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The Effectiveness of “Entanglement” as Climate Literature

Many of the challenges of writing effective climate literature come from the discrepancy of scale; Climate change includes a connected series of symptoms that span over decades and over the entire globe, but literary narrative emphasizes importance on the individual level. In “Entanglement,” Vandana Singh connects the experiences of five characters from around the world to each other, demonstrating the importance of interconnectedness in the fight against climate change. Although Singh uses “techno-fixes” in the story, which some might argue veer the story too far into fantasy, “Entanglement is a primarily effective piece of climate literature because the connective narrative style serves to efficiently depict the magnitude of the spatial scale, connecting characters and events together to form a sense of hope and community.

“Entanglement” effectively depicts unique symptoms of climate change on multiple levels in several different countries, connecting individual experiences with each other. For example, Bhola, a boy in India, finds himself running from a tornado. He and the other members of his community had never seen one before, and he was frozen with terror until he heard a woman’s voice—Irene’s, from across the world in the arctic—coming from his wristwatch, telling him to run and find low ground. This wristwatch is how the characters in the different vignettes are connected to each other. In times of emotional heights or other crisis, they come to each other’s aid through a few words. Bhola serves as this voice to another woman, Fernanda, who lives in Brazil. When Fernanda needed it most, Bhola was able to send her hope for the future, hope for rain. By connecting these characters together over a large distance, Singh demonstrates one way to deal with one challenge of fictionalizing climate change issues that Goodbody and Johns-Putra write about: “Particular difficulties in representing climate change in literary or filmic narrative result from the complexity of its causes and manifestations, and the discrepancy between its enormous spatial and temporal scale and that of individual human experience” (10). Some authors, they explain, opt to focus on single events that represent a larger chain of events, or to depict several events with “an ensemble of characters.” To tackle the issue of a large spatial scale of climate change, Singh chose to connect the experiences of five characters together, not only representing the connection between the events (all symptoms of climate change), but also to suggest a solution to the sense of isolation that several of the characters (and, indeed, much of humanity) feels. This technique was effective. The reader is able to comprehend five different aspects and effects of climate changes from different perspectives and regions. She was able to convey the magnitude of climate change and, with the story of Bhola in India, was able to convey how climate change affects communities in drastically different ways. Bhola’s story addressed how class differences and poverty contribute to how some communities are more vulnerable than others.

By connecting these characters in difficult moments through their wristwatches, Singh suggests that hope is a vital in the fight against climate change. Further, Singh suggests that hope can be found in connecting with others. In the story, Yuan, the creator of the watches, explains his goal: “one day, it can help us raise our consciousness beyond family and friend, neighborhood and religion, city and country” (317). This seems to suggest that the greatest asset we may find is the feeling of universal community; to find hope for the future of the world, we must first foster *personal* hope, connection, and fulfillment.

How does **EITHER** “Shooting the Apocalypse” **OR** “Entanglement” **OR** Powers’ *The Overstory* work with the goals and challenges of writing about climate change?: **Craft a thesis that clarifies how you think the story succeeds and/or fails as effective climate literature.** Use specific quotations from the climate theory excerpts to analyze your chosen text. When talking about an emotional response to the story you can use “I” to discuss your own reactions and that of your classmates.  Be sure to address both the form (the WAY the story is written) and the content of the story.

* Effective sense of spatial scale—each of the stories happen in different parts of the world that are experiencing different symptoms of climate change
* Ineffective suggestion of the solution to climate change—that all we need is to feel connected to one another
  + Use of a “techno-fix” from bacigalupi; the presence of the wrist watch is a fantasy that he was talking about—there isn’t one piece of technology that’s going to fix the crisis

Your essay should be 5-6 pages, in formal prose, typed, double-spaced, Times New Roman, in 12-point font, with 1-inch margins. Cite quotations with page numbers or line numbers.  Include a works cited page IF you are citing anything outside class resources. (But don’t spend hours worrying about where to put a period or a comma, I just want general citation info there.)

Your essay should have a thesis, or main argumentative point, which you should support with analysis of evidence and examples from the text. Each paragraph should develop one point in support of your thesis.  I encourage you to use your work from group discussion posts and our class zoom conversations as part of your analysis.

The essay should contain at least two close readings that pay particular attention to word choice and form. However, you may also use cultural history and/or biographical evidence to support your thesis.  But whichever type of evidence you use to analyze the text, avoid relying primarily on summarizing the action of the text.

The essay must contain at least four quotations from the critical theory articles we read by Bacigalupi, Goodbody & Johns-Putra, and Jaquette Ray. They can’t all be from the same article.

You are NOT required to use any outside research, UNLESS you are making a claim that requires verification of the existence of a particular climate issue, scientific fact, or cultural history knowledge, in which case I will expect a citation to verify facts about that climate issue, technology, or relevant historical cultural context. When integrating the outside information, clarify who wrote it or where it is from, and if there is a link, include the link.