilege, one of the "fortunate ones," and as someone who no longer buys into the world's social, economic, and political order as a consumer. When Thunberg refers to her privilege, she almost always invokes a sense of place and the cultural connections between climate change and geographic location. For example, addressing a London audience at an Extinction Rebellion Rally on April 23, 2019, Thunberg pronounced, "I come from Sweden, and back there it's almost the same problem as here, as everywhere, that nothing is being done to stop the climate and ecological crisis, despite all the beautiful words and promises."[150] Back in Sweden, when speaking at Brilliant Minds Conference on June 13, 2019, Thunberg went further in describing the significance of place by stating that "it is not people in countries like Mozambique, Bangladesh, or Colombia who are the most responsible for this crisis. It is mostly down to people like you here in the audience: entrepreneurs, celebrities, politicians, business leaders—people who have a lot of power."[151]

How Thunberg positions herself as a young girl with Asperger's from Sweden influences how she understands her identity as an activist. "I am just a messenger," Thunberg asserts, "I am not saying anything new, I am just saying what scientists have repeatedly said for decades."[152] Thunberg maintains that she writes her own speeches and became aware early on that what she says is "going to reach many, many people," leading her to frequently ask for input and "help on

how to express certain complicated matters."[153] More than anything else, Thunberg is committed to working with scientists because she "want[s] everything to be absolutely correct so that [she doesn't] spread incorrect facts, or things that can be misunderstood."[154] That Thunberg identifies as a messenger of science, facts, and truth becomes a central animating feature of the analysis that follows, which reveals Thunberg's narration of a crisis of life and death. Key to my analysis below, Thunberg's biographical experiences and avowed identities lay the foundation for how she communicates about matters of life and death and authorize her self-proclaimed responsibility to describe the world as she sees it: in crisis, strange, and inhabited by Walking and Waking Dead.

An Existential Emergency: A Crisis of Life and Death

On September 8, 2018, Thunberg addressed the public for the first time since her inaugural school strike a few weeks prior. Speaking to an audience gathered for Stockholm's Climate March, Thunberg laid the foundation for her activism by establishing several key components of the story she wanted to tell about climate change. In her speech entitled "Our Lives Are in Your Hands," Thunberg first reviewed the science-based conversations happening regarding the Paris Agreement. Next, she explained why reaching its greenhouse gas emission reduction goals is critical to keeping global warming below 2 degrees Celsius. Then, depicting "a nightmare scenario" and "catastrophic climate change," Thunberg pleaded to "all of the newspapers," "influencers," "political parties," "politicians," and "to all of [those] who choose to look the other way every day" to "please, treat the climate crisis like the acute crisis it is."[155] The following month, Thunberg described how the burning of fossil fuels has become so bad that it "threaten[s] our very existence" and is a known "existential threat."[156] Later, in 2019, Thunberg noted that "we are now facing an existential crisis—the climate crisis, the ecological crisis—

which has never been treated like a crisis before."[157] Since her first address in 2018, Thunberg's framing of climate change as a "crisis," "threat," and "emergency" saturates nearly every public address and sets the tone for her social media presence. Central to this crisis is the threat of non/existence.

In this section, I argue that Thunberg invokes death by framing climate change as an existential emergency. More than simply positioning climate change as a matter of life and death, Thunberg communicates a world in a state of crisis, enabling her to depict and invoke death in unique ways. My analysis unfolds in two parts. First, I utilize Matthew W. Seeger and Timothy L. Sellnow's theorizing around "narratives of crisis" to set a foundation for understanding crises' rhetorical force and function as persuasive con/texts.[158] Here, I outline the key tenets of crisis narratives and demonstrate how the constitution of an existential emergency is best understood under this framework. Second, as a crisis narrative, I analyze how the story of existential emergency appeals to larger themes of culture, class, and states of non/existence. I analyze Thunberg's introduction of "a strange world" in which everyday living calls forth death to demonstrate this point.

Climate Change: A Crisis of Non/Existence

To invoke crisis is a rhetorical act.[159] Central to the persuasive power of large-scale crises and disasters is their ability to shape culture, beliefs, lives, and institutions.[160] Seeger and Sellnow assert that "disasters and the stories told about them carry meaning, encode lessons, and frame larger public and societal understanding of risks, warnings, and potential harm."[161] Crises, therefore, serve as prime con/texts for rhetorical scholarship. The study of presidential rhetoric, for example, offers numerous analyses of how presidents promote crisis as a way to persuade the citizenry that national values or survival are in threat, enabling them to justify bold, often

military, action.[162] Seeger and Sellnow add to these studies by arguing that "crises can create the need, perceived or real, for significant social, economic, and political change."[163] The constitution of this need is so compelling that Seeger and Sellnow believe that "crises are arguably the most powerful force in social change contributing to ongoing systemic adaption and evolution."[164]

The functions of crisis narratives are manifold. Crisis narratives have both instrumental and constitutive functions in that they simultaneously serve to "fill the absence of meaning in response to a specific event" (instrumental) and construct our understanding of the world around us (constitutive).[165] In addition, stories of crisis almost always consider ethical and moral questions that function to develop empathy, help navigate hardship, and cultivate community.[166] Consequently, loss is a central animating feature of crisis, including the loss of sense making and meaning, the extreme disruption, loss, and general confusion that emerge from crises, and material and physical losses resulting in existential losses.[167] Crisis narratives help make sense of complex and disorienting events and operate rhetorically to advocate for and manage social, economic, and political changes relating to crises and disasters of the past, present, and future.[168] Another critical function of crisis narratives is their ability to help "assess and affix blame and responsibility."[169] Placing blame, in turn, is a crucial element to crisis narratives' ability to be forward-looking to reassess, recreate, and rebuild a vision of the future that is more resilient than before.[170] Although the functions listed above are not comprehensive, they offer a conceptual framework to support my argument that Thunberg's activism, on the whole, is best understood as a narrative of crisis.

Throughout the texts I analyzed, Thunberg consistently describes climate change as a global threat, emergency, and crisis. Indeed, her use of the word "crisis" alone exceeds 200

times. As previously stated, Thunberg's personal history reveals a constant reckoning with how she perceives the world and the various ways global, institutional, and interpersonal happenings simply "don't add up." As Thunberg's family memoir points out, the crisis that animates her activism transcends the issue of climate change into broader challenges with globalization, and with the political and economic ordering of ecological and social life. In another way, Thunberg experiences a loss of sense making and meaning when attempting to reconcile the science of climate change and the everyday behaviors and responses she witnesses worldwide. For example, Thunberg frequently wrestles with how the world/politicians/governments/everyday consumers can ignore climate change and do what she perceives to be nothing to take responsibility for or make meaningful steps to mitigate its impact on the world. "They keep saying that climate change is an existential threat and the most important issue of all. And yet they just carry on like before," she announced at the Extinction Rebellion Rally in London.[171] Again, when speaking at the 2019 World Economic Forum in Davos, Thunberg compared climate change to a house on fire, a staple metaphor throughout her activism intended to stoke panic and signal imminent danger. Thunberg calls into question the complacency and illogical responses to this sort of occurrence by addressing global leaders directly, "If our house was falling apart, our leaders wouldn't go on like you do today. You would change almost every part of your behavior as you do in an emergency."[172] Thunberg openly seeks to elicit mass panic and a heightened sense of urgency amongst her audiences and explains that "when I say that I want you to panic, I mean that we need to treat the crisis as a crisis."[173] These excerpts demonstrate the instrumental and constitutive value of transforming conversations about climate change into a crisis. By deploying a crisis narrative, Thunberg fills the absence of meaning in response to

climate change, promotes urgency, and concurrently leverages the threat and danger of the crisis to invite a shift in ideological perspective.

To reinforce the urgency of the climate crisis, Thunberg regularly counts down the number of years, days, and hours away from a not-so-distant future. For example, when Thunberg addressed European Parliament in 2019, she warned that "Around the year 2030, 10 years, 259 days and 10 hours away from now, we will be in a position where we will set off an irreversible chain reaction beyond human control that will most likely lead to the end of our civilization as we know it."[174] Thunberg continued this doomsday countdown on several more occasions and referenced numerous others throughout her speeches. Examples include providing timelines for phasing out coal, the remaining carbon dioxide budget and how long it will last, and the amount of time wasted since scientific leaders began calling for climate reform. This strategy models how crisis narratives extend warnings and consequences if social, economic, and political changes are not made, such as when Thunberg cautions that "nature will probably strike back in some way."[175] These warnings also constitute climate change as an existential emergency, a crisis that dwells in the liminal space between life and death. The rhetorical function of this story is to advocate for a new way of imaging the world—a world in an existential crisis—to live differently.

Imagining "A Strange World": Where Living Kills

Thunberg's speech "A Strange World" is an exemplary model of how invoking an existential emergency functions to erode the life/death binary and imagine a world of non/existence.[176] Here, I focus on how Thunberg's depiction of the "strange" calls into question notions of living entirely and disrupts normative perceptions of the world across personal, institutional, and global settings. Rhetoric scholars in the fields of environmental communication

and the study of public memory note that *strangeness*, as theory and method, unsettles normative frames of interpreting the everyday encounters that influence our ability to *know* a place.[177] Joshua Barnett suggests that confronting the strange is key to ecological thinking because embracing "strange strangers" (the people, places, and objects that shape how we make our way and make sense of the world) "disables binary, hierarchical understandings of the world, including how humans interface with more-than-human beings."[178]

Being made strange, as Bradford Vivian describes, is not merely describing something outside the familiar. Instead, "the strange may be regarded as its internal dissolution, which begins slowly and at discrete points but inevitably draws even our most sacrosanct beliefs—those concerning ourselves—into its vortex."[179] The significance of the strange world that Thunberg constitutes is that it forces her audience to imagine the world in which they live through her eyes.

Throughout "A Strange World," Thunberg narrates the story of existential emergency by revealing how living, as character and plot, kills. "We live in a strange world," Thunberg repeats at the beginning of five clauses that proceed to introduce eleven examples of the strange:

1. Where all the united science tells us that we are about eleven years away from setting off an irreversible chain reaction, way beyond human control, that will probably be the end of our civilization.
2. Where children must sacrifice their own education in order to protest against the destruction of their future.
3. Where the people who have contributed the least to this crisis are the ones who are going to be affected the most.
4. Where politicians say it's too expensive to save the world, while spending trillions of euros subsidizing fossil fuels.
5. Where no one dares to look beyond our current political systems even though it's clear that the answers we seek will not be found within the politics of today.
6. Where some people seem to be more concerned about the presence in school of some children than the future of humankind.
7. Where everyone can choose their own reality and buy their own truth.
8. Where our survival is depending on a small, rapidly disappearing carbon budget. And hardly anyone even knows it exists.

9. Where we think we can buy or build our way out of crisis that has been created by buying and building things.
10. Where a football game or a film gala gets more media attention than the biggest crisis humanity has ever faced.
11. Where celebrities, film and pop stars who have stood up against all injustices will not stand up for our environment and for climate justice because that would inflict on their right to fly around the world visiting their favourite restaurants, beaches and yoga retreats.[180]

The anaphoric form of this speech reinforces Thunberg's illustration of the strange in a way that her audience becomes sensitized to larger themes of culture (i.e., consumer cultures, political cultures, and popular cultures), class (i.e., the wealthy's ability to "spend" the carbon budgets of those who are most impacted by climate change), and non/existence (i.e., the ways these acts of living call forth crisis, dying, and the destruction of the future).

Thunberg often attempts to persuade her audience by relating new ways of seeing, imagining, and remembering everyday living. In addition to presenting a new view, a strange view, of the ordinary, Thunberg uses vision to activate people ("You are failing us. But the young people are starting to understand your betrayal. The eyes of all future generations are upon you. And if you choose to fail us, I say: We will never forgive you."[181]); imaginary scenes ("So that when we are older, we will be able to look our children in the eyes and say that we did everything we could back then. Because that is our moral duty, and we will never stop doing that. We will never stop fighting for a living planet and for a safe future — for our future."[182]); places ("Once the climate crisis has gotten your attention, you can't look away[183]); memories ("And yet they have the nerve to look us in the eyes, lie and say they are doing enough. Well, whatever they are doing they are doing it wrong. We are starting to see through their lies and we will hold them accountable for their actions."[184]); and worldviews ("Without seeing the full picture, we will not solve this crisis."[185]). Again, the importance of Thunberg's ability to force

her audience into imagining the world differently—strangely—is that it enables her to emphasize the significance of an existential emergency as a consequence of everyday living.

I contend that the themes of crisis and strangeness throughout Thunberg's rhetoric encourage a way of seeing "normal," everyday reality as a horror show that portrays life and living as liminal, mindless, and violent. In what follows, I expand on Thunberg's construction of a living that kills and highlight three characters that emerge in the world as she sees it: adults, killing as the Walking Dead, Mother Science, an alternative to a dying Mother Earth, and children, living as a Waking Dead. The imagery surrounding these three identities animate Thunberg's depiction of climate change as a strange crisis of non/existence and call forth a way of seeing, naming, and responding to the existential threat it poses. Across the following analysis sections, I demonstrate how Thunberg's rhetoric reveals an overarching, intergenerational tension between adults and younger generations. At the core of this dynamic lies the protective force of Mother Science, which Thunberg positions beyond the constraints of generational struggles, symbolizing a timeless sanctuary. The interplay between adults as zombies and the efforts of children to stop the contagion that spreads with each step emerges as the driving force of Thunberg's deployment of death as a persuasive strategy.

The Carbon Footprints of the Walking Dead

To evoke the image of a "Walking Dead" engages a large body of work on *living* dead subjects, broadly, and zombie literature, specifically.[186] Across these studies, scholars assert that the zombie genre is pervasive in popular culture and attest to widespread public fascination with the figure of the zombie. Most of this scholarship maintains that the zombie as a metaphor for racism is particularly important to critical communication studies because, as Haneen Shafeeq Ghabra and Marouf A. Hasian assert, "the zombie more than any other [monstrous] character

resembles humans . . . mak[ing] it an especially potent symbol for biopolitical hazards, especially in geological contexts."[187] For instance, in Chapter One, I introduce Eric King Watts's argument that tropes of the zombie signify the Black body as a bio-threat and function as a type of biopolitical regime of racism.[188] Watts argues that the zombie trope, as "monstrous figuration" and "object of violent fantasies of retribution and reclamation," organizes and energizes discursive resources "to manage felt emergencies regarding a loss of white power, privilege, and place."[189] Put plainly, Watts evidences how the body of the zombie points to racial anxieties and systems of racism by reproducing blackened, biothreat bodies and endorsing coordinated rituals of militarization, violence, and colonization.[190] Watts is among a large contingent of communication scholars who continue to explore "monstrosity" as a site of ideology, meaning, and power.[191] My exploration of Thunberg's construction of a Walking Dead exists alongside this scholarship, and incorporates additional imaginations of how adults and policy makers embody some of the qualities and characteristics of the zombie trope.

Among the numerous explanations about how the undead/living dead make their way through the modern world, the zombie as a reflection of "the abject mindlessness of our excessive and irresponsible consumption in a period of ever-accelerating global capitalism," strongly aligns with how Thunberg frames key global decision makers of today.[192] An exemplary model of this framing is Thunberg's frequent use of the concept of a carbon footprint, which evokes a clear image of a living that kills. On one occasion, for example, Thunberg argued, "Your individual carbon footprints are in some cases the equivalent of whole villages. But I think the worst part is that you are normalizing this extreme lifestyle because people look up to you. You are the role models. You are setting the standards. People aspire to be like you."[193] As the living walk through the world, consuming, building, and making their way, each step leaves an

impression. The impression not only carves a path for others to follow but also exists alongside the footprints of others. For Thunberg, the impact of these impressions has extreme consequences. Thunberg often uses her country to make this point, stating, "Sverige är ett av de tio länderna med störst ekologiskt fotavtryck per capita. Vi är värstingarna. Om alla skulle leva som vi skulle det behövas 4,2 jordklot. Det spelar roll vad vi gör." ("Sweden is one of the ten countries with the largest ecological footprint per capita. We are the worst. If everyone were to live like us, 4.2 globes would be needed. It matters what we do.")[194] The significance of a carbon footprint is that once it is made, it becomes a marker of death. Contrary to the story of progress, the pursuit of happiness and living life to the fullest, the story of existential emergency narrates a world in which each step calls forth the end of existence. In other words, living is the process of becoming death, and herein lies the erosion of the life/death binary. One does not exist without the other.

The setting of an existential crisis is as narrow as the reality of a single individual or a group gathered at a football game to as broad as a global political and economic system that trades in fossil fuels. These settings intensify the plot by suggesting a series of "strange" encounters that move the world closer to the end of humankind at an unprecedented pace. As a result, audience members are called to *know* everyday life in a way that is intimately entangled with the familiar yet uncomfortable, unjust, and crossing the thresholds of life and death. Therefore, an existential emergency is a crisis that characterizes life/living as a threat, a constant act of simultaneous living and dying. The strangeness of climate change, while made explicit in "A Strange World," permeates Thunberg's broader crisis narrative throughout her activism. Reimagining the world in this way enables Thunberg to persuade her audiences that they must

begin thinking of how to "live" and "die" differently. To help them answer this question, Thunberg puts her unwavering faith in science.

Listening to Mother Science

In Chapter One, I reviewed the literature on the relationship between gendered environmental discourses and the thematic of death, grief, and loss. Here, I expand on this literature by introducing how traditional metaphors and models of gender politics shaped the identities of science and nature. In this section of analysis, I discuss how Thunberg's construction of a "Mother Science" works to disarm the rhetorical authority of the "fathers of modern science" to both separate science from its historically patriarchal framing and establish a mother figure that children (and future generations) can "unite behind," "listen to," and above all, trust. Thunberg's development of a Mother Science functions as an alternative to and elides the patriarchal assumptions that infuse the dying Mother Earth metaphor.

By positioning science as the singular pathway to "future living conditions for all species"[195] while at the same time fixing blame on government, capitalism, and political essentialism, Thunberg is able to (re)make science in the image of a nurturing mother. These shifts run contrary to a perseverant tradition of thought that identifies nature, indeed Earth, as the Mother, and science as the advancement of masculine domination.[196] The significance of constituting a Mother Science is that imagery of a Mother Nature/Earth holds little value in Thunberg's activism. Consequently, the story of surviving the existential emergency depends on the survival of science.[197] In other words, Mother Science is the source of life for Greta. Furthermore, Thunberg's singular, unwavering demand is to "unite behind the science," and she often reinforces this message by inciting the need to listen. Central to understanding the

persuasive power of Mother Science is the relationship between her and her children, which is the focus of my third area of analysis.

The depiction of nature as the nurturing mother of humankind dates to antiquity, and the literature exploring the philosophical history of "nature as female" is quite large.[198] Tracing historical conceptions of nature and inquiry, Carolyn Merchant examines how gender constructions have, in turn, shaped behaviors towards both nature and women over time.[199] Merchant's research reveals that The Scientific Revolution transformed conceptions of a living female earth into a dead and passive site of extraction and domination. These changing constructions of nature are intimately connected to modern constructions of women as "culturally passive and subordinate."[200] Emerging from these conversations, and significant to this analysis section, is the long-lasting image of Mother Nature, which represents two divergent qualities of womanliness: woman as nurturing, self-sacrificing, and the embodiment of home and woman as wild, vengeful, and a creator of chaos. In Merchant's opinion, the shift of an organic world view to a booming exploitative mentality led to the "death of nature as a living being and the accelerating exploitation of both human and natural resources in the name of culture and progress."[201] Expanding on Merchant's work, Sandra Harding examines "the science question in feminism" by revealing how gendered political strategies have "provided resources for the advancement of science, and science has provided resources for the advancement of masculine domination."[202]

Emphasizing a feminist epistemology that asserts that modes of knowing and knowledge-seeking and ways of being are coconstitutive, Harding's work sets a foundation for textual criticism of the history of science and the rhetorical significance of metaphors and models of gender politics relating to scientific inquiry. Harding offers more to this analysis than insights

into the intersection of gender and science by highlighting how we must also understand science within a raced framework grounded in whiteness. Indeed, Harding asserts that modern Western sciences operate as a social force rooted in male supremacy, racism, class exploitation, and colonial and imperial exploitation and domination.[203] In turn, Western science methods, assumptions, and claims (however well-intended) materially produce socially and biologically raced bodies in ways presented as natural, cultural, and logical.[204] Harding's arguments underscore the importance of exploring how maternal metaphors operate within scientific discourses embedded in gendered and racialized knowledge, authority, and power systems.

Several rhetorical critics explore the persuasive power of maternal metaphors and motherhood that build upon historical conceptions of the Mother. For example, Sara Hayden argues that "maternity is the grounding for an alternative vision of society in which the social welfare of citizens is privileged."[205] In her study of how family metaphors promote a politics of care, Hayden notes that a fundamental and cross-cultural responsibility of a mother is to keep her children safe, suggesting that their ultimate power pertains to life and death.[206] As a result, Hayden asserts that "to act as a mother is to act in the context of one's relationship to another" and prioritize the lives of others, particularly children, to protect them from harm.[207] Buchanan suggests that as a cultural code, "The Mother . . . operates as a god term within public discourse and connotes a myriad of positive associations, including children, love, protection, home, nourishment, altruism, morality, religion, self-sacrifice, strength, the reproductive body, the private sphere, and the nation."[208] Important to her exploration of rhetorics of motherhood, however, is that the authority and credibility that motherhood grants women come hand in hand with the existing dominant system that disadvantages them because of their gender. [209] Jennifer A. Peeples and Kevin M. DeLuca, for instance, examine how these topoi of motherhood shape

the advocacy of women who lead Environmental Justice groups and conclude that their gender and role as mothers function to affirm their rhetorical authority on environmental issues.[210] By speaking out against toxic and inequitable living conditions that threaten their homes, families, and communities, these women advocates argue that the truth they possess as mothers is just as important as the truth brought forth by science. Peeples and DeLuca do not explore the rhetorical quandary Buchanan suggests. Still, I might add that when the women activists juxtapose the truth of the Mother with the truth of science, they seem to demonstrate Buchanan's point that "both their force and peril derive from entrenchment within dominant systems of power."[211] Of note across these studies of rhetorics of motherhood is that the Mother figure functions as a rhetorically significant site for exploration.

Despite the robust scholarship exploring rhetorics of motherhood and communicating the maternal, few communication scholars have further investigated how the nature-as-nurturing-mother metaphor anchors environmental crisis in patriarchal and male-centered ideologies. Of note is Emma Frances Bloomfield's rhetorical analysis of the eco-horror film, *mother!*. Bloomfield argues that the leading character, mother, embodies a strategic essentializing of the Mother Nature archetype.[212] Naming the figure of a "womanature," Bloomfield demonstrates what happens if the audience fails to "listen to mother (nature)," which reinforces their complicity in her suffering. Bloomfield's analysis and my own share two important features. First, Bloomfield enlarges how we recognize the Mother as an archetype, something I also hope to accomplish in this area of analysis. Second, Bloomfield explains how the relationship between the film's character mother and her home demonstrates for the audience the rhetorical moves of listening to, attending to, and caring for (non)human nature in a way that prompts unique ecological imaginations of non/human life. Though Bloomfield does not dig into the concept of

"listening to mother," she implies a concern for and need to listen to women's rhetoric(s) and the topics that emerge from women's rhetorical acts. In turn, Bloomfield invites a closer look at how "listening to Mother" functions to invert the construction of listening as passive and an inherently feminine attribute. To this end, I gather these literatures together to demonstrate how Thunberg constructs what I am calling a "Mother Science," which enables her to transpose the broader associations of the maternal and nature, as I described above, into the historically patriarchal and exploitative image of science. The significance of this rhetorical strategy is that Thunberg shifts the focus away from a dying/dead Mother Earth and fixes her audience's attention on what will happen if they do not "listen to science (mother)."

The threat to a thriving and transformative science is perhaps the most salient, albeit unspoken, topoi of death throughout Thunberg's activism. Not once does Thunberg announce that "science is dying," nor does she deploy traditional gender metaphors with her calls to "listen to the science" and "unite behind the science." However, embedded in her calls to hold current governmental and capitalistic systems accountable for the existential crisis of our time is a separation of science from its "founding fathers" and its brothers, politics, and economics.[213] This rupture complicates traditional associations of science with masculinity and nature with femininity. Furthermore, as I argued above, a vital element of an existential emergency's rhetorical power is that Thunberg was able to force her audience into seeing the world through her eyes, to see it as strange and on the brink of extinction. In Thunberg's constitution of a strange world, children must sacrifice themselves to protect themselves against the destruction of their future. Thunberg's resolve, however, is to turn to science as a figure that is always already self-sacrificing and nurturing a future that keeps children safe from harm. The Mother Science

metaphor, therefore, wrests science from its patriarchal foundations and offers a feminist alternative that figures science as trustworthy, caring, and, when listened to, a protector.

Thunberg seldom speaks about nature, and when she does, there is almost always a direct connection to reducing carbon emissions. For example, "we have to stop burning fossil fuels and restore nature"[214] or "planting trees is good, of course, but it's nowhere near enough of what needs to be done, and it cannot replace real mitigation or rewilding nature. Let's be clear. We don't need a *'low* carbon economy'. We don't need to '*lower* emissions'. Emissions have to stop."[215] Rather than focusing on conservation, preservation, or restoration rhetorics, Thunberg consistently returns to a narrative of blame and responsibility rooted in the science of the climate crisis. Perhaps the most blatant example of affixing blame is when Thunberg says, "[a]nd someone is to blame. Some people—some companies and some decision-makers in particular—have known exactly what priceless values they are sacrificing to continue making unimaginable amounts of money."[216] As I illustrate in Thunberg's imagination of a strange world, global political and economic systems are responsible for the existential emergency. Put another way, children are left to self-sacrifice to safeguard a living future because adult political leaders are turning away from Mother Science and keeping her from protecting children from harm.

While Thunberg acknowledges the inherent value and beauty of nature, she never belabors the point. Not once, for example, does Thunberg evoke the image of Mother Earth. Moreover, on the rare occasion that Thunberg references themes of nature, she contradicts Merchant's assertion that nature is dead and no longer associated with the character of a living being by exclusively referring to a "living planet." When Thunberg spoke at the World Economic Forum in Davos on January 22, 2019, for example, she argued for bold climate action for, among many other things, "the sake of this beautiful living planet."[217] Likewise, in Montreal,

following her well-known climate march and rallying of millions of people in over 170 countries, Thunberg declared, “We marched for a living planet and a safe future for everyone. We spoke the science and demanded that the people in power would listen to and act on the science. But our political leaders didn’t listen.”[218] These examples demonstrate how Thunberg departs from modern constructions of a dead Mother Nature by highlighting a planet and Mother Science that are living, adults as a liminal “walking dead,” and as I argue below, children as a “waking dead.”

Moreover, the last excerpt reveals how Thunberg positions political leaders in opposition to science, and a critical error of these leaders is their unwillingness to *listen* to science. Like the zombie figure discussed above, adults/political leaders behave mindlessly, as if incapable of listening and acting rationally on the basis of science. Adrian Skilbeck’s analysis of how Thunberg’s activism implicates the field of education draws similar conclusions about leaders’ unwillingness to listen:

> Her speeches are an indictment of a politics and an education where words and actions have come apart . . . Time and time again . . . [she] asks those in power to take responsibility for what they say in the face of what is known—"the facts” and to act accordingly—"listen to the rock-solid science,” “speak clearly,” “create transformational action,” “wake up and change,” and “act as if our house is on fire.”[219]

To expand on Thunberg’s positioning of political leaders at odds with science, Thunberg calls out a range of governments, politicians, CEOs and businesses, journalists and media, and everyday individuals for not listening and associates this behavior with inaction (“And [political leaders] will be remembered as the greatest villains of all time, because they have chosen not to listen and not to act.”[220]); selfishness (“You don’t listen to the science because you are only interested in solutions that will enable you to carry on like before.”[221]); immorality (“[carrying on] would be impossible to morally defend . . . we are seeing unacceptable loss of life and

livelihoods.[222]); and a lack of care ("—not to listen, not to act, not to care—"[223] and "We have not come here to beg world leaders to care. You have ignored us in the past and you will ignore us again. You've run out of excuses and we're running out of time."[224]). These depictions are an affront to the qualities of Mother Science; a science that is trustworthy, listenable, nurturing, and a protector of the future.

While Thunberg doesn't evoke Mother Science by describing her image, she certainly draws upon the rhetorical resources that the Mother, as cultural code, elicits. Thunberg produces a Mother Science by associating, again and again, economics and politics with qualities of ignoring/not listening, choosing self-gain and prosperity at the expense of others, disregarding a moral obligation to protect from harm, and neglecting to respond to an emergency. These qualities are an affront to the nature of the Mother and in direct opposition to rhetorics of motherhood. Indeed, Thunberg makes a clear distinction between aligning with industry or political ideologies over Mother Science. Recall, in my review of Thunberg's identity, she denounced being "political" and focuses on communicating the science and the risks of failing to act on science. "To those who question my so called 'opinions,' Thunberg once posted, "this is not opinions or politics. It's the current best available science."[225] On another occasion, Thunberg attributed a catastrophic fire in Australia to a political failure in "mak[ing] the connection to the science, posting "500 million (!!) animals are estimated dead because of the bushfires" and "over 20 people have died and thousands of homes have burned to the ground."[226] Throughout her activism, Thunberg works to separate science from the global political and economic powers that have traditionally constituted the realm of the masculine, patriarchal, and dominance. This realm is the stuff of the "strange world" that no longer adds up, a world where "we live in a post-truth society today, and that we don't care, that we have lost empathy. We have

stopped caring for each other in a way. We have stopped thinking long-term and sustainable. And that's something that goes much deeper than just climate crisis deniers."[227] Therefore, to unite behind science is no longer to stand alongside the fathers of The Scientific Revolution who make false claims about progress and innovation. Instead, to unite behind science is to join in a community of care and empathy and to listen to the Mother in order to ensure a future.

Similarly, on March 4, 2020, Thunberg addressed the European Parliament in Brussels with her speech "We Will Not Allow You to Surrender on Our Future."[228] She began by marking the amount of time—one and a half years—that she and hundreds of thousands of children had been *sacrificing* their education to fight climate change. Noting that the EU had given up the fight against the existential threat of the climate crisis by propping up weak and insufficient policies, Thunberg likened this inaction to "giving up on doing everything you can to ensure a safe future for your own children."[229] This inaction, Thunberg remarked, "makes no sense at all" and assumes an act of surrender and unfulfilled promises. Speaking as a united front on behalf of her companion climate crisis activists around the world, Thunberg resolved, "We will not be satisfied with anything less than a science-based pathway which gives us the best possible chance to safeguard the future living conditions for humanity and life on earth as we know it."[230] This example introduces a second identity that Thunberg constitutes throughout her activism, the image of the child.

The study of maternal metaphors and rhetorics of motherhood suggests an unwavering bond between the Mother and her children. While Thunberg never names a Mother Science, children are central to her activism. In this section of analysis, I have argued that Thunberg constructs the image of Mother Science by rejecting the paternalism of modern science, separating science from "founding fathers," and casting science as children's new caregiver.

Another projection of Mother Science is Thunberg's construction of a "Waking Dead," who serve as the devoted children united behind Mother Science. I now turn my attention to how the Waking Dead function as messengers of death, hailed from the future to warn of what happens if the world doesn't wake up and listen to Mother.

Living as a Waking Dead

When Thunberg delivered her acceptance speech, "A Strange World," at the Goldene Kamera Film and TV Awards ceremony in 2019, she was being recognized for her ability to inspire, imagine, and encourage unique and creative change in the world. Indeed, the function of the Goldene Kamera Award is to honor groundbreaking and influential individuals who "know no media boundaries" and imagine the world differently.[231] As I argued above, this speech functioned to destabilize everyday encounters and see the world as a place where "normal living" kills. In this strange world, children are self-sacrificing "in order to protest against the destruction of their future…the future of humankind."[232] Concluding that today—in this time—"[her generation is] *now* standing at a crossroads in history," Thunberg's physical "presence" as a speaker and as a child underscored the images and strangeness that she described; that children are calling upon older generations to act on the climate crisis before it is too late.[233] Not a month before this speaking engagement Thunberg posted a public statement on Facebook to confront a host of critiques against her, including the belief that she was a child out of place. She writes, "And I agree with you, I'm too young to do this. We children shouldn't have to do this. But since no one is doing anything, and our very future is at risk, we feel like we have to continue."[234]

In my introduction of Thunberg's persona and positionality, I submitted that Thunberg's focus on her identity as a child reinforces her rhetorical authority to speak on matters of life and death. My aim in this section of analysis is to demonstrate how Thunberg, as a messenger, relates

the story of existential crisis by evoking what I call a "waking dead." I argue that Thunberg constructs a waking dead by placing future generations into the bodies of youths in the present. These youths of and from the future exist as though in a dreamworld, a world made strange through Thunberg's eyes. The image of the waking dead is that of a child whose future and dreams were stolen by the in/actions of past/present generations and emptied of their ability to *live*. Thunberg equates this inaction to a generation of sleeping adults when she states, "We already have all the facts and solutions. All we have to do is to wake up and change."[235] And later, "We children are doing this to wake the adults up. We children are doing this for you to put your differences aside and start acting as you would in a crisis. We children are doing this because we want our hopes and dreams back."[236] Almost resembling ghosts of the past, present, and future, these children enter the dreamworld of sleeping adults and wake them to the strangeness of how they live. Thus, the bodies of children, indeed the physical "presence" of Thunberg speaking on behalf of future generations, come to embody anxieties of death and a non/existent future.

In contrast to a "walking dead," or zombie, which represents a dead body enlivened only by feeding off the living, a waking dead represents a live body deadened by everyday living that kills.[237] Eric King Watts' asserts that the zombie trope "occupies a contradictory relation to logics of the 'post-'" in that the zombie "recalls histories and narratives of terror, horror, revulsion, slavery, rape, and violence" and signifies "the unleashing of black bio-threat bodies upon a population."[238] The zombie, therefore, is a character of the post-, a figure of the undead, and a fantasy regarding the return of a subject from the past. Moreover, as chapter one described, the zombie trope is a function of state power and a signifier of the management of life and death within a biopolitical regime. A waking dead, I argue, calls forth a subject from the future. The

exigency of the waking dead community is not to uncontrollably consume life as a means to suspend themselves in the realm of the living, but rather to "wake" others, specifically adults, to the strange dreamworld, the threshold between life and death, in which they dwell. In this way, a waking dead functions to liberate rather than control, to embrace (the Mother) rather than resist (science). A waking dead, then, reconstitutes a politics of relation that does not sacrifice, dispose of, or freeze death but imagines it as a process of becoming.

Given the significant role that children play throughout Thunberg's activism, the connection between the image of Mother Science and the mother-child relationship is not lost in this section. As Lisa Baraitser argues in her development of the "maternal death-drive," "the figure of the child-activist Greta Thunberg…carr[ies] hope for the future," and her task is to "carry expectations and anxieties about the future and bind them into a reproductive present."[239] Linking children with death in this way disrupts common perceptions of children as tokens of innocence, naiveté, and unspoiled aliveness and figures them as the world's only hope for a human reproductive future. "What we do or don't do right now," Thunberg contends, "will affect my entire life and the lives of my children and grandchildren. What we do or don't do right now, me and my generation can't undo in the future."[240] The significance of placing the deaths of future generations into the bodies of the children of today is that it reconstitutes the image of the child in a state of non/existence.

The body of a waking dead is trapped in the dreamworld of sleeping adults. In this place of empty dreams and unfulfilled promises, a waking dead non/exists on the threshold of time—a "crossroads in history"—and as a result, their political agency comes from death itself, because in death, lies the future. Thunberg calls forth, identifies with, and speaks on behalf of future generations throughout her activism. In fact, Thunberg references the future over one hundred

times, and her "presence" as a "tiny" young girl further places the image of the future into view. "Young people are the future,"[241] Thunberg argues, and "the future of all the coming generations rests on your shoulders."[242] In this way, I believe that the constant locating of the future in the present "deadens" today's children.

Thunberg's invocation of a waking dead, I suggest, exposes two unique ways of understanding the persuasive power of death. First, a waking dead reveals their encounters with adults, the strange world of today, and the current climate crisis as the chronicle of a death foretold. A waking dead's identity as a child precedes and yet embodies their death. Herein lies the rhetorical authority of youths and Thunberg herself; she warns of how the living of today materializes the deaths of tomorrow. Or, as Deborah Bird Rose so eloquently describes, "To be alive is to know that one's life is dependent on the deaths of others."[243] For instance, on multiple occasions, Thunberg narrates the story of her future life to older generations:

> If I live to be 100, I will be alive in the year 2103. When you [adults] think about the future today, you don't think beyond the year 2050. By then I will, in the best case, not even have lived half of my life. What happens next? In the year 2078, I will celebrate my 75th birthday. If I have children or grandchildren, maybe they will spend that day with me. Maybe they will ask me about you, the people who were around back in 2018. Maybe they will ask why you didn't do anything while there still was time to act.[244]

In this excerpt, Thunberg directly challenges the familiar tropes that governments and politicians invest in preserving the world for their children and grandchildren. Luke Bevan and colleagues came to similar conclusions in their analysis of strategic narratives of climate change. "Policymakers," they argue, "often claim that they are acting on behalf of future generations, making the world 'safe for our grandchildren.'"[245] Thunberg and other youth activists—children and grandchildren of the world—appropriate the political power of this narrative by denying older generations the authority to speak, but not act, on their behalf as a means to justify what youths perceive to be weak policy.

Another example of claiming rhetorical authority is when Thunberg pairs what leading scientists have argued is a point of no return regarding the impact of carbon dioxide emissions, the year 2030, with her future. “In the year 2030 I will be twenty-six years old. My little sister, Beata, will be twenty-three. Just like many of your own children or grandchildren. That is a great age, we have been told. When you have all of your life ahead of you. But I am not so sure it will be that great for us . . . Now we probably don’t even have a future any more.”[246] Again, confronting an older generation with what is to come if they continue to refuse to “listen to the science, Thunberg reinforces the notion that adults are dreaming and unable, or perhaps unwilling, to confront the strange reality in which they live or the deaths that and sacrifice that make that living possible. Therefore, the child as a waking dead functions to call forth the deaths of a future that is not a part of popular imagination and place them into the current moment and the bodies of those that seemingly have their whole lives ahead of them.

Second, between the dreams of adults and the realities of their daily lives under an increasingly precarious future, a waking dead substantiates the notion that dreaming and the stuff that dreams are made of make and unmake life and death. Throughout her activism, Thunberg oscillates between denouncing and yearning to reclaim the importance of dreams. On the one hand, Thunberg implies that dreams are a mechanism used by older generations and adults to sustain systems of power that put the climate crisis into motion. Indeed, dreams represent the very progress narratives and promises that ignore science. Dreams function to “stand in the way of telling it like it is”[247] at a time that “we need to wake up . . . to face the reality, the facts, the science.”[248] Dreams falsely suspend time as though the threat of climate change is not rapidly upon us and create the conditions for a living that kills while propping it up like a fairytale.

In her speech "The World Is Waking Up," which she delivered to the UN General Assembly in New York City on September 23, 2019, Thunberg exclaims, "You have stolen my dreams and my childhood with your empty words. And yet I'm one of the lucky ones. People are suffering. People are dying. Entire ecosystems are collapsing. We are in the beginning of a mass extinction, and all you can talk about is money and fairy tales of eternal economic growth. How dare you!"[249] Thunberg rarely speaks explicitly of death and dying.[250] In fact, this excerpt is one of two occasions across the texts I analyzed in this study. The significance of this particular speech act is that it draws on a larger rhetorical reservoir that alludes to dreams as the makers of the strange world in which she lives.

On the other hand, Thunberg benefits from the rhetorical power of dream narratives in her activism. The most potent example of this is when Thunberg addressed the United States Congress in Washington, DC on September 18, 2019, and mirrored the form of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech. Thunberg was not subtle in using dreams, distinctly and unequivocally American topoi, to reach her audience. As she frequently does, Thunberg introduced herself by saying, "My name is Greta Thunberg, I am sixteen years old and I'm from Sweden." She preceded by expressing her gratitude for being with "you [members of Congress] *here* in the USA. A Nation that, to many people, is the country of dreams."[251] After this brief introduction, Thunberg shared that she also had a dream: "that governments, political parties and corporations grasp the urgency of the climate and ecological crisis and come together despite their differences—as you would in an emergency—and take the measures required to safeguard the conditions for a dignified life for everybody on earth."[252]

Throughout her address, Thunberg moved back and forth between criticizing how dreams reinforce the climate crisis and imagining a new world by furthering her own dreams. Moreover,

Thunberg both disparaged the utility of dreams, such as when she asserted that Congress "must not spend all of your time dreaming, or see this as some political fight to win,"[253] and folded back on herself by propping dreams up, "yes, we need dreams, we can not live without dreams. But there's a time and place for everything." As an advocate for change, Thunberg alluded to the slippery nature of dreams. Thunberg sought change from those stuck in a dream and believed that waking them up is the solution. The temptation and desire to dream and to make a change, however, are inescapable. As Davina Cooper points out, one conception of change is that "once dreams of a better society have taken imaginative shape, their material fulfillment can then be pursued."[254] The challenge becomes in moving from imagining to actualization, from dreams to practice, a practice that, in turn, reconstitutes imagining and, as Cooper describes, "reveals not so much the pointlessness of dreaming as the difficulty in shaping and directing the process of change."[255] Regardless of these shifts, Thunberg's use of dreams in her activism reinforces the idea that dreams are powerful sites of rhetorical invention.

Scholarship on space and place offers resources for understanding dreams as a form of persuasion in Thunberg's activism. Henri Lefebvre, for instance, suggests that "The space of the dream is strange and alien yet at the same time as close to us as is possible."[256] For Lefebvre, the production of space, even that of a dream, is not insignificant. Indeed, "Space's investment…is a matter of life and death."[257] Understood in this way, the space of the dream is paradoxical: "At once imaginary and real . . . the faithful guardian of sleep rather than of social learning."[258] Greg Dickinson expands on this idea by arguing that "Dreams are dreamed in particular places, shaping responses to and directing the construction of material spaces."[259] More than a construction of material spaces, argues Bird Rose, dreams and dreaming "denote[s] the creators, the origins, the process of creation, the continuities of coming into being and coming into

pattern."[260] Cumulatively, these references to dreams suggest that dreams function to prolong and reimagine our understandings of places, bodies, and time. To awaken from a dream, then, is to expose its fictions, to overcome disenchantment, and significantly, to change.[261]

To conclude this area of analysis, I return to the figure of a waking dead. Harbingers of death and occupied by future generations placed in the realm of dreams, the waking dead hold the unique ability to see and make sense of the "strangeness" of their non/existence in the current moment. As children, a waking dead adhere to many of the associations we make with the mother-child relationship. That Thunberg constitutes a waking dead by compelling youths worldwide to unite behind and listen to the science is not insignificant. As I argued above, Thunberg constructs the identity of a Mother Science that is seemingly dead/dying in the strange dreamworld of the climate crisis. To overcome this existential emergency, children become deadened and gain political agency through death itself because, as the science clearly states, they are running out of time.

Children of Time

As the "Greta Effect" continues to permeate public discourses worldwide and compel youths—and older generations—to join her in uniting behind the science, the language of time seems to bind and sustain them. Thunberg's references to time animate the larger themes of crisis, science, and children that I analyzed above and reveal a familiar yet strange relationship with death; present generations are actively killing future generations. The generations of today are calling forth the deaths of tomorrow, including their own. In this way, time exposes death as a power that might act on us and suggests that if we do not waste time nor let time run out, we might spend our time living in ways that liberate future generations.

"The time to act is now,"[262] resounds Thunberg. Beginning nearly 150 Instagram posts with "today," Thunberg uses anaphora to call forth the future into the present and reinforces how action now constitutes future living/dying. "*Today* we raise our voices . . . "[263]; *"Today* hundreds of thousands of people were once again climate striking all over the world, demanding an end to fossil finance!"[264]; "*Today* we are 636 young people . . . "[265]; "*Today* is overshoot day for Sweden . . . [I]f everyone lived like we do, the world would have already used up its annual resources. For the rest of the year we aren't just stealing the resources from future generations, but also from the present most affected people from the most affected areas."[266] Thunberg argues, "There is simply not enough time to wait for us to grow up and become the ones in charge."[267]

Indeed, following the release of *The Climate Book* in February 2023*,* a book "based on the current best available science" and a collection of essays Thunberg edited and compiled, Thunberg introduced the hashtag #tomorrowistoolate into many of her Instagram posts and social media activism. #tomorrowistoolate reasserts that the future is not some far-off and unrelatable experience. The future is always already the experience of time today and now. Today, Thunberg looks to science – the figure of care, trustworthiness, and protector from harm – to help her make sense of the existential emergencies in her life because if science has the answers, and science is dying, then for Thunberg, so is she, and so are the rest of us. In this way, Thunberg compels others to listen and unite alongside her because the threat of death and non/existence transcends time. A death in the future is a death today and a constant state of becoming death, always.

In conclusion, I have argued that Greta Thunberg's public address exposes how death operates as a site of persuasion. Thunberg's climate change activism reveals the transformative potential of youths as rhetorical authorities on matters of life and death because, as children of

time, young activists can call upon their future deaths and embody them in the present. A primary rhetorical strategy of death, then, is to constitute bodies, identities, and ways of knowing/imagining the world. While the themes of crisis, science, children, and time are not reliant on one another, nor are they always explicit in their reckoning with matters of life and death, these topoi work together to demonstrate how death constitutes the material, spatial, and temporal matterings of everyday life. Thunberg's overarching rhetoric of death across these themes is her treatment of death as a space of inbetweenness and a process of becoming.

CHAPTER THREE: AUTUMN PELTIER AND THE DEATH OF KINSHIP

In April 2019, former Anishinabek Nation Grand Council Chief Glen Hare appointed 14-year-old Autumn Peltier as Chief Water Commissioner. "Autumn has extensive nibi giikendaaswim (water knowledge)," announced Chief Glen Hare, and "she has been bringing global attention to the water issues in our country for a few years now. It is an honour to have her be our next Chief Water Commissioner."[268] Inaugurated on March 24, 2007, former Grand Council Chief John Beaucage announced the creation of the Anishinabek Women's Water Commission (WWC) along with a mandate "to provide advice for Anishinabek Nation Leadership and citizens on water and Great Lakes management issues through dialogue and information exchange."[269] The WWC comprises five Anishinabe-kwe[270] representatives from First Nation communities within the Anishinabek Nation territory and includes one Chief Commissioner and four Commissioners for each Anishinabek Region. Biidaasige-ba ("The one who comes with the light"), or Josephine Mandamin, an Elder from Wikwemikong Unceded Nation, served as the founding Chief Commissioner from the inception of the WWC until the day she died on February 22, 2019. "Grandmother Water Walker" or "Grandmother Josephine" to most but "Great Auntie" to Peltier, Josephine's death called forth new leadership in raising awareness around water issues and sharing traditional knowledge, teaching, and values.

Peltier was "shocked" by her appointment and unsure if she could continue her late great aunt's work. Still, after consulting with Elders in her family and community, she accepted.[271] Indeed, Peltier emerged as a formidable and highly regarded leader who, despite her age, was already a notable activist worldwide. By the time she turned eighteen, Peltier had been nominated for the International Children's Peace Prize three times, was the recipient of

numerous international and national awards, and was the feature of a documentary and multiple books. Before taking on the title and responsibility of Chief Water Commissioner, much of the world knew Peltier as the "Water Warrior" who addressed the United Nations about the issue of contaminated water on reserves in Canada. Many Canadians recognized Peltier as the teen who "challenged" Prime Minister Trudeau—a public "scolding" that gained her international media attention.[272] To Anishinabek, Peltier's activism responds to an ancestral call and cultural responsibility for water and reflects the role of traditional keepers and spiritual protectors of water.[273] Peltier claims these sacred duties to protect water throughout her activism and is steadfast in extending Indigenous teachings to her audiences, namely, "water is life," "water is sacred," and "water is the lifeblood of Mother Earth." Inherent to these teachings is Peltier's appeal to acknowledge the personhood of our waters, to protect them as we would human rights, and to come to know them as kin.[274]

In this chapter, I argue that Peltier articulates climate change through kinship relationships that are dying and that a critical reading of her advocacy for water as a living, spirited text contributes to our understanding of death as a rhetorical strategy, emphasizes an Indigenous understanding of a "grievable body," and helps explain how discourses of life and death compel an audience to live differently. I begin by highlighting how Peltier positions herself as Indigenous, woman, and chief, identities that demand a sacred responsibility for teaching ways of being and knowing that ensure a living and thriving future for *all her relations*. I then organize this chapter around the Indigenous concept of kinship as a context for my critical reading of two larger themes in Peltier's activism: aliveness and responsibility. First, I describe how Peltier extends a "grammar of animacy" and characterizes water as spirited, alive, and, significantly, as woman. Second, I explore how Peltier leverages her ascribed and avowed

identity as a "Water Warrior" to refocus attention on the ethics of responsibility, care, and protection of ongoing relationships in a way that calls upon two Indigenous figures: Water Keepers and Water Walkers. I conclude by discussing the rhetorical significance of dying and disentangled kinship relationships by considering how "keeping kinship" is a mode of "keeping time" and, therefore, protecting Indigenous futures.

"I am Indigenous."

Shifting back and forth between Ojibwe and English, Autumn Peltier often offers a traditional and formal hello and identifies herself by her spirit name, her dodem, and her community.[275] "Bozhoo! My Anishinaabe[276] Name is Mskwaagiizo-Kwe (Redmoon Woman), I am Migizi dodem (Eagle Clan), I am also known as Autumn Peltier. I come from the Wiikwemkoong Unceded Anishnaabé Territory also known as Wiky on Manitoulin Island. I am 16 years old . . . "[277] And on most occasions, Peltier lays forth the key tenets of her advocacy. "My job has been to give water a voice, because we need to protect water for our future and futures to come," Peltier writes.[278] Then, she claims her political authority to speak on behalf of water issues by generally stating, "I am the Anishinabek Nation Chief Water Commissioner. The Anishinabek Nation is a political advocate for 39 First Nations across Ontario, Canada."[279] After positioning herself across these identities, Peltier offers "water teachings" and concludes with a song offering for water. Following a similar form and function throughout her activism, Peltier has captivated her audiences with her almost lyrical ritual of introducing herself, her beliefs, and her activism. Though Peltier has matured physically and as an orator, her ceremonial dress, tender yet piercing gaze, and unwavering commitment to advocating for water depict a peculiar and evocative power as a youth.

Over the course of her life as an activist, Peltier has enchanted the world with her unflinching determination, disarming wisdom, and enduring commitment to protecting water. Born on September 27, 2004, Peltier, as one biography describes, "seemingly came out of the womb already set on her path: to advocate for people's right to clean water, the rights of water itself, and the political recognition of the interdependency of the two."[280] This depiction suggests that an activist of Peltier's character and impact is only understood as a spontaneous and extraordinary phenomenon. However, Peltier's trajectory to becoming a revered activist becomes visible when considering her avowed identities and the breadth of her cultural, epistemological, and political orientations. Peltier identifies as an Anishinaabe-kwe (Anishinaabe woman), meaning that living in the waters of her mother's womb profoundly impacts her personal and political identity as a protector of water. The Anishinaabe people believe that water has a spirit and flows through all living beings, connecting them in a sacred web of life. As a young Anishinaabe girl from the Wiikwemkoong First Nation on Manitoulin Island in Ontario, Canada, Peltier was born into a community, worldview, and family that nurtured a spiritual and cultural connection to water. Considering water a living entity deserving of reverence and protection, Anishinaabe culture regards water, like women, as the giver of life and the source of all creation. This worldview shapes Peltier's belief in the interconnectedness of all life forms and constitutes a shared responsibility to protect the environment for future generations. Recognizing how Peltier's Anishinaabe perspective incites protecting water as a means of safeguarding life itself helps explain the clarity and dedication to her advocacy.

We learn from Stephanie, Peltier's mother, that her lineage includes "a lot of fighters, a lot of warriors . . . she comes from a line of chiefs."[281] For this reason, Stephanie is unsurprised that her daughter "is who she is" but tenderly notes that "it's hard work. Sometimes it can be

challenging for her because, you know, she is a kid still."[282] Despite coming from a long line of "fighters," Peltier shares that kids from her community bullied her physically and emotionally because of the attention and opportunities she received for her activism. Stephanie's commentary about Peltier's innate capacity to serve as a water protector implies that being a fighter, warrior, and chief is somehow at odds with being a kid. Peltier is explicit in articulating this tension when positioning herself as a youth.

Peltier's identity as a youth is complex throughout her discourse. Many of Peltier's speaking engagements and media attention specifically call upon her rhetorical authority as a child, teen, or youth. Although Peltier does not ignore this part of her identity, her discourse highlights a tension about whether youths should be responsible for making change.[283] Put another way, Peltier simultaneously embraces and challenges the idea that youths are the only hope for a thriving future. For example, in an earlier Instagram post, Peltier exclaimed, "We are the future and the adults hold our future in their hands . . . we have a voice, and we will use it!!!!"[284] On another occasion, Peltier asserted, "I'm 12 years old, I shouldn't have to be up here fighting for our water. I'm here representing all children, as we are the ones inheriting this world."[285] Speaking on behalf of children, Peltier asserts, "No child should grow up not knowing what clean water is or never knowing what running water is."[286] Again, in an Instagram post Peltier writes, "Reflecting on what's happening all over the world, so many things happening to children all over the world . . . #forthechildren"[287] These examples demonstrate how Peltier's advocacy is deeply rooted in an ethic of shared responsibility and care for others, regardless of the perception that youths are typically cared for by adults. Indeed, that Peltier identifies herself as the Chief Water Commissioner, a Water Warrior/Protector, and also as a youth is a testament to this point.

Despite the manifold ways Peltier identifies as a youth, she believes her age is the reason she was given a speaking platform in the first place. In an interview, Peltier shared, "There are people that say, 'she can't do this, what she's saying doesn't matter because she's only fifteen years old.' But I think the only reason I got this much attention is because of how old I am."[288] Regardless of how Peltier perceives why she has a speaking platform, she joins millions of youths worldwide who are responding to social and ecological injustices. Peltier argues, "Things like [water advisories] shouldn't be happening. There's a lot of youth becoming activists. We are realizing what kind of future the adults today are giving us for tomorrow."[289] Herein lies the bedrock of Peltier's activism: the health of water today calls forth a future that is suffering, uncared for, and dead. Indeed, there is no future, no beginning—no creation story—without water, and Peltier is uniquely qualified to speak on the aliveness, the spirit, and the death of waters.

Expanding on her avowed identity as a young Anishinaabe-kwe, Peltier points to her upbringing and several critical experiences that shaped her political identity as an activist. In addition to Peltier's great-aunt, Josephine Mandamin, a renowned Water Walker, Elder, and advocate for the preservation and healing of water bodies, Peltier's mother, Stephanie, played a vital role in nurturing her exposure to traditional knowledge, ceremony, and Anishinaabe commitments to caring for the natural world. During Peltier's formative years, she would travel with her mother to ceremonies, visit Elders, see healers, and meet with knowledge keepers.[290] Reflecting on the sacrifices her mother made to model "what it is to be an Anishinaabe woman," Peltier understood that her mother's goal was "to pass on the teachings so they would not be lost, so we could still be who we are, stand up for our rights, use our voices, protect the lands, protect the waters and protect the treaties."[291] Peltier describes how her mother raised her and her sisters

"to know our ways so we could carry things on when she was gone." [292] This upbringing shapes how Peltier relates to, identifies with, and takes responsibility for climate change issues. For example, while attending a water ceremony with her mother in Serpent River First Nation, Peltier, who was eight years old at the time, went to the bathroom and was surprised to find the walls covered with signs and post-it notes reading "Not for consumption," "Don't touch or drink the water," and "Boil water advisory."[293] Confused that not everyone can access safe drinking water, this experience fundamentally altered Peltier's sense of self, purpose, and identity as a water advocate. Following this experience, Peltier "began speaking for clean water for indigenous communities [because] seeing little kids run around not knowing what clean drinking water from a tap . . . really bothered [her]."[294] Indeed, Peltier asserts that this was the day that her mother told her "what it meant to be born a woman and as an Anishinaabe-Kwe."[295]

Peltier indicates that her time in Serpent First River Nation is the origin of her advocacy, but she did not garner global recognition for several years. In November 2015, Peltier was among sixty-four youths aged nine to twelve from over twenty countries who traveled to the Children's Climate Change Conference in Sweden to speak about how a changing environment affects youths. Peltier, eleven, flew by plane for the first time and delivered a speech about the importance of water, broadly, and to Anishinabe-Kwe, specifically. Peltier proclaimed, "Our water is getting sick."[296] Media accounts of Peltier's speech praised her for opening with an Ojibwe song that honored her Great Aunt Josephine, and reports noted how the two Canadian delegates "participated most," were "amazing," and in "high demand with local media."[297] Though this is the first documented speaking engagement of Peltier's activism, we learn from a Canadian regional newspaper that she was recommended to represent Canada because of prior speaking experiences and engagement in outdoor education and cultural programs.[298] "They

recommended [Peltier and Pheasant (the second Canadian delegate)] because they're good role models and do a lot of things," Peltier's mother shared in an interview. "They both belong to a provincial running team, do public speaking and speak their language. They're both into the culture; they're dancers and participate in ceremonies."[299] As I describe in subsequent sections, Peltier's identity as an Indigenous girl with deep cultural and ceremonial experiences anchors her positionality as a water advocate and youth activist and constitutes her rhetorical authority to speak on matters of life and death.

Peltier's political presence escalated after confronting Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, a rhetorical relationship I describe in more detail below. Local, national, and international media placed special attention on the "teen" that was "challenging Trudeau" and "fighting to protect Canada's water."[300] Furthermore, global recognition of Peltier's political presence mounted, as did her public appearances and invitations to speak to broader audiences, including on World Water Day at the United Nations General Assembly on March 22, 2018. Peltier's appointment as Chief Water Commissioner the following year reinforced her rising political power and authority to speak on behalf of Anishinabek communities, despite being fourteen years old. As Chief Water Commissioner, Peltier was "called to action."[301] In addition to advocating for the Great Lakes, Peltier understood her role to mean "having a say at the table when decisions are made for [the Great Lakes]."[302] Moreover, media and news reporting seem to take Peltier's role as a Chief Water Commissioner seriously in that references to her by title often overshadow her identity as a youth.[303]

Throughout her activism, Peltier is careful to complicate notions of Indigeneity that function to flatten or depict an inherently impoverished and dying identity or way of life.

Highlighting her privilege as someone with access to both an Anishinaabe worldview and clean drinking water, Peltier asserts:

> Growing up and understanding how everything is connected to water, and how vital our waterways are is amazing in itself. My people still live off the land, we eat wild game, we harvest medicines from the lands, our waterways are vital in giving millions clean drinking water. Unlike several Canadian Indigenous communities across Canada and United States, and international countries in Third World conditions where they don't have access to clean drinking water, I can't even imagine what it is like to be dependent on bottled water.[304]

That Peltier identifies as an Anishinaabe girl *in relation* to a place—Manitoulin Island—is more than a lens through which to see the world, but also an experience of connecting and living in ways that align with her advocacy. "I am from this land," Peltier explains, "My ancestors are buried here on this land. This land is our land and it's part of me and part of everything I am and everything I do."[305] In this way, Peltier gives her audience a glimpse into living otherwise, living wisely, knowing a place through kinship, life, and death, and imagining a future of health and wellbeing that is inherently bound to the land and the significance of place.

How Peltier positions herself as an Anishinaabe girl with socio-political authority within the Anishinaabe cultural context and kinship responsibility to *all her relations* lays the foundation of my analysis of death in this chapter. Peltier is transparent and honest about her sense of belonging and responsibility to continue in the flow of her ancestors and her Great Aunt Josephine as a protector, advocate, and voice for water. Her appointment as Chief Water Commissioner reinforces her personal commitments and authorizes her to promote action with a degree of influence. Moreover, Peltier's epistemological standpoint of advocating *in relation* to water shapes how she constitutes living and dying. In this way, Peltier communicates climate change through kinship relationships and calls upon her audience to come to know the world

through kinship systems where false promises function as the face of death and shared responsibility functions as the face of kinship.

Kinship Systems. Climate Systems.

In 2021, Peltier contributed an essay alongside a collection of Indigenous activists, leaders, and authors envisioning Indigenous futures.[306] In her essay, "In the Blink of an Eye," Peltier narrates a blend of personal origin stories, present reflections, and future imaginations of her life and career as a water advocate. Though the essay certainly features Peltier's commitment to water-rights activism, the reader comes to understand her advocacy through stories about her relationships with her future children, mother, Great-Aunt Josephine, ancestors, Indigenous peoples, and water (to name a few). Visualizing herself as a forty-six-year-old sitting in her office "watching a thunderstorm roll in," Peltier first reflects on "the huge responsibility that [Anishinaabe-Kwe] carried" because of their role to "nurture and teach the young girls" about their sacred connection with water and the need to protect their relationship with her.[307] Peltier envisions having "dedicated all of [her] education and [her] work to ensuring that we have clean drinking water and that we keep our Great Lakes from harm."[308] Indeed, over the course of Peltier's life, she focused on "gaining connections," "helping," "supporting," and "protecting" Indigenous peoples in Canada who were suffering from intergenerational traumas and loss of language, culture, and ceremony. Peltier also extended this care and protection to the waters and natural environment from "profiteering" and "destruction." At stake in Peltier's telling of the past from the future is "that our voices would be heard and the future of water, the future of our Indigenous ways, would survive all this human-made destruction."[309] The pathway for ensuring these futures manifest is through kinship, and woven throughout Peltier's discourse is an appeal

to multiple responsibilities for one another's safety, wellbeing, and self-determination across human and non-human relationships.

In what follows, I argue that Peltier communicates climate change through kinship relationships, enlarging her audiences' understanding of life/living and death/dying. I utilize Potawatomi environmental justice scholar Kyle Whyte's theories of kinship relationships and epistemologies of crisis and coordinated action to analyze Peltier's articulation of climate change. I begin with a general review of the concept of kinship and move to describe how Whyte situates kinship and climate change at the intersection of Anishinaabe and environmental justice issues to set the context for how I examine Peltier's discourse. Then, I discuss the differences between epistemologies of crisis and epistemologies of coordination to reveal how Peltier presents her audience with both "the face of death" (broken promises) and "the face of kinship" (mutual responsibilities) to transform her audiences' unjust responses to coordinated responses to change. Throughout this section, I emphasize how Peltier positions climate change as a symptom of broken relationships between humans, non-human species, and spirit. By highlighting the importance of relationships and relational qualities that animate climate change, Peltier advocates for an ethic of shared responsibility. I conclude with a discussion of how Peltier's discursive construction of kinship relationships demands that audiences recognize their responsibility for matters of life and death.

Changes in Kinship. Changes in Climate.

Invoking kinship is to establish, organize, and normalize relationships. In this way, kinship is a rhetorical product of significance and the principal focus of this section.[310] Conceptions of kinship are manifold and represent diverse and nuanced perspectives of Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultures worldwide.[311] Of interest to my analysis, however, are

perspectives that emphasize a holistic understanding of relationships that challenge Western notions of individualism, nuclear family structures, race, ethnicity, nationality, or bloodlines.[312] Chamoru communications scholar Tiara Na'puti, for example, describes how in the culture of her people, "kinships are forged through ancestry or systems of poksai (to nurture/welcome) . . . we understand ourselves as having full responsibility to ocean, land, and people."[313] Understood in this way, kinship, for Na'puti, functions to nurture, promote accountability, and challenge erasure in the field of rhetorical studies and beyond. Judith Butler depicts kinship as "a set of practices that institutes relationships of various kinds which negotiate the reproduction of life and the demands of death."[314] Consequently, kinship practices "address fundamental forms of human [and non-human] dependency, which may include birth, child-rearing, relations of emotional dependency and support, generational ties, illness, dying, and death (to name a few)."[315] For Kyle Whyte, kinship relationships "fall under the category of relationships grounded in responsibility" and responsibility "refers to bonds of mutual caretaking and mutual guardianship.[316] In essence, kinship relationships incite interdependence and responsiveness to changes that impact the wellbeing and self-determination of members in a kinship system.[317] Important to my analysis, Whyte argues that Indigenous persons articulate changes in kinship relationships to make sense of climate change.[318]

An Indigenous orientation to climate change, for Whyte, is inherently connected to the coordination or violation of kinship relationships. Whyte argues, "Our ancient stories speak of extreme weather events, seasonality, trends of environmental change, migration across different ecosystems, and humans' capacity to influence entire regions through fire, flood control, trade, among other collective actions."[319] In this way, these creation stories and political systems offer teachings about how societies can be as resilient and adaptive as possible to constant change, and

they do this by focusing on the relational qualities across "diverse beings and entities beyond humans, such as plants or water, who also participate in the relational qualities."[320] In what follows, I demonstrate how the conceptual framework of kinship relationships as a solution to climate change is the organizing principle of Peltier's activism.

Peltier seldom names climate change as the site of her advocacy. For example, "climate change" emerges only four times out of four hundred and twenty Instagram posts (two being reposts from other authors) and twice across the fifteen speeches included in this study. Instead, Peltier extends Anishinaabe knowledges about the importance of water and focuses her audiences' attention on relationships. When Peltier's Great Auntie Josephine created the Mother Earth Water Walks, for example, she did so because "the Elders began to see changes in the lands, medicines, animals and waters," according to Peltier.[321] Alongside her family, Peltier advocates for water because of these changing relationships. On one occasion, Peltier promoted a panel discussion at Harvard University, stating, "Happy to discuss climate change, justice and resilience in today's environments and explore its affect [sic] on our land as #indigenous people."[322] In this example, Peltier immediately pivots to actions of care and focuses on the relationship between land and people by stating, "Mother Earth gives us so much . . . and we take. We should act more on caring for Nibi & Mother Earth. We need to give back . . . better. We can not [sic] go backwards. But we can go forward . . . better."[323] Peltier made a similar transition when speaking on World Water Day in 2018 at the United Nations, an event that launched an "International Decade for Action."

In her speech, Peltier shared a "snapshot" of where she would be in 2028, which "doesn't feel good in terms of pollution, climate change, pipelines braking, recycling, sanitation, poverty, hunger, and illnesses related to these issues."[324] Peltier then describes how she can only help

mitigate these issues by "helping my auntie educate others and share a story of how we need to respect Mother Earth and need to honor our sacred water."[325] Again, Peltier focuses on cultivating relationships with elders, the land/Mother Earth, and water. As Whyte notes, "This is not to claim that kinship-based approaches fail to value scientific reasoning and evidence. Science certainly has a place . . . Yet the kinship-based approaches understand future generations as beings or entities—whether human or non-human—that deserve our best efforts to protect valued kinship relationships."[326] While Peltier acknowledges climate change as a significant concern, she prioritizes relationships and responsibility as the primary sites of restoration in the past, present, and future.

The concept of kinship carries across time and place and reinforces Peltier's argument that "everything is connected to this issue of clean water, and this impacts our health and well-being."[327] Peltier continuously points to her ancestors to emphasize the significance of water and the need to protect its sacredness. "All water is original from time immemorial." Peltier explained to her audience at the U.N. Global Landscapes Forum, "To think our ancestors drank from this same water thousands of years before us."[328] Here, water maintains a relationship across generations. In contrast, Peltier reminds her audience that "There are children born into a world living off bottled water, living off a certain amount to do everyday things," which matters because, without water, children lose their ability to be in relationship with the land or their ancestors.[329] As I detailed above, Peltier's personal history and cultural connection to water means she understands the world as inherently bound to the land and the significance of place. In this way, access to clean drinking water is as much about the health and wellbeing of the individual as it is about the health and wellbeing of one's kinship relationships.

Peltier's consistent reference to herself as an ancestor in the future further accentuates how kinship appeals transcend time and space. For example, Peltier argues "We need to protect the habitants around all waters across the world. We need to remember that our ancestors' prayers are still protecting this land, and that we are our ancestors' hope. One day I will be an ancestor, and I want my descendants to know I used my voice so they can have a future."[330] Across these examples, Peltier uses water to connect present, past, and future generations and constitutes relationships and mutual responsibilities between them. Moreover, Peltier promotes an epistemological shift in responding to change by reconnecting with Anishinaabe knowledges and practices. This shift exemplifies what Whyte describes as an epistemology of coordination and functions to challenge epistemologies of crisis as appropriate and just responses to climate change.

Epistemologies of Crisis. Epistemologies of Coordination.

Epistemologies of crisis and coordination are additional lenses through which to see how Peltier constitutes kinship in her activism. Knowing the world through crisis is to experience the present as new, unprecedented, and urgent. Knowing the world through coordination is to always already expect change in generative and responsive ways. Whyte argues "against crisis epistemology" by expanding on Indigenous scholarship that has explored the temporal assumptions behind settler colonial power, such as "firsting," "settler time," and "settler colonial present."[331] Joining scholars who expose liberal assumptions about the settler state's primacy in national origin narratives, Whyte focuses on crisis and its role in validating oppression and presuming unprecedentedness and urgency. In contrast, an epistemology of coordination emphasizes the importance of moral bonds (kinship relationships) for responding to constant change. Epistemologies of crisis and coordination, then, are crucial for understanding Indigenous

knowledges, culture, and society, as "they can transform unjust and immoral responses to real or perceived crises."[332]

How Peltier embodies the principles of an epistemology of coordination is manifold. Though Peltier certainly refers to various crises throughout her activism, her approach to mitigating unjust responses to these crises models a deep understanding of interconnectedness, mutual responsibilities, and the importance of nourishing relationships. Some examples include how Peltier recognizes interdependence and the knowledge that humans are interconnected with nature guides her actions and advocacy ("We need our land to live and we can't be here without the land and the water. We are all connected."[333]); emphasizes mutual responsibilities among individuals, communities, and the environment to protect the natural world, which in turn, supports human life ("For once, let the land and animals win in this long dispute. We depend on the earth, animals, and plants. We need the water protected."[334]); practices care, reciprocity, and consent for the environment and all its non/human inhabitants (Our water deserves to be treated as human with human rights. We need to acknowledge our waters with personhood so we could protect our waters."[335]); seeks long-term solutions that promote resilience for future generations ("I want my descendants to know I used my voice so they can have a future."[336]); and honoring Anishinaabe knowledge and practices that have a long history of sustainability and resilience ("Everything is connected to this issue of clean water, and this impacts our health and well-being. [A] story shared by my grandfather [about a word], in our language that says 'Ode' nid.' We use this word when we say we are going to town or the city, but it really means where your heart is. My heart is in our land, in our water."[337]) Peltier embraces the principles of an epistemology of coordination and integrates them into her activism to foster interconnectedness and promote collective and coordinated responses to the emergent challenges of climate change.

A compelling part of Whyte's explication of these epistemologies emerges in what he describes as a notable story of history and futurity in Anishinaabe intellectual traditions.[338] Commonly known as the "Seven Fires Prophesy," the story, through the telling of seven or eight fires representative of a different era, focuses on the persistence and flourishing of Anishinaabe peoples amidst various challenges, including social and environmental issues. One prime example is the rise of the settler population in North America. In the face of these challenges, Anishinaabe people are expected to make critical decisions about interpreting the newcomers' intentions, discerning the "face of kinship" and allyship from the "face of death."[339] The story warns that superficial kinship can mask the true face of death, and acceptance of false promises can lead to suffering. Potawatomi and Indigenous Studies scholar Blaire Topash-Caldwell expands on the teachings of the Seven Fire Prophesy by noting that the overall intention is to offer instructions on "how to live a good life, lest humans become greedy, violent, and wasteful—qualities which will inevitably lead to the end of the world."[340] Ultimately, choosing an Indigenous future rooted in safety, wellbeing, and self-determination requires Indigenous peoples to follow their ancestors' paths and choose spirituality over consumerism.[341] To further describe how Peltier communicates climate change through kinship relationships, I now analyze how "the faces of death" and "the faces of kinship" emerge in her activism.

The Faces of Death (False Promises). The Faces of Kinship (Shared Responsibility).

A year after traveling to Sweden, Peltier famously told Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, "I am very unhappy with the choices you've made . . . The pipelines."[342] Trudeau replied to a tearful Peltier, "I will protect the water," and his "broken promise" remains a focus of Peltier's activism to this day. Indeed, exploring this particular rhetorical situation reveals how the event catalyzed Peltier's rhetorical relationship with Trudeau over time. The following

extended example demonstrates how Trudeau initially presented himself as the "face of kinship" by aligning with Peltier and committing himself to "protect the water." As Peltier reminds her audiences in the years that follow, however, Trudeau never made good on his promise, and, as a result, she unmasked him to reveal the face of death.

Accompanying a Chief and an Elder, Peltier was meant to give Canadian Prime Minister Trudeau a water bundle during the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) annual winter gathering. She prepared a speech, and her mother spent a reported 18 hours making her water dress for the occasion.[343] Though the schedule didn't allow for Peltier to deliver her speech in person, media distributed copies of her handwritten address to Trudeau. Instructed to give the prime minister the gift as she approached, Peltier took the opportunity to confront him. Though the exchange was captured on a live broadcast, the audience did not hear Peltier or Trudeau speak. In an interview directly after, Peltier recounted what she said, and the reporter published the full text of her handwritten speech, which the media recirculated. Moreover, public and political responses to the exchange recirculated on personal and public social media accounts. For example, renowned Métis artist Christi Belcourt noted her frustration with the AFN for not giving Peltier time to speak, stating, "What a huge loss that we didn't take the time to listen to this young girl speak as what she has to say is powerful."[344]

A photograph of the exchange between Peltier and Trudeau captures Peltier gently resting her hands across her heart and chest as she gazes softly towards the floor with knit brows and clenched cheeks. Trudeau, leaning slightly towards Peltier and looking upon her as he might look upon a child who just scraped their knee—tenderly, but not overly concerned—is holding the bundle she prepared for the ceremony: a small copper cup, some asemaa/tobacco (an offering to honor flowing waters and animals), and a red cloth, all nested in a small copper bowl.[345]

Captioned "Autumn Peltier, 12, cries as she hands gifts to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, with Elder Elmer Couchene and AFN National Chief Perry Bellegarde trying to comfort her at a ceremony in Gatineau, Que. on Dec. 6, 2016," the image recirculated for quite some time throughout Canadian news sources, and it did not always accompany coverage of Peltier's work. Instead, media utilized the image of Peltier confronting Trudeau as a visual appeal for focusing on broader Indigenous social and environmental issues.[346]

In Peltier's speech, she acknowledges the lifetimes her elders have spent advocating for Mother Earth and though she has "been in exsistance [sic] for billions of years . . . it has taken us less than a century to destroy her."[347] Expressing disappointment "when I hear broken promises made by our federal government," Peltier challenges Trudeau's recent decision to approve multiple pipeline expansions.[348] Arguing that pipelines pose a danger to water because "after time pipelines erode, they rot, and they break down," Peltier's message is forceful about where she stands on the issue.[349] Noting that climate change "is probably going to be here a few more decades," Peltier reasons that "we have a few more decades to work together."[350] "Tomorrow is a new day," Peltier reminds Trudeau. "We can try to sit together and work together to discuss other ways we can save the environment," Peltier continues with heightened urgency, "Our people and our land have been through enough . . . It's time for humanity to stop terrorizing Mother Earth and give her time to heal."[351] The exchange between Peltier and Trudeau, the recirculation of her speech, and the visual appeal of Peltier's grief in "the face of death" anchored Peltier's activism for the general public and shaped her relationship with Trudeau for years to come.

This extended example locates the faces of death and kinship in multiple ways. First, in an interview following the encounter, Peltier indicated that she was unsure if Trudeau would

keep his promise to protect the water. As Whyte described, the Indigenous story depicts that encounters with the faces of death and the faces of kinship represent significant decisions for Indigenous peoples. In the beginning, Peltier had not decided if Trudeau was wearing the mask of kinship, but over time, she made it clear that he had yet to make good on his word, thereby depicting him as the face of death. Put another way, Trudeau's unfulfilled vow to protect the water will lead to suffering and death.

Additionally, across Peltier's Instagram posts and public speaking events, she calls out Trudeau over fifty times and continues to remind him and her audiences of his broken promise to this day. "Who will speak first?" Peltier asks @justinpjtrudeau across multiple posts. "His promise . . . Currently broken 5 years later . . . Actions speak . . . Actions need to begin. Promises need to be upheld."[352] Peltier's commitment to reminding her audience, and Trudeau, that broken promises are not tolerated also extends to larger political structures. For example, in 2022, Peltier posted a video of muddy water reminiscent of chocolate milk flowing from a kitchen tap with a stream of text reading, "Did you have a drink of water today? Perhaps you cooked and needed water. Maybe you had a shower. This is the type of water on more than 100 indigenous reservations in Canada. We are denied the right to clean water every day. It has been more than 40 years." Peltier's caption read, "Why are we still waiting for Canadas leaders to speak about this? Do we remember Justin Trudeaus promise to @autumn.peltier years ago? The promise to restore clean water to indigenous reservations? Who's going to speak first? @justinpjtrudeau @jagmeetsingh The blood of my people is on your hands."[353] Taken together, Peltier depicts Trudeau, specifically, and Canadian leadership, broadly, as the faces of death that undermine Indigenous safety, self-determination, and wellbeing, and in so doing, she compels her audience to choose the faces of kinship and coming to know the world as kin.

Coming to Know the World as Kin: A Coordinated Responsibility for Life and Death

The faces of kinship promote the critical tenets of kinship relationships: care, consent, and reciprocity.[354] Amongst the numerous occasions that Peltier unmasks Trudeau as the face of death, she simultaneously extends the faces of kinship. For example, on World Water Day 2022, Peltier encouraged her followers to join her: "Let's spread awareness together . . . [we] are working together to spread more conversation. Water is life . . . When we stand together as one, we are one voice and one nation."[355] In this example, Peltier constitutes a moral bond and expresses mutual responsibility to care for water. On another occasion, Peltier paints Queen Elizabeth II in direct contrast to Trudeau. Featuring an image of a letter from Buckingham Palace that reads: "Dear Miss Peltier, the Queen has asked me to thank you for your letter . . . and to say that Her Majesty has taken careful note of the views you express regarding water rights for the indigenous people of Canada."[356] Here, Peltier tags Trudeau and asks why he cannot "respond and recognize" her calls but Her Majesty can offer a response that "gives her hope."[357] Significantly, Peltier's message demonstrated that Queen Elizabeth II *cared* (she was taking water issues under "careful" consideration), that Queen Elizabeth II was engaging in reciprocity (she responded to a letter that Peltier sent personally), and that Queen Elizabeth II was not turning away from the opportunity to be in relationship with Peltier, specifically, and water issues, broadly.

I contend that these calls (and "callouts") emphasize "coming to know the world as kin" and suggest an epistemology of coordination. While not an ultimate solution, an epistemology of coordination can help address the challenges faced by people worldwide.[358] Throughout her activism, Peltier harnesses kinship to generate coordinated responses. More than a "calling out" of particular faces, such as Prime Minister Trudeau or Queen Elizabeth II, Peltier constitutes

kinship relationships by "calling in." Put another way, Peltier's self-image depicts the face of kinship. Peltier coordinates action to achieve her goals by calling upon her audiences to come to know the world as kin as she does. For example, upon being awarded the Sovereign's Medal for Volunteers, Peltier consistently reminds her followers of her primary exigencies: "I do this for My Great auntie Josephine Mandamin and her commitment to Nibi, for my people, for our future, for Nibi and Mother Earth, it's a way of life #Waterissacred #waterislife #weallneedwatertosurvive."[359] Peltier also appeals to her audiences by generating a sense of connection, kinship, and togetherness with them.

Upon receiving an honorary doctorate from Royal Roads University, Peltier posted, "While we will be in Victoria we will connect with the waters and our land. It's important to care for our water. Without water there is no life. #waterislife."[360] That Peltier communicates climate change through kinship relationships is significant because repairing our relationships—with one another, broadly, and with *water*, specifically—becomes the pathway to thriving, living futures. Coming together, then, is a strategy to mitigate the death and destruction of kinship, and climate, systems. Throughout Peltier's activism, she calls upon her audiences to imagine themselves as "one," "together," and "whole." In 2019, Peltier addressed the U.N. Global Landscapes Forum and introduced a series of phrases that permeated her Instagram and speeches for the next several years:

> We need to join forces with all nations regardless of colour and nationality. Mother Earth does not discriminate, and we need Mother Earth to live, and we need the waters. *When we stand together as one, we are one voice and one nation, and together as one we are stronger.* We have this one chance to save our planet. Let's do this for our great, great grandchildren.[361]

My reading of this passage suggests that Peltier's plea to come "together as one" reinforces the notion that keeping kinship is vital to her understanding of a living *water* and, therefore, a living

future. By communicating climate change through kinship relationships, Peltier's rhetoric encourages new ways of living that demand critical decisions in the face of false promises and shared responsibilities. In the following analysis sections, I demonstrate how themes of aliveness, responsibility, and togetherness animate Peltier's charge to come to know the world as kin, thereby ensuring Indigenous futures. By constituting a living, spirited water, Peltier gives her audiences something to care for and casts them as always already in relation with one another.

Spirited Life. Spirited Death.

Ne – be Gee Zah – gay – e – goo
Gee Me – gwetch – wayn ne – me – goo
Gee Zah Wayn ne – me – goo

Water, we love you.
We thank you.
We respect you.

— *Nibi Song*[362]

Though the ecological function of water may be its most prominent feature to many climate change activists, Peltier's advocacy demonstrates how water's spiritual function is its most significant. As I foreshadowed above, water, in the context of Peltier's activism and identity as an Anishinaabe girl, is origin and future, life and death, material and sacred. Water is the being that makes and breaks, and breaking waters crash over us in waves of ancestry, responsibility, and spirit. Peltier communicates the significance of water in nearly every rhetorical act. "Many people don't think water is alive or has a spirit." Peltier reflected in 2018. "My people believe this to be true."[363] On another occasion, Peltier explained why Anishinabek protect the waters by stating, "It's because for years and years our ancestors have passed on traditional oral knowledge that our water is alive and our water has a spirit."[364] The aliveness and spirit of water

coconstitute water's selfhood and, as a result, demand regard and warrant guardianship. Peltier models this regard, and protecting water is the central animating feature of her advocacy and identity. "I am Indigenous," Peltier resounded for a campaign, "I speak for the water because water is alive and she does have a spirit and she hurts every day because of what people are doing in the world—polluting the water, dumping toxic waste, just garbage."[365] As though harnessing the power of water to "hollow out stone, not through force but through persistence," Peltier, above all else and since she began speaking worldwide, beseeches her audiences to see the aliveness and spirited qualities of waters.[366]

How Peltier constitutes water across the texts I analyzed reflects Anishinaabe ways of knowing that acknowledge "a spiritual connection to water, recognition of water as a life form, and knowledge that water has many healing powers."[367] More than a spiritual connection to water, Peltier advocates for the Anishinabek view that water is life *with* spirit, which shapes both her cultural and political relationship with water. Nicole Latulippe and Deborah McGregor review the primary Anshinabek nibi inaakonigewin (water laws): 1) Water has a spirit. 2) We do not "own" water. 3) Water is life. 4) Water can heal. 5) Women are responsible for water. 6) We must respect water. 7) Water can suffer. And 8) Water needs a voice.[368] These water laws suggest that Peltier's activism is a fulfillment of her responsibility to care for and protect the waters in accordance with her cultural identity, a point I expand upon below. Underpinning this responsibility, however, Peltier extends what Potawatomi botanist and scholar Robin Kimmerer theorizes as a "grammar of animacy" and characterizes water as spirited, alive, and, significantly, as woman.

Extending a "Grammar of Animacy"

Drawing from her Potawatomi heritage and scientific background, Kimmerer proposes a "grammar of animacy" and suggests that by recognizing and embodying the principles of animacy in our language, we can cultivate a more respectful and reciprocal relationship with nature. This grammar emerged as Kimmerer was learning to speak Potawatomi, and her process of coming to *speak* the world in alignment with how she knows the world as kin is worth citing at length:

> "To be a bay." "Ridiculous!" I ranted in my head . . . A bay is most definitely a person, place, or thing—a noun and not a verb" . . . And then I swear I heard the zap of synapsis firing . . . In that moment, I could smell the water of the bay, watch it rock against the shore, and hear it sift onto the sand. A bay is a noun only if water is *dead* . . . "To be a bay" holds wonder that, for this moment, the living water has decided to shelter itself between these shores, conversing with cedar roots and a flock of bay mergansers. Because it could do otherwise—become a stream or an ocean or a waterfall, and there are verbs for that, too.[369]

By infusing animacy into our language, we can shift our perspective from one of domination to one of reciprocity and kinship. A grammar of animacy, then, considers everything in the natural world as animate, agential, spirited, inherently valuable, and deserving of respect, reverence, and gratitude. Moreover, and as Kimmerer argues, using a grammar of animacy breathes life into language and calls forth an interconnectedness and kinship that "could well be a restraint on our mindless exploitation of the land."[370]

Kimmerer's grammar of animacy brings Peltier's discourse into focus by reinforcing the rhetorical power of life and death across her advocacy. This grammar means that *to be water* is to be animate, living, sentient, and to have a sense of self. *To be* alive, as I argue in Chapter One, opens oneself up to always already becoming death through the acts of living. Understood in this way, Peltier constitutes relationships with and between the living and dying of non/human species and calls upon her rhetorical authority and mutual responsibilities to take care and "keep"

these relationships whole and to keep them well. Consideration of a grammar of animacy points to the rhetorical function of aliveness as critical to understanding Peltier's use of water as a verb and structuring principle in her activism.

Water is Life/Alive: A Structuring Principle

Peltier's discursive use of water is ideographic in nature.[371] While water, the noun (read: dead and unspirited), conceals the complex kinship relationships and ideologies saturating Peltier's discourse, *water*[372], the verb (read: alive and spirited), makes visible Peltier's ability to present "ways of thinking, being, and acting in the world as possible or not."[373] Moreover, *water* invites relationships, and as McGee notes, "human [and non-human] beings in collectivity behave and think differently than human [and non-human] beings in isolation."[374] In this way, *water*, as ideograph, is a rhetorical force that restructures signification into a distinctly Indigenous understanding of a living, agential *water* and socializes ecological relational entanglement.[375]

In practice, Peltier introduces *water* to her audiences in nearly every speaking engagement, extending a politics of belonging that compels her audience to live differently and *in relation* with *water. Water* is Peltier's constant companion, almost as though they share the podium. As I review above, one of the primary water laws is that "water needs a voice," and Peltier unwaveringly gives her one: #waterislife, #nowaternolife, "water is alive," "water has a spirit," "water is the lifeblood," "water deserves," "water is sick," "water needs," "water sustains us," "water was calling," "water hears us, feels us, and listens to us." Peltier speaks for *water* because *she* has a spirit, *she* is hurting, and *she* needs a voice. As I describe above, understandings of ceremony, intergenerational wisdom, and the sacredness of water influence

how Peltier articulates her identity as an activist. Peltier emphasizes that "Indigenous voices are alive. I am alive"[376] and that "water is sacred, water is alive and water has a spirit."[377]

Peltier's primary exigency is to give voice to water and to depict *her* aliveness, so *her* audience can build a relationship with *her*. Relating to the natural world and water in familial and spiritual ways shapes how Peltier identifies and communicates social and ecological injustices. For example, Peltier claims that she "speak[s] for the water because water is alive and she does have a spirit and she hurts every day because of what people are doing in the world—polluting the water, dumping toxic waste, just garbage."[378] Moreover, she "advocate[s] for water because we all came from water and water is literally the only reason we are here today and living on this earth."[379] Significant to Peltier's message is how she constitutes Indigenous places as alive and spirited. Furthermore, Peltier's persistence in extending an Indigenous understanding of *water* moves her audiences to *know water* in a way that calls upon them to choose shared responsibility (the face of kinship) rather than false promises (the face of death). As Peltier's audiences come to know *water* as kin, they can grieve her deaths.

As I reviewed in Chapter One, the "grievable body" is a conceptual dwelling place of death. Attempting to answer the question, "How do you grieve a dying river?" Quoting Aldo Leopold, Joshua Barnett notes, "We grieve only for what we know."[380] Introducing *water*, then, enables Peltier to make an ethical claim upon her audience and place the precarious conditions of Indigenous lives into the hands of the other.[381] For Barnett, "apprehending the precariousness of a life is the precondition of caring for and supporting that life. Because if something is vulnerable or fragile, it requires care if it is to be sustained."[382] Taken together, a conceptual framework of kinship creates the conditions for Peltier to extend a grammar of animacy that puts *water* and her audiences in relation to one another. Significantly, kinship, as an ethic of

responsibility, "focuses on how responsible relationships must first be established or restored for it to be possible to have renewable energy projects that respect Indigenous safety, well-being, and self-determination."[383] Peltier reinforces the notion that *water* needs to be known as one would come to know a human when stating, "Our water deserves to be treated as human with human rights. We need to acknowledge our waters with personhood so we could protect our waters."[384] Acknowledging the aliveness of water constitutes a grievable body and willfulness to protect that body from harm. In this section of analysis, I have demonstrated how Peltier constitutes responsible relationships between her audience and *water* by characterizing her as living a spirited life. Put another way, Peltier's advocacy helps her audiences meet the preconditions for caring and mutual responsibility because they are invited to know *water* and repair a relationship with her and, therefore, grieve and care for her. Next, I describe how Peltier simultaneously leverages her rhetorical authority as a "Water Warrior" to enact the traditional responsibilities of Water Keepers.

Water Warrior. Water Walker.

Speaking on World Water Day at the United Nations General Assembly on March 22, 2018, Peltier, a seasoned public speaker by this time, described how "one day, I will be an ancestor, and I want my great-grandchildren to know I tried hard to fight so they can have clean drinking water . . . Now is the time to warrior up and empower each other to take a stand for our planet."[385] Peltier first claimed her identity as a Water Warrior in November of the previous year by using the hashtag "#waterwarrior1." For several months leading up to her address in New York, she continued to integrate the hashtag and often included "#waterprotector" in the same posts. Once Peltier called upon her audience in New York to "warrior up," global media sources were swift to depict Peltier as the Water Warrior.[386]

Above, I argued that Peltier's discourse functions to communicate climate change through kinship relationships. These relationships are forged in mutual responsibilities for the wellbeing and safety of all beings. In this section of analysis, I expand my analysis of the thematic of responsibility in Peltier's advocacy. First, I review several scholarly works that tend to warrior tropes at the intersection of culture and sexuality and demonstrate how Peltier constitutes and claims the identity of Water Warrior while complicating the underlying assumption that a warrior must "fight." Specifically, I look at Peltier's ascribed and avowed identity as a Water Warrior as a weaving together of two other significant Indigenous figures: Water Keepers and Water Walkers. I discuss some of Peltier's rhetorical maneuvers to transform the conventional/colonized warrior trope while simultaneously claiming the rhetorical authority that "warriors" historically garner in popular Western imaginations.

Several communication scholars have investigated the rhetorical characteristics of the warrior through a cultural context that is predominately Western, colonized, and inherent to war. In their exploration of masculinity, whiteness, and the warrior hero in U.S. Nationalist rhetoric, Laura Prividera and John Howard assert that archetypes of the "warrior hero" generally describe someone as "independent, disciplined, strong, sexually potent, and above all masculine."[387] Robert Ivie and Oscar Giner, too, explore the warrior trope as a rhetorical artifact and note that "the warrior myth is ancient and enduring. It represents soldiers as fearless fighters, saviors performing heroic deeds."[388] In their analysis of Veterans for Peace, Ivie and Giner argue that the mythic authority of warriors is transformed in U.S. war culture by military veterans advocating for peace. This shift transforms the military idiom and channels the warrior ethos into positive peacemaking, promoting change and contemplative effect. More recently, scholars have investigated the polysemous nature of the "social justice warrior" and demonstrated how despite

far-right intentions to use the term to dehumanize, disfigure, and disparage, many have reclaimed the term as a positive marker of identity.[389] Across these scholarly works, and significant to my analysis, the figure of the warrior is understood to be one of cultural innovation with a great degree of rhetorical authority. Though media responded to Peltier's call to "warrior up" by depicting her as the Water Warrior who was "fighting" and "challenging" unjust water governance, Peltier transformed herself into a warrior figure whose primary weaponry includes care, empowerment, and kinship. These qualities are inherent to Indigenous teachings about women's role as Water Keepers.

Attending ceremonies from when she was still in her mother's womb, Peltier understands that being born a woman means her role is to protect the waters. "Our first water teaching happens inside our mother's womb," explains Peltier. "We live in her waters for nine months, and when the water breaks, new life comes." [390] Peltier asserts throughout her discourse that life in the womb is only possible because of water. According to Peltier's teachings and worldview, the "sacred water" supporting a fetus' development generates a bond not just between children and their mothers, grandmothers, great-grandmothers, and ancestors but also with the sacredness of water in and of herself.[391] To advocate for water, then, is to acknowledge that we all came from water, to care for women's and water's role in supporting life, and to honor the sacredness of water through ceremony, relationship, and "keeping."

The cultural practice and identification of women as Water Keepers are central to the stories and teachings Peltier received about the sacredness of water. Kimmerer describes how as water keepers, "[women] carry the sacred water to ceremonies and act on its behalf… we have a natural bond with water, because we are both life bearers… [as a result] it is our responsibility to safeguard the water for all our relations."[392] That both water and women give life and that the

spirit of water is a woman is a common theme in Indigenous teachings.[393] Moreover, the practice of keeping water is often synonymous with being a Water Walker. Blaire Topash-Caldwell offers a stunning illustration of the responsibilities and ethos of the Water Walker in this extended example of Anishinaabe cosmology:

> *Nokomis* (Grandmother) is carrying a copper pale of water next to a meandering stream. Nokomis is a Water Walker—an activist from the *Midéwiwin* (Medicine) Lodge using ceremony and political demonstration in order to call attention to various environmental issues related to water. She does this by conducting women's water ceremony, cleansing local waters through prayer, cedar, and copper pails. She walks and prays for the water while carrying some in her pail, finally pouring it into another body of water so that her prayers may ripple throughout time and space.[394]

The practice of walking and prayer, Topash-Caldwell contends, enables the Water Walker to blur ceremonial and political spaces while reestablishing relationships with their traditional homelands that settler colonialism severed through strategic removal and ecological destruction.[395] "Grandmother Water Walker," Peltier's Great Auntie Josephine and inaugural Chief Water Commissioner, revitalized these severed relationships when she began the contemporary Women's Water Walks in the early 2000s to bring attention to the world's dying relationship with water. Throughout her lifetime, Grandmother Josephine walked over 4,500 miles of the Great Lakes coastline and sparked a political movement of Indigenous women to reclaim their sacred responsibilities to protect the waters as life-givers and Water Keepers.[396]

Certainly, Peltier claims her identity as a Water Warrior and often evokes traditional representations of a fearless hero willing to fight for what she believes in. There are numerous examples of Peltier leveraging the rhetorical authority of the figure of the warrior. On one occasion, for example, Peltier posted, "My fight for the right to clean water for #firstnations is a heavy weight. But I keep going."[397] And again, "I will not back down. I am not afraid."[398] The image of Peltier as a warrior, particularly in the context of fighting for life and encouraging her

audience to let *water* live, maintains the enduring warrior myths by narrating a battle over life and death. Still, Peltier's duties as a Water Warrior are complex, and on occasion, she challenges the idea that she should have to fight, at all: "I'm 12 years old, I shouldn't have to be up here fighting for our water."[399] More often, however, Peltier complicates this narration by transforming and modifying the duties of warriors from fighting to acts of nurturing, praying, caring, sitting with, and walking, thereby modeling her identity as a Water Warrior in the image of the Water Keepers and Water Walkers.

In May of 2021, for instance, Peltier posted a series of images of her wearing a ceremonial water dress, bending towards a flowing riverside, and dipping a copper cup into the water. "We must continue to pray for the waters, as there is no life without water. Thinking of all of the water walkers and people who do work for Nibi/Water."[400] Referencing prayer as a meaningful political and relational act is common throughout Peltier's discourse and is an example of how she layers complexity and Anishinaabe cosmology into the myth of the warrior. Another exemplary model of how Peltier transforms her role as a warrior is when she strategically pairs her contemporary title as Water Warrior with the women and ancestors that came before her. After the Assembly of First Nations headlined Peltier and her work, she expressed thanks to a host of supporters on Instagram. She concluded with, "[Miigwech to] . . . all the Water Warrior grandmothers and aunties who support the work I do for our water and our planet! And a huge spiritual hug to my auntie-ba who's always guiding me, supporting me and watches over me. I would not be where I am today if it wasn't for her and I am always thankful to (Biidaasige-ba)."[401] By all accounts, Peltier has followed in her Great Auntie Josephine's footsteps and joined a long line of grandmothers and aunties who protect the water. Still, the

release of *The Water Walker*, a short documentary featuring Peltier's life and advocacy, is one account that reinforces this point.

With a running time totaling 13 minutes, *The Water Walker* extends a thoughtfully distilled depiction of Peltier's character. Though the film features many of the passages I review in this chapter, the layering of narration and visual context affords a few nuanced insights that are meaningful to this section of analysis. In a similar form and function that Peltier utilizes in her speeches, the film first shares the significance of water to all of creation and works in short interludes to describe the origin and trajectory of Peltier's activism. The narrator transports the audience across illustrated moments throughout the film and overlays storied and poetic context to the overarching plot. Following a scene of Peltier's mother smudging the dress she will wear to the United Nations (to cleanse, bless, and protect Peltier and to support her in speaking from the heart and connecting with her ancestors), the narrator interjects, "The spirit of water exists in every raindrop. In every stream and puddle. In the veins of trees and in every tear we shed for joy or grief." Water walkers. Defenders of water. We do it for the next generations. For the babies of all species. Keep going. Stay strong."[402] Here, the narrator evokes some of the key tenets of an ethic of shared responsibility I explored above: strength through persistence and care for all relationships, past, present, and future.

The depiction of Peltier as a Water Walker reminds her audiences of their connection to water and compels them to participate in saving water. One narration in the documentary describes, "As she stood in cold and ice and in heat in rain around each bend of the lake, she thanked the water at each puddle and stream. She asked the water for help. Soon the people started to join in, and help, and the waters started to become clean."[403] Like "a walking prayer," the act of carrying an open vessel of water and walking great distances is a practice of

Indigenous peoples for thousands of years.[404] As one Water Walker remarked, "You as an individual, no matter whether you are indigenous or non-indigenous, you can take steps in your day-to-day life in ensuring there is clean water for future generations."[405] As Water Walker and Water Keeper, Peltier imagines a world of reciprocity and responsibility. In this world, death is not sacrificial but life-giving. *The Water Walker* concludes with an offering of thanks "to our mother whose waters broke on that first day and made song possible. We sing now for you. To you. With you. Drumming to your heartbeat, with nothing left to give but our bones and flesh as an offering so that we too can drink in life as our journey continues for another million years and another million cycles around the sun."[406] And finally, a question: "Now that our children are protecting us . . . who will protect the children?"[407] Peltier's activism and embodiment of a Water Warrior who keeps and walks for, with, and alongside *water* seems to answer this question by hailing her audiences to imagine themselves living in the way of this type of warrior.

These examples of Peltier's work and responsibilities as a Water Warrior suggest that she strategically claims the rhetorical authority of being understood as a warrior without fulfilling the warrior's duty to kill. A fearless advocate, to be sure, but Peltier never situates herself within the context of a battle or war. Indeed, "the essence of war is destruction and death," and Peltier lays claim to the warrior's propensity to sacrifice life for the sake *water* or Indigenous futures.[408] While Peltier is reflexive about how she has "been considered to be the water protector or the water Warrior," she embodies her identity as a warrior through acts of sacred and ceremonial care for *water*.[409] In so doing, Peltier remakes our understanding of what it means to protect *water* by compelling her audiences to participate in the sacred practices of "keeping" *water* in accordance with Indigenous teachings. Inherent to coming to know the world as kin, recognizing

the aliveness of all beings, and sharing in the responsibilities to keep life in a constant state of flow, is a broader sense of belonging *in relation* and *in time*.

Keeping Kinship. Keeping Time.

The practice of keeping water is to safeguard the future of all our relations. When Water Walkers enter into ceremony, they embark on a spiritual journey, as well as a physical one. The act of walking in silence and prayerful contemplation with a copper vessel symbolizes the regard and gratitude the Anishinabek people have for water as a life-sustaining resource and living being. Water Walkers simultaneously raise awareness about the mutual responsibility to protect and care for water while cleansing and healing the water by restoring its purity and vitality. "You cannot go backwards with [water], and you cannot come to a stop," shares one Water Walker, "You as an individual, no matter whether you are Indigenous or non-Indigenous, you can take steps in your day-to-day life in ensuring there is clean water for future generations."[410] Traveling great distances, whether in a water walking ceremony or through everyday living, water walking embodies the essence of keeping water and keeping time.

Whyte defines kinship time in opposition to linear time. When linear time focuses on climate change trends, rising temperatures, and a sense of imperilment, crisis, and urgency, kinship time points to the erosion of responsible relationships and caretaking of kinship systems. Linear time functions as a ticking clock. Kinship time unfolds through interconnectedness and responsiveness. Linear time demands swift mobilization and deploys scientifically-backed solutions that further jeopardize communities that bear the greatest risk of loss, destruction, and death. Kinship time creates the conditions for consent, reciprocity, and trust. While many climate scientists and activists fixate their gaze on a countdown clock that communicates a point of no return in the climate crises, Water Walkers are perpetually in motion, paced by the heartbeat of

Mother Earth beneath their feet. Protecting water, then, is to walk through time that is never "up" and always already in relation to kinships of the past, present, and future.

I have illustrated in this chapter how Peltier's rhetoric emphasizes the vitality of water and frames death as a disruption to the continuous flow of life rather than an end. Within an Anishinaabe cosmology and epistemology that weaves water's sacredness and interconnectedness into the fabric of existence, death/dying is inherent, harmonious, natural, and cyclical. In this way, Peltier invites a paradigm shift and challenges her audiences to participate in the collective responsibility of caring for water. Peltier's intervention is to keep water from suffering the finite life of a human, thereby sustaining a cyclical pattern of living that sustains existence. This intervention erodes the life/death binary and offers a lens through which we can perceive the ongoing vitality and adaptive qualities embedded in Indigenous ways of knowing and being. Eroding the life/death binary is a critical intervention to Western epistemologies that work to fix death in a particular way, as good/bad, un/justified, un/timely, and in/appropriate. Put another way, the death (as an event/condition) of water is the death of time and the ability to sustain existence.

To fully understand the rhetorical significance of death in Autumn Peltier's discourse, I have described how her advocacy for water is personal, spiritual, and inherent to what it means to be Anishinaabe.[411] I have argued in this chapter that Peltier's public address reveals how death becomes us when we no longer experience living *in relation*. I explored how Peltier communicates climate change through kinship relationships and laid the foundation for how she casts death as a mode of persuasion through a coordinated responsibility for life. Through the rhetorical act of breathing life into water, Peltier constitutes a sacred relationship between women and water and challenges audiences to "keep" water from dying. Indeed, throughout her

activism, Peltier commits herself and her audiences to "keeping" a web of interconnected matters of life and death. Keeping water honors the sacredness of a living water that flows as the lifeblood of Mother Earth and all who dwell in her care. Keeping kinship protects the strength of all our relations across time. The process of keeping, then, constitutes a way of moving through living and dying in kinship with others. The depth of our living shallows when we no longer breathe life into all our relations. In this way, the significance of death in Peltier's rhetoric is her ability to constitute a dying kinship system and work to heal that system through an ethic of responsibility. Through depictions of solidarity, vision, and health, Peltier challenges her audience to consider "keeping kinship" and, therefore, "keeping time" for Anishinaabe futures.

CHAPTER FOUR: ISRA HIRSI AND THE DEATH OF ATTACHMENT

Against the backdrop of escalating climate change and global concerns about environmental and social injustices, a group of young and determined activists joined forces with the larger Fridays for Future initiative and organized the first nationwide climate strike in the United States on March 15, 2019.[412] Among the cohort of youths, Isra Hirsi emerged as a critical leader in co-founding what is now known as the U.S. Youth Climate Strike movement.[413] "The U.S. Youth's Climate Strike is proof of what I wanted to see," Hirsi remarked when accepting a "Voice of the Future" award several months later.[414] "With U.S.Y.C.S. we organized millions of people in climate strikes and policy initiatives because we believe young people, especially those of color, deserve to have a say in our futures and that we will fight for them until we don't need to."[415] As an avowed Black girl and "city kid," Hirsi spent years "never seeing [herself] in the national climate justice movement" and grappled with the notion that people that looked like her were "not meant to be climate activists."[416] In turn, Hirsi joined other youth climate strikers, highlighting the complexities of climate change and its impact on Black and brown communities, particularly those living in urban areas. Indeed, for Hirsi, the lack of visibility of Black and brown bodies in the climate change movement contrasts with the oversaturation of Black and brown Bodies in the social justice movement.

In the wake of Trayvon Martin's murder on the evening of February 26, 2012, Hirsi's family joined protestors across the nation calling for a full investigation and prosecution of his killer, George Zimmerman, and rallying against racial profiling and stand-your-ground laws.[417] "[Trayvon] was only a year older than me," recalled Hirsi, " . . . and then, when I was in middle school, Jamar Clark was murdered in Minneapolis, in my hometown."[418] The murders of Martin

and Clark reinforced for Hirsi that "people that looked just like me—that looked like my brother, like my dad—are being killed in the streets."[419] Hirsi related to these murders because she could transpose the images of self, family, and community onto the dead bodies of Martin, Clark, and other young Black individuals. These murders also occurred in urban places, which generated a sense of familiarity and belonging for Hirsi. In response, the urgency to "actually get out there" in opposition to social injustices was a matter of life and death. Put plainly, being murdered on the street as a result of racialized violence posed a much greater threat to Hirsi than global warming.[420] Then, in 2014, Flint, Michigan, changed its water source from Lake Huron to the Flint River, resulting in lead contamination and a public health emergency. Hirsi watched the water crisis unfold through news reports in horror and awe. "Seeing on T.V. that kids were getting lead poisoning not that far away from me in communities that looked like mine. I just thought it was horrible," Hirsi recalled.[421] Hirsi described the crisis in Flint as an event that "flipped a switch" for her because, for the first time, she could see herself experiencing climate change as a young Black person. Just as gun violence disproportionately and overwhelmingly hurts communities of color, the human-caused disaster in Flint disproportionately affected Black and brown people, highlighting the intersection of environmental racism and systemic inequalities, igniting social and environmental justice activism, and bringing national attention to the need for clean water access, accountability, and equitable treatment for marginalized communities.[422]

Significantly, events like the water crisis in Flint underscored how Hirsi began to understand the impacts of climate change on the everyday lives of the most vulnerable communities and future generations. Over time and leading up to the launch of the U.S. Youth Climate Strike, Hirsi honed her activism by bringing social and climate injustices into the same

conversations and recentering environmental issues on communities of color. In turn, Hirsi emphasizes the need to focus on climate organizers from marginalized communities to prevent the loss of diverse voices in the movement. "So today," Hirsi proclaimed, "if your list of climate activists consists of people like Greta Thunberg and Leonardo DiCaprio, I challenge you to research Black, brown, and Indigenous climate organizers and uplift the work that we are doing all over the world."[423] Aligned with the environmental justice paradigm, Hirsi continues to focus her activism on people's everyday experiences and their relationships to place, community, and identity. In this way, climate change exists in the encounters that constitute the body, community, and the circulation of wellbeing.

Focused on the idea that affect "marks a body's belonging to a world of encounters," I argue that Hirsi communicates climate change through place attachments that simultaneously impede and accelerate the living and dying of communities of color.[424] Place attachments are the affective bonds between people and places.[425] Broadly, attachments characterize how the body feels and experiences power relations and binds individuals to something else (i.e., another body, an object, a place, an ideology, and so forth).[426] Attachments to place, then, are fundamental to both individual and collective identity, sensemaking, and wellbeing, despite their penchant to maintain problematic and unjust politics of relation. The death of place attachments is not merely ecological but implicates the lives, wellbeing, and subjectivities of Hirsi and her community. To risk an attachment to place is to threaten the resistance, persistence, and empowerment of communities of color. I begin this chapter by reviewing Hirsi's personal and political identities as an avowed Black Muslim girl who locates herself in the "white spaces" of the youth climate movement and struggles with the lack of intersectional perspectives and diversity in the movement. To support my critical analyses of Hirsi's activism, I draw on environmental justice

scholarship that links environmental issues to race, class, gender, and social justice. This scholarship suggests that environmental justice is (re)produced, felt, and resisted through our material lives, power relations, and spaces of encounter. In the next stage of my inquiry, I interrogate Hirsi's rhetoric through the lens of attachments to place that coconstitute community and identity. Here, I analyze how Hirsi portrays environmental injustices as a catalyst for the loss of lives and identities in socio-economically depressed areas. I highlight how Hirsi's discourse, rooted in place attachments, leverages the persuasive power of death to constitute a vision of a "just life" that is inclusive, resilient, and committed to transformational change. In the concluding section of this chapter, I consider the social and political implications of making and breaking attachments to both individual and collective living/dying.

"I am a Black Muslim woman."

Born on February 20, 2003, in Minneapolis, Minnesota, Isra Hirsi was raised in the context of activism and progressive ideals. "From the day I was born, my parents instilled in me that I had the ability to change the world," Hirsi has stated.[427] As the daughter of Ilhan Omar, a Somali-American politician serving in the United States House of Representatives, to say that Hirsi grew up in an environment that fostered political engagement and social justice awareness would be an understatement. Indeed, after interviewing Hirsi, one journalist reflected, "The more I talked to Hirsi, the more I wondered what I could have done at her age if my political fire had simply been encouraged more by the adults around me."[428] A feature in *Vice* offers an early account of Hirsi's activism and reports on an environmental justice event hosted by U.S. Congresswoman Omar, one of Hirsi's first public speaking events as a climate activist. Headlined "Isra Hirsi is 16, Unbothered, and Saving the Planet," and written shortly after Hirsi founded the U.S. Youth Climate Strike in January 2019, the article describes how Hirsi was

"grappling with harassment, safety threats, tokenization, and privilege on a national scale years before she's even allowed to vote."[429] The piece also highlights a progression of childhood experiences that led to Hirsi's participation in the climate change movement. We learn that before 2019, Hirsi "didn't have a sense of climate urgency" relative to other issues, but her participation in local social justice movements has been unwavering since attending her first protest at six years old.[430] In middle school, Hirsi aligned herself with the Black Lives Matter movement, and at age twelve, alongside Omar, Hirsi and "thousands of organizers" shut down the Mall of America "to demand justice for Jamar Clark, a 24-year-old Black man who was killed in 2015 by two Minneapolis police officers."[431] Later, in high school, Hirsi joined nationwide advocacy for gun control, school safety, and policy changes to prevent mass shootings following the Parkland shooting on February 14, 2018, which resulted in the tragic deaths of seventeen students and staff members.[432] Not until Hirsi began to understand climate issues through the lived experiences of communities of color—rather than the green-colored glasses of white-led environmental groups—was she "determined to build an environmental justice movement in which young people of color could see themselves."[433]

Hirsi's activism is multifaceted and encompasses various cultural, social, and political identities. Hirsi identifies as a Black Muslim woman and is outspoken about how her intersectional identities significantly shape her activism. "I was one of the only Black kids in almost every single climate space that I entered," she shared on a Midwest Climate Summit panel in 2020, "and I only entered with the knowledge of the impacts on my community and my motherland [Somalia] . . . the spaces I was in lacked an intersectional focus, but also a people-focused analysis."[434] Across her public discourse, Hirsi focuses on being a part of multiple marginalized communities and brings keen awareness to the disproportionate impacts of climate

change on historically marginalized groups. Consequently, Hirsi describes her "existence in the climate justice movement in itself an act of resistance."[435] As I will discuss in subsequent sections, Hirsi's activism highlights how the interplay between race, class, gender, and other identities shapes the experiences of individuals and communities in relation to the impacts of climate change.

As a youth activist, Hirsi believes in the power of youth voices and their ability to transform the future. When Hirsi co-founded the U.S. Youth Climate Strike, inspired by the global Fridays for Future movement led by Greta Thunberg, she focused on encouraging youths to find and use their voices to make change on the issues they care about. "We [youths] have the ability to turn [climate change] around," announced Hirsi at the 2019 strike, "many of us are realizing that. From climate strikes all across the country and world to anti-pipeline protesters, young people are making their voices heard."[436] Hirsi uses her voice to ensure women of color "have a say in [their] futures and that [they] will fight for them until [they] don't need to."[437] In this way, Hirsi claims her rhetorical authority through her avowed identity as a young woman of color, which grants her unique insights into the challenges faced by future generations. By connecting with activists and organizations worldwide, Hirsi amplifies her impact and fosters solidarity among diverse communities. Indeed, throughout her activism, Hirsi has emphasized the need for young activists to come together and join forces with established organizations and movements, leveraging their unique perspectives and energy to drive transformative change while underscoring the significance of intergenerational collaboration.

For example, when speaking about the power of youth voice, Hirsi noted, "I think that the fact that people are listening to young people and engaging with us and also just seeing [youths] . . . asking questions, always wanting to learn more about the world . . . that kind of energy really

showcases that, you know, we definitely have a future."[438] On another occasion, Hirsi posts a "shoutout to those older than me who I met and spoke with. We may not agree on our methods for justice, but your wisdom is powerful."[439] Despite her appreciation for intergenerational organizing, Hirsi has also indicated that youth are the true beacons of hope. Hirsi's tolerance for "folks in power" who are not as inclined to make real change on climate change issues is low, stating, "I don't know if I care much as to what [older generations] have to say on the conversation [of climate change]. You know, like, they had their time."[440] On the one hand, these passages demonstrate how Hirsi communicates the urgency of the climate crisis and the need for intersectional perspectives and intergenerational collaboration to address it effectively. On the other hand, Hirsi is clear in being unwilling to engage with those who "still act so privileged and still act like [climate change] isn't happening."[441] One unfaltering intergenerational relationship that Hirsi maintains, however, is that with her mother.

Hirsi's relationship with her mother, Ilhan Omar, has significantly shaped her political identity. In addition to praising her mother for teaching her "how to always be unapologetically me," Hirsi credits Omar's journey as a Somali American immigrant and pathway into the U.S. House of Representatives as a personal inspiration. Indeed, Hirsi attributes her passion for social justice, her commitment to activism, and her way of engaging with difference and injustice to the values of her mother and how she was raised:

> My mom is an organizer, and for as long as I can remember, [I've been] going to protests or rallies or campaign events, even in the first grade. We would talk about community issues and political campaigns at the dinner table. So, for me, being politically and socially aware was the norm. When someone says something offensive or problematic, you say something, right? Well, I took that too literally. I would say something all the time, and kids in my classes used to get super annoyed with me pointing out everything, even if it was slightly sexist. But I mean, I was proud of it, you know? I couldn't handle that.[442]

Growing up in a politically active and culturally diverse household, paired with Hirsi's deep admiration for her mother's resilience and courage in the face of adversity, magnified the importance of using her voice and platform to speak up against injustice and oppression. For Hirsi, "politics are life or death. Not a trend you can subscribe to for the time being."[443] Moreover, Hirsi's familial context shapes how she understands systemic injustices at the intersection of race, gender, socioeconomic status, and climate change.

For Hirsi, the power of her voice as a youth is inherent. "If I exist in this world, then I exist to protect it," Hirsi asserted, "I exist to create, [to] let this world continue for generations beyond me."[444] Claiming that her commitment to organizing around social and environmental justice issues is not "just for herself, but for everyone," a primary motivation for Hirsi is her belief that using her voice and engaging in everyday conversations can "drastically change our world."[445] While this rhetorical "power at our fingertips" always came naturally concerning social issues, it took some time for Hirsi to locate her voice in the climate movement. On many occasions, Hirsi remarks on her identity as a climate change activist as puzzling to both her audiences and her. "To my own surprise," Hirsi once shared, "I have been organizing environmental justice for the past three years. The reason it is so surprising to me is because I did not grow up with a fascination with the outdoors or even that much of a care for it."[446] Elaborating on her experience growing up, Hirsi explains that she did not have access to "outdoorsy trips like hiking," she has only been camping twice, and "hated going outside so much" that she never learned how to swim."[447] In contrast to some who join the climate movement on account of their connection to nature, for Hirsi, organizing around an issue that "felt so far away" from how she grew up was shaped by her insatiable appetite for the news,

reading, and her desire to "join every club" that she could, which included her high school's environmental club.[448]

Hirsi's enthusiasm for engaging and organizing as a teen coincided with learning about climate issues globally and the impact of a changing climate on her. Hirsi describes, "I was able to expand my knowledge of how personal [climate change] is for me and so many other people."[449] Still, how Hirsi's peers identified themselves in their activism fundamentally opposed her growing awareness and attachment to climate change issues. "[F]or all of the kids in my 'green club,' environmental justice just meant appreciating the outdoors," Hirsi remarked. "They talked about composting and water fountains for the school, but never Line 3 or air pollution in North Minneapolis. In this club, I was told that climate justice was 'going green' and recycling, but climate justice is liberation for people. To me, it was my neighbors, my family, and my motherland, Somalia."[450] These excerpts describe how Hirsi's avowed identity as a climate activist, as well as her discourse, enlarge perceptions of climate change by complicating what climate change "looks like," how different bodies feel and experience climate change in unique and inequitable ways, and significantly, how place shapes individual and collective identities through encounters with climate change.

Hirsi's activism is deeply rooted in the power of place, and throughout her discourse, she recognizes that meaningful change often begins at the grassroots level. As a result, Hirsi generally focuses on the distinctive dynamics and needs of specific places, tailoring her advocacy to create more effective and locally relevant solutions. Hailing from Minneapolis, Minnesota, a city known for its vibrant activism and social justice movements, Hirsi notes that she has "never seen so many people so engaged in a place like this . . . Whether that is good engaged, bad engaged . . . people actually come outside." [451] Hirsi's experience going to "so

many caucuses, so many conventions" in the Twin Cities region has been "really cool to see," remarking, "[of] all the places that I've been, I've never seen somewhere as energized as this place."[452] Magnified by growing up in a politically active household, this local context and connection influences Hirsi's activism and provides her opportunities to engage with grassroots organizations, collaborate with like-minded individuals, and contribute to community organizing efforts.

Hirsi's positionality as a young Black Muslim woman from the city informs how she communicates her identity as an activist. Hirsi asserts that impactful climate change policy must originate at the local level and focus on the communities they impact, which includes "Black and brown [communities] . . . low-income, those with disabilities," and beyond.[453] Hirsi's overarching motivation is to ensure climate policies and activism become "more intersectional, more diverse, and [make] sure that every single voice is represented in those spaces."[454] Hirsi is committed to treating social and environmental justice as inseparable because she believes that transformative and equitable change is possible together.[455] "Joining everything" and "doing everything and anything" that she could is a central animating feature of Hirsi's identity as a climate activist and, in her view, "kind of became my brand."[456] Over time, Hirsi has refined her brand of activism by focusing on how people, their identities, and their communities are intricately linked to climate change. In this way, Hirsi prioritizes human welfare and underscores the ethical imperative of addressing climate change to ensure equitable access to resources, protection from harm, and advancing flourishing environments for communities of color. I suggest that Hirsi's focus on place, community, and identity builds personal and collective attachments to climate change. Understood this way, climate change functions as a space of encounters that constructs and threatens the body's sense of self and belonging. I now turn to

environmental justice scholarship to help us fully understand the rhetorical dimensions of attachments and how Hirsi constitutes death through various attachments to climate change.

Feeling Climate Change: The Attachments of Everyday Living and Dying

In the fall of 2020, Hirsi participated in the "Midwest Climate Summit Think Tank," which aimed to engage leaders and decision-makers from multiple sectors across the Midwest in advancing understanding of climate impacts in the region and cultivating ideas and partnerships that would help accelerate climate action.[457] Hirsi delivered one of her longest and most conceptually complex speeches as a keynote speaker. Titled "Creating a People's Movement," Hirsi first described how she began organizing around environmental justice, much of which I review above. Then, Hirsi shared how her journey of understanding climate change as a social justice issue served as the framework for her rhetorical strategies to "pull" folks into the movement.[458] Namely, Hirsi claimed that climate change becomes relatable when described as a "people's issue," broadly, and person of color's issue, specifically.[459] For example, Hirsi argued that talking about "the science or the floods or Antarctica" with urban communities in the Midwest distances city dwellers from environmental issues.[460] In contrast, talking about everyday air quality, recent extreme winters, and the lack of snow in a particular year connects climate change to the day-to-day experiences of people living in urban places.[461] Moreover, Hirsi asserted that "while forests are burning and animals are dying, and those are things that we need to talk about, people need to understand what the risks are for them. How the atmosphere warming up and melting ice caps relate to their specific wellbeing."[462]

Specifically, at the event and across her activism, Hirsi highlights how environmental injustices constitute the ongoing suffering and experiences of underrepresented voices and historically marginalized communities of color globally. For example, on one occasion, Hirsi

reminded her audience that she is "almost always the youngest in the [climate movement] space, the most melanated, and the only person from the city."[463] Every conversation Hirsi engaged in with her white peers always came back to addressing how climate change impacted Black, brown, and Indigenous communities because the environmental degradation is hitting them "the hardest." Indeed, on one occasion, Hirsi reminded her audience, "As I deliver this speech, millions across the world are suffering from air pollution, tropical storms, and horrible water quality."[464] Across these examples, Hirsi argues that Black and brown voices are critical to understanding the risks of climate change, and she continuously fosters empathy across their lived and affective experiences.

The significance of making climate change a more people-focused movement, for Hirsi, is that it "allows for the movement to expand across race, class, sexuality, gender, [and] religion lines, as well."[465] In this way, traditional and emerging perspectives on environmental inequalities explain much of Hirsi's conviction that intersectional theory and practice must guide climate activism to ensure more just and sustainable futures. I will not review the depth of environmental justice scholarship here.[466] Instead, I connect Hirsi's description of climate change as a people's issue—a social justice issue—to existing knowledge on environmental injustices, the mechanisms that produce them, and the potential outcomes of environmental discrimination and precarious living/dying these injustices constitute. In particular, I focus on three conceptual frameworks to support my argument that Hirsi constitutes death by deploying place attachments as a rhetorical strategy.

First, a critical analysis of Hirsi's discourse begins with a focus on the role materials and practices of everyday life play in shaping and restructuring environmental injustices.[467] Environmental justice (as scholarship and as a movement) emphasizes alarming and indisputable

demonstrations of the unequal exposure, burden, risk, and suffering of historically marginalized groups to environmental harm.[468] This scholarship builds on research that explores how political, economic, and social injustices perpetuate environmental racism and works to bridge environmental and social justice issues, including "human rights, slavery, genocide, deforestation, pollution and toxics, biopiracy/bioprospecting, globalization, land appropriation, immigrant rights, military testing, natural resources extraction, waste disposal, climate change, energy production, and free trade agreements, to name a few."[469] As Isabelle Anguelovski describes, "Hundreds of reports and articles have shown that minorities and low-income populations have suffered greater environmental harm than white and wealthier communities from waste sites, incinerators, refineries, transportation, and specific area sources."[470] One such report is Arline Geronimus' "weathering" hypothesis, which accounts for early deterioration among Black populations and asserts that racial/ethnic differences in chronic and excess morbidity are "a consequence of the cumulative impact of repeated experience with social or economic adversity and political marginalization."[471] Weathering, then, describes how racism, trauma, and oppression mark already vulnerable bodies.[472] In the context of everyday living, therefore, the materiality of environmental injustices refers to the objects, structures, and spaces we encounter that influence our routines, behaviors, and interactions.

Copious examples illustrate the "stuff" of environmental injustice. Living in an environmentally polluted area with high levels of pollution,[473] disparities in safe access to parks and green spaces,[474] the material consequences of climate change, such as damage, displacement, and loss of livelihoods, and unequal distribution of resources such as clean water, nutritious food, and adequate healthcare are some illustrations of how environmental injustices and climate change impact individuals' lived experiences.[475] Highlighting unsustainable material flows such

as food insecurity, homelessness, proximity to toxic waste, and access to clean water, theorists, and practitioners of environmental justice move beyond traditional notions of the environment as "nature" and emphasize the entanglement of material life and social justice.[476] The growing concern for materiality in environmental justice and communication scholarship, moreover, demonstrates the importance of activism that protests injustice by actively redesigning and controlling the material flows of everyday life.[477] The material aspects of environmental and social injustices outline the potency of death as a rhetorical device for framing the urgency for transformative action against the systemic threats to vulnerable communities. Hirsi's discourse about the deaths of Black populations, moreover, amplifies her imperative for advocacy that addresses both the material and existential dimensions of environmental and social injustices.

Second, central to understanding these environmental injustices through the lens of materiality and everyday living is how they affect the emotional wellbeing of individuals and communities. As I introduced in Chapter One of my review of environmental grief, mourning, and loss, affect theory helps us understand how environmental stressors due to climate change exacerbate existing social inequalities and impact the overall mental health and psychological safety of an individual and their community. I understand "affect" here as an intensity or emotional force that acts on the body and accrues over time. Or, as Melissa Gregg and Gregory Seigworth describe as an accumulation "across both relatedness and interruptions in relatedness, becoming a palimpsest of force-encounters traversing the ebbs and swells of intensities that pass between bodies . . . Affect marks a body's belonging to a world of encounters."[478] Put plainly, affect theory emphasizes the significance of emotions, moods, and bodily sensations in shaping our understanding of the world, our perceptions of self, others, and belonging, or how we relate to one another and our surroundings.[479] Hirsi once described how her work as an activist was so

intense that she felt like she was "running on fumes" and "crashed hard" because "the weight [of climate change] is so big, and you feel like it is crushing you."[480] Understanding the relationship between materiality and affect highlights how the "stuff" and spaces of everyday living evoke feelings and influence our moods, behaviors, and interactions. This relationship matters because these (emotional) experiences constitute our identities and social realities.

The presence of pollutants in our lives can trigger feelings of anxiety, stress, and fear regarding health risks.[481] The lack of access to green spaces can lead to feelings of isolation, depression, and disconnection from nature. Access to parks and green space is not just a matter of how many there are but also how safe they are for everyday use.[482] The impact of natural disasters can heighten our sense of insecurity and uncertainty about the future. Scarce resources can create feelings of injustice, anger, frustration, and grief, not to mention heightened stress and emotional strain. How the body feels and experiences climate change and other environmental injustices co-constitutes the body's relationship to the material objects and everyday spaces of encounter. Through the lens of Hirsi's activism, the emotional resonance of pollutants, the isolation that a lack of belongingness induces, and the heightened sense of insecurity reveal insights into how death operates as an affective element that influences how individuals perceive and respond to environmental and social injustices. In Hirsi's words, "With climate change comes obstacles and emotional stress because this crisis is personal."[483] By framing climate change through the death of place attachments, therefore, Hirsi intensifies the affective response and landscape of environmental discourse.

Third, environmental injustices, as spaces of encounter, exist in situ and as sites of personal and social tension. Environmental justice scholars conceptualize the environment as the "where" we live, work, play, learn, eat, and more.[484] As I described above, environmental justice

scholarship aims to investigate how certain communities, often marginalized or low-income, are disproportionately burdened with environmental hazards. These investigations are often interconnected with examining the spatial distribution of risks, how place-based identities intersect with environmental issues, and how spatial planning and policy interventions address or exacerbate spatial disparities. Concurrently, and within rhetorical studies, many critics examine how the "where" can work rhetorically.[485] Many of these studies analyze how space and/or place are persuasive, how speakers invest certain spaces and/or places with value, culture, politics, ideology, and identity, and how space and/or place, in turn, constitutes the subject positions, perceptions, and identities of the bodies that make their way through them. Across these analyses and disciplines, scholars take the persuasive and constitutive power of space/place seriously and observe that space/place functions to coordinate, condition, and govern ways of being and living. Moreover, individuals and collective identities mobilize around the places in which they live because—justly or unjustly—they are attached to them.

Conceptualizations of materiality, affect, and spaces of encounter reveal that our connections to the material world, its emotional resonances, and the spaces/places where these experiences unfold contribute to a profound sense of belonging and identity. These principles articulate attachments that simultaneously impede and accelerate living/dying by constituting attachments (both secure and insecure) to place. In what follows, I set a theoretical foundation for place attachments and demonstrate how Hirsi works to "pull" communities of color into the climate change movement by communicating her attachments to urban places, community, and her identity as a Black Muslim woman. A rhetoric of attachments, broadly, and to place, specifically, is one that strategically leverages emotional connections to places and communities

to incite action. I then demonstrate how Hirsi evokes the persuasive power of death through place attachments that threaten individual and collective identities, belongingness, and futures.

Evoking Death Through Place Attachments

Throughout her activism, Hirsi illustrates how environmental injustices threaten and constitute attachments to place. These place attachments are entangled with concerns for life and death, especially in the context of social and environmental injustices. Anguelovski offers a foundational description of place attachment as "an essential characteristic of people's feeling toward a place . . . defined as the affective bond between people and places."[486] Concepts of place attachment are interdisciplinary and expansive in scope, but several key characteristics are widely accepted:[487] Place attachment fosters community resilience and contributes to individual and collective wellbeing[488]; The affective bonds formed through place attachment impact mental health by acting as a social anchor that can provide a sense of stability and continuity in times of change or crisis[489]; Individuals and communities with strong place attachment are more likely to engage in sustainable practices, experience a heightened sense of belonging and joy, and engage in cultural preservation practices that safeguard diverse heritage and invest in aesthetic enhancements in their surroundings[490]; and, place attachment offers a degree of emotional security that can act as a buffer against the negative impacts of urbanization, climate change, and violence.[491] In sum, paying attention to place attachment's role in constituting individual and collective identities matters because place attachment "provides a sense of security and well-being, defines boundaries between groups, and anchors memories, especially against the passage of time."[492]

At their core, place attachments align with the broader rhetorical tradition emphasizing the persuasive power of emotions and identification.[493] Attachments in the context of the climate

justice movement elucidate how activists strategically leverage emotional connections to places and communities to catalyze action against environmental injustices. The underlying threat is not just to physical environments but to the essence of living and dying, linking the persuasive power of emotions and identification to the overarching theme of death. Drawing from communication and rhetorical studies, this lens recognizes the power of affective bonds formed through place attachments and their ability to evoke empathy and mobilize audiences. For example, Hirsi demonstrates how place attachments connect her activism to personal experiences of loss when she describes how "seeing my community in shambles after Jamar Clark and Philando Castile died . . . when I was [fourteen] living in Minneapolis." These deaths generated a "feeling" that Hirsi could activate her "hyper-woke part of [her] personality to do some real change" across climate injustices, gun violence prevention, and any other issue that "claimed the lives" of her communities."[494] When Hirsi constitutes personal place attachments and illustrates how social and climate injustices are a threat to them, she communicates how the risk of death goes beyond facts and figures and taps into the deeply personal and affective dimensions of human experience.

Based on the idea that attachments characterize affects and how the body feels and experiences power relations in material ways, my framing of attachments in the remainder of this chapter is twofold.[495] First, attachments to place constitute a basic human need and are crucial to individual and collective wellbeing.[496] Understood in this way, harm to attachments constitutes an injustice. Here, I borrow Christopher Grove's definition of injustice as "oppression and domination—the denial of active capabilities of self-definition and self-determination."[497] This definition suggests the denial of secure attachments can be seen as a form of existential threat akin to the rhetorical force of death. That Hirsi communicates climate change as a social justice

issue reinforces the notion that climate change functions to deny and impede an individual's and collective's ability to maintain secure attachments to place, others, and self.

Second, attachments, however essential to one's sense of belongingness, relationships, and subjectivity, can be problematic, oppressive, and even violent. Lauren Berlant's explication of "cruel optimism" sets the foundation for this second framing of attachment, noting that "one makes affective bargains about the costlines of one's attachments, usually unconscious ones, most of which keep one in proximity to the scene of desire or attrition."[498] Here, Berlant describes the paradoxical nature of attachments in Western European and North American neoliberal contexts. Attachments offer a sense of security and identity while simultaneously posing risks to one's wellbeing. Put another way, we become attached to what we call "the good life," which, as Berlant astutely points out, "is for so many a bad life that wears out the subjects who nonetheless, and at the same time, find their conditions of possibility within it."[499] This second form of attachment suggests that we can become attached to problematic objects (places, routines, identities, etc.) that actively threaten our lives because those objects constitute who we are.[500] In the context of Hirsi's activism, this concept becomes salient as she navigates the dual nature of attachments, urging action against environmental injustices that threaten the places and identities to which people are deeply attached, despite the fact that many of these places are hazardous and unsafe. In turn, Hirsi's rhetoric illustrates how attachments simultaneously offer a sense of identity and security while risking the wellbeing of Black populations.

The duality of attachments as both essential to un/just living and intimately tied to un/just dying suggests a precariousness in using them as a rhetorical strategy. The framework of cruel optimism illustrates how attachments to cherished places and identities, while crucial for mobilization, simultaneously expose communities to the harsh realities of environmental

injustices, particularly in the cultural context of Western neoliberalism. Put another way, the attachments that constitute our subjectivity simultaneously constitute our morbidity. When considering the relationship between rhetorics of death and attachments in the context of Hirsi's activism, climate change intersects with questions of "the good life/death." As I introduced above, the significance of Hirsi's connection to urban places, the communities of color that live in cities, and her identity as a young Black Muslim shape how she *feels* climate change—how climate change marks and moves (or contains) her body in particular ways. In this way, the thematic of death serves as a critical lens for understanding the implications of Hirsi's framing of climate change through place attachments.

The Places Where We Live and Die

I suggest Hirsi's rhetoric deploys place attachments as a rhetorical strategy that impresses upon her audiences that climate change threatens the places they are attached to and that they should act by joining the climate change movement and fighting for their homes, their everyday encounters with the places they live, and their ability to flourish in the future. By reinforcing the importance of place attachments, Hirsi reassures her audiences, particularly Black and brown communities living in urban places, that fighting environmental injustices is critical to their survival and wellbeing. I arranged the following excerpts in two parts. First, I gather several examples of Hirsi's discourse that construct our understanding of her personal place attachments and how those attachments animate her activism. I connect the ideas of refuge and childhood memories to the potential loss of vitality and security. Then, I look at an example of how Hirsi constitutes place attachments to a contested track of land near Atlanta, Georgia, commonly known as "Cop City." Across these examples, I demonstrate how Hirsi relates the urgency of climate change and other environmental injustices by portraying them as the death of wellbeing,

belongingness, the sense of safety associated with cherished places, and the very essence of community.

In 2023, Hirsi served as a panelist at The Great Northern's Climate Solutions Series in Minneapolis. The thematic of death permeated the wide range of topics and their intersections with the climate crisis by focusing on how environmental injustices disproportionately impact communities of color. When asked what environmental justice means, Hirsi replied that she thinks about people, her neighbors, and her community.[501] "I grew up in Cedar-Riverside," recalled Hirsi, "I spent most of my time just really [sic] at Riverside Park along the Mississippi and didn't spend much time going hiking or engaging with the outdoors besides this urban park."[502] Rather than offering a clear definition and pointed examples of environmental justice (of which there are many), Hirsi shared her memories of Riverside Park and the bonds she formed with the people who lived there. "All I can really remember is thinking about how my neighbors are and thinking about how the world around us can truly impact every single person."[503] This brief recollection of Hirsi's neighborhood park, the singular outdoor place that shaped her understanding of nature and connections with her neighbors, defines environmental justice. The "what" environmental justice means is less important than the "where" environmental justice is or is not. In this case, Cedar-Riverside and Riverside Park are places that shape individual and collective identities of Black residents. For Hirsi, the degradation of such vital places, signifies a threat to the attachments formed through place and indicates the loss of living and flourishing that extends beyond the physical environment. Endangered place attachments, therefore, set the theme of death and loss through environmental degradation, displacement, and the control of material and affective flows.

Cedar-Riverside, or "Little Somalia," is geographically situated to the East of Downtown Minneapolis along the West Bank of the Mississippi River and "just outside the downtown policing districts and adjacent to lumber and flour mills, breweries, and the railroad."[504] Dominated by highways on all sides, one history describes the community as a "concrete river" shaped by decades of unjust development that severely divided the neighborhood from the rest of Minneapolis and "profoundly chang[ed] resident's mobility and access to urban services . . . and community spaces."[505] Significantly, the life expectancy of residents living along the highway is nearly seven years younger than the state average despite the fact that the majority of community members do not own a car or possess a driver's license, and the highway does not service the neighborhood.[506] Casey Ryan Kelly's exploration of "precarity" as a form of structural violence of postindustrial society is helpful in making sense of what they describe as the trope of the city-as-nightmare or "urban nightmare."[507] Kelly illustrates how visual representations of urban places portray them as a source of violence and criminality rather than highlighting the broader structural vulnerabilities leading to urban decay. Kelly argues that social and environmental injustices reflect precarity as divesting and abandoning a racialized working class, crumbling infrastructure, and environmental degradation. This structural critique depicts the city (death) as an inescapable presence and constant threat that is visually mapped into the geographic contours of precarity in and vulnerability in a postindustrial society.

Experiencing everyday vulnerabilities through spatial encounters, Kelly argues, suggests a thanatopolitical structure to the city "where precarity is rationalized in the name of life; in short, for 'us' to live 'they' must be allowed to die."[508] Though the built environment of Cedar-Riverside governs residents' deaths through decreased air quality and environmental degradation, the place also generates ways of being and living—where they live, work, and play.

As Hirsi alluded to in her depiction of environmental justice, Riverside Park "provided a refuge for the community. A place to gather . . . to create a sense of place while enjoying access to desirable urban greenspace."[509] This account of the history of I-94 in Cedar-Riverside ultimately reviews the grim health, economic, and environmental impacts of transportation infrastructure in the community and concludes that "visiting the park today, the noise of the traffic has an impact on park use. The only access to the river is a crumbling staircase. Ending sidewalks, fences and walls restrict movement. Sound walls promise protection from noise pollution and the eyesore of the freeway, but their effectiveness has been questioned."[510]

Though Hirsi does not elaborate on why her memories of Riverside Park define environmental justice, this description of Cedar-Riverside suggests that her attachment to the place is definition enough. Hirsi's attachment to Riverside Park is more than a physical landscape changing over time. Riverside Park serves as a symbol of refuge for her community and a repository of childhood memories. Environmental hazards and injustices threaten identity formation and belongingness in the past, present, and future by eroding the memories and experiences tied to place that bind the residents of the community together. Indeed, the death of place attachment signifies the death of the cultural fabric that constitutes Hirsi's understanding of a flourishing life.

As Berlant suggests, Hirsi's attachment to Riverside Park, perhaps unconscious, keeps her in proximity "to the scene of desire or attrition" over time. Across Hirsi's accounts of growing up in the city, she speaks of her fondness, concern, and connection to the place, despite the "costlines." For instance, Hirsi acknowledges that north Minneapolis is "one of the most air polluted parts of the Twin Cities."[511] Hirsi's acknowledgment of the environmental hazards emphasizes the threat of death to the community and her attachments to the place she calls home

and recognizes the imminent threat to how communities form and flourish. Still, this is the place "where the Somali population is visible" and where she "went to schools with kids who looked like [her] and had the same culture as [her]—people [she] could relate to. Growing up in these predominantly Black and Muslim neighborhoods, [she] was always aware of who [she] was."[512] This excerpt illustrates the interconnectedness of place attachment, feelings of belongingness, and place identity. In contrast, Hirsi has described the exhaustion that comes with "the immense exclusion and the complete erasure of Black and brown voices in climate spaces and in gun violence direction spaces," suggesting that displacing these communities from climate change as a space of encounter is a form of symbolic death of culture, identity, community.

Hirsi's attachments to the Cedar-Riverside neighborhood, Riverside Park, and the community that gathers in these places (the community that "looks like her") impacted her and "every single person" in seemingly positive ways. Indeed, these places reflect Hirsi's personal and collective identities. Despite the air quality or condition of the park or surrounding transportation infrastructure, Hirsi spends most of her time in these environments and actively seeks to protect them. As I described above, Hirsi struggled to identify with and relate to the "white spaces" that comprised the climate change movement. Protecting Riverside Park is less about Hirsi's connection to nature (one which she seldom claims) and more about the everyday encounters of low-income folks in the inner city deserving flourishing lives free from environmental and social injustices. This analysis sheds light on how Hirsi's struggles with "white spaces" are intimately tied to her personal place attachments where she feels a sense of belonging. Hirsi's memories of Riverside Park are symbolic of a refuge for the community and her childhood. The continued degradation of the park due to environmental changes represents a

threat to the attachments formed through place, signifying a loss that extends beyond the physical environment.

The degradation of ancestral and cultural connection through the death of place attachments has implications for how individuals and communities navigate and form new attachments and, as such, constitutes a death to present and future subjectivity and belongingness. Anguelovski argues that "the neighborhood is a critically important place for marginalized groups" because despite its often "dire baseline conditions and the numerous obstacles to transforming it," residents are bonded (a feeling of being a part of a neighborhood) and rooted to their neighborhoods, and therefore committed to protecting the sense of community and security they feel in them.[513] As Agyeman and colleagues describe, to disrupt or damage the places people feel attached, "whether by burglary, conflict, or environmental change, can lead to feelings of grief, loss, and anxiety, and disrupt networks of social support of particular value for low-income communities."[514] These descriptions of place attachment and the importance of urban neighborhoods help contextualize Hirsi's experiences of "grow[ing] up in a low-income household, in an inner city," and "never hav[ing] a *real* connection to nature or anything."[515] For Hirsi, "the climate crisis is lives," and she understands the climate crisis "through the lives of my people back home in Somalia, but also where I'm from in Minneapolis."[516] In other words, climate change exists in the material encounters of everyday living *in place.*

In addition to serving as a social anchor and acting as a buffer against the negative impacts of urbanization and violence, Hirsi's place attachments to Cedar-Riverside and her ancestral home in Somalia inform how she navigates other spaces of encounter and builds new attachments to place. When Hirsi moved to New York to attend college, she noted the time it took to find a community of like-minded people. The people Hirsi was looking for wanted to

organize around climate impacts on urban communities of color.[517] Once Hirsi found a community "kind of like what Minneapolis feels like to me," she admitted to how nice it felt to "find a bubble within another bubble," again emphasizing the significance of place attachments in navigating how one can both organize around climate change and develop a sense of stability and continuity in times of change or crisis.[518] This passage suggests a fragility to place attachments in the face of urban transformations and environmental injustices but also in the face of displacement, relocation, and building attachments to new places. This fragility evokes the threat of death by disrupting the symbolic, emotional, and material continuity of living and exposing the existential risks associated with weakened place attachments. Hirsi's struggle to recreate the feeling of a strong place attachment constituted her personal sense of self and belonging.

Ageyman and colleagues describe this approach of "rekindling attachment to place, place-making, and community development" as a critical tactic for environmental justice activists because, as I review above, attachments to place increase the likelihood that an individual or community will engage in practices that enhance not only their material quality of life but also their emotional quality of life.[519] Hirsi often deploys the tactic of place-making in her discourse. For instance, in a mini-course on how to organize and cultivate an activist identity, Hirsi emphasized, "There is so much power in engaging locally, in understanding what is going on in your neighborhood, and in educating yourself about those things," and developed a worksheet for participants to review their core values and reflect on what the most concerning and/or most relevant area of inequality in their community is.[520] Across these texts, Hirsi roots her rhetorical authority in situ, and a central animating feature of her rhetoric is that she reminds her audiences that connecting to place, joining local activist groups, and committing to learning

about the issues that impact their everyday lives and communities. Hirsi also points out the impact of disruptions to place attachments in urban communities other than her own.

Journalist Charles Bethea offers a stunning account of an ongoing situation in Atlanta in their piece "The new fight over an old forest in Atlanta."[521] Bethea writes, "The plans for an enormous police-training center—dubbed Cop City by critics—have ignited interest in one of Atlanta's largest remaining green spaces."[522] For several years, City officials considered and ultimately passed, in 2021, a development proposal for a new police and fire training complex amid a 1,000-acre stretch of the Weelaunee Forest.[523] Though colloquially known as "Cop City" by project opponents, like many places, this land has many names and carries historical significance for many stakeholders. The Weelaunee Forest is the ancestral home of the Muscogee Creek Nation, whose peoples resided in the region until the Indian Removal Act forcibly displaced them in the eighteen-twenties and eighteen-thirties.[524] Since that time, the land's historical use has been one of violence, abuse, and systemic racism. Bethea reports, "The forest was home to what has been called the 'finest plantation in the country,' and the site of a famous Civil War battle. Then, for much of the twentieth century, the land was the site of a prison farm, the gutted and graffitied ruins of which are still visible."[525] Though remnants of discarded building facades remain from the time when the forest served as a "de-facto city dump" in the late nineteen-seventies, several key stakeholder groups have come together over the years to attain permanent preservation and conservation corridors with considerable success.[526] The proposed police training center in Atlanta, which replaces a historically significant forest, encapsulates the threat of death not only to the natural environment but also to the cultural and historical attachments of the community. Moreover, the history of violence on the land echoes through the potential loss of identity and belonging. The potential destruction of a forest, paired

with the reinforcement of racialized violence, communicates the deaths of place, security, and just living.

As a panelist in 2023, Hirsi was asked to touch on intersectionality, specifically about how climate change disproportionally impacts youths in the present and the future. Hirsi responded by reflecting on the "recent situations like 'Cop City' in Atlanta" as an example of "class struggle in clashes with environmental struggle, and, you know, how important it is [for people] to defend something that they deserve, like a beautiful forest and greenery, in such an urban city."[527] Uncertain if everyone in the audience was familiar with Cop City, the moderator asked Hirst to elaborate. Her description is worth quoting at length:

> So there is a beautiful urban forest in Atlanta that is currently being given to local police, state police, and surrounding police departments to basically create a neighborhood to where they practice raiding people, practice – It's just – it's a training facility for police, and it will create so many homes that nobody will get to live in and devastate an entire forest that is one of the largest. And also, [Atlanta is] one of the Blackest cities in America. So, in a lot of ways, this act of violence is not only racist, but it's also engaging in environmental racism, and it just showcases the intersections between the state, climate, and also just like our own identities.[528]

Though the conversation moves in a different direction, this passage demonstrates how Hirsi invokes the duality of attachments in her activism. The current development project highlights environmental justice issues and underscores the intersectionality of social and environmental disparities. Furthermore, the history of the land and the competing imaginations of what the land could be in the future emphasize how marginalized communities often bear the brunt of environmental degradation and pollution. The neighborhoods surrounding the three-hundred-acre, city-owned tract of land that the police and fire training center will occupy abuts a socio-economically depressed and predominately Black part of unincorporated DeKalb county,[529] where residents face disproportionate exposure to environmental hazards such as pollution and industrial facilities.[530] Whereas white residents might view a police and fire training center as a

site of safety, for Black residents, the site connotes a training ground for police officers who may perpetuate more Black deaths. In turn, Hirsi advocates for this community to preserve and cultivate their place attachment despite the chronic social and environmental injustices the land and its ab/use constitute for the community. Taken together, these excerpts illustrate how Hirsi's attachments to place set a foundation for her attachments to community and identity.

Dis(place)ing Community and Identity

Paying attention to the role place attachment plays in constituting individual and collective identities matters because communities are not only physical or social entities but also spaces of shared meaning, interaction, and belonging, and identity is not only an individual construct but also a social phenomenon shaped by shared spaces, histories, and cultural contexts. Therefore, a disruption to place attachments threatens how individuals understand themselves, navigate the world, build relationships, and find themselves at home with themselves and others. Hirsi demonstrates the interconnected nature of place, community, and identity throughout her discourse. Through her people-centered approach to her activism, she calls upon her audiences to see the impacts of climate change on their identities and communities by rooting them in place. Above, I reveal how attachments to place are an integral point of persuasion across Hirsi's activism. Now, I expand on the conceptual framing of place attachments to how Hirsi integrates attachments to community and identity into her activism.

Hirsi constructs a community of shared meaning, interaction, and belonging through her place attachments. Indeed, community *is* place in many of Hirsi's descriptions. "For me, community is my hometown, it's my people, its Somalis, its Black people, its women, its people who listen to my voice, its people who uplift voices like mine. People who are ready to fight, are ready to engage, and are ready to support each other," Hirsi asserted in early 2023.[531] This

passage demonstrates the interconnectedness and coconstitutive nature of attachments to place, community, and identity. Hirsi claims that without this community and these people, she "would not be the organizer that I am today."[532] These encounters with place and community shape how Hirsi identifies in and with the world and how she, in turn, gives back. On one occasion, Hirsi posted on Instagram, "I'm striking because my communities are at risk, my future is at risk, and so are future generations' chances for a liveable planet."[533] Here, Hirsi *places* community at risk and, through her people-centered framework, brings climate change to urban communities of color in a way that calls upon death and a dying future. In another display of evoking community through place and in situ, Hirsi posted after the Climate Strike at the Minnesota State Capital, "Yesterday was historic. I saw thousands coming out to fight for our livelihood. Minnesota, you showed the world that we won't stand this inaction, and I'm so proud."[534] Considering the intersectional intricacies of Hirsi's activism over time, these examples invite audiences to understand the loss that comes with climate injustices. Climate injustice is more than a threat to faraway environments. Climate change threatens the places and communities that shape who we are and how we make sense of personal and collective experiences with injustice. Hirsi's use of place attachments, moreover, compels her audiences to understand and experience climate injustice as a disruption to the shared spaces, histories, and cultural contexts that her audiences are attached to, particularly those audience members who relate to Hirsi because of her advocacy for communities of color living in urban places.

While Hirsi anchors her activism in her attachments to place, community, and identity, she constructs a narrative that invites her audiences to enter the movement as always already attached to others. Hirsi ensures that her audiences experience a sense of belonging. "This movement is not one person, or one group. This movement is all of us and we need to make sure

we value those who are disproportionately affected by this crisis. And allow those who are affected to lead," Hirsi asserted early in her activism and continues to argue for a more intersectional and collective approach to dismantle climate injustices.[535] Though Hirsi is explicit in trying to address the "ongoing problem of diversity and equity in climate activism," by pulling communities of color into the movement through her person-centered framework, she also recognizes her role in reaching audience members who may not connect to her through shared place attachments, histories, or cultural contexts.[536] In an interview, Hirsi noted that one of her motivations to persist as a climate justice activist was because she "might be one of the only black women that [white climate activists] encounter, and that is really important."[537] Despite the perception that many white climate activists "don't really care" about her, Hirsi noted that she "cares about me and my people."[538] Hirsi's commitment to care for "people like her" regardless of whether they join her is a significant part of her activism. Her attachments to her identity and community reveal the many barriers for similar individuals to identify with climate justice issues. Therefore, Hirsi "will stand here and advocate for them until they all realize that we need to do something about [climate change]."[539] In Hirsi's view, a significant barrier is that even though "The climate crisis is already impacting people of color. Not even within the U.S. but across the world. Black and brown people are dying because of the ignorance of the issue."[540] This stark assertion underscores the threat of death and the urgency of addressing climate injustices but also illustrates how building attachments is not the only way to constitute community and identity.

While Hirsi points to ignorance as a barrier to organizing against climate injustices, she also recognizes attachments impeding her audiences from acting or perceiving meaningful change as a possibility. For example, Hirsi argues that "Taking away the aspect of individual action makes everybody being [sic] able to relate, talking about the places that they go, the

animal industries that they partake in, and everything else makes them realize that it's not their fault and it never was, but really it's the fault of corporations, the government, and the one percent."[541] Attachments to everyday living and encounters with the environments where Hirsi's audiences "live, work, and play" become possible when individuals and communities can place blame on larger economic and political structures. By d*e*taching lower socioeconomic, urban communities of color from the systems that create climate injustices that threaten their lives, Hirsi offers a pathway towards *re*connecting with place in a way that generates a more just and sustainable future. Most important is that Hirsi's rhetorical strategy to attach herself to place constitutes community and identity in a way that strengthens her authority to speak on behalf of these attachments and advocate for their preservation to ensure a living, flourishing future for urban communities of color.

Dystopian Detachments and Rekindling Attachments

The duality of attachments, as both a source of vitality and a potential conduit for harm, underscores the complexity of human connection in the face of climate injustice. Hirsi's rhetoric around the death and preservation of attachments implicates the futures she envisions. The death of attachments forewarns a dystopian future where marginalized communities, particularly Black and brown populations, face a hopeless sense of placelessness. Climate injustices stripped connections to meaningful environments and individuals are thrust into an unsettling existence detached from the material objects and everyday living that constitute their identities. With no attachments to place, community, or identity, Hirsi depicts an erosion of cultural heritage not only with physical displacement but with the gradual disappearance of the spaces of encounter with narratives, traditions, and histories vital to individual and collective identity. A death to attachment, therefore, perpetuates the environmental injustices of the past and present, and

Hirsi's activism functions as a form of resistance against the death of more just and sustainable futures. Hirsi's call to rekindle attachments paints a contrasting picture and suggests futures characterized by community resilience, resistance, and flourishing. The act of reclaiming, preserving, and building attachments implies a vision of living where communities actively engage with and protect their environments and contribute to an ecologically and socially just future. Joining Hirsi in her climate activism is to counter the destructive economic and political powers that threaten the attachments, voices, and experiences of marginalized communities. Furthermore, preserving and rekindling attachments fosters a future where the intersectionality of identities is acknowledged and celebrated.

Through place attachments, Hirsi communicates climate change as an injustice that simultaneously impedes and accelerates living and dying. Hirsi's activism urges us to consider the interconnectedness of environmental injustice, attachment, community, and identity by sharing her personal attachments and emphasizing the intersections between environmental and social disparities. Grappling with the consequences of detachment on our collective identity, Hirsi calls upon the rhetorical power of death to generate a looming sense of placelessness and disconnection from familiar environments despite their duplicitous ability to nurture and erode wellbeing and life chances. Throughout Hirsi's discourse, communities armed with attachments are agents of change, shaping their own stories and challenging prevailing narratives about self-determination and degradation. My analysis reveals that the threat of death emerges as a compelling evocation of attachment loss. Hirsi relates the urgency to preserve attachments, not just as personal connections and affiliations but as vital components of shaping a future that values, protects, and celebrates an intersectional approach to environmental and social justice.

CHAPTER FIVE: BRING OUT YOUR DEAD

The purpose of this study has been to explore death as a rhetorical strategy and emphasize the speaking power of youths and their unique contributions to public discourses. In the preceding pages, I have argued that when youths employ the persuasive power of death, they do one or more of the following: (1) Constitute a space of inbetweenness and a process of becoming; (2) Harness the rhetorical significance of the material, spatial, and temporal aspects of everyday life; (3) Highlight the consequences of placelessness, disconnection, and detachment; (4) Call forth a politics of relation centered in an ethic of responsibility, intersectionality, and shared accountability; and (5) Imagine more just, sustainable, and flourishing futures for *all our relations*.

In my analysis of Greta Thunberg, Autumn Peltier, and Isra Hirsi's climate activism, I focused on the intersections of death, youth discourse, and environmental activism. I began this dissertation with a curiosity about death and centered this project on youths' unexpected expertise and rhetorical authority in addressing social, cultural, and ecological injustices. Recognizing the challenges and opportunities in studying youth discourses, I engaged with childhood and youth studies debates regarding the social construction and cultural mediation of youth as an identity. I embraced definitions that understand youths as an unstable, emergent, and continually evolving process of becoming rather than a fixed category. I selected three individuals who self-identify as environmental activists and serve as exemplary models for this project. Their diverse intercultural and international contexts offer opportunities to explore various theoretical and epistemological perspectives on death. As such, I emphasized the significance of each rhetor's epistemologies, cultural contexts, and social/geographic locations in

shaping how they define and make sense of death. Employing an expansive understanding of what constitutes a valid critical object, I worked with textual fragments to achieve a more equitable rhetorical record of youths broadly and amongst the youths in this study, specifically. Collapsing text and context emphasized the constant conversation between discourse and the surrounding environment. In this way, I understood texts as inherently incomplete and perpetually in motion, reflecting changing cultural conditions. As I reviewed in Chapter One, existing scholarship on youths often focuses on generational divides and delivery styles rather than the content of youth messages in and of themselves. I deployed a method of generative criticism and an iterative approach to my qualitative inquiry to continuously examine my interpretation of each orator's construction of death against existing theories and scholarly conversations. This method started by generating units of analysis or explanations from artifacts rather than relying on pre-established methods. Throughout my analyses, I infused critical and feminist assumptions for a more dynamic exploration of power relations, positionality, and gender justice. As a critical researcher, I assume that power relations mediate social life and knowledge production, and I consider the body, positionality, and ethics in my rhetorical criticism. Throughout this dissertation, my role as a researcher carried an ethical responsibility to promote human (and non-human) freedoms, wellbeing, and compassion and to work against blockages and injustices. Finally, as a feminist rhetorical critic, I placed death on the edges of the personal/public and blurred the lines between the private/political.

To conclude this project, I will briefly summarize the analysis of each youth activist, their rhetorical situations, and how they called upon death as a rhetorical strategy in contexts of climate change. Considering the rhetoric of this diverse set of young women rhetors, I synthesize the significant findings and key implications of my analyses to suggest a rhetorical theory of

eudaimortia, which reveals the persuasive power of death to challenge and reconstitute how to live, how to become, and how to make, move, and imagine bodies, worlds, and time. After describing the key propositions for how rhetorical critics might apply eudaimortia as a methodological and theoretical tool, I offer a "post mortem" and engage with more recent scholarship on climate rhetoric and explain how consideration of the rhetors/texts I examined in this project expands, challenges, and advances our understanding of climate rhetoric. Finally, I extend a rhetorical theory of eudaimortia and other tools, perspectives, and insights from this study to critics writing outside the contexts of ecological grief and environmental injustices, concluding with a brief discussion for further research.

Greta Thunberg and The Death of Science

Greta Thunberg identifies as a Swedish youth climate activist in the global spotlight as a leading voice in the climate change movement. Since the age of fifteen, Thunberg has delivered speeches in international forums addressing diverse audiences, from world leaders at the United Nations to local passersby on Fridays outside the capital building in downtown Stockholm. Thunberg characterizes death as a space of inbetweenness and process of becoming by calling upon the future deaths of youths and embodying them in the present. In Chapter Two, I argue that Thunberg's public addresses demonstrate how death operates as a persuasive rhetorical strategy by (1) drawing on themes of crisis, (2) rejecting a paternalistic modern science, (3) constructing a Mother Science as a nurturing and protective figure, and (4) positioning children as the "Waking Dead," united behind Mother Science. Together, these topoi of death constitute the material, spatial, and temporal aspects of everyday life and compel audiences to listen to science as they would a nourishing mother figure to secure a flourishing and living future. Thunberg's depiction of the living as a Waking Dead positions children as self-sacrificing

messengers from the future, warning of impending crises. These children function to "wake" the present to the strange dream world of the climate crisis. I explore how Thunberg oscillates between criticizing and embracing the power of dreams. On the one hand, dreams work to sustain systems of power and impede climate action. On the other hand, Thunberg leverages dreams as a persuasive tool. Finally, I investigate Thunberg's references to time in relation to the urgency of climate action. I argue that time functions as a binding element between death and the killing of future generations. As Thunberg describes, #tomorrowistoolate, compelling her audiences to listen to science to make sense of the existential emergencies climate change presents.

Autumn Peltier and The Death of Kinship

Autumn Peltier, an Anishinaabe water advocate from the Wiikwemkoong First Nation, operates within the context of Indigenous epistemologies that emphasize the spiritual and relational connections to the natural world. Peltier's identity as an Indigenous girl and Chief Water Commissioner shapes how she addresses global audiences about Indigenous ways of being and knowing. Peltier's speaking platform ranges from international media to environmental conferences to Indigenous gatherings and ceremonies. Throughout her discourse, Peltier roots her activism in kinship systems and spiritual connections to water, which reveals how death operates as a mode of persuasion through a coordinated responsibility for life and kinship relationships. Peltier breathes life into water by calling upon a sacred relationship between women and water, which challenges her audiences to "keep" water from dying. The Indigenous process of "keeping" constitutes a way of moving through living and dying in kinship with others and focuses on healing a dying kinship system through an ethic of shared responsibility. In Chapter Three, I explore Peltier's depiction of water's ecological and spiritual

significance as a living, spirited being, according to Anishinabek nibi inaakonigewin (water laws). I argue that Peltier constitutes a complex identity of the Water Warrior that weaves traditional perspectives of the role of women as water keepers, water walkers, and the intertwining of ceremony and politics. Peltier's identity as a Water Warrior transforms the traditional warrior trope from fighting to acts of nurturing and caring. I investigate Indigenous temporal concepts by comparing notions of kinship time with linear time as responses to climate change urgency and demonstrate how Peltier's advocacy focuses on "keeping kinship" and "keeping time" as a shared ethical responsibility in environmental activism.

Isra Hirsi and The Death of Attachment

Isra Hirsi's activism brings together social and environmental justice issues and focuses on how a people-centered approach to the climate change movement addresses systemic disparities in Black and brown communities. Hirsi's identity as a young, Black Muslim woman shapes how she relates to climate change and informs how she mobilizes young activists of color living in urban contexts. Hirsi communicates climate change as an injustice that severs critical attachments to place, community, and identity. The threat of death emerges in Hirsi's rhetoric as a compelling evocation of attachment loss that generates a sense of placelessness and disconnection from familiar environments. Through place attachments, I argue that Hirsi's activism demonstrates the duality of attachments as a source of vitality and a conduit for harm. On the one hand, Hirsi's personal place attachments draw on the constitutive power of place in shaping identities, building communities, and constructing shared meaning and senses of belonging. On the other hand, my examination of Hirsi's rhetoric illustrates the potential harm associated with place attachments, such as vulnerability to social and environmental injustices. My analysis in Chapter Four suggests that Hirsi employs death as a rhetorical strategy by

revealing the deaths of marginalized communities in the present (especially Black and brown populations) as warnings of dystopian futures. In turn, Hirsi promotes rekindling attachments as a form of activism that envisions resilient, resistant, and flourishing futures.

Rhetorics of Death and Death as Rhetoric

Defining death in this study was less important than clarifying the ways death emerged as rhetoric and how rhetoric, in turn, constitutes death throughout Thunberg, Peltier, and Hirsi's discourses. In the preceding chapters, I have illustrated how each variant of death suggested that an individual's perception of what death "is" and means shapes how death functions rhetorically. Across my analyses of Thunberg, Peltier, and Hirsi, I underscored how death emerges as a complex and multifaceted rhetorical tool from each youth's unique positionalities and social, cultural, geographical, and political contexts. Whether as a space of becoming, a mode of persuasion through responsibility, or a means to constitute attachments, each activist employs death rhetorically to evoke emotions, challenge narratives, and motivate action.

Constituting a Space of Inbetweenness and a Process of Becoming

My critical analysis of Thunberg, Peltier, and Hirsi's climate activism reveals the complexity of death as a rhetorical strategy that constitutes a space of inbetweenness and a process of becoming. These activists embody resilience and adaptability in response to the ever-shifting landscapes in efforts and utilize death rhetorically to position themselves and their audiences within an ongoing process of becoming. Each activist challenges existing norms and paradigms to mobilize their audiences to live differently. Simultaneously, Thunberg, Peltier, and Hirsi reflect on the transformative natures of their journeys, portraying their roles as climate activists not as fixed destinations but as ongoing processes of growth and wellbeing.

Thunberg destabilizes traditional views of science, positioning it in a precarious, transformative space. By constituting climate change as a crisis that requires immediate action, Thunberg's rhetoric creates a sense of urgency that casts the present in a liminal space that demands action. This urgency catalyzes a global youth movement, and as I discussed in Chapter Two, Thunberg wants her audiences to panic. In this way, panic represents a transformative process that fosters collective action and becomes a symbol of youth activism. Finally, Thunberg positions change as an inevitable process "whether we like it or not," and becoming agents of change by waking ourselves to today's crises will open our eyes to more sustainable futures.

Peltier focuses on evolving kinship systems that constitute identity and a politics of relation, highlighting that a fluid, adaptive, and shared responsibility for changing climates is critical to the practice of "keeping" a thriving future for Indigenous populations. By positioning keeping water as a process bound to the past, present, and future, Peltier transforms her identity as a Water Warrior into an agent of intergenerational nurturing and care. Peltier's participation in water ceremonies upholds an ongoing spiritual and ecological becoming process that intertwines Indigenous practices and sacred responsibility with flourishing futures.

Hirsi's deployment of place attachments as a rhetorical strategy signifies an inbetweenness that places personal identity and connection within the broader context of social and environmental injustices. Hirsi's activism reveals that Black and brown bodies are placed in the liminal space of precarious living and dying. Through place attachments, vulnerable communities are simultaneously made and eroded by climate change's material and affective impacts.

Harnessing the Rhetorical Significance of the Material, Spatial, and Temporal Aspects of Everyday Life

Throughout their activism, Thunberg, Peltier, and Hirsi incorporate elements of the material, spatial, and temporal aspects of everyday life. For instance, Thunberg leverages rhetorics of science to emphasize the material impacts of climate change on the environment. Hirsi discusses how climate change disproportionately affects certain geographical areas (urban cities), highlighting the spatial dimensions of environmental injustice. All draw on the rhetorical force of time into their rhetoric by including historical events, imaginations of the future, or amplifying the urgency of change in the present. Integrating material evidence, spatial considerations, and temporal dimensions connects these youth's climate activism with their lived experiences and establishes a material, spatial, and temporal relationship between climate change and death.

Highlighting the Consequences of Placelessness, Disconnection, and Detachment

Each activist draws their audience's attention to the negative outcomes and implications of losing a sense of place, disconnection from meaningful relationships, and detachment from one's surroundings or identity. Hirsi, in particular, focuses on these consequences when she communicates climate change as inherently social and, therefore, just as much an injustice to people as to the environment. In Chapter Four, I argue that Hirsi's activism communicates that individuals and communities are losing a sense of belonging and connection to specific places they are attached to. In turn, climate change and other environmental and social injustices are rendering the familiar and secure places unrecognizable to the communities of color living/dying there. Hirsi's activism highlights the emotional and cultural aspects of placelessness due to the death of place attachments. When injustice severs these attachments, Black and brown bodies

lose more than just a connection to place; they lose meaningful relationships with natural places, community, and cultural identity. In this way, environmental degradation disrupts life chances and just futures.

The theme of placelessness, disconnection, and detachments is also present in Thunberg and Peltier's activism in how they explore detachments from a thriving future or cultural heritage as affecting their overall wellbeing and sense of purpose and place in the present. Thunberg argues that inaction today leads to a future devoid of environmental stability tomorrow and emphasizes that our failures are a result of detachment. Envisioning a future marked by unforgivable ecological collapse is the link Thunberg makes between the deaths of the past, present, and future if we do not prioritize systemic change. Peltier, too, focuses on the consequences of detachment from water's sacredness and the risk of severed intergenerational and non-human relations. Peltier underscores how restoring kinship systems through ceremony, connection, and an ethic of responsibility is critical to healing the ecological destruction and strategic removal of Indigenous ways of knowing, being, living, and dying. Calling upon death as a rhetorical strategy encourages audiences to consider the personal and collective risk of placelessness, disconnection, and detachment.

Calling Forth a Politics of Relation Centered in an Ethic of Responsibility, Intersectionality, and Shared Accountability

In my analysis of Peltier's activism, I demonstrated how she advocated for a political approach that prioritizes interconnectedness, ethical obligations, an understanding of intersecting identities, and collective responsibility. By communicating climate change through dying kinship systems, Peltier promoted a political framework that considers these principles in the context of environmental activism. This framework emphasizes the moral duty of individuals and

communities to preserve and protect the natural world through "keeping." This rhetorical strategy calls upon death to encourage audiences to see environmental issues through the lens of Indigenous epistemologies that know all matter as lively and worthy of being grieved, protected, and flourishing. Like Peltier, Thunberg emphasizes collective accountability in confronting the climate crisis and appeals to an ethic of shared responsibility by challenging her audiences to recognize their role in the climate crisis. Similarly, Hirsi calls forth a politics of relation to promote a more inclusive environmental justice movement by centering intersectionality in her activism.

Imagining More Just, Sustainable, and Flourishing Futures For All Our Relations

Throughout this project, I have explored how Thunberg, Peltier, and Hirsi constitute death through their imaginations of the future and memorializing of the past. The collision and interweaving of pasts/presents/futures prioritizes equity, sustainability, and overall wellbeing that inspires new ways of being. In turn, the activists' advocate for more just futures that address the systemic inequalities climate change poses on individual and collective living/dying. As I argued throughout this dissertation, each activist promotes practices that conserve, protect, and support social and environmental wellbeing in temporally dynamic ways. Indeed, imagining flourishing throughout time is central to how we come to know death in the context of Thunberg, Peltier, and Hirsi's activism. Furthermore, these imaginations extend beyond human relations and include a holistic ecosystem constituted by hope, agency, and a sense of shared responsibility.

For example, in Chapter Two, I described how Thunberg imagines a future when justice and responsibility are the central animating features of global policies. In this future, global leaders are committed to a sustainable present and listen to sciences to ensure systemic change that supports a flourishing environment and all species for generations to come. Peltier envisions

a future when the lifeblood of water that flows through every being is honored through ceremony and kinship systems. Water Walkers roam terrains and communities living/dying in abundance, cleansing and replenishing a sustainable and flourishing existence with each prayerful step. Hirsi describes a future when communities are actively engaged, aware, and empathetic to the experiences of others. These communities coconstitute the just and sustainable world in which they live through conscious efforts to understand and cherish the environments that shape their identities and provide a sense of belonging.

Across these imaginations of the future, each activist deploys death as a rhetorical strategy to encourage their audiences to confront climate change in particular ways. Thunberg communicates ecological catastrophe and the deaths of ecosystems and future generations to compel action. Tapping into the fear of death by environmental degradation and loss—the death of science—Thunberg urges her audiences to act before it is too late. Peltier's rhetoric evokes the death of sacred relationships and kinship systems. By calling upon death, Peltier urges her audiences to rekindle an intergenerational and interspecies ethic of responsibility to preserve and generate a thriving past, present, and future existence. Hirsi highlights the unjust death of Black and brown communities because of the loss of place attachments due to social and environmental injustices. By evoking the threat of death, Hirsi persuades her audiences to prioritize and protect the places that constitute who they are, how they feel, and how they belong.

Taken together, these activists utilize death as a rhetorical strategy to signify a liminal space and process of becoming, amplify their messages' urgency, and underscore the repercussions of detachment, isolation, no sense of responsibility, and a lack of imagination and just action. While distinctive in their approaches, Thunberg, Peltier, and Hirsi collectively demonstrate the persuasive power of death across these themes, reinforce the significance of

youths speaking out on matters of life and death, and contribute to a nuanced understanding of death's transformative potential across diverse contexts. Drawing on the major findings and themes from the preceding chapters, I propose that Thunberg, Peltier, and Hirsi's unique approaches to deploying death to emphasize becoming, responsibility, justice, and the interconnectedness of all life/death suggest a rhetorical theory of eudaimortia.

A Rhetorical Theory of *Eudaimortia*

As I previewed in Chapter One, *eudaimortia* enlarges traditional Aristotelian conceptions of *eudaimonia.* Eudai*monia* considers flourishing and wellbeing as the ultimate goal of *human* life. As Gerard Hauser describes, an individual achieves eudaimonia through ethical *living* and fulfilling their highest potential by cultivating virtues in the here and now through deliberation, practical reasoning (*phronesis*), and the vernacular.[542] In the context of eudaimonia, a rhetorical critic might analyze how communication practices can contribute to moral and intellectual development, engage in ethical persuasion that promotes a common good, or encourage human flourishing and "living well."[543] Traditional understandings of eudaimonia, then, guide a scholar to engage in audience-centered analyses that are likely temporally bound to the immediate impact of a text on the wellbeing in the present. Moreover, these analyses assume the moral dimensions of rhetoric and focus on how ethics and virtues promote and enhance the wellbeing of individuals and communities. Eudaimonia, or "the good life," is realized through these virtuous pursuits.[544]

In contrast, eudai*mortia* signifies how flourishing, wellbeing, and death coconstitute one another and conceptualize an interconnected and transformative way of being across time. By proposing that life/living is a process of death/dying, a rhetorical theory of eudaimortia reshapes our understanding of life, becoming, and the intricate interplay of bodies, worlds, and times.[545]

As such, a rhetorical theory of eudaimortia asserts both theoretical and methodological interventions for examining how death as rhetoric and rhetorics of death coconstitute the material, spatial, and temporal matterings of everyday life. Scholars working with a framework of eudaimortia can examine the discursive practices that highlight the agential potential of death and focus on how death's subjectivity, in turn, constructs nuanced understandings of being and living, belonging and relation, and accountability to the past, present and future. Analyses might range from considering the ethical responsibilities for the dead to the ever-present influence of the dead on the flourishing of the living to challenging normative biopolitical impact on wellbeing and flourishing life/death.

In this specific project, eudaimortia is a theory of the good life and death made visible in and by Thunberg, Peltier, and Hirisi's rhetoric. This study contributes a unique perspective to rhetorical criticism by revealing death as a rhetorical strategy across diverse environmental justice narratives. Imagining wellbeing by becoming death has transformative potential in how we reckon with ecological grief, gendered environmental discourses, and environmental injustice. More broadly, however, a rhetorical theory of eudaimortia offers important insights into how rhetorical practices do one or more of the following: (1) Expand eudaimonia beyond the life/death binary; (2) Emphasize the interconnectedness of life and death; (3) Promote an ethical responsibility for the dead in the past, present, and future; (4) Acknowledge the political agency of the dead; (5) Challenge biopolitical norms; and (6) Shape public memory, mourning, imagination, and flourishing.

A rhetorical theory of eudaimortia emerged from my exploration of the persuasive power of death in Thunberg, Peltier, and Hirsi's climate activism. I needed a more expansive view of eudaimonia that allowed me to consider the impact of death on the rhetorical strategies each

activist deployed and a theoretical framework of eudaimortia offers a conceptual lens for understanding how speakers constitute wellbeing through death. In Chapter Two, I argued that Thunberg's crisis narratives extended beyond the present into the future, which is an example of how her rhetoric expands both the temporal scope of eudaimonia and invokes the deaths of future generations and ecologies, constituting the political agency of the Waking Dead. A rhetorical theory of eudaimortia explains how Thunberg's use of time and urgency challenges the present's impact on the future by holding the present accountable for the killings of yesterday and tomorrow. Waking to the experiences of the future dead reconstitutes what "the good life" means to the Walking Dead of today. In Chapter Three, I illustrated how Peltier's emphasis on the spiritual and relational connections with water constitute "all matter as lively," in ways that explore the agential potential of the living/dying. Indeed, Peltier's rhetoric enlarges the agents of death to include all our relations and promotes an ethical responsibility for the dead in the past, present, and future. In my critical analysis of Peltier's activism, eudaimortia affords a more expansive understanding of what constitutes a grievable body. Finally, in Chapter Four, I argued that Hirsi's activism confronts the vulnerability, suffering, and deaths of Black and brown bodies placed in the liminal spaces of precarious living and dying. A rhetorical theory of eudaimortia accounts for biopolitical norms and regimes that impede the flow and flourishing of individuals and communities. A nuanced understanding of death's potential to challenge and reconstitute "the good life" supports my analysis that Hirsi constitutes a death to critical attachments to place, community, and identity. Hirsi uses the persuasive power of death to imagine more resilient, resistant, and flourishing futures by pointing to place attachments that are risk of dying.

In sum, a rhetorical theory of eudaimortia encourages the rhetorical critic to consider the enduring impacts of death and its role in challenging and reconstituting how we live, become,

and envision ourselves flourishing across worlds, time, and in relation with others. While traditional understandings of eudaimonia guide scholars to investigate communication through immediate, audience-centered, ethical impacts, a rhetorical theory of eudaimortia explores new dimensions of rhetorical analysis to include the interconnectedness of life and death and a more nuanced view of rhetorics of death and death as rhetoric. A rhetorical theory of eudaimortia emphasizes the interconnectedness of social and environmental living, dying, flourishing, and suffering. My study asserts that when considering the persuasive power of death in discourse, rhetorical critics and communication scholars must attend to the ethical implications of invoking death, commit themselves to being culturally and contextually sensitive, and look for how death serves as a powerful narrative frame and symbolic element in discourse.

Post Mortem

Much like a medical examination reveals the intricacies of life/living, this post mortem summarizes the political and theoretical significance of my exploration of death in the preceding chapters. My analysis of Thunberg, Peltier, and Hirsi's activism urges scholars to rethink traditional perspectives, embrace a holistic understanding of life and death, and reflect on the potential of eudaimortia to reshape how we conceptualize death as a generative process of living and becoming. As I have illustrated throughout this project, "bringing out the dead" in rhetorical analysis constitutes new ways of being and living. Put another way, death constitutes a collective pulse, confronts the political status quo by demanding accountability and collective action, and reimagines political pasts/presents/futures that are responsive, relational, and representative.

This research advances new insights in the four major areas: (1) making sense of death in rhetorical studies; (2) environmental communication beyond the Anthropocene; (3) youth rhetoric and activism; and (4) furthering a rhetorical theory of eudaimortia. In the following

sections, I return to my review of these areas in Chapter One and describe how my study expands, challenges, and or advances existing scholarly approaches to them.

Making Sense of Death in Rhetorical Studies

Much of the existing literature that explores death focuses on what thanatologist Robert Kastenbaum describes as the "the up-close-and-personal situations of dying people, their families, and caregivers."[546] This scope of analysis is true of both the institutionalized study of death, thanatology, and the field of rhetorical studies. As I reviewed in Chapter One, there are three traditional understandings and historical definitions of death: as an event, condition, or state of non/existence. In this way, the term "death" is polysemous, and the multiple meanings of death invoke and imbibe varying epistemological, ideological, and ontological perspectives. I overlayed these broad characteristics of death with rhetorical studies of death to suggest three primary sites of analysis: studies on end-of-life rhetoric, studies on the rhetoric of eulogies and funeral oratory, and the rhetorical study of death's discourses. While my study joins a group of communication and communication-adjacent scholars whose research intersects around topics of death, dying, mourning, memorialization, and end-of-life communication, my study aligns with scholars that treat death as a constant state of being.[547]

Through examining cross-cultural perspectives and epistemologies of death, my analyses of Thunberg, Peltier, and Hirsi broadens understandings of how cultural contexts shape rhetorics of death and death as rhetoric. My analyses reveal the political and material consequences of rhetorics of death across disparate ideological orientations. As such, my study advances our understanding of how death functions rhetorically and emphasizes the persuasive power of death in shaping individual and collective identities. Stuart J. Murray and other scholars investing death as an expression of political and economic struggle, called for further exploration of how

Western frameworks project distinct assumptions onto both the definitions of death and death's meanings/matterings and took a closer look at how systems of power kill in the name of life and progress.[548] I responded to this call by curating an intercultural set of orators/texts and incorporating Indigenous epistemologies that center the knowing and seeing of *all matter as lively*. Broadening the ideological, geographical, and conceptual understandings of death in my study allowed me to further theorize the thematic of death beyond its conditions, events, and economies. Moreover, I was able to evaluate the relational politics of death more thoroughly, and therefore, death as a process of becoming. By exploring the discursive power, politics, and relations of death, my study enlarges the thematic of death as an area of research and joins environmental communication scholars in theorizing beyond anthropocentric relations and subjectivity.

My study warrants future research into the uses of death as a rhetorical strategy in political discourse, social movements, and intercultural communication. For instance, I lacked historical analyses that assessed the evolution of the framing of death and its impact on public opinion. Comparative studies that conduct cross-cultural and cross-temporal analyses of rhetorics of death in political speeches or how the framing of death shapes policy decisions and public perceptions would advance the study of death rhetoric. Furthermore, while I did not explicitly foreground theories of whiteness in my analyses, my study warrants ongoing critical reflection and interrogation of how whiteness operates as an invisible norm that shapes societal structures, discourses, and individual perceptions. For example, my own privileging of certain voices, experiences, or modes of engagement inadvertently reflects and perpetuates viewpoints and experiences laden with underlying racialized assumptions about the characteristics of "science," "kinship," "ceremony," and "urban," to name a few. Finally, my study suggests further

examinations of the role of death as a persuasive element in historical and contemporary social movements and assessing death's contribution to mobilization and resistance.

Environmental Communication Beyond the Anthropocene

This research joins environmental communication scholars exploring the relationship between ethics, loss of ecological place, and the ways discourse gives shape to environmental ideologies and human/environmental interactions. By placing death on the edges of social, cultural and ecological injustices, this study expands how we investigate mournable bodies beyond the Anthropocene. In this way, my interrogation of the significance of *all* relations, including the non-human, in the process of subject formation, joins with other prominent and emerging environmental communication scholars. In Chapter One, I outlined the two "dwelling places" of death in the field of environmental rhetoric that are of particular importance to my project: grief and gender. In this section, I return to scholars who are developing theorizations of "eco-grief" by highlighting the ways environmental loss works temporally, materially, culturally, socially, and rhetorically.

In their recent exploration of "vigilant mourning," a sustained and repeated mourning process that involves remaining awake and alert to ecological losses, Joshua Barnett explores how mourning practices contribute to the collective capacity to grieve ecological catastrophe.[549] Emphasizing the role of language, names, and images in ecological mourning, Barnett suggests that mourning is a discursive practice that supports individuals as they navigate environmental death. Barnett states, "We live in a time characterized by enormous ecological devastation and profound planetary transformation. Amid the Anthropocene, the death, destruction, and disappearance of the more-than-human world have become undeniable."[550] Barnett primarily focuses on death as an event by focusing on specific losses and extinctions and the tangible

aspects of these losses. My study expands Barnett's argument by suggesting that as individuals and communities become more attuned (through the ritual process of vigilant mourning) to the losses of species, landscapes, and ecosystems, death and loss, in turn, mark their bodies and constitute new ways of living/dying. In this way, mourning operates as a rhetoric of death and positions death as rhetoric. As I argued in Chapter One, without frames of loss, mourning, and grief, there is no life/living. My research deepens this area of rhetorical analysis by offering ways to explore the coconstitutive qualities of death beyond the Anthropocene. In turn, this project contributes to further interrogations of how death functions rhetorically in cultural practices, ceremonies, and traditions in ways that contribute to a broader understanding of cultural values, beliefs, rituals, identities, and attitudes toward loss.

Youth Rhetoric and Activism

Central to the design of this project is how I established a connection between death and youths, broadly, and how I reaffirmed the rhetorical authority of youths to speak on matters of life and death. I have shown that exploring death in relation to youths is both timely and timeless. Thunberg, Peltier, and Hirsi each foregrounded death in ways that disrupt the adult gaze that might typically, and perhaps prefer, to see youths as the depiction of life and the future. Death's dominating presence in youth rhetoric is uncomfortable. For older generations who cling to hopes of the future, vitality, and wellbeing through their visions of youths, death is inescapable. Youths becoming death create a space of flourishing that enables them to reject adults' propensity to run away from death/dying by depicting youths as the elixir to immortality.

Youths deploy death as a rhetorical strategy to evoke pasts, presents, and futures in ways that construct a nuanced understanding of how to make our way through the world. Furthermore, in my selection of each orator, I sought diverse intercultural and international contexts to ensure

a variety of ecological and intersecting social issues. This research contributes to conversations within the field of youth studies and also suggests that rhetorical scholars should further explore the motivations, strategies, and impacts of youth activism in various contexts. For instance, my project joins discussions on how children and youths participate in civic life and have the potential to change norms of democratic engagement.

The results in my study suggest several areas for future research across communication and rhetorical studies, including but not limited to further exploration of global youth movements. I have argued that youths have a unique rhetorical authority to speak about global issues. Deeper investigations of youth voices, their messages, their diverse cultural and political contexts, their rhetorical strategies, and their impacts and contributions will ensure that communication scholarship recognizes youths as active agents in shaping a sustainable and just world. This project positions young activists as catalysts for change in discussions about life, death, and social and environmental challenges, but there is much to explore in the area.

Death Becomes Us

Thunberg, Peltier, and Hirsi, by my account, have traversed what I described in Chapter One as the "tender, innocent, and transitional era" of girl/childhood and have entered a phase in their lives and activisms that evokes adulthood. All are legally categorized as adults in their respective contexts, but more importantly, all have adopted new vocabularies of speaking out *for* youths rather than *as* youth as they age. Do we take their voices more or less seriously now that we describe them as women, rather than girls? Are they able to stay awake, attuned, and attached to death in the same ways over time? Are the many faces of death still visible to them? Or does their transition into adulthood signify other deaths, such as the death of sight and the death of imagining new ways of being, living, and belonging?

I began my study of death by expressing a concern for *actual* deaths and a curiosity about death as a constant state of being. Despite the inevitability of death, the freedom to create one's life—to be free of violence, alienation, and oppression and to experience meaning, belonging, and wellbeing—is a central animating feature of the persuasive power of death. COVID-19 lingers and claims close to two thousand lives every week, but the threat of death is less likely than the inconvenience of cold-like symptoms. Five "major" wars and dozens of wars, minor conflicts, and "skirmishes and clashes" are taking place around the world.[551] The World Health Organization estimates that between 2030 and 2050, climate change will cause approximately 250,000 deaths per year from malnutrition, malaria, diarrhea, and heat stress alone.[552] A rhetorical theory of eudaimortia demands justice and responsibility for these deaths. Death becomes us when we accept the fullness of our complicity in these unjust and untimely deaths. The process of becoming death equips us with new ways of living, being, and imagining wellbeing.

ENDNOTES

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5. Edwin Battistella, "Marjorie Taylor Greene and the Death of the Public Political Apology," *The Conversation*, February 9, 2021, sec. Politics + Society, http://theconversation.com/marjorie-taylor-greene-and-the-death-of-the-public-political-apology-154714; Marc Fisher, "The End of Democracy? To Many Americans, the Future Looks Dark If the Other Side Wins," *Washington Post*, October 25, 2020, sec. Politics, https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/end-of-democracy-election/2020/10/25/3b8c0940-13d0-11eb-ba42-ec6a580836ed_story.html.

6. "Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19): Numbers at a Glance," World Health Organization, accessed May 1, 2023, https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019.

7. President Joe Biden, "Remarks by President Biden on the Anniversary of the COVID-19 Shutdown" (East Room, The White House, March 11, 2021), https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2021/03/11/remarks-by-president-biden-on-the-anniversary-of-the-covid-19-shutdown/.

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10. Edwin Black, "The Second Persona," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 56, no. 2 (April 1970): 119, https://doi.org/10.1080/00335637009382992.

11. Anthropologist and theologist Douglas J. Davies describes death as "a subject that touches practically every aspect of life. The inevitable interest we all have in death—whether voiced or silent—is, often, unlike the interest we possess in other subjects…infused with emotion, whether that of the experience of bereavement of its anticipation, or of the thought of our own mortality." Douglas James Davies, *A Brief History of Death*, Blackwell Brief Histories of Religion (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub, 2005), x.

12. I will not be undertaking such a mapping in this project. Historian Steven Fine extends a brief review of the state of the discipline in noting that "The social and religious history of death is a growth area in modern scholarship. Scholars of western cultural history have found interest in this subject, an interest that paralleled, was influenced by and influenced contemporary debate on the social construction of death. In the United States interest in death as a phenomenon began to develop during the later 1960's. Generally associated with the work of psychologist Elizabeth Kubler-Ross, new attentiveness to death has resulted in attitudes toward dying that are much different than those that existed before her time. The single most important historical study of changing western attitudes toward death is Philippe Ariés' *L'homme devant la mort* (Paris, 1977). This work, produced by one of the major practitioners of the French Annales school, was translated as The Hour of Our Death (New York, 1981). Ariés' work was not carried out for academic reasons exclusively. Like Kubler-Ross, Ariés' was dissatisfied with the sanitized attitude toward death that he felt characterized the 1960's and 1970's. He probed literary and archaeological sources for alternative approaches. Ariés assumed a global approach to the history of death, tracing its development from the Greco-Roman period through the present. The book, in fact, deals with very specific issues of death, usually as they pertain to France or to western Catholicism." Steven Fine, "Review of Goldberg, Sylvie-Anne, 'Crossing the Jabbok: Illness and Death in Ashkenazi Judaism in Sixteenth- through Nineteenth-Century Prague,'" *H-Judaic*, 1997, https://networks.h-net.org/node/28655/reviews/30598/fine-goldberg-crossing-jabbok-illness-and-death-ashkenazi-judaism.

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14. Joshua Schuster, "Death Reckoning in the Thinking of Heidegger, Foucault, and Derrida," *Other Voices* 1, no. 1 (1997), http://www.othervoices.org/1.1/jnschust/death.php. Literary and environmental scholar, Joshua Schuster, suggests that the "death debate" serves as a significant lens through which we might understand how various perspectives on death and dying set into motion distinct schools of philosophical thought.

15. Schuster, 1094.

16. Plato, *Plato: Euthyphro. Apology. Crito. Phaedo. Phaedrus.*, trans. Harold North Fowler (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2005), 141.

17. Hannelore Wass, "Death Education," in *Macmillan Encyclopedia of Death and Dying*, ed. Robert Kastenbaum (New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2003), 339.

18. Shay Welch, "Native American Epistemology," in *The Phenomenology of a Performative Knowledge System: Dancing with Native American Epistemology*, ed. Shay Welch (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2019), 31, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-04936-2_2.

19. Brian Yazzie Burkhart, "What Coyote and Thales Can Teach Us," in *American Indian Thought: Philosophical Essays*, ed. Anne Waters (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub, 2004), 20.

20. Burkhart, 20.

21. Viola Cordova, "Approaches to Native American Philosophy," in *American Indian Thought: Philosophical Essays*, ed. Anne Waters (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub, 2004), 27.

22. Brian Yazzie Burkhart, "Red Wisdom: Highlighting Recent Writing in Native American Philosophy," *Confluence: Journal of World Philosophies* 1, no. November (2016): 233, https://scholarworks.iu.edu/iupjournals/index.php/confluence/article/view/527.

23. Following James Martin, I define discourse as "the general domain of signs and symbolic exchanges," and use the words "discourse," "rhetoric," and "communication" interchangeably. James Martin, "Rhetoric, Discourse and the Hermeneutics of Public Speech," *Politics* 42, no. 2 (May 2022): 170, https://doi.org/10.1177/0263395720933779. Rhetoricians define and approach the concept of discourse in various ways but generally analyze discourse to understand how language shapes and reflects social, cultural, and political realities. For example, Robert L. Scott argues that any definition of rhetoric must recognize that the environment in which humans live is significantly shaped by human interaction and emphasizes the dynamic and ever-shifting nature of the rhetorical environment, which cannot and should not be fixed to one definition. Robert L. Scott, "On Not Defining 'Rhetoric,'" *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 6, no. 2 (1973): 81–96. Thomas B. Farrell, too, focuses on how rhetoric functions as a dynamic and ongoing engagement with history and emphasizes the exploration of available and unavailable means of persuasion within different historical contexts. Farrell suggests a consideration of rhetoric "rhetoric as *productive* art, rhetoric as *constitutive* art, and rhetoric as *inventional* art." Thomas B Farrell, "Rhetoric in History as Theory and Praxis: A Blast from the Past," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 41, no. 4 (2008). I align with scholars who embrace the elasticity of discourse and rhetoric as terms. See, for instance Jennifer Emerling Bone, Cindy L. Griffin, & T. M. Linda Scholz' challenge to a strict definition of rhetoric and their review of the manifold definitions in circulation since Aristotle. Jennifer Emerling Bone, Cindy L. Griffin, and T. M. Linda Scholz, "Beyond Traditional Conceptualizations of Rhetoric: Invitational Rhetoric and a Move Toward

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129. Greta (@gretathunberg) Thunberg, "We Children Do Not Usually Do as You Tell Us to Do, We Do as You Do.," Instagram photo, August 20, 2018, https://www.instagram.com/gretathunberg/. I always default to the rhetor's English translations when integrating their first language discourse into this project. In this case, Thunberg's post was in Swedish, and her English translation was offered in the comments. Over the course of her activism, Thunberg posted predominately in English. Methodologically, I try and ensure transparency on how I navigate linguistic nuances throughout this dissertation while acknowledging that I am not conducting a close textual analysis or comparing linguistic nuance across languages in this project.

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140. Ernman et al., 188.

141. Greta (@gretathunberg) Thunberg, "I'm Very Tiny and I Am Very Emotional," Instagram photo, March 28, 2020, https://www.instagram.com/p/B-R15nFJFhv/.

142. Greta Thunberg, "Almost Everything Is Black and White," in *No One Is Too Small to Make a Difference* (New York: Penguin Books, 2021), 6.

143. Greta (@gretathunberg) Thunberg, "Greta Thunberg (@gretathunberg) • Instagram Photos and Videos," Instagram profile, accessed August 15, 2021, https://www.instagram.com/gretathunberg/. Being born at 375 ppm means that there were 323.87 parts per million of CO2 in the atmosphere when Greta was born. Declaring this figure is meant to mark the efforts to stop or slow climate change as unsuccessful, at least, in her lifetime.

144. Thunberg, "I'm Too Young to Do This," 29.

145. Greta Thunberg, "Cathedral Thinking," in *No One Is Too Small to Make a Difference* (New York: Penguin Books, 2021), 49–50.

146. *Speech at Brilliant Minds Conference in Stockholm 13/6 19* (YouTube Video, 2019), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DQWMDWWYVz4.

147. *I Am Greta*.

148. *I Am Greta*.

149. Greta (@gretathunberg) Thunberg, "I'm Sometimes Called "political". But I've Never Supported Any Political Party, Politician or Ideology.," Instagram photo, December 12, 2019, https://www.instagram.com/p/B5_FgJhpJ6B/.

150. Greta Thunberg, "Together We Are Making a Difference," in *No One Is Too Small to Make a Difference* (New York: Penguin Books, 2021), 53.

151. *Speech at Brilliant Minds Conference in Stockholm 13/6 19*.

152. Thunberg, "I'm Too Young to Do This," 31.

153. Thunberg, 28.

154. Thunberg, 28.

155. Greta Thunberg, "Our Lives Are In Your Hands," in *No One Is Too Small to Make a Difference* (New York: Penguin Books, 2021), 4.

156. Thunberg, "Almost Everything Is Black and White," 6.

157. Thunberg, "Together We Are Making a Difference," 53.

158. Matthew W. Seeger and Timothy L. Sellnow, *Narratives of Crisis: Telling Stories of Ruin and Renewal*, High Reliability and Crisis Management (Stanford, California: Stanford Business Books, an imprint of Stanford University Press, 2016).

159. Seeger and Sellnow.

160. Seeger and Sellnow, 5.

161. Seeger and Sellnow, 5.

162. Jeanine E. Kraybill and Raul Madrid Jr., "The Rhetoric of Crisis: George W. Bush during the Afghanistan and Iraq Wars," *American Communication Journal* 21, no. 1 (Spring 2019): 1–10. In this article, Kraybill and Madrid review key studies connecting presidential rhetoric and crisis.

163. Seeger and Sellnow, *Narratives of Crisis*, 7.

164. Seeger and Sellnow, 7.

165. Seeger and Sellnow, 8–9.

166. Seeger and Sellnow, 176.

167. Seeger and Sellnow, 40.

168. Seeger and Sellnow, 13.

169. Seeger and Sellnow, 13.

170. Seeger and Sellnow, 81–92.

171. Thunberg, "Almost Everything Is Black and White," 6.

172. Thunberg, "Cathedral Thinking," 47.

173. Thunberg, "I'm Too Young to Do This," 30.

174. Thunberg, "Cathedral Thinking," 44.

175. *I Am Greta*.

176. Greta Thunberg, "A Strange World," in *No One Is Too Small to Make a Difference* (New York: Penguin Books, 2021), 39–42.

177. Jennifer H. Rice et al., "Memory and Lost Communities: Strange Methods For Studying Place," *Review of Communication* 20, no. 2 (April 2020): 144–51, https://doi.org/10.1080/15358593.2020.1737193.

178. Joshua Trey Barnett, "Impurities: Thinking Ecologically With *Safe*: Impurities," *Communication, Culture & Critique* 10, no. 2 (June 2017): 208, https://doi.org/10.1111/cccr.12162.

179. Bradford Vivian, *Being Made Strange: Rhetoric Beyond Representation*, SUNY Series in Communication Studies (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004), 18.

180. Thunberg, "A Strange World."

181. Greta Thunberg, "The World Is Waking Up," in *No One Is Too Small to Make a Difference* (New York: Penguin Books, 2021), 98–99.

182. Greta Thunberg, “We Are the Change and Change Is Coming,” in *No One Is Too Small to Make a Difference* (New York: Penguin Books, 2021), 104–5.

183. *I Am Greta*.

184. Greta Thunberg, “We Are a Wave of Change,” in *No One Is Too Small to Make a Difference* (New York: Penguin Books, 2021), 116–17.

185. Greta Thunberg, “There Is Hope,” in *No One Is Too Small to Make a Difference* (New York: Penguin Books, 2021), 126.

186. A sample of rhetoric and communication studies over the past twenty-five years include: Joshua D. Ambrosius and Joseph M. Valenzano III, “‘People in Hell Want Slurpees’: The Redefinition of the Zombie Genre through the Salvific Portrayal of Family on AMC’s *The Walking Dead*,” *Communication Monographs* 83, no. 1 (January 2, 2016): 69–93, https://doi.org/10.1080/03637751.2015.1030683; Brooke Bennett, “The Undying Ideologies of Race and Gender: The Zombie Apocalypse in Telltale’s The Walking Dead: Season One,” *Feminist Media Studies* 19, no. 5 (July 4, 2019): 637–50, https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2018.1457068; Kyle Bishop, “Dead Man Still Walking,” *Journal of Popular Film and Television* 37, no. 1 (April 2009): 16–25, https://doi.org/10.3200/JPFT.37.1.16-25; Kathryn A. Cady and Thomas Oates, “Family Splatters: Rescuing Heteronormativity from the Zombie Apocalypse,” *Women’s Studies in Communication* 39, no. 3 (July 2, 2016): 308–25, https://doi.org/10.1080/07491409.2016.1194935; Bernadette Calafell, ed., “Monstrosity Special Issue,” *The Popular Culture Studies Journal* 6, no. 2 & 3 (2018): 596; Leah Ceccarelli, “Scientific Ethos and the Cinematic Zombie Outbreak: Science in Fictional Narratives,” *Mètode Revista de Difusió de La Investigació* 0, no. 6 (June 15, 2015), https://doi.org/10.7203/metode.6.4472; Ryan Cheek, “Zombie Ent(r)Ailments in Risk Communication: A Rhetorical Analysis of the CDC’s Zombie Apocalypse Preparedness Campaign,” *Journal of Technical Writing and Communication* 50, no. 4 (October 2020): 401–22, https://doi.org/10.1177/0047281619892630; Daniel W. Drezner, “Metaphor of the Living Dead: Or, the Effect of the Zombie Apocalypse on Public Policy Discourse,” *Social Research* 81, no. 4 (2014): 825–49; Haneen Shafeeq Ghabra and Marouf A. Hasian, “World War Z, The Zombie Apocalypse, and the Israeli State’s Monstering of Palestinian ‘Others,’” *Communication & Critical/Cultural Studies* 17, no. 2 (June 2020): 183–98, https://doi.org/10.1080/14791420.2020.1775269; John Greene and Michaela D. E. Meyer, “The Walking (Gendered) Dead: A Feminist Rhetorical Critique of Zombie Apocalypse Television Narrative,” *Ohio Communication Journal* 52 (January 10, 2014): 64–74; Joshua Gunn, “On Dead Subjects: A Rejoinder to Lundberg on (a) Psychoanalytic Rhetoric,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 90, no. 4 (November 2004): 501–13, https://doi.org/10.1080/0033563042000304034; Joshua Gunn and Shaun Treat, “Zombie Trouble: A Propaedeutic on Ideological Subjectification and the Unconscious Different Versions or Parts of This Manuscript Were Delivered at the 2003 National Communication Association Conference in Miami and the 2002 Popular

Communication Association Conference in New Orleans.," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 91, no. 2 (May 2005): 144–74, https://doi.org/10.1080/00335630500291489; Patrick D. Murphy, "Lessons from the Zombie Apocalypse in Global Popular Culture: An Environmental Discourse Approach to the Walking Dead," *Environmental Communication* 12, no. 1 (February 2018): 44–57, https://doi.org/10.1080/17524032.2017.1346518; Watts, "'Zombies Are Real': Fantasies, Conspiracies, and the Post-Truth Wars," *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 51, no. 4 (2018): 441, https://doi.org/10.5325/philrhet.51.4.0441; Jen Webb and Sam Byrnand, "Some Kind of Virus: The Zombie as Body and as Trope," *Body & Society* 14, no. 2 (June 1, 2008): 83–98, https://doi.org/10.1177/1357034X08090699; Robert Wonser and David Boyns, "Between the Living and Undead: How Zombie Cinema Reflects the Social Construction of Risk, the Anxious Self, and Disease Pandemic," *The Sociological Quarterly* 57, no. 4 (September 1, 2016): 628–53, https://doi.org/10.1111/tsq.12150; King Watts, "Postracial Fantasies, Blackness, and Zombies"; Fabienne Martens, "'The Zombie Manifesto': The Rise of the Zombie Narrative," n.d., 64.

187. Ghabra and Hasian, "World War Z, The Zombie Apocalypse, and the Israeli State's Monstering of Palestinian 'Others,'" 186.

188. King Watts, "Postracial Fantasies, Blackness, and Zombies."

189. Watts, "'Zombies Are Real,'" 444.

190. Watts, 444–48.

191. The literature on the "monstrous" and zombies as a monstrous figure is quite large. Haneen Shafeeq Ghabra and Marouf A. Hasian's offer an exemplary review of this area of study; see, Ghabra and Hasian, "World War Z, The Zombie Apocalypse, and the Israeli State's Monstering of Palestinian 'Others.'"

192. Ceccarelli, "Scientific Ethos and the Cinematic Zombie Outbreak," 107.

193. *Speech at Brilliant Minds Conference in Stockholm 13/6 19*.

194. Greta (@gretathunberg) Thunberg, "Sverige Är Ett Av de Tio Länderna Med Störst Ekologiskt Fotavtryck per Capita. (Sweden Is One of the Ten Countries with the Largest Ecological Footprint per Captial.)," Instagram photo, September 23, 2018, https://www.instagram.com/p/BoEiAhilbDB/.

195. Thunberg, "Together We Are Making a Difference," 54.

196. I follow Lindal Buchanan in applying Roland Barthes's method of interpretation to the image of the Mother. Speaking to viewers and listeners through a complex patterning of signification, Mother operates as a cultural code, connotation, or ideology and, therefore, "alludes to, masks, and sustains the network of power relations that undergird gender." Lindal

Buchanan, *Rhetorics of Motherhood*, Studies in Rhetorics and Feminisms (Carbondale ; Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 2013), 5.

197. I use the terms Mother, Mother Nature, and Mother Earth interchangeably throughout this chapter.

198. I turn to two scholars in particular, Carolyn Merchant and Sandra Harding, because both take distinctly feminist approaches, offer thorough examinations of the history of both the nature of science and the communication of science and nature as ideological and cultural tropes. Carolyn Merchant, *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution* (New York: Harper & Row, 1989); Sandra Harding, *The Science Question in Feminism* (Cornell University Press, 1986).

199. Merchant, *The Death of Nature*.

200. Merchant, xvi.

201. Merchant, xxii.

202. Harding, *The Science Question in Feminism*, 112.

203. Sandra Harding, *Science and Social Inequality: Feminist and Postcolonial Issues*, 1st edition (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006).

204. Harding, 17–98.

205. Sara Hayden, "Family Metaphors and the Nation: Promoting a Politics of Care through the Million Mom March," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 89, no. 3 (January 2003): 197, https://doi.org/10.1080/0033563032000125313.

206. Hayden, 202–3.

207. Hayden, 202.

208. Buchanan, *Rhetorics of Motherhood*, 8.

209. Buchanan, 5.

210. Jennifer A. Peeples and Kevin M. DeLuca, "The Truth of the Matter: Motherhood, Community and Environmental Justice," *Women's Studies in Communication* 29, no. 1 (Spring 2006): 59–87.

211. Buchanan, *Rhetorics of Motherhood*, 5.

212. Emma Frances Bloomfield, "Transcorporeal Identification and Strategic Essentialism in Eco-Horror: *Mother!* 's Ecofeminist Rhetorical Strategies," *Environmental Communication* 15, no. 3 (April 3, 2021): 339–52, https://doi.org/10.1080/17524032.2020.1833059.

213. The "fathers of modern science" broadly acknowledges the contributions of a group of Western and bourgeois men, such as Francis Bacon, William Harvey, René Descartes, Thomas Hobbes, and Isaac Newton, as the intellectual minds behind modern human progress and the defenders of scientific inquiry today. See, Merchant, *The Death of Nature*, xix–xxiv.

214. Greta Thunberg, "Can You Hear Me?," in *No One Is Too Small to Make a Difference* (New York: Penguin Books, 2021), 64.

215. Thunberg, 64.

216. Greta Thunberg, "Prove Me Wrong," in *No One Is Too Small to Make a Difference* (New York: Penguin Books, 2021), 15–16.

217. Thunberg, 16.

218. Thunberg, "We Are the Change and Change Is Coming," 101.

219. Adrian Skilbeck, "'A Thin Net Over an Abyss': Greta Thunberg and the Importance of Words in Addressing the Climate Crisis," *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 54, no. 4 (2020): 965, https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9752.12485.

220. Greta Thunberg, "You're Acting Like Spoiled, Irresponsible Children," in *No One Is Too Small to Make a Difference* (New York: Penguin Books, 2021), 35.

221. Thunberg, "Can You Hear Me?," 65.

222. Greta Thunberg, "Wherever I Go I Seem To Be Surrounded by Fairy Tales," in *No One Is Too Small to Make a Difference* (New York: Penguin Books, 2021), 89–90.

223. Greta Thunberg, "You Can't Simply Make Up Your Own Facts," in *No One Is Too Small to Make a Difference* (New York: Penguin Books, 2021), 84.

224. Greta Thunberg, "Unpopular," in *No One Is Too Small to Make a Difference* (New York: Penguin Books, 2021), 14.

225. Greta (@gretathunberg) Thunberg, "To Those Who Question.," Instagram photo, October 3, 2019, https://www.instagram.com/p/B3ItSsECyey/.

226 Greta (@gretathunberg) Thunberg, “Australia Is On Fire.,” Instagram photo, January 4, 2020, https://www.instagram.com/p/B66EdfBJDfp/.

227. Greta (@gretathunberg) Thunberg, “That We Live in a Post-Truth Society Today, and That We Don’t Care, That We Have Lost Empathy.,” Instagram photo, October 29, 2020, https://www.instagram.com/p/CG677vPJ0P6/.

228. Greta Thunberg, “We Will Not Allow You to Surrender on Our Future,” in *No One Is Too Small to Make a Difference* (New York: Penguin Books, 2021), 138–43.

229. Thunberg, 139.

230. Thunberg, 143.

231. Best of, “About the Award,” Goldene Kamera, accessed August 15, 2021, https://www.goldenekamera.de/digitalaward/article208280613/Der-YouTube-GOLDENE-KAMERA-Digital-Award-2020.html.

232. Thunberg, “A Strange World,” 39, 40.

233. Emphasis added. Thunberg, 42.

234. Thunberg, “I’m Too Young to Do This,” 31.

235. Thunberg, “Almost Everything Is Black and White,” 10.

236. Thunberg, “Can You Hear Me?,” 66.

237. I follow Eric King Watts’ reference to the ABC television show *The Walking Dead* which, as Watt’s aptly describes, “dramatizes people becoming monsters—being literally zombified—as the strike to survive; to avoid gnashing teeth and ripping hands the begin to kill with the sovereign’s impunity and lose their souls.” Eric King Watts, “Postracial Fantasies, Blackness, and Zombies,” *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 14, no. 4 (October 2, 2017): 328, https://doi.org/10.1080/14791420.2017.1338742.

238. King Watts, 318–19.

239. Baraitser, “The Maternal Death Drive: Greta Thunberg and the Question of the Future,” 7, 1.

240. The second sentence of this quote was only stated in Greta’s live performance at the Extinction Rebellion in London’s Parliament Square on October 31, 2018. The published version edited this statement from the speech. Thunberg, “Almost Everything Is Black and White,” 9.

241. Greta Thunberg, “The People Are the Hope,” in *No One Is Too Small to Make a Difference* (New York: Penguin Books, 2021), 120.

242. Thunberg, “Our Lives Are In Your Hands,” 4.

243. Deborah Bird Rose, *Wild Dog Dreaming: Love and Extinction*, Under the Sign of Nature: Explorations in Ecocriticism (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2011), 26.

244. The published version of this passage was substantially edited and I have chosen to quote the original performance because of the added depth and nuance it offers to Greta’s imagination of how her future unfolds over time. Thunberg, “Almost Everything Is Black and White,” 9.

245. Luke D. Bevan, Thomas Colley, and Mark Workman, “Climate Change Strategic Narratives in the United Kingdom: Emergency, Extinction, Effectiveness,” *Energy Research & Social Science* 69 (November 2020): 1, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.erss.2020.101580.

246. Thunberg, “Can You Hear Me?,” 55–56.

247. Thunberg, “Wherever I Go I Seem To Be Surrounded by Fairy Tales,” 86.

248. Thunberg, 87.

249. Thunberg, “The World Is Waking Up,” 96.

250. More often, Greta describes the sufferings of other others and across these references there is a connection back to the notion that living kills and those that suffer the most are the least responsible. An exemplary model of this connection is when Greta stated, “We are about to sacrifice our civilization for the opportunity of a very small number of people to continue to make enormous amounts of money. We are about to sacrifice the biosphere so that rich people in countries like mine can live in luxury. But it is the sufferings of the many which pay for the luxuries of the few.” Thunberg, “Unpopular,” 13.

251. I emphasize Greta’s use of “here” in her introduction, because Greta goes on to list several damning statistics about the United States’ role in the climate crisis. “The USA is the biggest carbon polluter in history. It is also the world’s number one producer of oil. And yet, you are also the only nation in the world that has signaled your strong intention to leave the Paris Agreement. Because, quote, ‘It was a bad deal for the USA’” (p. 91-92). The rhetorical power of this quote as it pertains to my argument is that Greta’s activism mostly associates dreams, and the act of dreaming, with older generations who blatantly disregard the science and continuously ignore the climate crisis. The fact that Greta locates dreams *here*, in the country of dreams, further develops the relationship between the place of dreams as a construction site for material

reality, a reality that kills. Thunberg, "Wherever I Go I Seem To Be Surrounded by Fairy Tales," 85.

252. Thunberg, 85.

253. Thunberg, 94.

254. Davina Cooper, *Everyday Utopias: The Conceptual Life of Promising Spaces* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 219.

255. Cooper, 219.

256. Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford, OX, UK ; Cambridge, Mass., USA: Blackwell, 1991), 209.

257. Lefebvre, 417.

258. Lefebvre, 209.

259. Greg Dickinson, *Suburban Dreams: Imagining and Building the Good Life* (Tuscaloosa, Alabama: The University of Alabama Press, 2015), 4.

260. Rose, *Wild Dog Dreaming*, 11.

261. Here, I gesture towards Jennifer Lynn Peterson's work and her use of Walter Benjamin's analysis of mass culture as a "dreamworld." Jennifer Lynn Peterson, *Education in the School of Dreams: Travelogues and Early Nonfiction Film* (Durham ; London: Duke University Press, 2013), 6–7.

262. Greta (@gretathunberg) Thunberg, "Countless of People Are Having to Flee Because of the Climate Crisis. The Time to Act Is Now.," Instagram photo, January 27, 2023, https://www.instagram.com/reel/Cn6Yv4FuuaT/.

263. Greta (@gretathunberg) Thunberg, "Today We Raise Our Voices against Military Oppression in Sudan.," Instagram photo, April 6, 2023, https://www.instagram.com/p/CcABz0RuwUL/.

264. Greta (@gretathunberg) Thunberg, "Today Hundreds of Thousands All over the World Marched for the Climate," Instagram photo, November 6, 2021, https://www.instagram.com/p/CV8dVXRsr50/.

265. Greta (@gretathunberg) Thunberg, "School Strike Week 223. Today We Are 636 Young People," Instagram photo, November 25, 2022, https://www.instagram.com/p/ClYqz-4sCgo/.

266. Greta (@gretathunberg) Thunberg, "Today Is Overshoot Day for Sweden.," Instagram photo, April 3, 2022, https://www.instagram.com/p/Cb5YY5KMT4v/.

267. Thunberg, "You're Acting Like Spoiled, Irresponsible Children," 32–33.

268. "Autumn Peltier Appointed Anishinabek Nation Chief Water Commissioner," *Anisinabek Nation Head Office*, April 26, 2019, https://www.anishinabek.ca/2019/04/26/autumn-peltier-appointed-anishinabek-nation-chief-water-commissioner/.

269. Anishinabek Women's Water Commission, "Traditional Naming of Water Bodies in the Northern Superior Region Withing Anishinabek Nation Territory" (North Bay, Ontario: Union of Ontario Indians, Lands and Resources Department, 2007), https://www.anishinabek.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/traditionalnamingofwaterbodies.pdf.

270. Anishinabe-kwe translates to "an Indian woman" or "an Ojibwe woman." Nora Livesay, ed., "Anishinaabekwe (Na)," in *The Ojibwe People's Dictionary*, trans. John D. Nichols (With support and collaboration from the University of Minnesota's Department of American Indian Studies and University Libraries), accessed June 18, 2023, https://ojibwe.lib.umn.edu/main-entry/anishinaabekwe-na.

271. "Never Too Young to Make a Difference: Q&A with Autumn Peltier," *Innovating Canada*, March 22, 2022, sec. Environment: Our Water, https://www.innovatingcanada.ca/campaigns/never-too-young-to-make-a-difference-qa-with-autumn-peltier/. Peltier's uncertainty, however, was seemingly unshared because if criticisms exist about her readiness (read: age) for the position, one will struggle to find them. In reviewing a significant and wide-ranging amount of media accounts of Peltier's appointment, I did not encounter a single piece of criticism lodged against her. Though suggestive, at best, the confidence and "matter-of-factness" of appointing a 14-year-old in a leadership role that represents more than 60,000 constituencies is impressive, to say the least.

272. See, for instance, Veronica Saroli, "This Teen Is Challenging Trudeau On Clean Water," *The Kit*, October 16, 2017, https://thekit.ca/life/this-teen-is-challenging-trudeau-on-clean-water-now/; "Teen Activist Autumn Peltier Who Scolded Trudeau to Address UN," *BBC News*, December 13, 2017, sec. US & Canada, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-42358227; Marie-Danielle Smith, "Autumn Peltier On Youth Activism, Challenging Trudeau, and A Future in Politics," *Maclean's*, January 2022, https://www.macleans.ca/longforms/autumn-peltier-on-youth-activism-challenging-trudeau-and-a-future-in-politics/; *Water Warrior Autumn Peltier Honoured at Toronto School*, 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7qZD0I9B4LY&list=PLQMAaAkeXW_QG3xJeGRcCPC1-OINIYneN&index=747; "Meet Autumn Peltier, Teen Water Warrior," *Secret Life of Canada*, August 6, 2019, sec. CPC Podcasts, https://www.cbc.ca/radio/secretlifeofcanada/meet-autumn-peltier-teen-water-warrior-1.5237845; Ari Kelo, "Meet Activist Autumn Peltier: The Young 'Water Warrior' Making A Splash," *The Rising*, October 4, 2019, sec. Action,

https://therising.co/2019/10/04/meet-activist-autumn-peltier-the-young-water-warrior-making-a-splash/; "Autumn Peltier: The Water Warrior," *Brut.*, March 28, 2020, https://www.brut.media/us/international/autumn-peltier-the-water-warrior-9627d447-a256-4b1b-8720-4129b51e5f05; Rosalind Russell, "Autumn Peltier – Water Warrior Gains More Recognition," *My Espanola Now*, April 21, 2021, sec. News, https://www.myespanolanow.com/40376/autumn-peltier-water-warrior-gains-more-recognition/.

273. The Ontario Resource Management Council endorsed a convening in 2008 that gathered 26 First Nation communities, provincial government ministries, Non Governmental Organizations, industry, youth, consultants, academia, water plant operators, and Anishinabek Elders and knowledge keepers. The report offers a comprehensive and culturally specific understanding of women's traditional roles as water keepers along with initiatives to sustain this work. "Anishinabek Traditional Knowledge & Water Policy Report," Prepared For: Anishinabek Ontario Resource Management Council (AORMC Water Working Group, March 2009), https://www.anishinabek.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Water-Report.pdf.

274. Melissa Kent, "Canadian Teen Tells UN 'Warrior Up' to Protect Water," *CBC News*, March 22, 2018, sec. Canada, https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/autumn-peltier-un-water-activist-united-nations-1.4584871.

275. Anishinaabe scholar Deborah McGregor explains that the Anishinabek "take clan names (*dodem*) from among the first animals that are said to have died for the people and as such are considered 'relatives.'" Deborah McGregor, "Mino-Mnaamodzawin: Achieving Indigenous Environmental Justice in Canada," *Environment and Society* 9 (2018): 9. See also, Darlene Johnston, "Respecting and Protecting the Sacred," *Research Paper Prepared for the Ipperwash Inquiry*, 2006.

276. In this chapter, I honor the Indigenous language and spelling variations that Peltier deploys throughout her discourse. However, a brief description of how variations in spelling point to geographically, culturally, and linguistically distinct identities and peoples is appropriate here. Historian, Garden River First Nation member, and professor of Canadian Studies, Karl S. Hele, defines and describes "Anishinaabe" as the following: "Anishinaabe (other variants include Anishinabe, Anicinape, Nishnaabe, Neshnabé and Anishinabek) refers to a group of culturally and linguistically related First Nations that live in both Canada and the United States, concentrated around the Great Lakes. The Anishinaabeg (plural form of Anishinaabe) live from the Ottawa River Valley west across Northern Ontario and to the plains of Saskatchewan south to the northeast corner of North Dakota, northern Minnesota and Michigan, as well as the northern shores of Lakes Ontario and Erie. The Ojibwe, Chippewa, Odawa, Potawatomi, Algonquin, Saulteaux, Nipissing and Mississauga First Nations are Anishinaabeg. Some Oji-Cree First Nations and Métis also include themselves within this cultural-linguistic grouping." Karl S Hele, "Anishinaabe," in *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, Historica Canada, July 16, 2020, https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/anishinaabe. Throughout this chapter, I draw on First Nations and Indigenous scholars, broadly, and Ojibwe-identifying peoples, specifically. Whenever possible, I commit to sharing an author/scholar's self-avowed identities (e.g.,

enrollment, clan, tribal affiliation, etc.), rather than ascribing my own assumptions onto how they may, or may not, position themselves in their work.

277. Autumn Peltier, "My Water Message for the World," Rematriation, March 8, 2021, https://rematriation.com/my-water-message-for-the-world/.

278. Peltier.

279. Peltier. Note: According to their website, "The Anishinabek Nation is the political advocate for 40 member communities across Ontario, representing approximately 65,000 people. The Anishinabek Nation is the oldest political organization in Ontario and can trace its roots back to the Confederacy of Three Fires, which existed long before European contact." For additional information about Anishinabek Nation see, "Anishinabek Nation," Union of Ontario Indians, accessed May 28, 2023, https://www.anishinabek.ca/who-we-are-and-what-we-do/.

280. "Autumn Peltier," Landscape News, accessed July 11, 2023, https://news.globallandscapesforum.org/collection/autumn-peltier/.

281. *The Water Walker*, Documentary (Seeing Red Media, 2020).

282. *The Water Walker*.

283. For example, Peltier's first gained global attention when traveling to Sweden to speak at the Children's Climate Change Conference in November 2015. One account of the intentions of the conference notes: Anna Albinsson, the coordinator of the Children's Climate Conference, says they organised the event to let politicians and the general public know what children think about climate change and to make their voices heard in the debate. "The children's voices are important because it's their planet and it's their children's children's planet, so I think it's very important that we listen to them," says Albinsson. "Sweden Hosts Global Climate Conference For Kids," *Radio Sweden*, November 26, 2015, sec. Eye on the Arctic, https://www.rcinet.ca/eye-on-the-arctic/2015/11/26/sweden-hosts-global-climate-conference-for-kids/.

284. Autumn @autumn.peltier Peltier, "We Are the Future and the Adults Hold Our Future in Their Hands....We Have a Voice, and We Will Use It!!!! Stand up for Our Planet and We All Need to Protect Our Drinking Water!!!!," Instagram photo, November 28, 2017, https://www.instagram.com/p/BcCVtkAHoFA/.

285. *Autumn Peltier Talks Pipelines* (Address to Assembly of First Nations Special Chiefs, Ontario, Canada, 2016), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wEDqbzLFOlc.

286. *World Water Day: Indigenous Canadian Teen Addresses UN General Assembly* (UN Headquarters, Manhattan, NY, 2018), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A6LcaTWTx8g.

287. Autumn @autumn.peltier Peltier, "Reflecting on What's Happening All over the World, so Many Things Happening to Children All over the World.," Instagram photo, May 21, 2021, https://www.instagram.com/p/CPJNQs-L1t9/.

288. Abi Hayward, "Water Protection and Youth Activism with Autumn Peltier," *Canadian Geographic*, October 21, 2020, https://www.canadiangeographic.ca/article/water-protection-and-youth-activism-autumn-peltier.

289. *The Water Walker*.

290. Autumn Peltier, "In the Blink of an Eye," in *Me Tomorrow: Indigenous Views on the Future*, ed. Drew Hayden Taylor (Madeira Park, BC: Douglas and McIntyre, 2021), 88.

291. Peltier, 80.

292. Peltier, 88.

293. *The Water Walker*.

294. *The Powerful Impact of Activism: How Autumn Peltier Is Leading the Next Generation*, Live from the Podium, 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s6XZlZkYCuA.

295. Peltier, "In the Blink of an Eye," 80.

296. *Anishinabek Youth: Children's Climate Change Conference* (Sweden, 2015), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FQuIlAhf6c8.

297. Jim Moodie, "Young Ambassadors Amaze Swedish Hosts," *The Sudsbury Star*, December 4, 2015, sec. News, https://thesudburystar.com/2015/12/04/young-ambassadors-amaze-swedish-hosts; "Sweden Hosts Global Climate Conference For Kids"; Robin Burridge, "Wiky Youths Chosen to Present Childrens' Climate Central Report to Sweden's Minister of the Environment," *The Manitoulin Expositor* (blog), December 9, 2015, https://www.manitoulin.com/wiky-youths-chosen-to-present-childrens-climate-central-report-to-swedens-minister-of-the-environment/.

298. Moodie, "Young Ambassadors Amaze Swedish Hosts."

299. Moodie.

300. Mike De Souza, "Mother 'So Proud' of Daughter for Challenging Trudeau's Pipeline Approvals," *Canada's National Observer*, December 9, 2016, sec. News, Energy, Politics, https://www.nationalobserver.com/2016/12/09/news/mother-so-proud-daughter-challenging-trudeaus-pipeline-approvals; *13-Year-Old Advocate Autumn Peltier Is Devoted to Protecting the World's Water* (Vancouver, British Columbia: True Calling Media, 2016),

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G7XY0UAOeRc; *Autumn Peltier Discussing When She Had Her Say About Pipelines and Clean Water*, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qqEnsuHyY2o; Saroli, "This Teen Is Challenging Trudeau On Clean Water"; *The Teen Fighting to Protect Canada's Water — Meet Autumn Peltier*, 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xqdE_7OZaqE.

301. Autumn @autumn.peltier Peltier, "I Was Called to Action as Chief Water Commissioner to Come and Visit Attawapiskat, a Northern Community That Is Currently in a Clean Water Crisis.," Instagram photo, July 17, 2019, https://www.instagram.com/p/B0BftcOF7jA/.

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303. For instance, much of Peltier's Instagram functions similar to a scrapbook that captures key events, recognitions, and media coverage. More than thirty posts following this form feature titles about Autumn Peltier "Chief Water Commissioner for the Anishinabek Nation," for example, rather than categorizing Peltier as a youth or highlighting her age.

304. *Water Protector Autumn Peltier Speaks at UN* (UN Headquarters, Manhattan, NY, 2019), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OusN4mWmDKQ.

305. Sunaya Sapurji, Mike Karapita, and Cathy Alex, "Autumn Peltier," *CBC News*, sec. I Am Indigenous, accessed June 8, 2023, https://www.cbc.ca/news2/interactives/i-am-indigenous-2017/peltier.html.

306. Peltier, "In the Blink of an Eye."

307. Peltier, 80, 81.

308. Peltier, 89.

309. Peltier, 79.

310. Notable scholarship investigating the discursive character of kinship include: Judith Butler, "Is Kinship Always Already Heterosexual?," *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 13, no. 1 (2002): 14–44; Joan Faber McAlister, "Collecting the Gaze: Memory, Agency, and Kinship in the Women's Jail Museum, Johannesburg," *Women's Studies in Communication* 36, no. 1 (February 2013): 1–27, https://doi.org/10.1080/07491409.2012.754389; Hector Qirko, "Kinship Appeals and Conservation Social Marketing," *Biodiversity & Conservation* 26, no. 5 (May 2017): 1009–26, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10531-017-1297-9; Shui-yin Sharon Yam, "Citizenship Discourse in Hong Kong: The Limits of Familial Tropes," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 104, no. 1 (January 2, 2018): 1–21, https://doi.org/10.1080/00335630.2017.1401222; E. Cram, "Queer Geographies and the Rhetoric of Orientation," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 105,

no. 1 (January 2, 2019): 98–115, https://doi.org/10.1080/00335630.2019.1553587; Tiara R. Na'puti, "Speaking of Indigeneity: Navigating Genealogies against Erasure and #RhetoricSoWhite," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 105, no. 4 (October 2, 2019): 495–501, https://doi.org/10.1080/00335630.2019.1669895; David S. Morris and Hector N. Qirko, "Saving 'Little Sister': A Test of the Effectiveness of Kinship Appeals in Conservation Marketing," *Environmental Communication* 14, no. 4 (June 2020): 481–91, https://doi.org/10.1080/17524032.2019.1687102; Myra Washington, "Woke Skin, White Masks: Race and Communication Studies," *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 17, no. 2 (April 2, 2020): 261–66, https://doi.org/10.1080/14791420.2020.1770820; Bimbola Akinbola, "#AfricanAunties: Performing Diasporic Digital Disbelongings on TikTok," *Text and Performance Quarterly* 42, no. 3 (July 3, 2022): 284–97, https://doi.org/10.1080/10462937.2022.2044071; Larissa Hjorth, "Careful Digital Kinship: Understanding Multispecies Digital Kinship, Choreographies of Care and Older Adults During the Pandemic in Australia," *Communication, Culture & Critique* 15, no. 2 (June 2022): 227–43, https://doi.org/10.1093/ccc/tcac008; Kareem Khubchandani, "Critical Aunty Studies: An Auntroduction," *Text and Performance Quarterly* 42, no. 3 (July 3, 2022): 221–45, https://doi.org/10.1080/10462937.2022.2081912.

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315. Butler, 15.

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317. Whyte, 42.

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322. Worth noting is that Peltier shares a short reel produced by Harvard Radcliffe Institute, the host of this panel discussion. The reel breaks the visual form that carriers throughout Peltier's Instagram account in that it cycles through catastrophic images of flood, fire, and extreme weather. This depiction of climate change through an epistemology of crisis is not common for Peltier, which I argue in this section of analysis. Autumn @autumn.peltier Peltier, "Happy to Discuss Climate Change, Justice and Resilience in Today's Environments and Explore Its Affect on Our Land as #indigenous People.," Instagram photo, October 21, 2022, https://www.instagram.com/reel/Cj3uM90r17s/.

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324. *World Water Day: Indigenous Canadian Teen Addresses UN General Assembly*.

325. *World Water Day: Indigenous Canadian Teen Addresses UN General Assembly*.

326. Whyte, "Ancestry and Crisis."

327. World Water Day: Indigenous Canadian Teen Addresses UN General Assembly.

328. Water Protector Autumn Peltier Speaks at UN.

329. Water Protector Autumn Peltier Speaks at UN.

330. Water Protector Autumn Peltier Speaks at UN.

331. Whyte, "Against Crisis Epistemology."

332. Whyte, 2.

333. *World Water Day: Indigenous Canadian Teen Addresses UN General Assembly*.

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336. *Forging a Sustainable Path Towards a Common Future | DAVOS 2020*.

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339. Whyte, 2–3.

340. Blaire Kristine Topash-Caldwell, "Neshnabé Futurisms: Indigenous Science and Eco-Politics in the Great Lakes" (Ph.D., United States -- New Mexico, The University of New Mexico, 2020), 82, https://www.proquest.com/docview/2696926963/abstract/3FD62FB7DDA64868PQ/1.

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342. Jorge Barrera, "The Gift and a Tearful Pipeline Plea: Autumn Peltier, 12, Reveals What She Told PM Trudeau," *APTN News*, December 7, 2016, sec. National News, https://www.aptnnews.ca/national-news/the-gift-a-tearful-pipeline-plea-autumn-peltier-12-reveals-what-she-told-pm-trudeau/.

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344. Barrera.

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347. Barrera, "The Gift and a Tearful Pipeline Plea."

348. Barrera.

349. Barrera.

350. Barrera.

351. Barrera.

352. Autumn @autumn.peltier Peltier, "Who Will Speak First?," Instagram photo, March 27, 2022, https://www.instagram.com/p/CYkQRgIr8eU/.

353. Autumn @autumn.peltier Peltier, "Why Are We Still Waiting for Canadas Leaders to Speak about This?," Instagram photo, January 15, 2022, https://www.instagram.com/reel/CYweqIUphqY/.

354. Whyte, "Against Crisis Epistemology," 7.

355. Autumn @autumn.peltier Peltier, "World Water Day Is Here. Let's Spread Awareness Together.," Instagram photo, March 22, 2022, https://www.instagram.com/tv/CbaUd8NA1ae/.

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358. Whyte, “Against Crisis Epistemology,” 2.

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364. *Water Protector Autumn Peltier Speaks at UN*.

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370. Kimmerer, 133.

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and/or challenges, an ideology. A sample of literature I consulted for this project includes, but is not limited to, Wander, "The Ideological Turn in Modern Criticism"; Wander, "The Third Persona"; McGee, "The 'Ideograph'"; Charland, "Constitutive Rhetoric"; McKerrow, "Critical Rhetoric"; Celeste Michelle Condit, "The Critic as Empath: Moving Away from Totalizing Theory," *Western Journal of Communication* 57, no. 2 (Spring 1993): 178–90; Dana L. Cloud, "The Rhetoric of <family Values>: Scapegoating, Utopia, and the Privatization of Social Responsibility," *Western Journal of Communication* 62, no. 4 (Fall 1998): 387–419, https://doi.org/10.1080/10570319809374617; Ceccarelli, "Polysemy"; Gunn and Treat, "Zombie Trouble."

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420. Hirsi.

421. *Representative Ilhan Omar's Daughter Takes On Climate Change | NBC News Now*.

422. As environmental justice scholar Julian Agyeman and colleagues describe, "the event, and the ongoing inevitable impacts of lead poisoning on young people, has been thoroughly discussed through the lens of environmental injustice—the inequitable exposure of communities of color, and communities in poverty, to environmental risks due primarily to their lack of recognition and political power." Julian Agyeman et al., "Trends and Directions in Environmental Justice: From Inequity to Everyday Life, Community, and Just Sustainabilities," *Annual Review of Environment and Resources* 41, no. 1 (2016): 322, https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-environ-110615-090052. See, also, "Gun Violence Disproportionately and Overwhelmingly Hurts Communities of Color," *Center for American Progress* (blog), June 30, 2022, https://www.americanprogress.org/article/gun-violence-disproportionately-and-overwhelmingly-hurts-communities-of-color/; "Five Years Later: Flint Water Crisis Most Egregious Example of Environmental Injustice, U-M Researcher Says," University of Michigan News, April 23, 2019, https://news.umich.edu/five-years-later-flint-water-crisis-most-egregious-example-of-environmental-injustice-u-m-researcher-says/.

423. Representative Ilhan Omar's Daughter Takes On Climate Change | NBC News Now.

424. Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth, eds., *The Affect Theory Reader* (Duke University Press, 2010), 2, https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822393047.

425. Isabelle Anguelovski, *Neighborhood as Refuge: Community Reconstruction, Place Remaking, and Environmental Justice in the City* (The MIT Press, 2014), 47, https://doi.org/10.7551/mitpress/9780262026925.001.0001.

426. Here, I anchor my exploration of attachments in Sara Ahmed's assertion that understanding attachments (both destructive attachments and conservation attachments) is crucial to how feelings and emotions flow through us, move us, and shape political action. Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, (Edinburgh University Press, 2014), 11; Sara Ahmed, "Affective Economies," *Social Text* 22, no. 2 (2004): 117–39, https://doi.org/10.1215/01642472-22-2_79-117; Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others.* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006).

427. *Isra Hirsi: The Angry Black Girl* (TEDxWakeForestU, 2020), https://www.ted.com/talks/isra_hirsi_the_angry_black_girl.

428. Shakur, "The Last Generation: Meet the Leaders of the Youth Climate Strike US," Patagonia Stories, May 1, 2019, https://www.patagonia.com/mx/stories/the-last-generation/story-72396.html.

429. Leila Ettachfini, "Isra Hirsi Is 16, Unbothered, and Saving the Planet," *Vice* (blog), September 18, 2019, https://www.vice.com/en/article/a357wp/isra-hirsi-ilhan-omar-daughter-climate-strike-profile.

430. Ettachfini.

431. Ettachfini.

432. Ettachfini.

433. Ettachfini.

434. Isra Hirsi, "Creating a People's Movement" (2020 Midwest Climate Summit Think Tank | Midwest Climate Collaborative, Washington University in St. Louis, October 2, 2020), https://midwestclimatecollaborative.wustl.edu/items/fall-2020-think-tank/.

435. *Isra Hirsi at 2019 MN Youth Climate Strike* (Move Minnesota, 2019), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NlYkZjbSxhs.

436. *Isra Hirsi at 2019 MN Youth Climate Strike*.

437. *Young People Deserve to Have a Say in Our Futures*.

438. *Juwaria Jama and Isra Hirsi: Power of the Youth Voice*, 2023, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y05jQYG3HEs.

439. Isra (@israhirsi) Hirsi, "— Also Shoutout to Those Older than Me Who i Met and Spoke with. We May Not Agree on Our Methods for Justice but Your Wisdom Is Powerful."," Instagram photo, August 28, 2020, https://www.instagram.com/p/CEc2V7gAstr/.

440. *Juwaria Jama and Isra Hirsi*.

441. *Juwaria Jama and Isra Hirsi*.

442. *Isra Hirsi*.

443. Isra (@israhirsi) Hirsi, "Politics Are Life or Death. Not a Trend You Can Subscribe to for the Time Being.," Instagram photo, May 21, 2020, https://www.instagram.com/p/CAdjsZLgjkZ/.

444. *Juwaria Jama and Isra Hirsi*.

445. *Juwaria Jama and Isra Hirsi*.

446. Hirsi, "Creating a People's Movement."

447. Hirsi.

448. Hirsi.

449. Hirsi.

450. Hirsi.

451. *Juwaria Jama and Isra Hirsi*.

452. *Juwaria Jama and Isra Hirsi*.

453. Hirsi, "Creating a People's Movement."

454. Hirsi.

455. Hirsi.

456. *Isra Hirsi*.

457. Hirsi, "Creating a People's Movement."

458. Hirsi.

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463. *Representative Ilhan Omar's Daughter Takes On Climate Change | NBC News Now*.

464. *Representative Ilhan Omar's Daughter Takes On Climate Change | NBC News Now*.

465. Hirsi, "Creating a People's Movement."

466. There are several exemplary reviews of the foundations, evolution, expansion, and emerging themes of environmental justice scholarship. In this chapter, I leaned heavily on Julian Agyeman, David Schlosberg, Luke Craven, and Caitlin Matthews' review and synthesis of the key theories, scholars, case examples, debates, methods, and interpretations of environmental justice. Agyeman et al., "Trends and Directions in Environmental Justice." Ronald Sandler and Phaedra Pezzullo's "primer" and interdisciplinary review of the environmental and environmental justice movements was also particularly valuable in how I orient this chapter in the fields communication and rhetorical studies. Ronald L. Sandler and Phaedra C. Pezzullo,

eds., *Environmental Justice and Environmentalism: The Social Justice Challenge to the Environmental Movement*, Urban and Industrial Environments (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2007). Of course, much scholarship and study has added to these foundational pieces, which I integrate into the theoretical framing of my analyses throughout this chapter.

467. Agyeman et al., "Trends and Directions in Environmental Justice," 331, write: "A focus on the materiality of everyday life is not new to [Environmental Justice]; many parts of the [Environmental Justice Movement] have long focused on the circulation and infusion of toxins into the bodies of women, children, and people of color and have been attentive to the fact that these groups remain disproportionately excluded from circulations of healthy food . . . the point here is that things, stuff, and our material lives have power and are invariably connected to the way that environmental justice is produced, experienced, reproduced, and resisted . . . Politically, that means stepping outside of problematic and unjust flows—industrialized food systems that discriminate against poor communities . . . Theoretically, such action insists that we shift away from traditional notions of environment—'the indifferent stuff of a world 'out there', articulated through notions of 'land', 'nature', or 'environment', to the intimate fabric of corporeality that includes and redistributes the 'in here' of human being."

468. Pezzullo and Cox elaborate that in contrast to more general frameworks "focused on scientific-technical information, biocentric reports, and anthropocentric causes, a climate justice frame communicates a value in ethical appeals, human rights, and impacts that evoke an exigency to act across vastly differing carbon footprints and uneven power relationships." Phaedra C Pezzullo and Robert J. Cox, *Environmental Communication and the Public Sphere* (SAGE Publications, Inc., 2017), 293.

469. Agyeman et al., "Trends and Directions in Environmental Justice," 328.

470. Anguelovski, *Neighborhood as Refuge*, 29.

471. Arline T. Geronimus et al., "'Weathering' and Age Patterns of Allostatic Load Scores Among Blacks and Whites in the United States," *American Journal of Public Health* 96, no. 5 (May 2006): 826, https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2004.060749.

472. See Robin M. Boylorn, "Teaching at the End of the World," *Communication Education* 69, no. 4 (October 1, 2020): 525–29, https://doi.org/10.1080/03634523.2020.1803381; Ryan Blitstein, "Weathering, the Storm," *Miller-McCune* 2, no. 4 (August 7, 2009): 48–57; Tina Sikka, "Covid-19 and Race: News Coverage of Structural Racism and The Role of John Henryism and Racial Weathering in Bame Covid-19 Deaths," *Javnost - The Public* 29, no. 2 (April 3, 2022): 215–29, https://doi.org/10.1080/13183222.2022.2042949.

473. Human ecologist Robert Higgins describes the cultural perception that historically minoritized communities are "appropriately polluted spaces." Robert R. Higgins, "Race, Pollution, and the Mastery of Nature," *Environmental Ethics* 16, no. 3 (August 1, 1994): 251–64, https://doi.org/10.5840/enviroethics199416315.Environmental justice scholar and activist Robert

Bullard calls these areas "sacrifice zones" that are located at a distance from dominant groups with more political power. Robert D. Bullard, *Confronting Environmental Racism: Voices from the Grassroots* (Boston, Mass: South End Press, 1993).Environmental communication scholar Phaedra Pezzullo explores the silencing of polluted communities who bear a disproportionate share of consequences of toxic locations. Phaedra C. Pezzullo, "Touring 'Cancer Alley,' Louisiana: Performances of Community and Memory for Environmental Justice," *Text & Performance Quarterly* 23, no. 3 (July 2003): 226–52, https://doi.org/10.1080/10462930310001635295.

474. Fighting policies that reinforce and perpetuate ecological inequalities and social injustices is a key goal of many individual and coalitional activism. Policy reform is expansive and includes, but is not limited to, ensuring accessible green space, efficient and non-toxic transit systems, and preventing hazardous labor conditions. See, for example, Sandler and Pezzullo, *Environmental Justice and Environmentalism*.

475. Environmental communication scholars have explored many of the material and racial aspects of environmental injustices. See, for example, Kathleen M. De Onís, "'Looking Both Ways': Metaphor and the Rhetorical Alignment of Intersectional Climate Justice and Reproductive Justice Concerns," *Environmental Communication* 6, no. 3 (September 2012): 308–27, https://doi.org/10.1080/17524032.2012.690092; Stacey K. Sowards, "Environmental Justice in International Contexts: Understanding Intersections for Social Justice in the Twenty-First Century," *Environmental Communication* 6, no. 3 (September 2012): 285–89, https://doi.org/10.1080/17524032.2012.700205; Stephen J. Flusberg, Teenie Matlock, and Paul H. Thibodeau, "Metaphors for the War (or Race) against Climate Change," *Environmental Communication* 11, no. 6 (November 2, 2017): 769–83, https://doi.org/10.1080/17524032.2017.1289111; Suzannah Evans Comfort and Young Eun Park, "On the Field of Environmental Communication: A Systematic Review of the Peer-Reviewed Literature," *Environmental Communication* 12, no. 7 (October 3, 2018): 862–75, https://doi.org/10.1080/17524032.2018.1514315; E Cram, Martin P. Law, and Phaedra C. Pezzullo, "Cripping Environmental Communication: A Review of Eco-Ableism, Eco-Normativity, and Climate Justice Futurities," *Environmental Communication* 16, no. 7 (October 3, 2022): 851–63, https://doi.org/10.1080/17524032.2022.2126869; Richard T. Craig et al., "Race/Ethnicity and Climate Change Reporting: Perceptions and Interests of News Personnel's Interest to Cover Climate Change Based on Race," *Environmental Communication* 17, no. 2 (February 17, 2023): 135–45, https://doi.org/10.1080/17524032.2021.1967181; Julia Coombs Fine, "Climate Justice Communication: Strategies from U.S. Climate Activists," *Environmental Communication* 17, no. 5 (July 4, 2023): 469–85, https://doi.org/10.1080/17524032.2023.2209291.

476. Anguelovski, *Neighborhood as Refuge*, 29–54, 41. The literature on political economies of toxic exposure and resource extraction is vast. Anguelovski offers a through explication of this scholarship and describes how "progress" in technology and innovation drives the expansion of production and consumption in ways that lead to unstoppable extraction of material, natural resources, and waste accumulation. Significantly, Anguelovski argues, "because

countries in the south do not have the ability or will to impose their own rules over transnational industries, poorer and more excluded communities suffer disproportionality. This is true in both cities and rural areas."

477. Sandler and Pezzullo, *Environmental Justice and Environmentalism*. Several chapters in Sandler and Pezzullo's edited collection suggest an activism that actively protests material injustices. See, for example, "Moving Toward Sustainability: Integrating Social Practice and Material Process," by M. Nils Peterson, Markus J. Peterson, and Tarla Rai Peterson and "The Silences and Possibilities of Asbestos Activism: Stories from Libby and Beyond," by Steve Schwarze.

478. Gregg and Seigworth, *The Affect Theory Reader*, 2.

479. See, Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion,* 10. Ahmed suggests, "Emotions are psychological *and* social, individual *and* collective . . . Emotions are critical to the very constitution of the psychic and the social as objects . . . In other words, emotions are not 'in' either the individual or the social, but produce the very surfaces and boundaries that allow the individual and the social to be delineated as if they are objects."

480. *Juwaria Jama and Isra Hirsi*.

481. See, for example, Cunsolo and Ellis, "Ecological Grief as a Mental Health Response to Climate Change-Related Loss"; Ashlee Cunsolo and Neville Ellis, "Hope and Mourning in the Anthropocene: Understanding Ecological Grief," The Conversation, accessed December 27, 2021, http://theconversation.com/hope-and-mourning-in-the-anthropocene-understanding-ecological-grief-88630; Ashlee Cunsolo et al., "Ecological Grief and Anxiety: The Start of a Healthy Response to Climate Change?," *The Lancet Planetary Health* 4, no. 7 (July 2020): e261–63, https://doi.org/10.1016/S2542-5196(20)30144-3; Ashlee Cunsolo and Karen Landman, eds., "Review: Mourning Nature: Hope at the Heart of Ecological Loss and Grief," May 17, 2017, https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt1w6t9hg.

482. Anguelovski, *Neighborhood as Refuge*, 31, writes: "In distressed communities, the few parks are often unsafe or used for drug dealing and consuming. They are not always well maintained, and parents prefer to keep their children away from them."

483. *Representative Ilhan Omar's Daughter Takes On Climate Change | NBC News Now*.

484. "Where we live, work, and play" (credited to Dana Alston in her address to the first People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit in 1991) has become the "iconic phrase" for Environmental Justice scholarship. Agyeman et al., "Trends and Directions in Environmental Justice"; Sandler and Pezzullo, *Environmental Justice and Environmentalism,* 62.

485. Examining how certain spaces and/or places gain political and cultural significance is an interdisciplinary endeavor. Some of the most notable works comprising the "spatial turn"

include Yi-Fu Tuan, *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perceptions, Attitudes, and Values* (Columbia University Press, 1990); Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1984); Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 1991); Doreen B. Massey, *Space, Place, and Gender* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994); Doreen Massey, *For Space* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2005); Edward S. Casey, *Representing Place: Landscape Painting and Maps* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002); Pierre Nora, *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996); Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995). Numerous scholars in rhetorical studies are important. See, for example: Bryan Hubbard and Marouf A. Hasian Jr., "Atomic Memories of the *Enola Gay*: Strategies of Remembrance at the National Air and Space Museum," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 1, no. 3 (1998): 363–85, https://doi.org/10.1353/rap.2010.0084; Ronald L. Jackson, "White Space, White Privilege: Mapping Discursive Inquiry into the Self," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 85, no. 1 (February 1999): 38–54, https://doi.org/10.1080/00335639909384240; Carole Blair, "Reflections on Criticism and Bodies: Parables from Public Places," *Western Journal of Communication* 65, no. 3 (Summer 2001): 271; Roxanne Mountford, "On Gender and Rhetorical Space," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 31, no. 1 (January 2001): 41–71, https://doi.org/10.1080/02773940109391194; David Wittenberg, "Going out in Public: Visibility and Anonymity in Michael Warner's 'Publics and Counterpublics,'" *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 88, no. 4 (November 2002): 426–33, https://doi.org/10.1080/00335630209384389; Greg Dickinson, Brian L. Ott, and Eric Aoki, "Spaces of Remembering and Forgetting: The Reverent Eye/I at the Plains Indian Museum An Earlier Version of This Essay Was Presented at the 2002 Convention of the Western States Communication Association.," *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 3, no. 1 (March 2006): 27–47, https://doi.org/10.1080/14791420500505619; Jordynn Jack, "Space, Time, Memory: Gendered Recollections of Wartime Los Alamos," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 37, no. 3 (June 29, 2007): 229–50, https://doi.org/10.1080/02773940601039363; Jessie Stewart and Greg Dickinson, "Enunciating Locality in the Postmodern Suburb: FlatIron Crossing and the Colorado Lifestyle," *Western Journal of Communication* 72, no. 3 (July 2008): 280–307, https://doi.org/10.1080/10570310802210148; Karma R. Chávez, "Remapping *Latinidad* : A Performance Cartography of Latina/o Identity in Rural Nebraska," *Text and Performance Quarterly* 29, no. 2 (April 2009): 165–82, https://doi.org/10.1080/10462930902774866; Kenneth S. Zagacki and Victoria J. Gallagher, "Rhetoric and Materiality in the Museum Park at the North Carolina Museum of Art," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 95, no. 2 (May 2009): 171–91, https://doi.org/10.1080/00335630902842087; Thomas R. Dunn, "Remembering 'A Great Fag': Visualizing Public Memory and the Construction of Queer Space," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 97, no. 4 (November 2011): 435–60, https://doi.org/10.1080/00335630.2011.585168; Danielle Endres and Samantha Senda-Cook, "Location Matters: The Rhetoric of Place in Protest," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 97, no. 3 (August 2011): 257–82, https://doi.org/10.1080/00335630.2011.585167; Samantha Senda-Cook, "Rugged Practices: Embodying Authenticity in Outdoor Recreation," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 98, no. 2 (May 2012): 129–52, https://doi.org/10.1080/00335630.2012.663500; Eric Aoki, Greg Dickinson, and Brian L. Ott, "Memory and the West: Reflections on Place, Practice, and Performance," *Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies* 13, no. 1 (February 2013): 3–5,

https://doi.org/10.1177/1532708612464631; Allison M. Prasch, "Toward a Rhetorical Theory of Deixis," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 102, no. 2 (April 2, 2016): 166–93, https://doi.org/10.1080/00335630.2016.1156145; Alyssa A. Samek, "Mobility, Citizenship, and 'American Women on the Move' in the 1977 International Women's Year Torch Relay," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 103, no. 3 (July 3, 2017): 207–29, https://doi.org/10.1080/00335630.2017.1321134; J. David Maxson, "'Second Line to Bury White Supremacy': Take 'Em Down Nola, Monument Removal, and Residual Memory," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 106, no. 1 (January 2, 2020): 48–71, https://doi.org/10.1080/00335630.2019.1704428.

486. Anguelovski, *Neighborhood as Refuge*, 47.

487. As Leila Scannell and Robert Giffort point out, "place attachment has been researched quite broadly, and so has been defined in a variety of ways," "Defining Place Attachment: A Tripartite Organizing Framework," *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 30, no. 1 (March 2010): 1–10, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jenvp.2009.09.006. I do not claim any specific definition in this chapter, but broadly explore how individuals and collectives generate meaning with the places and spaces they encounter. For a more thorough review of theories of place attachment, see: Christopher Groves, "The Bomb in My Backyard, the Serpent in My House: Environmental Justice, Risk, and the Colonisation of Attachment," *Environmental Politics* 24, no. 6 (November 2, 2015): 853–73, https://doi.org/10.1080/09644016.2015.1067348; Julian Agyeman, Patrick Devine-Wright, and Julia Prange, "Close to the Edge, down by the River? Joining up Managed Retreat and Place Attachment in a Climate Changed World," *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space* 41, no. 3 (March 2009): 509–13, https://doi.org/10.1068/a41301; Vanesa Castán Broto et al., "Stigma and Attachment: Performance of Identity in an Environmentally Degraded Place," *Society & Natural Resources* 23, no. 10 (August 23, 2010): 952–68, https://doi.org/10.1080/08941920802705776; Patrick Devine-Wright and Yuko Howes, "Disruption to Place Attachment and the Protection of Restorative Environments: A Wind Energy Case Study," *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 30, no. 3 (September 2010): 271–80, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jenvp.2010.01.008; Robert J. Doolittle and Donald MacDonald, "Communication and a Sense of Community in a Metropolitan Neighborhood: A Factor Analytic Examination," *Communication Quarterly* 26, no. 3 (Summer 1978): 2–7, https://doi.org/10.1080/01463377809369297.

488. Irwin Altman and Setha Low, in their work on place attachment, have explored how strong connections to place contribute to social bonds and community resilience. Irwin Altman and Setha M. Low, eds., *Place Attachment* (Boston, MA: Springer US, 1992), https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4684-8753-4. Timothy Beatley's research on "Biophilic Cities" explores how fostering connections to place enhances civic engagement and the well-being of urban environments.; Timothy Beatley and Robert McDonald, *Biophilic Cities for an Urban Century: Why Nature Is Essential for the Success of Cities* (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2020), https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-51665-9. Bradley Jorgensen and Richard Stedman's research on the psychological benefits of place attachment emphasizes the positive impact on mental health and well-being. Bradley S. Jorgensen and Richard C. Stedman, "Sense

of Place as an Attitude: Lakeshore Owners Attitudes toward Their Properties," *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 21, no. 3 (2001): 233–48, https://doi.org/10.1006/jevp.2001.0226.

489. Louise Chawla's research on the role of the environment in children's resilience during times of crisis speaks to the stabilizing influence of place attachment.

490. Raymond De Young's work on the role of place attachment in fostering pro-environmental behaviors and sustainable practices aligns with this argument. Kimberly D. S. Adams and Raymond De Young's research on place attachment and belonging highlights the positive impact on individual well-being. David Seamon's work on place and culture illustrates how place attachment contributes to cultural preservation and well-being. Timothy Beatley's research on "Biophilic Cities" explores how fostering connections to place enhances civic engagement and the well-being of urban environments. Yi-Fu Tuan's extensive work on humanistic geography, including the concept of topophilia, speaks to the cultural and aesthetic richness associated with meaningful places.

491. Setha Low, in her work on the anthropology of space and place, has explored the impact of urbanization on place attachment and urban well-being.

492. Anguelovski, 47-49.

493. I draw inspiration from Kenneth Burke's concept of identification, which posits that shared symbols and experiences foster a sense of unity among individuals, as well as the many scholars I review above who contribute to the "affective turn" in communication studies. Kenneth Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969). See also, Jenny Edbauer Rice, "The New 'New': Making a Case for Critical Affect Studies," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 94, no. 2 (2008): 200–212, https://doi.org/10.1080/00335630801975434. Scholars such as Celeste M. Condit and Dana L. Cloud have explored the emotional dimensions of rhetoric, providing a theoretical foundation for understanding the persuasive potential of affective appeals. Celeste Michelle Condit, "The Critic as Empath: Moving Away from Totalizing Theory," *Western Journal of Communication* 57, no. 2 (Spring 1993): 178–90; Condit; Celeste M. Condit and Roderick P. Hart, "Political Styles and Political Feelings: Introduction," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 13, no. 2 (June 1, 1996): 175–80, https://doi.org/10.1080/15295039609366970; Dana L. Cloud, "The Materiality of Discourse as Oxymoron: A Challenge to Critical Rhetoric," *Western Journal of Communication* 58, no. 3 (Summer 1994): 141–63.Works by environmental communication scholars like Robert Cox and Phaedra C. Pezzullo emphasize the role of emotions in shaping environmental attitudes. Pezzullo and Cox, *Environmental Communication and the Public Sphere*; Phaedra C. Pezzullo, "Resisting 'National Breast Cancer Awareness Month': The Rhetoric of Counterpublics and Their Cultural Performances," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 89, no. 4 (November 2003): 345–65, https://doi.org/10.1080/0033563032000160981.

494. *Isra Hirsi*.

495. As Sarah Ahmed describes, "Emotions are after all moving, even if they do not simply move between us . . . Of course, emotions are not only about movement, they are also about attachments or about what connects us to this or that." Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion,* 11. Here, I turn to Ahmed's theory of "stickiness." Stickiness, according to Ahmed, describes how stereotypes and negative affects attach to certain bodies and figure them as threats to safety, order, and unity. In turn, feelings of fear, anxiety, and hate "stick" to these bodies and justify violence, containment, policing, and other forms of structural racism. Stickiness, therefore, binds figures together and generally impedes movement/circulation. Robert McRuer adapts Ahmed's theory in their analysis of "thinking pink" in relation to gay men, to suggest that stickiness has an accelerative, or lubricative, function that opposes fear economies with "pink economies." Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, ed., *Prismatic Ecology: Ecotheory beyond Green* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013).

496. Groves' exploration of the "colonization of attachment" guides my understanding of attachment, and particularly place attachment, as a constitutive part of how individuals and collectives occupy certain spaces/places/environments. Like Groves, I am concerned with the consequences of harming the attachments that call forth wellbeing and flourishing. I expand on this understanding of attachment, however, by drawing on scholars who investigate how attachments also function to sustain injustice, and therefore, disrupting or threatening those attachments can function as a decolonizing tactic. Groves, "The Bomb in My Backyard, the Serpent in My House."

497. Groves, 854.

498. Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 94.

499. Berlant, 97.

500. Marina Levina offers a compelling analysis of the intimate relationship between whiteness and the joys of cruelty in her essay recounting personal experiences growing up as a Jewish individual in the Soviet Union and later immigrating to the United States Marina Levina, "Whiteness and the Joys of Cruelty," *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 15, no. 1 (January 2, 2018): 73–78, https://doi.org/10.1080/14791420.2018.1435079. Levina's exploration underscores the affective dimensions of cruelty and its attachment to whiteness, and argues that the assertion of power is intertwined with a sense of joy. In the context of my critical analysis, Levina's work illustrates how attachments to problematic objects (borrowing from Berlant and Ahmed), such as identity markers and power dynamics, can persist due to the joy derived from their assertion, even when they actively threaten individuals' wellbeing.

501. *Juwaria Jama and Isra Hirsi*.

502. *Juwaria Jama and Isra Hirsi*.

503. *Juwaria Jama and Isra Hirsi*.

504. Our Streets Mpls in Collaboration with Heritage Studies and Public History UMN, "Concrete River: A History of I-94 in Cedar Riverside," ArcGIS StoryMaps, October 10, 2023, https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/5b59c747a09c4829bf7d0f74a8804c8e.

505. UMN.

506. UMN.

507. Casey Ryan Kelly, "It Follows: Precarity, Thanatopolitics, and The Ambient Horror Film," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 34, no. 3 (August 2017): 234–49, https://doi.org/10.1080/15295036.2016.1268699.

508. Kelly, 238.

509. UMN, "Concrete River."

510. UMN.

511. *Isra Hirsi at 2019 MN Youth Climate Strike*.

512. Isra Hirsi, "The Climate Movement Needs More People like Me," Grist, March 25, 2019, https://grist.org/article/the-climate-movement-needs-more-people-like-me/.

513. Anguelovski, *Neighborhood as Refuge*, 54.

514. Agyeman, Devine-Wright, and Prange, "Close to the Edge, down by the River?," 509.

515. *Isra Hirsi*.

516. *Isra Hirsi*. Emphasis added. Hirsi occasionally suggests that her personal experiences of climate change aren't as "real" or "authentic" as those whose experiences of climate change could be considered more extreme (i.e., the Global South or throughout many Indigenous populations around the world). I understand this tendency as Hirsi's conscious and unconscious reckoning with how she understands her privilege. My analyses of Hirsi's discourse over time suggests that she struggles with claiming the violence and threat that climate change poses to her, personally, because those experiences seem somehow less violent than individuals and communities who are, for example, climate refugees. In this dissertation, I acknowledge the rhetorical significance of how Hirsi describes the "real," while understanding her experiences of climate change as constitutive, regardless of whether or not she minimizes their impact on her life in comparison to others.

517. *Juwaria Jama and Isra Hirsi*.

518. *Juwaria Jama and Isra Hirsi*.

519. Agyeman et al., "Trends and Directions in Environmental Justice," 333.

520. Hirsi, "Activism Through Empathy with Isra Hirsi."

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of Virtue Ethics and Its Implications for the Media Ethics Classroom," *Journal of Media Ethics* 35, no. 3 (July 2, 2020): 139–51, https://doi.org/10.1080/23736992.2020.1779593; Deci and Ryan, "Hedonia, Eudaimonia, and Well-Being"; Waterman, "Two Conceptions of Happiness."

544. In their critique of the tiny house movement as a form of social and political protest against neoliberal ideologies, Crystal Colombini briefly mentions the concept of eudaimonia and suggests that within a neoliberal-dominated political economic movement, happiness and human flourishing are often inseperable from consumption. This analysis suggests that scholars consider alternative visions of "the good life" that challenge dominant capitalist narratives and explore new possibilities for economic and social structures. Crystal Colombini, "The Rhetorical Resistance of Tiny Homes: Downsizing Neoliberal Capitalism," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 49, no. 5 (October 20, 2019): 447–69, https://doi.org/10.1080/02773945.2019.1658213.

545. As I reviewed in Chapter One, Stuart J. Murray's lead in conceptualizing the use of death for mobilizing political life and build on his interpretation of eudaimonia as a "threshold of life and death." I push this understanding of eudaimonia further in what I term eudaimortia. Murray, "Thanatopolitics," 96.

546. Kastenbaum, "Death Writ Large," 376.

547. In November 2023, the National Communication Association (NCA) announced the "Death and Dying Division" as an official sponsored interest group. The division's mission is to support the communication-oriented study of death, dying, and bereavement. Though this group primarily understands and analyses death as an event or condition (as I reviewed in Chapter One), they are inclusive of all methodologies and epistemologies making my own scholarly contribution timely and significant.

548. Murray, "Thanatopolitics," 205.

549. Joshua Trey Barnett, "Vigilant Mourning and the Future of Earthly Coexistence," in *Communicating in the Anthropocene: Intimate Relations*, ed. Vail Fletcher and Alexa Dare, Environmental Communication and Nature: Conflict and Ecoculture in the Anthropocene (Lexington Books, 2021).

550. Barnett, 19.

551. "Curated Data," *ACLED* (blog), accessed January 8, 2024, https://acleddata.com/curated-data-files/.

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