



The Earth Speaks: Cultural Trauma and Climate Change Narratives in Media

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Research Question:



What kinds of narratives depict climate change, and how do they intersect with or reflect cultural trauma narratives?

“Environmental problems are not only issues of technology, industry, ecology, or biology — they are also fundamentally social problems.”

(Bell, 2021)

A grayscale collage of human figures, possibly cutouts, arranged in a circular pattern. Each figure is filled with a dense, repeating pattern of small, stylized human faces, suggesting a collective or shared experience. The figures are in various poses, some with arms raised, creating a sense of movement and shared emotion. The overall composition is centered around the text "Cultural Trauma".

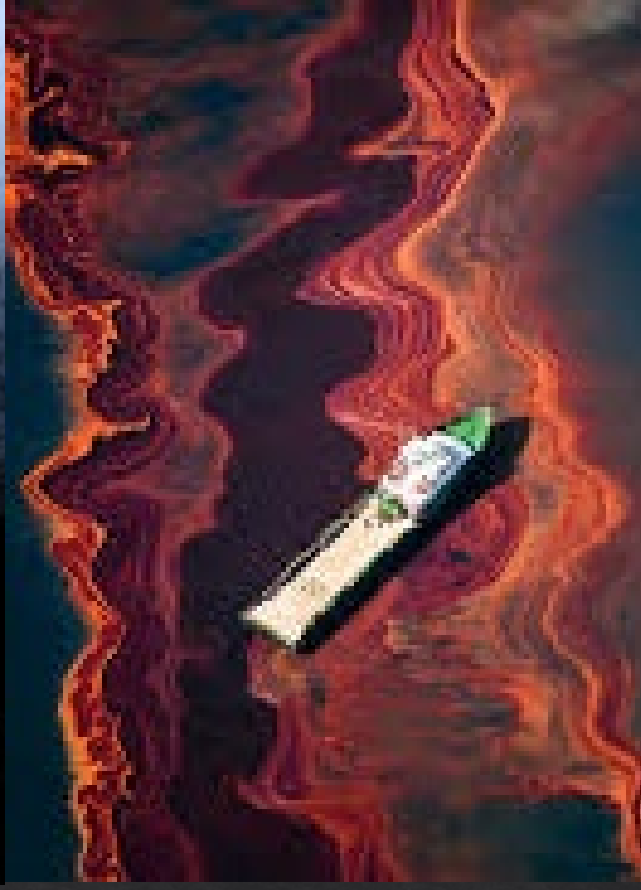
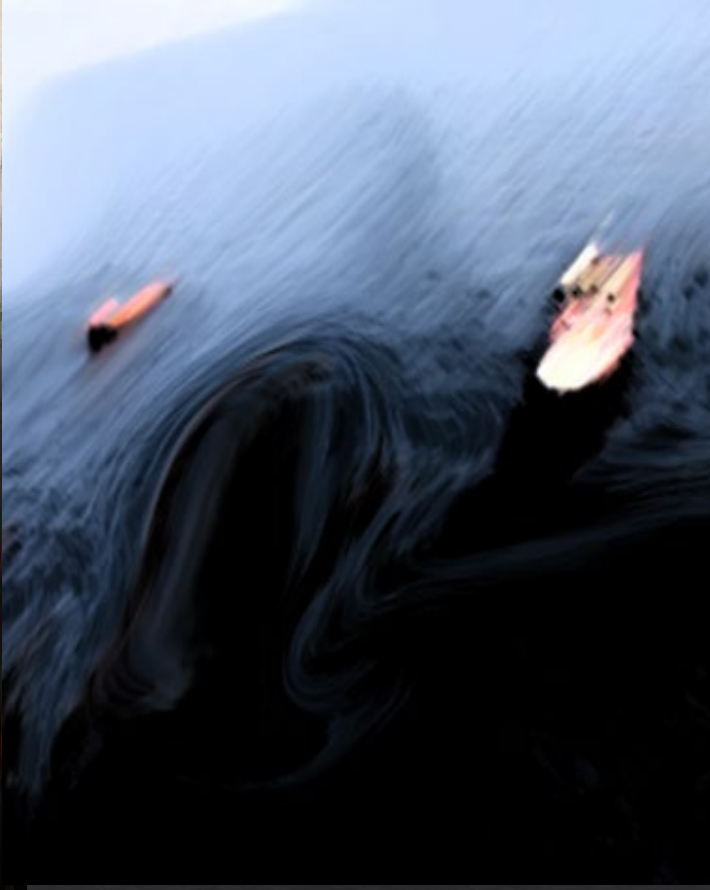
Cultural Trauma

“A memory accepted and publicly given credence by a relevant membership group and evoking an event or situation which is a) laden with negative affect, b) represented as indelible, and c) regarded as threatening a society’s existence or violating one or more of its fundamental cultural presuppositions.”

(Smelser, 2008).



The Anthropocene



Disasters

From Theory to Storytelling

Narrative Types

Tragic Narrative

- ◆ **Emphasizes:** Ambiguity, complexity, and reflection
- ◆ **Rejects:** Simple binaries
- ◆ **Focus:** Resilience, empathy, and service



Dualistic Narrative

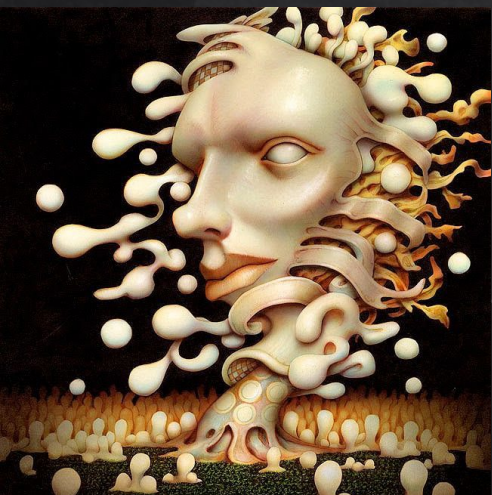
- ◆ **Emphasizes:** Conflict between good and evil
- ◆ **Defines:** Clear antagonists and protagonists
- ◆ **Focus:** Triumph, downfall, and decisive action—often at the cost of nuance



Narrative Types

Chaos Narrative

- ◇ Fragmented, lacks coherence or resolution
- ◇ Difficult to tell and hard to hear
- ◇ Characterized by suffering, vulnerability, and disorientation
- ◇ Told retrospectively, from emotional distance



Quest Narrative

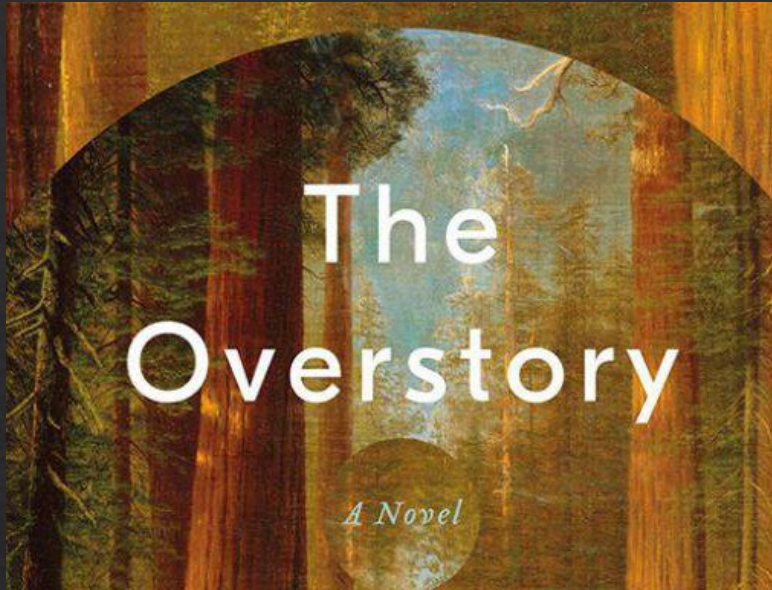
- ◇ Suffering as a challenge
- ◇ Meaning through the illness or trauma journey
- ◇ Three subtypes:
 - ◇ Memoir: illness woven into life story
 - ◇ Manifesto: demands social change
 - ◇ Automythology: transformation through catastrophe



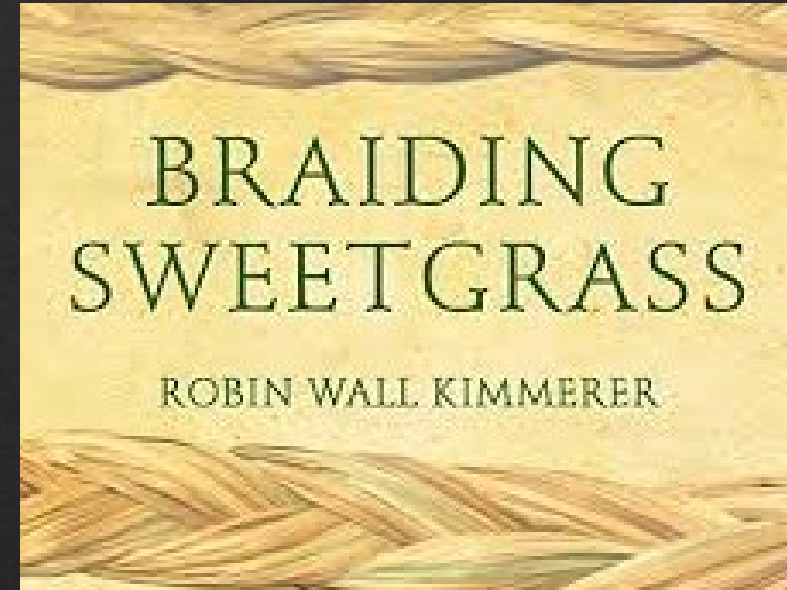
The Global North Lens

- ◆ These nations shape dominant climate discourse
- ◆ Nation's histories = exploitation & environmental degradation
- ◆ Allows deeper insight into how trauma is framed





- Eco-fiction novel
- Human–tree relationships
- Challenges extractive views of nature
- Nature as alive, interconnected



- ◊ Nonfiction rooted in Indigenous knowledge
- ◊ Centers restoration, gratitude, and relational accountability.
- ◊ Healing between humans and nature
- ◊ Grounded in restoration and gratitude

Activists

Greenpeace:



Unified ecological mission, global peace for the planet

Sierra Club



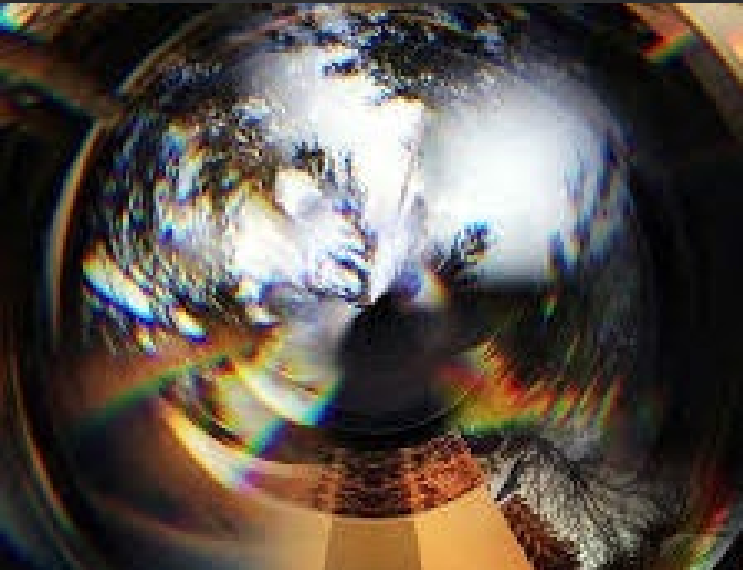
Exclusive identity, belonging through shared values

The Guardian



Newspaper Articles

- Acute disasters and Prolonged Ecological Harm
- Political Lens
- International Reach
- Influence



Key Elements

- Narrative Types
- Recurring Themes & Agendas
- Storytellers and Trauma Roles
- Emotional Impact



Cultural Trauma and the Climate Crisis