

Storytelling for Survival: Climate fiction and the fight for justice

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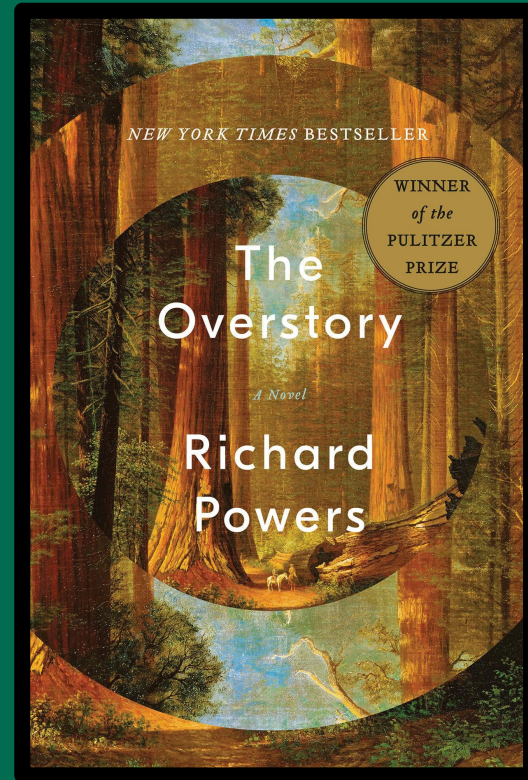
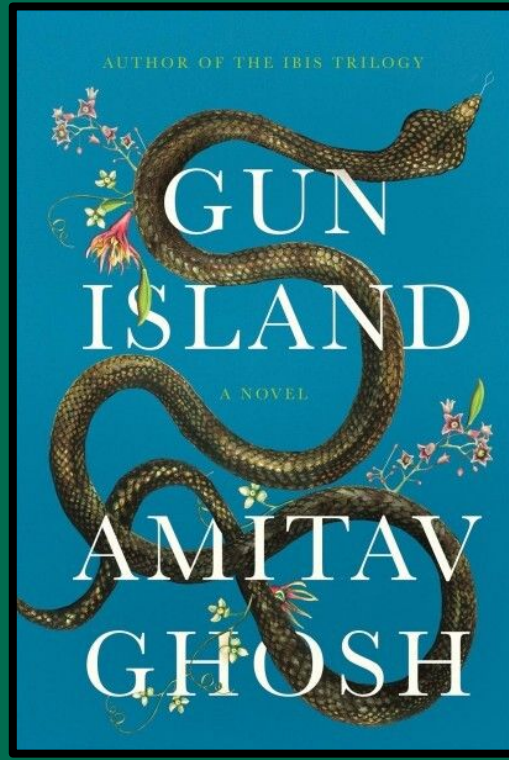
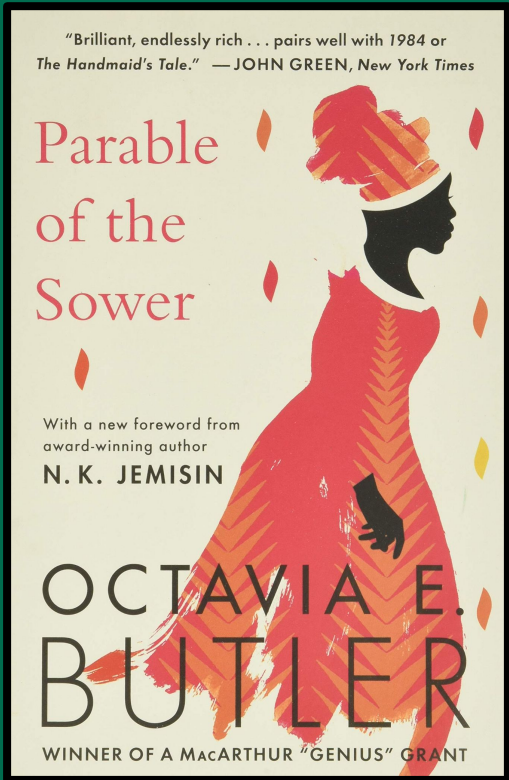
BACKGROUND

The climate crisis is real and it’s here, that's a fact. But facts alone don't move people—stories do. Climate fiction (or “cli-fi”) is an essential cultural tool used to shape the way we understand climate justice. As climate injustice continues to disproportionately affect the most vulnerable, understanding how fiction frames these inequalities is vital in promoting change.

METHODS

- 1. Textual analysis**
 - Identify thematic and narrative structures
- 2. Method classification**
 - Categorization of methods used to engage with climate justice themes
- 3. Scholarly Dialogue**
 - Enter the novels methods and messages with climate justice scholarship
- 4. Critical evaluation**
 - Assessment of the strengths and limitations of methods used to engage climate justice

Narratives that foreground **marginalized perspectives in community-based responses** to environmental collapse are most effective at expanding public understanding of climate justice.



Justice <i>Who's affected?</i>	Marginalized communities facing racial, economic, and social injustice.	Displaced populations and nonhuman species affected by global instability.	Ecosystems, Indigenous lands, and biodiversity threatened by environmental harm.
Agency <i>Who can act?</i>	Grassroots community members organizing to build alternative, just futures.	Both human migrants and ecosystems are portrayed as agents capable of transformation.	Environmental activists and nonhuman life act as forces pushing for ecological awareness and protection.
Responsibility <i>Who caused it?</i>	Corporate exploitation, systemic inequality, and government neglect.	The legacies of colonialism, global capitalism, and ecological mismanagement.	Industrial expansion, environmental apathy, and policy failures.
Urgency	An immediate humanitarian emergency with long-term social consequences.	A global crisis unfolding across generations, connecting myth and modernity.	A slow, continuous process of ecological degradation that demands long-view thinking.
Narrative Function	Depicts how communities can resist and rebuild amidst systemic collapse, modeling radical resilience.	Highlights how interconnected human and ecological futures are, and challenges species boundaries.	Recenters narrative on trees as protagonists; challenges anthropocentrism

Climate fiction: Strengths

- **Emotional Access**
 - connecting readers to lived experiences of injustice, survival, and solidarity.
- **Accessibility & Reach**
 - Fiction communicates climate issues in ways that are culturally relatable and often more engaging than data.
- **Representation of the Marginalized**
 - Some stories center race, class, and multispecies ethics—expanding the moral circle of justice.
- **Speculative Power**
 - By speculating on collapse, fiction helps audiences confront uncomfortable truths and challenge dominant narratives.

Climate fiction: Limitations

- **Technological and Market Bias**
 - Some fiction echoes ecomodernist or technocratic solutions without critique—downplaying systemic roots.
- **Overemphasis on Collapse**
 - Apocalyptic framing can backfire, leading to despair or numbness rather than action.
- **Echo Chamber Risk**
 - Fiction often reaches already-engaged readers, struggling to shift the views of indifferent or resistant publics.
- **Individualism vs. Systemic Change**
 - Stories may focus on personal transformation, ignoring structural solutions.