



Planetarianism Now: On Anticipatory Imagination, Young People’s Literature, and Hope for the Planet

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One of the greatest challenges facing education in the Anthropocene is to empower young people everywhere *to believe* that we are able to transition to an ecological civilization. The nourishment of this capacity is a different task than helping them grasp—in numbers and data—the scope of climate change, biodiversity loss, and other forms of ecocide currently unfolding under the business-as-usual operations of neoliberal petrocapi-talism. The latter challenge is “merely” about honing young people’s climate science literacy. And while the quantifiable nature of scientific understanding is not without its challenges, unless one is willing to contest the scientific consensus about climate change, this factual knowledge is neither hard to find nor controversial. Helping young people *believe* that we can transition from an ecocidal to an ecological civilization is a whole different matter.

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M. Paulsen et al. (eds.), *Pedagogy in the Anthropocene*, Palgrave
Studies in Educational Futures,

https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-90980-2_12

While it also requires factual knowledge, such belief is a form of anticipatory imagination that looks beyond the horizon of what is currently possible to envision what is desired and necessary. One name for this belief is hope and the concern of this chapter is with how literature for young people can be tapped to nourish hope for the planet.

The argument is framed by a larger premise, according to which appeals to scientific evidence and data are not sufficient to “communicate—and hence trigger—the social and political changes needed to address climate change” (Szeman & Boyer, 2017, p. 5). The challenges facing us require a radical transformation of our conceptual structures of perception and a new critical awareness of how to use stories for that purpose. The proposition explored here is that while the battle for our planet’s future is fought on many fronts, it is first and foremost the battle of imagination: of whether we can imagine a biocentric future. My contention is that hope-oriented anticipatory imagination is a necessary precondition for disrupting ecocide and enabling meaningful change. The term I propose for this anticipatory imagination focused on the planet’s future is *planetarianism*. This chapter offers its programmatic exposition, theorizing planetarianism as a mode of engagement with the issues of climate change in and through literature for the young reader.

DREAMING DESPAIR: THE PRESENT MOMENT AND THE RISE OF DYSTOPIA

The leading question for this section was whether it is more responsible for educators to respond to the Anthropocene by preparing young people for the inevitable collapse of a petroc capitalist world or by empowering them to collective action that has the potential to re-orient the course of our civilization toward regenerative futures built on respect for planetary boundaries. So framed, the question represents a false dichotomy, but it gestures at a pedagogical dilemma: how to teach about climate change without leaving the audience feeling hopeless. The false dichotomy part is that preparing for the demise of our unsustainable, profit-driven, extractive, and ecocidal civilization is not antithetical to forms of activism necessary for the emergence of an ecological civilization. In fact, a broad consensus exists that petroc capitalism must be abandoned as soon as possible (Klein, 2014; Ghosh, 2016; Szeman & Boyer, 2017; Read & Alexander, 2019). As Rupert Read puts it, we are facing three broad

possible futures. One, we will somehow manage to rapidly transform our ecocidal civilization into an ecological one. Two, our ecocidal civilization will collapse, but it will manage to seed a successor civilization as it falls. Or three, our ecocidal civilization will collapse utterly and terminally; victim of climate instability, resource depletion, and the conflicts these emergencies would engender (Read, 2020, pp. 159–160).

The main political and financial institutions of our petrocapiatist status quo have so far denied considering *any* of these three futures. They are locked instead in a magical thinking narrative about the future of accelerating expansion, including into space, with more of everything and infinite growth. For serious consideration of our possible futures, one needs to turn to climate movements like Extinction Rebellion and Fridays for the Future, or to UN reports and scientific literature. When the 2018 IPCC Special Report gives us only until 2030 for “rapid, far-reaching and unprecedented changes in all aspects of society” to contain global warming at 1.5° C by the end of the century (IPCC, 2018), or when the 2019 UN IPBES Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity concludes that we need “a fundamental, system-wide reorganization across technological, economic and social factors, including paradigms, goals and values” to protect nature and thus our own survival (IPBES, 2019), this is the language of science talking about the choices we have. Likewise, when Greta Thunberg calls out governments and corporations for “making it look like real action is happening when in fact almost nothing is being done, apart from clever accounting and creative PR” (Thunberg, 2020, p. 109), this is our time’s equivalent of “The Emperor’s New Clothes”: of teenage activists recognizing how our socio-political order is caught up in self-serving illusions. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) Paulo Freire proposed the term *conscientization* for the process of “achieving critical consciousness” of oppression or injustice that allows one “to go a step beyond the deception of palliative solutions [and] to engage in authentic transformation of reality” (2018, p. 183). I want to suggest that our time is one of the accelerating conscientization of climate change. One in which we are entering a popular revolt against a dysfunctional system.

Knowing these facts does not make the pedagogical dilemma easier. The choice between the goals of “steeling for despair” versus “offering hope” is not just uncomfortable psychologically but daunting in practical ways. How do we teach to normalize despair or desensitize our students to a possible environmental collapse—and should we teach it, even if we knew how? Likewise, how do we teach hope for the planet without

making it seem like solutions are easy or the situation is not as critical as the scientific data suggest? In more nuanced contexts, can despair and hope be taught together or balanced out without turning our pedagogy into collusion with the ecocidal status quo? Or perhaps hope and despair are each more complex notions than the binary opposition we often take them to be? If so, is there a way of enacting hope that embraces despair or acting on despair to carry forth the seeds of hope?

The trajectories of young people's literature and scholarship over the past four decades suggest some answers to these questions. In the realms of literary criticism and the humanities, two developments merit special attention. The first was the emergence of ecocriticism, with the term coined in 1978 by William Rueckert, the professional organization Association for the Study of Literature and Environment established in 1992, and the seminal collection that defined the field, Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm's *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology* published in 1996. Ecocriticism has since diversified into several strands (Gaard, 2009), all of them retaining the original focus on "the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment" (Glotfelty, 1996, p. xviii). In its "study" part, ecocriticism remains "merely" an interpretative tool. The focus on "the physical environment," however, reveals ecocriticism's activist aspirations and its origin as a reaction to literary studies in the 1990s being too academic. While postmodernism, deconstruction, and poststructuralism ignored the realities of the biological world, the fundamental premise of ecocriticism was radically different: "that human culture is connected to the physical world, affecting it and affected by it" (p. xix). The answer, one answer, ecocriticism thus offered was that literary studies should pay attention to "the most pressing contemporary issue of all, namely, the global environmental crisis" (p. xv).

The other major process was the rise of the environmental humanities in the early 2000s. An interdisciplinary global intellectual movement rather than a development within a particular field, the environmental humanities recognize that "abandon[ing] narrow disciplinary traditions" is necessary to fully grasp the inextricable ways in which humanity and the environment are connected (Emmett & Nye, 2017, p. 4). The environmental humanities advocates that reconceiving of "the relationship between scientific and technical disciplines and the humanities" is "essential to understanding and resolving dilemmas that have been created by industrial society" (p. 4). The key contribution of the environmental

humanities has been to stress that science alone is not enough to engender a societal transformation our world needs. Since most of the constraints working against environmental action are cultural, the environmental humanities offer a necessary space to foster new ways of thinking and a new story about who we are, as a species, in relation to all other forms of life on the planet. The species focus has been especially groundbreaking. Indeed, until the Anthropocene registered on our simian radars, we had never even had to think of ourselves as a species. The environmental humanities is a response to this challenge. It insists that we must, as a species, find a new, emotionally compelling story “capable of mobilizing social adaptation” to the realities of a climate-altered world (p. 8).

Concurrent with the development of ecocriticism and the environmental humanities, something else was happening in literature and film for the young audience. It was the explosion of dystopia. The dystopian imagination was not a new thing, but it had until then existed “on the margins of mainstream literature” (Baccolini & Moylan, 2003, p. 1). It was only in the Reagan years—the dawn of the neoliberal era—that “a more clearly dystopian turn began to emerge within the popular imagination of Anglo-American societies” (p. 3). Within a decade, stories of “the Great Unraveling”—as Joanna Macy and Chris Johnstone have called this broad narrative template (2012, p. 5)—became not just mainstream but the dominant response to the Anthropocene in literature and film. The wide currency of dystopian, postapocalyptic, and post-disaster narratives has since forged a negative feedback loop: the more dystopia we read, the more evidence we find for its inevitability. For literary historians, however, dystopia is a recent phenomenon. It represents a historically situated aberration in our story systems triggered by the rise of neoliberalism.

In some ways, dystopia does make sense. Most of my students are Generation Z, born between 1995 and 2012. They grew up in a world literally hurtling toward apocalypse. During their lifetimes, between 1990 and 2020, global fossil fuel consumption grew by about 30 percent, atmospheric CO₂ increased more than it did in the entire lifespan of the human species until 1990, and the global average temperature of the planet increased by about 0.5° C (Tortell, 2020, p. 8688). It was also during their lifetimes that alarm about climate change was first raised and then countered with multimillion-dollar campaigns of denial, doubt mongering (Oreskes & Conway, 2010), and fossil fuel lock-in framing (Supran and Oreskes, 2021). It was during their lifetimes too that a series of voluntary neoliberal trade agreements to limit greenhouse gas emissions were signed,

celebrated, and fizzled out—none of them even close to slowing down, let alone stopping the rise of emissions (Tortell, 2020). For people raised in a dysfunctional culture that continues to worship the market—even though it is increasingly clear that the market, being the primary driver of ecocide, is incapable of solving the problems it generates (Moore, 2016)—dystopia is the name of the game. My students know it well. Although they are in their late teens or early twenties, most of them have no illusions that capitalism can work for the planet. “Our economy today is built in large part upon the exploitation of the environment and its inhabitants,” wrote a freshman student, commenting on Polly Higgins’ TED talk about ecocide. “Higgins’ willingness to push for the formal condemnation of ecocide is inspiring, ... but it will be rejected as unfriendly to corporate interests which benefit from ecocide.”

Students like George grew up reading dystopia, playing dystopian games, and watching dystopian films. They grew up hearing that capitalism is unavoidable, even if it destroys the planet. Surrounded by dystopian, postapocalyptic, and post-disaster narratives, most of them have internalized the belief that imagining a hopeful future is naïve, whereas imagining a postapocalyptic hell is reasonable. They have no problems whatsoever with naming books, films, shows, or games that project the collapse of our civilization. But they struggle to recall a single story that projects a hopeful planetary future. This availability heuristic and the attitudes it generates are not only the result of the culture in which they live and the dystopian narratives this culture generates. They are also reinforced by the popular and academic attention dystopia has received. Since the early 1990s, a whole field of dystopian studies has arisen to explain how dystopias are a new form of political opposition. Dystopia, Baccolini and Moylan note, offers “an education of perception” which may “support or catalyze a social transformation that will bring about an end to the conditions that produced the twentieth-century dystopias” (2003, p. 11). YA dystopias, specifically, “seek to teach serious lessons about the issues faced by humanity, and to offer readers a pleasurable retreat from their quotidian experience” (Hintz et al., 2013, p. 5). Likewise, post-disaster YA fiction is “highly political in scope” and strategically works “to engender a restorative and transformative response to environmental crisis” (Curry, 2013, p. 15). It is all about education and warning, it seems.

My issue with this well-meant enterprise is that in the name of resistance to the ecocidal status quo literary and filmic dystopias have helped reinforce the belief that ecocide is unavoidable. In 1981 Frederick Jameson

wrote about the political unconscious of literature and my contention is that the rise of dystopia has engendered its own political unconscious: one that works toward the erasure of hope. This erasure is seldom acknowledged by authors, filmmakers, and scholars, but I have heard it, many times, from my students. “I have grown up watching and reading dystopian media that often left me feeling a bit empty regarding the future of the planet or society,” wrote one freshman. In the words of another, “I never thought about how dystopian novels eliminated much of the hope young individuals could have for the future, especially in regard to climate change. ... While I do try to help the environment through my daily choices—eating vegan, recycling, conserving water—my overall outlook on the future is hopeless to the point that I do not see any benefit from taking larger action.” Teaching about climate change, I have seen versions of this sentiment appear frequently enough to suggest that they represent a larger cultural construct. Writing about an urgent need for utopia, Tom Moylan recently remarked that dystopia has congealed into a “popular structure of feeling [which] immerses people in nihilist pleasure ... and sustains a disarming anti-utopian pessimism” (2020, p. 166). Indeed. Over the past three decades—extrapolating from the neoliberal assault on the planet—we have created a vast industry that describes dystopia, examines dystopia, replicates dystopia, and normalizes expectations about dystopian futures. The focus on what we dread has left almost no place for discussions about the future we want.

The consequences have been dire. As cognitive scholars have long known, the more a neural circuit is activated, the stronger it gets: our cognitive architecture is such that “[w]hen we negate the frame, we evoke the frame” (Lakoff, 2004, p. 3). Research has linked the rise of eco-anxiety, climate denialism, and social inertia to the prevalence of dystopian imaginaries in the media and popular culture (Brulle & Norgaard, 2019; Kretz, 2017). In literature, empirical studies have shown that over 80 percent of cli-fi narratives employ the “disaster frame” which—instead of mobilizing action—elicits despair, helplessness, and anger that lead to “ignoring or avoiding the topic” (Schneider-Mayerson, 2018, p. 490). When the disaster frame is articulated in stories—recall the vision of future Earth in *Wall-E*—stories of the Great Unraveling tend to operate as self-reinforcing prophecies. Indeed, given how capitalism reproduces itself through “feed[ing] on and learn[ing] from resistance and critique” (Haiven, 2014, p. 9), dystopias may have become commodifications conscripted to reproduce the system they supposedly challenge (Moylan, 2020, p. 166). If so,

dystopia today represents a *de facto* capitulation to the rhetoric of petrocapitalism, which sees no alternative to the current carbon economy, and no alternative to its peculiar idea of growth based on accelerating monetization and exploitation of the biosphere. Given capitalism's colonialist legacy, visions of dystopian future are also capitulations to the unavailability of racism. In the words of Hari Ziyad, "white liberal dystopian projections aren't cautionary tales about nativism and hyper capitalism, but an embrace of complicity" (2018, np). Underlying all these assumptions lies the fear that it is already too late. Take all this together and it becomes clear that the cultural work of dystopia has been impressive but not transformative enough. While dystopia has a place in building climate literacy, it is not sufficient to bring about the change we need.

DREAMING HOPE: PLANETARIANISM AND THE WAY FORWARD

What if, instead of obsessing about the stories of the Great Unraveling, we turned our creative energies to imagine the futures we want? What if we used our imaginations to prefigure the world as it can be? My suggestion is that one of the most productive ways to engage with the urgencies of the Anthropocene is through stories that mobilize hope—and not just any hope but specifically hope for the planet. This capacity for "hopeful dreaming" (Alexander, 1968, p. 389) has always been the domain of art, especially literature. Our challenge is to reimagine ourselves in relation to the biosphere and the primary space for that reimagining is the story. But not just any story. As Ursula K. Le Guin commented in her 2014 National Book Awards Acceptance Speech: "I think hard times are coming when we will be wanting the voices of writers who can see alternatives to how we live now, who can see through our fear-stricken society and its obsessive technologies to other ways of being, and even imagine some real grounds for hope" (np). These are the stories we need.

Le Guin's call is finding resonance in an emerging field of hope studies. Whereas earlier ecocritical scholarship insisted on the need to study any and all literary representations of the environmental crisis, hope scholars stress the need to study "bright spots": stories that model solutions, positive outcomes, and understanding that have the potential to mobilize the audience's agency (Kelsey, 2020, p. 175). Whereas scholars in the environmental humanities and the Anthropocene literary studies have long centered discussions on how the stories we tell can shape our future, hope scholars insist on the need to "hack the story" (Ray, 2020, p. 80), "trend

hopeful” (Kelsey, 2020, p. 157), and address the challenges of the Anthropocene within hope-oriented frameworks. As Macy and Johnstone argue, our culture today unfolds within three broad narrative templates: Business as Usual, the Great Unraveling, and the Great Turning (2012, pp. 4–5). Each template is a version of reality and a lens through which we frame the challenges facing us. Each constructs our agency in relation to that reality. Macy and Johnstone’s argument is that today we need stories of the Great Turning: stories about the transition to an ecological civilization, stories “committed to the healing and recovery of the world” in which “the central plot is finding and offering our gift of Active Hope” (p. 5). Like Kelsey, who insists that “the environmental crisis is also a crisis of hope” (2020, p. 11), Macy and Johnson frame hope as an activist position necessary for us to discover “the path of an inspired vision” and achieve the change we want to see (2012, p. 185). Like Kelsey, who contends that “hope for the environment is not only warranted but essential to addressing climate change, biodiversity loss, and the full suite of environmental crises we face” (2020, p. 4), Macy and Johnson stress that Active Hope is indispensable. In fact, “the greater the gap between the present reality and what we would like to have happen,” the more important it becomes “to believe that what we hope for is possible” (2012, p. 186). This relationship between hope, belief, change, and agency is paradoxical but central for any meaningful progress toward an ecological civilization. In other words, to embrace Active Hope, to become “active participants in bringing about what we hope for” (p. 3), we must recognize that hopelessness is not a reality. It is a mindset. One that makes us “act and live from an orientation of fear” (Ray, 2020, p. 81). How do we confront it? How do we overcome our powerlessness—the I-can’t-do-that, it’s-too-late, and it’s-too-big framing of the challenges ahead? How do we navigate past what Macy and Johnstone call “the threshold guardian of disbelief?” (2012, p. 193)?

I suggest we start with imagining hope for the planet. Eileen Crist has described the Anthropocene as a discourse “constituted by a blend of interweaving and recurrent themes” (2016, p. 15), two of which are especially prominent: naturalization of human expansionism and naturalization of the Earth’s environmental collapse—that is, after Earth has been reduced to a resource for our species’ ascension toward domination of the galaxy and discarded when used up. This notion that Earth is doomed is a rhetorical construct that renders the planet expendable. It must be rejected in favor of imagination focused on hope—for only imagination empowers

us “to love and respect the Earth with the same intensity that we give to our families and our tribe” (Lovelock, 2000, p. 8). Put otherwise, the challenge of addressing the discourse of the Anthropocene is primarily a challenge to our story systems. Stories are the best tools we have to rewire our affective and cognitive modes of being in relation to the planet. And if we have been telling the wrong stories, it is time to get them right.

The alternative I propose is an epistemological orientation of putting the planet first, or planetarianism. A conceptual tool for ushering in the future we want, planetarianism is *a biocentric philosophical commitment to stand up for the planet*—thus, a counternarrative to the dystopian, anthropocentric discourse of the Anthropocene that legitimizes ecocide as the price for human “progress.” On another level, planetarianism is *applied hope articulated through stories*—a form of hope-as-resistance that enables us to overcome what Macy and Johnstone call “the challenge of disbelief” (2012, p. 186). Planetarianism, in this formulation, is a name for the process of unleashing our anticipatory imagination and channeling it into designing alternatives to the ecocidal present. Planetarianist stories envision the planet as a living entity, imagine a non-ecocidal socioeconomic system, depict disanthropocentrized relationships among humanity and other living beings, and gesture at a biocentric, multispecies future that is worth living for. So conceived, planetarianism can be examined as a distinct component of narrative fiction.

If this sounds simple, I want to stress that planetarianism presents us with a tremendous conceptual-creative challenge. We have little experience imagining applied hope through stories and we live in a culture whose mediascape is dominated by dystopian imaginaries. Our educational and other initiatives to create hope for the planet are always at risk of being pulled into the narrative of technooptimism, which effectively defends the ecocidal status quo as a necessary step toward a future of always-almost-within-reach technofixes. Or they risk being derailed by the more immediate concerns of the present. Nor have we given enough consideration to the infinitely plural articulations of hope. What counts as hopeful for specific age groups or culturally situated audiences? What are the forms or thresholds of hope? What is the meaning of hope for the planet and how it might be different for not just different audiences but when expressed in different genres or media? Finally, what are the best tools to examine or teach hope—Active Hope, applied hope, activist hope, and other facets of hope—in the stories we tell? While I have no answers

to these questions, the remaining part of this chapter offers two provocations about the unique educational potential of planetarianist fiction.

First, one important cultural work of planetarianist literature is to nourish a sense of hope even in the absence of specific solutions. Having hope is not the same as having a solution. While much of hope studies and solution journalism is predicated on the premise—and rightly so—of counteracting stories of doom and gloom with stories of environmental successes, equating hope with existing solutions is limiting. It distorts the larger work of hope as a form of sustaining belief operating even when we have no clear vision of *how* that hoped-for future may be achieved.

Consider, for example, Pam Bonsper and Dirk Rink's *The Problem of the Hot World* (2015). In this picturebook, five animal friends realize that their world is getting too hot. The deer, the bear, the fox, the mole, and the owl head out to the Ocean to see where all the water went. But the salty water is not what they need. A polar bear cub then appears and tells them of a magic cave where they will find the answer. The five friends enter the cave, which turns out to be a tunnel leading back in time. When they tumble out, back in their own forest, it is lush: "everywhere it was green and it was not hot" (np). The end. Or consider Sandra Dieckmann's *Leaf* (2017). In this picturebook, a lone emaciated polar bear is washed on the shores of a forest in a temperate climate. The bear is seen as a monster by all other forest creatures and tries to adapt by dressing up in leaves. Or, is it trying to fly away on leaf wings? When the crows talk to him at last, the bear indeed turns out to be "just someone who wished he could fly back home" (np). Eventually, the crows carry the bear back home to the Arctic and promise to tell his story "to everyone who would listen, so that no polar bear would ever get lost again" (np). In Rachel Hope Allison's *I'm Not a Plastic Bag* (2012), the great pacific garbage patch flies away like a bird. Saying "thank you" to the gulls who inspired it to take off, it leaves the ocean clean for the marine creatures to live. It was not in its place. In the last opening, the smiling face of the GPGP monster in the sky is watching a lone albatross sail over the tranquil sea. All is well. And in Jewel Parker Rhodes' *Bayou Magic* (2015), 12-year-old Maddy saves the local ecosystem by reconnecting with the ancestral knowledge traditions passed on to her by Grandmère Lavalier. When the oil rig in the Gulf explodes, gushing crude oil, Maddy's dream grasps that her connection to mermaid goddess Mami Wata is the only way to save Bayou Bon Temps. She calls upon the mermaids to build a levee of rock and silt to block the river's mouth. "They listened. They will do what I dreamed. Because of me,

there is a happy end” (2015, p. 232). When the media hail the outcome as “the Bon Temps miracle”—the oil parting “around this bayou like the eye of a hurricane” (pp. 233–234)—Maddy realizes that while “you can’t fix everything yourself, [y]ou need good friends and hope. Sometimes, even mermaids” (p. 235). None of these books offer realistic solutions to the problems of the Anthropocene they build on: global warming, shrinking habitats, species extinction, marine pollution, or oil spills. At the same time, they each offer excellent examples of planetarianist fiction that mobilizes hope for the planet by leaving the readers empowered that a non-ecocidal outcome is possible. They all communicate that hope is a gift one must not give up even if realistic solutions are hard to imagine.

Second, planetarianist literature redefines hope as a form of collective action rooted in anticipatory imagination. Stressing the power of collective action is a flip side of acknowledging that climate change and other devastations of the Anthropocene are driven by systemic causes rather than by evil schemes of singular villains. And that these systems—both systems of oppression and systems of resistance—are shaped by the stories we tell. A number of planetarianist books succeed in depicting these systems without compromising their affective power which comes from focalization through the voice of a single protagonist.

To defeat the black snake that threatens the land in Carole Lindstrom and Michaela Goade’s *We Are Water Protectors* (2020), the young protagonist rallies a coalition that consists not only of her people, Native Americans, but also of her ancestors, of non-Native allies, of natural elements, of “the four-legged, the two-legged, the plants, trees, rivers, lakes, the Earth”—for “we are all related” (np). It is this broad coalition that will defeat the ecocidal system. When the narrative states, “We are stewards of the Earth. Our spirits have not been broken” (np), this is the voice of Active Hope proclaiming that togetherness is the path to transformative change. Likewise, in Megan Herbert and Michael E. Mann’s *The Tantrum That Saved the World* (2017), young Sophia is transformed into a climate activist when she connects with climate refugees who arrive at her home. The first to show up is a polar bear whose ice home ceased to exist. The bear is followed by a Kiribati family, a swarm of bees, a flamingo, a family of Syrian farmers, a sea turtle, a New England fisherman, and a Bengal tiger. “They all turned to face her with hope in their eyes, expecting Sophia to halt their demise” (np). Sophia organizes the refugees and petitions City Hall officials. When her call is snubbed, Sophia throws a tantrum to save the world, a tantrum so loud that the world listens. “Cooperative

action can turn this high tide, they had **strength in numbers** and **right on their side**” (np, bold in original). The book ends with refugees leaving for their new homes and the world getting a “second chance”—represented in green background landscapes—even though just what the transformation involves is not described. A similar message about the power of collective action is found in Zoë Tucker and Zoe Persico’s *Greta and the Giants* (2019)—a fictionalized retelling of Greta Thunberg’s school strike for climate. In it, the animals plead with Greta to stop the greedy Giants who are destroying the forest, and Greta stands in the Giants’ path with a sign “Stop.” Within days, “more people and animals saw what they were doing and joined in too” (np). When the crowd gets so huge that it fills the forest, the Giants take notice. It takes them a while to disengage from their habitual destructive activities, but eventually, they do. “Before long ... the forest became more beautiful than anything they could ever have imagined” (np).

What all these and other planetarianist stories achieve is to project hope as an emerging quality that arises out of multiplicity of simple interactions: the Water Protector girl promising to protect water, Sophia taking in the first climate refugee, or Greta taking up a sign to stop the Giants’ thoughtless rampage. The anticipatory imagination behind each of those acts is not certainty about the outcome, but a response to a call that creates possibility. “Emergence,” writes Adrienne Maree Brown, “is beyond what the sum of its parts could ever imagine” (2020, p. 37). That, too, is also how planetarianist stories showcase hope for the planet: as an emergent quality arising from collective dreaming. This dreaming keeps alive young people’s belief that it is not too late and that any system created by human beings can be changed by human beings. Planetarianism affirms that we have the agency for that change. And that even a broken world is worth fighting for.

PLANETARIANISM NOW

Beyond the examples mentioned above, authors have used multiple other strategies to articulate applied hope for the planet in stories for young audiences. That we need this hope is becoming increasingly clear and my contention is that children’s literature can act as a particle accelerator for planetarianist ideas. As educators in the Anthropocene, we are faced with a challenge of how to empower our students to *believe* that a just, ecological civilization is possible. To further its emergence, we should actively

seek out stories that articulate hope for the planet and shift attitudes away from resignation. It is not enough to make our students aware of the facts; it is crucial to empower them to take an active stand against ecocide and teach them how. Stories that articulate hope are indispensable because the key obstacle in the current fight for our planet's future is the pervasive doomsday script that exonerates inaction. We will not prevail unless we have stories that counter fear and despair with inspiration and hope. As with issues of race, diversity, and inequality, we need to learn to talk about the challenges of the Anthropocene openly and honestly. Our most advanced technology for imagining the future is the story, and it is through stories that we can engage others in conversation about how to translate hope into reality. "With malice toward none, with charity for all," we need everyone on board—engaging our communities like Sophia's team in *Tantrum*: "They all told more people, who told more folks still. They won hearts with kindness and minds with good will. And so on and so on until everyone, was doing the hard work that had to be done" (2020, np). We can choose the stories we live. We can stop the ecocide happening on our watch. The time for planetarianism is NOW.

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