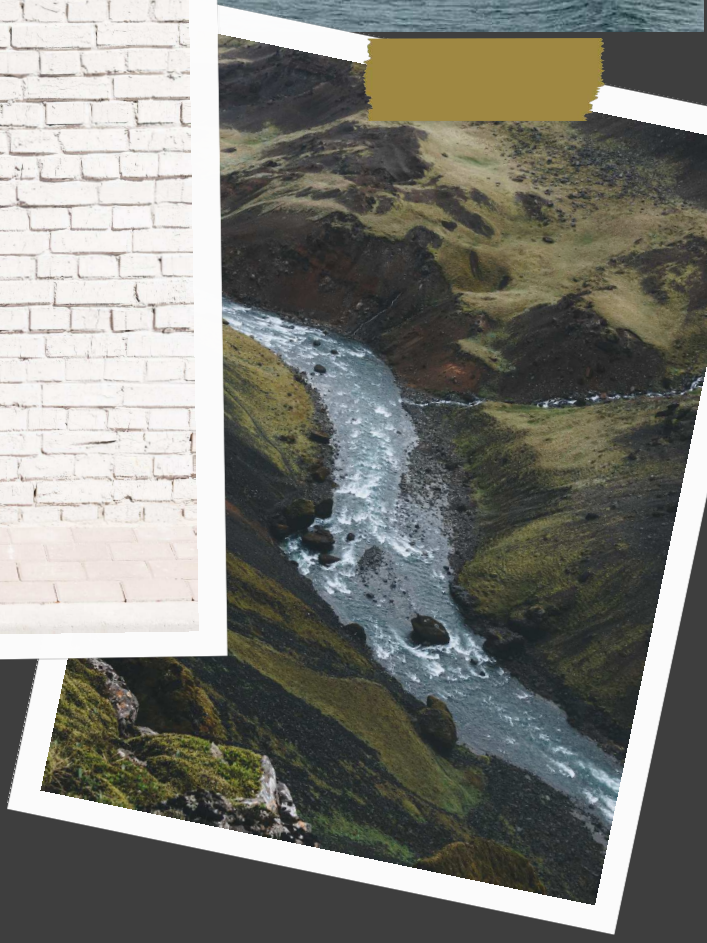
SustainMV 2026

How to do Things with Words

A Creative Approach to Literature and Coastal Decline





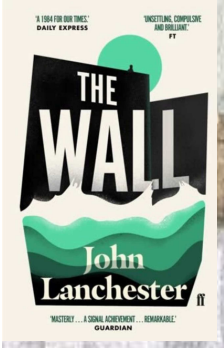


Blackout Poetry Anthology

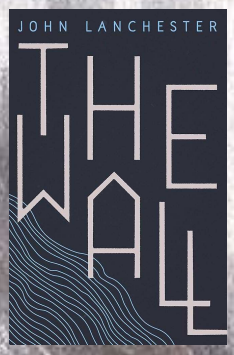
created by the participants of SustainMV 2026

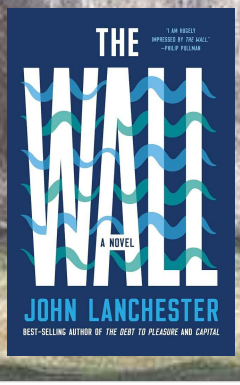
01.09.2026

Prof. Christian Schmitt-Kilb
Esther-Marie Schilling









Lanchester, John. 2019. *The Wall*. W.W. Norton & Company.

Although everybody always calls the Wall the Wall, that isn't its official name. Officially it is the National Coastal Defense Structure. On official documents it's abbreviated to NCDS. Guard posts have a name and a number. This post was Ilfracombe 4. We were on the outermost stretch of a long coastal curve. Straight in front, and for ninety degrees to each side, there was nothing to see except the ocean. If straight in front was twelve o'clock, it was nothing but water from none o'clock to three o'clock. Turn a further ten degrees to either side--- turn to eight o'clock or four o'clock--- and you could see the Wall undulating into the distance. The engineers who built it tried to keep it as straight as possible, because straighter=shorter, but there were many places where the natural shape of what used to be the coastline meant that it was more economical, in time and effort and concrete, to use the existing shape of the coast as the guideline for the Wall. This must be one of them. My new home. (21)

Lanchester, John. 2019. *The Wall*. W.W. Norton & Company.

[redacted] Ilfracombe 4. [redacted] was [redacted] a long coastal curve. [redacted] and you could see [redacted] it's straight [redacted] because straighter=shorter, [redacted] meant [redacted] it was more economical, [redacted] My new home. (21)



environmental humanities, ecocriticism, blue humanities, littoral zone(s), Deep Time, nature/'nature', Anthropocene, Anthropocentrism

Surfing
weewoo

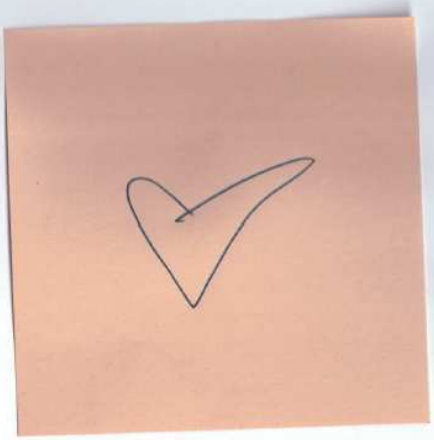
I love the poem

BEAUTIFUL POEM!

Straight and explanatory, really liked it.

beautiful illustration

My new home, where you could see the ocean



THE WALL, 2019

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environmental humanities, ecocriticism, blue humanities, littoral zone(s), Deep Time, nature/'nature', Anthropocene, Anthropocentrism

love the urgency!

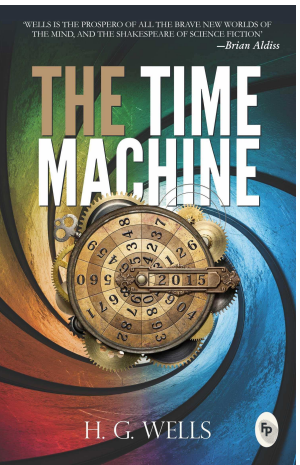
in a way, the poem "underwrite" the poem adds to the message!

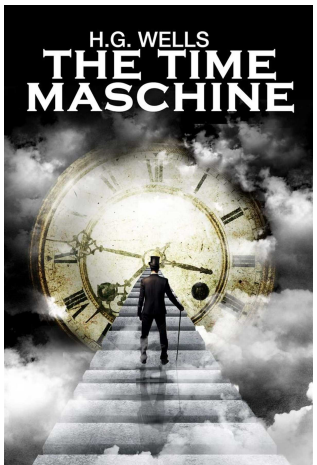
Wells, H.G. 1895. *The Time Machine*.

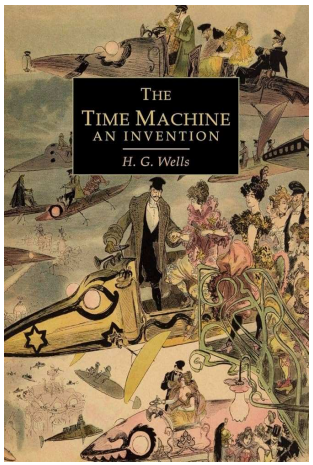
The machine was standing on a sloping beach. The sea stretched away to the south-west, to rise into a sharp bright horizon against the wan sky. There were no breakers and no waves, for not a breath of wind was stirring. Only a slight oily swell rose and fell like a gentle breathing, and showed that the eternal sea was still moving and living. And along the margin where the water sometimes broke was a thick incrustation of salt—pink under the lurid sky.... Looking round me again, I saw that, quite near, what I had taken to be a reddish mass of rock was moving slowly towards me. Then I saw the thing was really a monstrous crab-like creature. ...

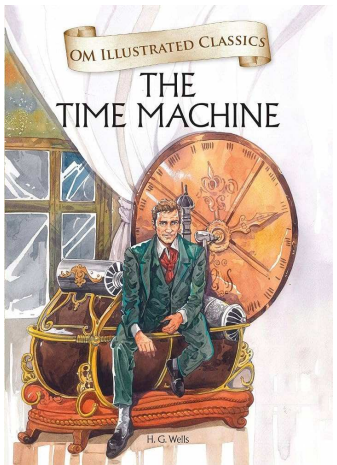
I cannot convey the sense of abominable desolation that hung over the world. The red eastern sky, the northward blackness, the salt Dead Sea, the stony beach crawling with these foul, slow-stirring monsters, the uniform poisonous-looking green of the lichenous plants, the thin air that hurts one's lungs: all contributed to an appalling effect. I moved on a hundred years,...—the same dying sea, the same chill air, and the same crowd of earthy crustacea creeping in and out among the green weed and the red rocks.

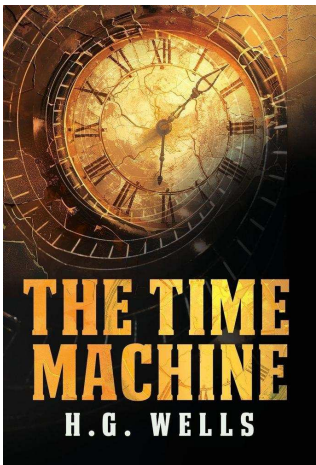
... At last, more than thirty million years hence, the huge red-hot dome of the sun had come to obscure nearly a tenth part of the darkling heavens. Then I stopped once more, for the crawling multitude of crabs had disappeared, and the red beach, save for its livid green liverworts and lichens, seemed lifeless. And now it was flecked with white. A bitter cold assailed me. Rare white flakes ever and again came eddying down. To the north-eastward, the glare of snow lay under the starlight of the sable sky, and I could see an undulating crest of hillocks pinkish white. There were fringes of ice along the sea margin, with drifting masses farther out; but the main expanse of that salt ocean, all bloody under the eternal sunset, was still unfrozen.

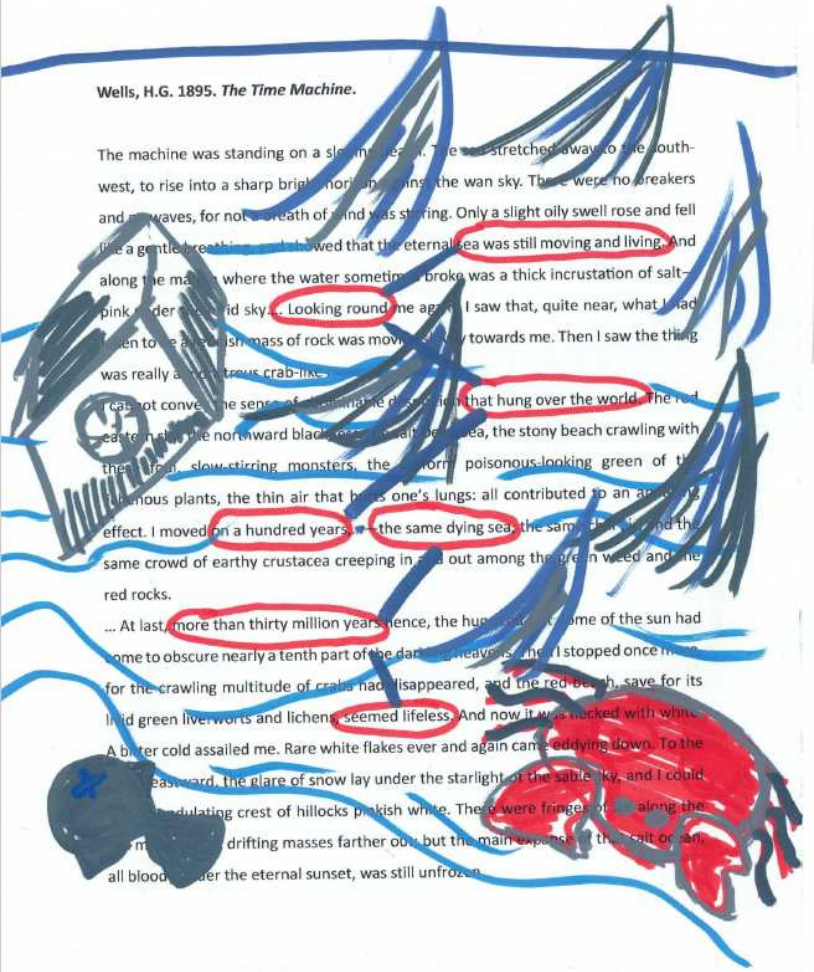












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environmental humanities, ecocriticism, blue humanities, littoral zone(s), Deep Time, nature/'nature', Anthropocene, Anthropocentrism

cool

run for your life

Awesome

Hopelessness.

Wells, H.G. 1895. *The Time Machine*.

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environmental humanities, ecocriticism, blue humanities, littoral zone(s), Deep Time, nature/'nature', Anthropocene, Anthropocentrism



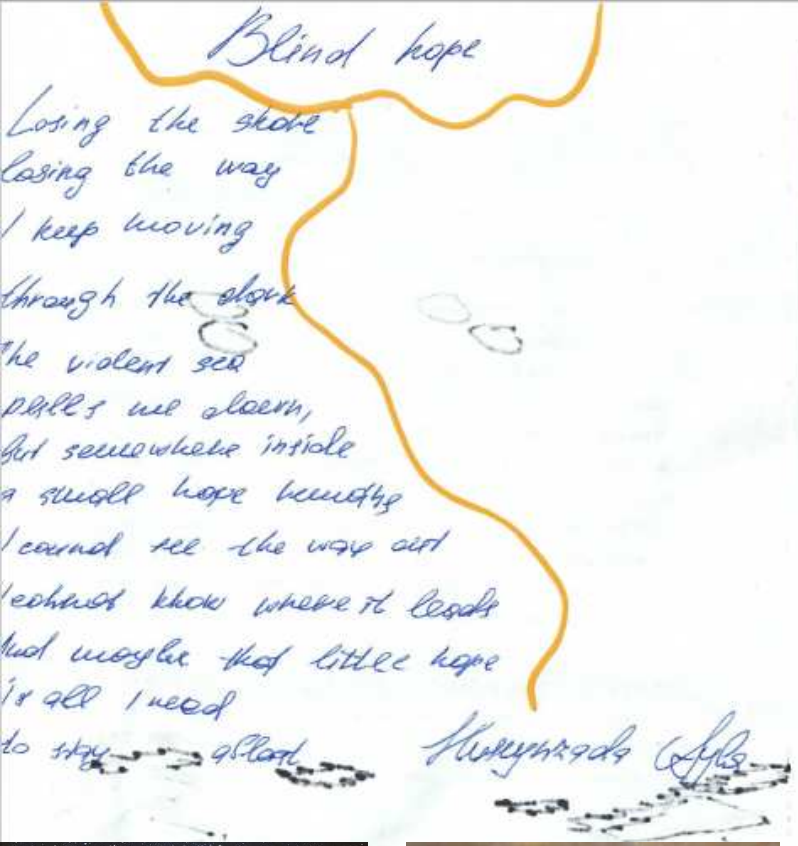
living

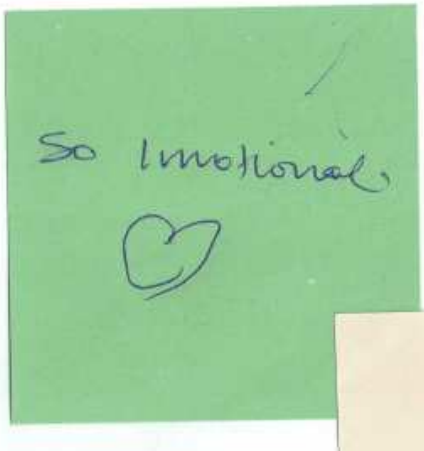
Hopelessness

Hopelessness or

HOPE ?

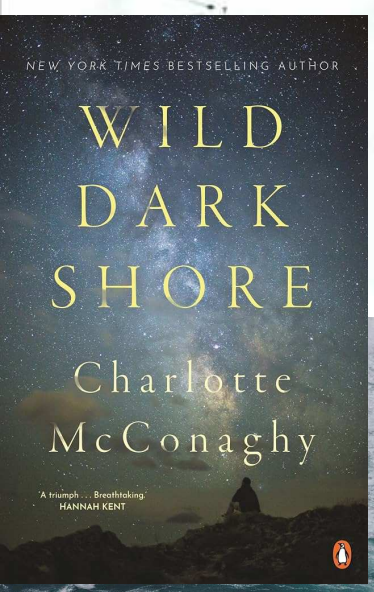
LOVE IT

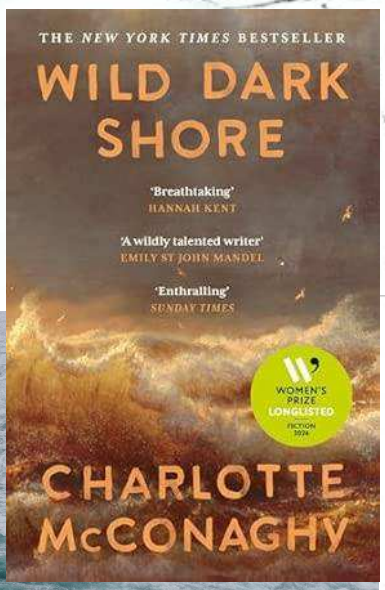


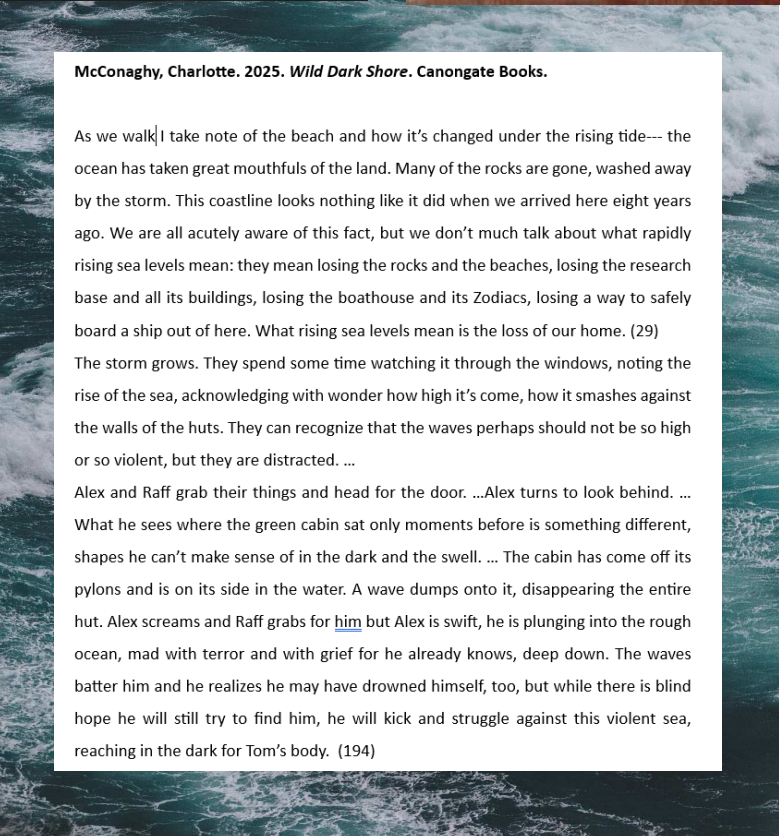










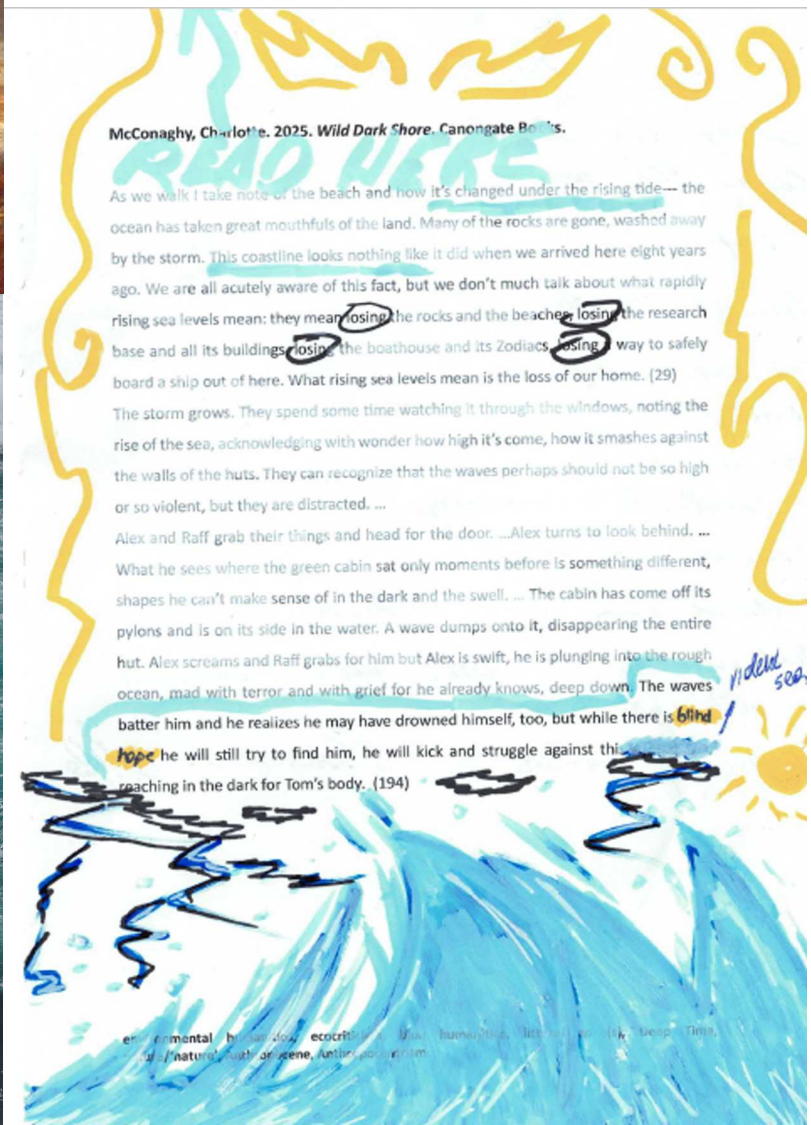


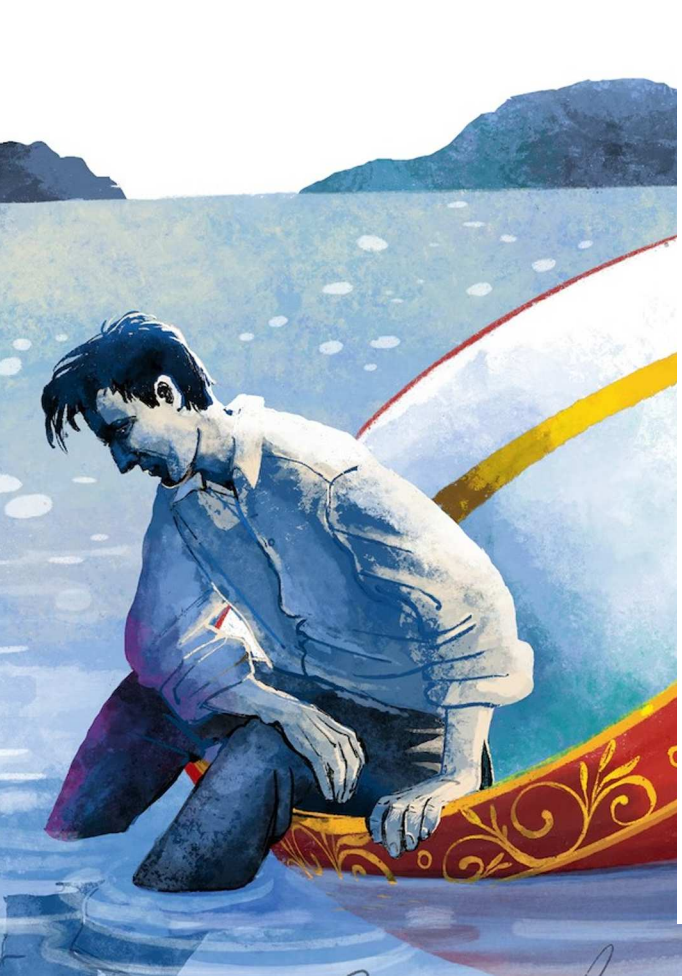
McConaghy, Charlotte. 2025. *Wild Dark Shore*. Canongate Books.

As we walk I take note of the beach and how it's changed under the rising tide--- the ocean has taken great mouthfuls of the land. Many of the rocks are gone, washed away by the storm. This coastline looks nothing like it did when we arrived here eight years ago. We are all acutely aware of this fact, but we don't much talk about what rapidly rising sea levels mean: they mean losing the rocks and the beaches, losing the research base and all its buildings, losing the boathouse and its Zodiacs, losing a way to safely board a ship out of here. What rising sea levels mean is the loss of our home. (29)

The storm grows. They spend some time watching it through the windows, noting the rise of the sea, acknowledging with wonder how high it's come, how it smashes against the walls of the huts. They can recognize that the waves perhaps should not be so high or so violent, but they are distracted. …

Alex and Raff grab their things and head for the door. …Alex turns to look behind. … What he sees where the green cabin sat only moments before is something different, shapes he can't make sense of in the dark and the swell. … The cabin has come off its pylons and is on its side in the water. A wave dumps onto it, disappearing the entire hut. Alex screams and Raff grabs for him but Alex is swift, he is plunging into the rough ocean, mad with terror and with grief for he already knows, deep down. The waves batter him and he realizes he may have drowned himself, too, but while there is blind hope he will still try to find him, he will kick and struggle against this violent sea, reaching in the dark for Tom's body. (194)

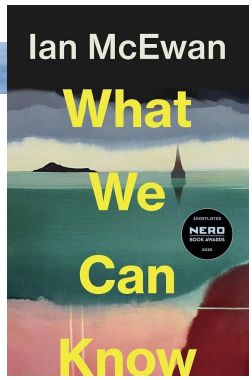




McEwan, Ian. 2025. *What We Can Know.* Jonathan Cape.

Acknowledgement of a 'climate opportunity' came slowly to a dazed world.

This was because of a catastrophic distraction, the Inundation of 2042. The long-predicted war between Russia and the West began with yet another pre-emptive strike, this one aimed most likely at US military installations in New Mexico. Faulty engineering caused the missile to drop 4,000 miles short. The outsized hydrogen bomb hurled seventy-metre-high waves towards Europe, West Africa and North America. Too deadly to be the accident the Russian authorities claimed? That question was never resolved. There were only a few hours of warning. The survivors were those who trusted their governments sufficiently to act, had transport and were not trapped in traffic jams and knew the routes to higher ground. Three-quarters of the Atlantic-facing populations were not so lucky or well resourced. Even cities on sheltered coasts were swamped. Lagos, London, Rotterdam, Hamburg and most of Paris did not emerge from under the counter-surges that raced up estuaries, or from the savage storms that followed. In revenge assaults, Russia lost Petersburg before international diplomacy prevailed. The list of vanished cities is long. More than 200 million died. Britain became an archipelago, its population halved. However, none of the twenty-first century's nuclear exchanges led to total war and humanity's extinction. There was our morsel of consolation. We were not so irrational after all. (105-106)



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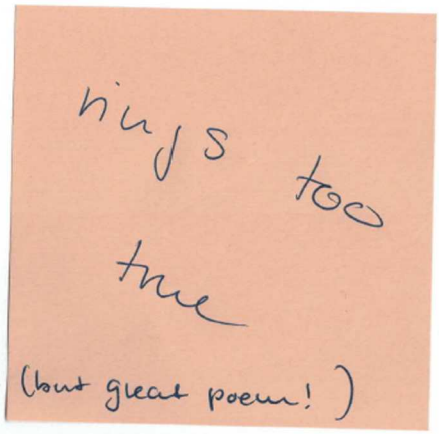
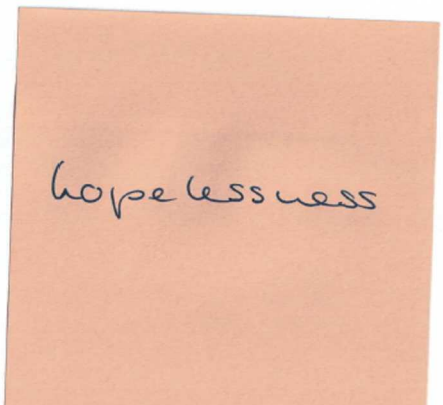
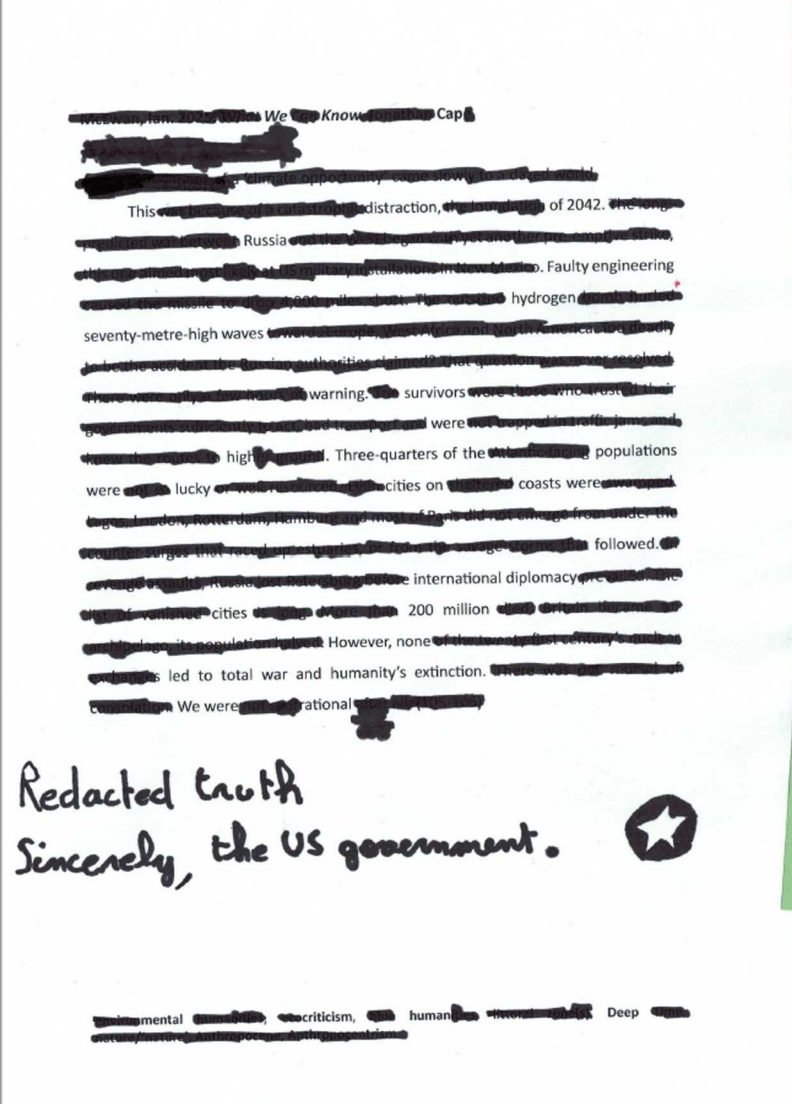






Redacted truth
Sincerely, the US government.

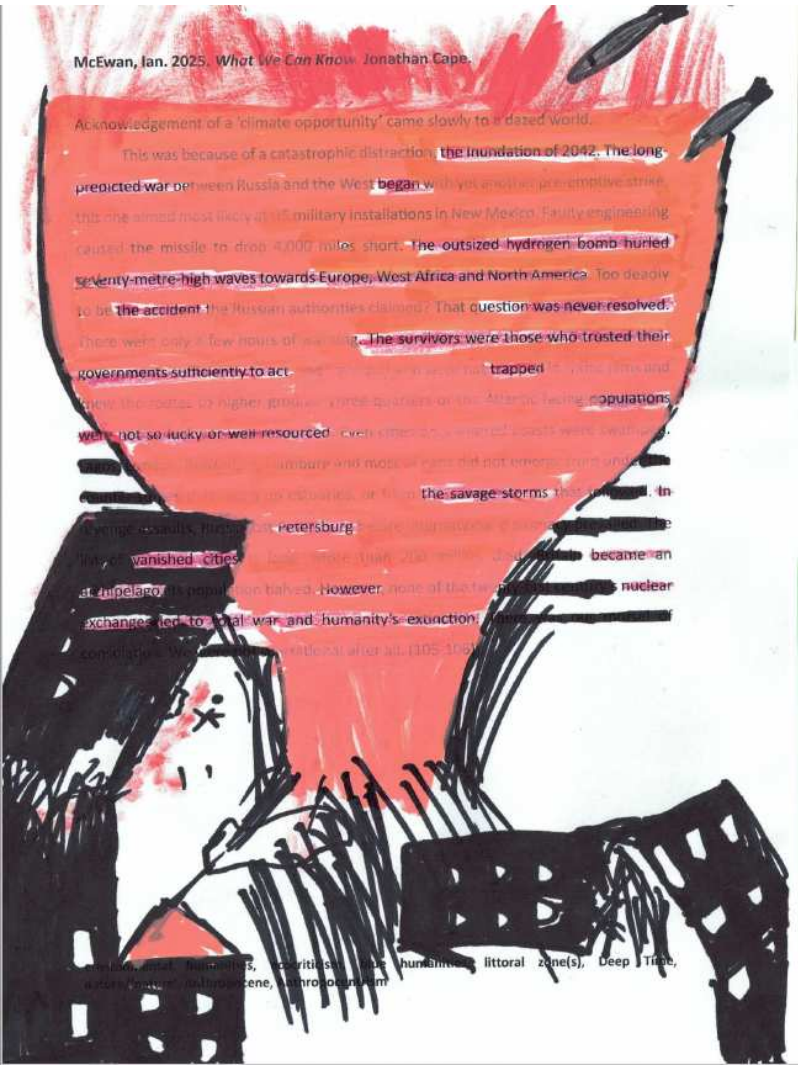
I'm jealous for such an ability to depict words with images.

KABOOM

You hit the nail
@Hanna

This is super creative. great use of irony and cynicism

Deep indeed



Explosive

Guernica but in better

AMAZING!

Painful. Too real
@Hanna

The best
I'm in love with u

Feel the painful
T_T

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environmental humanities, ecocriticism, blue humanities, littoral zone(s), Deep Time, nature/'nature', Anthropocene, Anthropocentrism

Décapite les élites!!!

great use of imagery

This is so cool :) ©Hanna

It truly shows the end of humanity in a couple of words

amazing yay :>



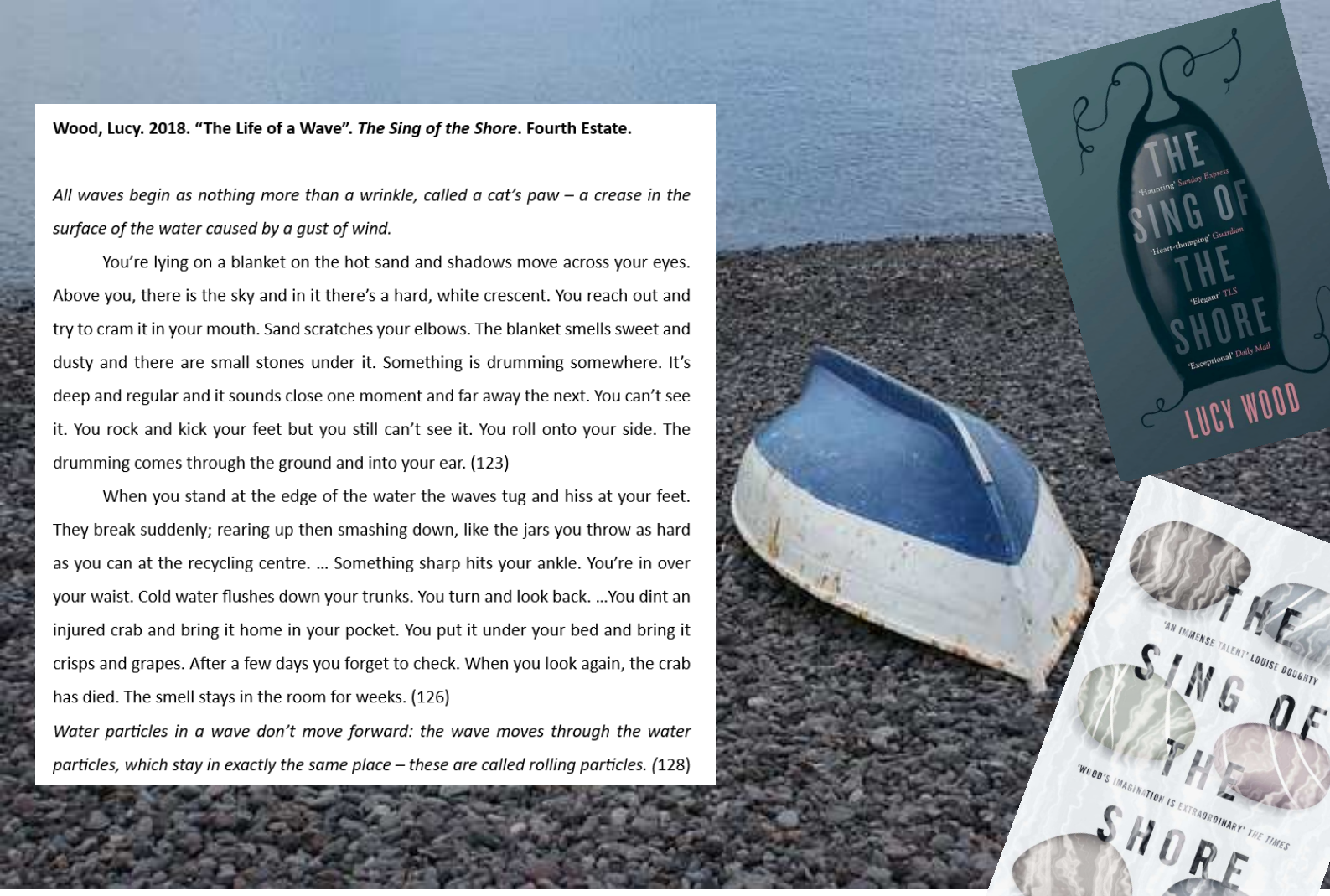
Wood, Lucy. 2018. "The Life of a Wave". *The Sing of the Shore*. Fourth Estate.

All waves begin as nothing more than a wrinkle, called a cat's paw – a crease in the surface of the water caused by a gust of wind.

You're lying on a blanket on the hot sand and shadows move across your eyes. Above you, there is the sky and in it there's a hard, white crescent. You reach out and try to cram it in your mouth. Sand scratches your elbows. The blanket smells sweet and dusty and there are small stones under it. Something is drumming somewhere. It's deep and regular and it sounds close one moment and far away the next. You can't see it. You rock and kick your feet but you still can't see it. You roll onto your side. The drumming comes through the ground and into your ear. (123)

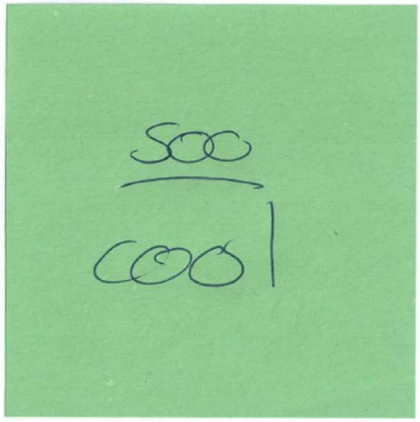
When you stand at the edge of the water the waves tug and hiss at your feet. They break suddenly; rearing up then smashing down, like the jars you throw as hard as you can at the recycling centre. … Something sharp hits your ankle. You're in over your waist. Cold water flushes down your trunks. You turn and look back. …You dint an injured crab and bring it home in your pocket. You put it under your bed and bring it crisps and grapes. After a few days you forget to check. When you look again, the crab has died. The smell stays in the room for weeks. (126)

*Water particles in a wave don't move forward: the wave moves through the water particles, which stay in exactly the same place – these are called rolling particles. (*128)





Just the facts that there is a cat is amazing 10 out of 10



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environmental humanities, ecocriticism, blue humanities, littoral zone(s), Deep Time, nature/'nature', Anthropocene, Anthropocentrism

Amazing. love the poem & :Illustration. Gorgeous!

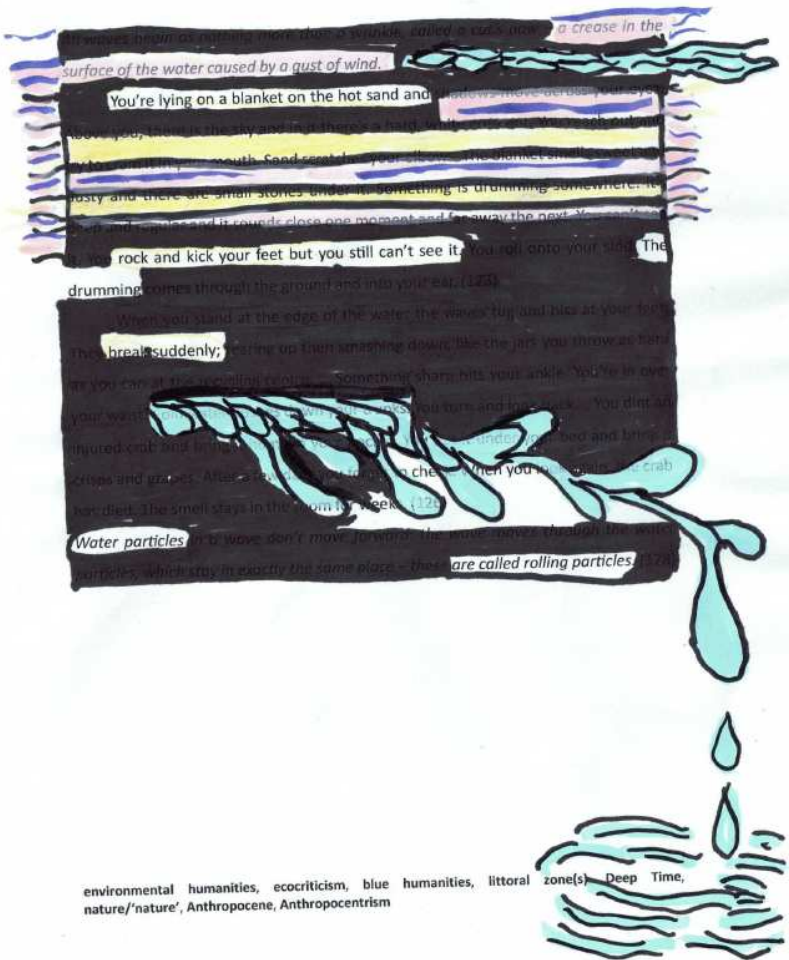
It was short but very catchy and witty.

sky / sun

future / past

Nice!

Wood, Lucy. 2018. "The Life of a Wave". *The Sing of the Shore*. Fourth Estate.



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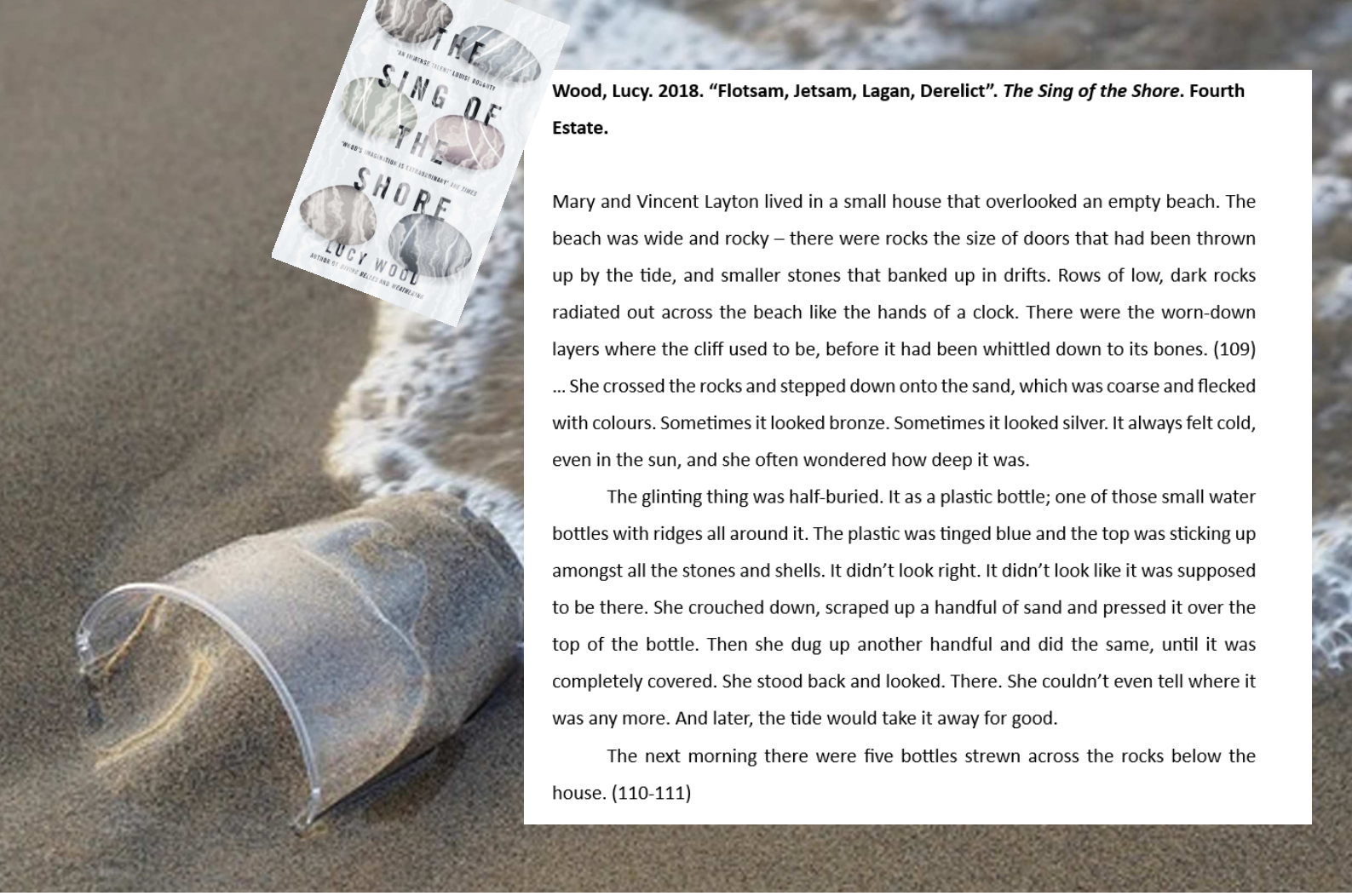
so creative



LOVE the illustration



Wood, Lucy. 2018. "Flotsam, Jetsam, Lagan, Derelict". *The Sing of the Shore*. Fourth Estate.

Mary and Vincent Layton lived in a small house that overlooked an empty beach. The beach was wide and rocky – there were rocks the size of doors that had been thrown up by the tide, and smaller stones that banked up in drifts. Rows of low, dark rocks radiated out across the beach like the hands of a clock. There were the worn-down layers where the cliff used to be, before it had been whittled down to its bones. (109) ... She crossed the rocks and stepped down onto the sand, which was coarse and flecked with colours. Sometimes it looked bronze. Sometimes it looked silver. It always felt cold, even in the sun, and she often wondered how deep it was.

The glinting thing was half-buried. It as a plastic bottle; one of those small water bottles with ridges all around it. The plastic was tinged blue and the top was sticking up amongst all the stones and shells. It didn't look right. It didn't look like it was supposed to be there. She crouched down, scraped up a handful of sand and pressed it over the top of the bottle. Then she dug up another handful and did the same, until it was completely covered. She stood back and looked. There. She couldn't even tell where it was any more. And later, the tide would take it away for good.

The next morning there were five bottles strewn across the rocks below the house. (110-111)

EMPTY BEACH

Wood, Lucy. 2018. "Flotsam, Jetsam, Lagan, Derelict". *The Sing of the Shore*. Fourth Estate.

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I chose this excerpt because it presents environmental pollution through a very simple every scene. There is no dramatic description of climate change, but one small plastic bottle makes the environmental problem visible. My poem about plastic pollution and how we cannot simply hide it. The tide brings it back and one bottle becomes five.

environmental humanities, ecocriticism, blue humanities, littoral zone(s), Deep Time, nature/'nature', Anthropocene, Anthropocentrism

Amazing. ♡.

Beautiful :)

Love the "empty beach" not empty at. all.

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environmental humanities, ecocriticism, blue humanities, littoral zone(s), Deep Time, nature/'nature', Anthropocene, Anthropocentrism

amazing ♡

Simple + to the point ♡

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environmental humanities, ecocriticism, blue humanities, littoral zone(s), Deep Time, nature/'nature', Anthropocene, Anthropocentrism

Beautiful scenery

almost like someone is drawing & looking up

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environmental humanities, ecocriticism, blue humanities, littoral zone(s), Deep Time, nature/'nature', Anthropocene, Anthropocentrism

Tones - observant -

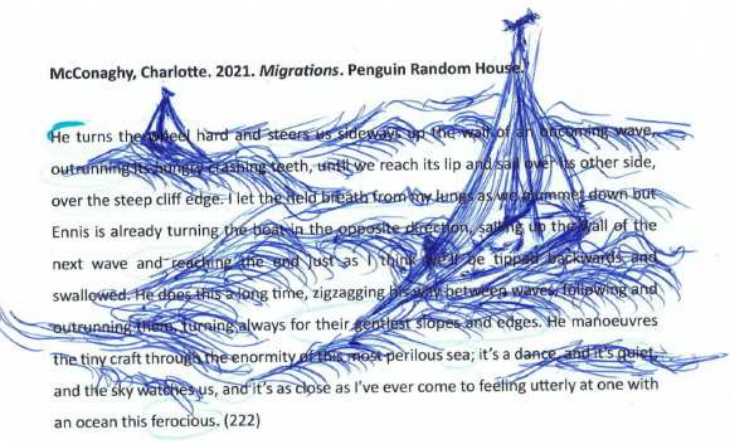
WELL THOUGHT!



McConaghy, Charlotte. 2021. *Migrations*. Penguin Random House.

He turns the wheel hard and steers us sideways up the wall of an oncoming wave, outrunning its hungry crashing teeth, until we reach its lip and sail over its other side, over the steep cliff edge. I let the held breath from my lungs as we plummet down but Ennis is already turning the boat in the opposite direction, sailing up the wall of the next wave and reaching the end just as I think we'll be tipped backwards and swallowed. He does this a long time, zigzagging his way between waves, following and outrunning them, turning always for their gentlest slopes and edges. He manoeuvres the tiny craft through the enormity of this most perilous sea; it's a dance, and it's quiet, and the sky watches us, and it's as close as I've ever come to feeling utterly at one with an ocean this ferocious. (222)





He turns sideways, outrunning the boat in the opposite direction, sailing up and reaching waves, for their gentlest slopes and edges. This sea, it's quiet, and ferocious.

environmental humanities, ecocriticism, blue humanities, littoral zone(s), Deep Time, nature/'nature', Anthropocene, Anthropocentrism

KIND.

Location? I want to go there next vacation

this should be in Louvre

Beautiful ♡

Skillfulness.

Grit.

BeautifulPoem. ♡

Kerg

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Turns the wheel hard and steers the boat in the opposite direction, zigzagging his way between waves. Manoeuvres through the enormity of this most perilous sea. The sky watches us.

Beutiful poem!

Quite beatifull I can imagine being on the boat and experiencing it for myself.

atmospheric. hopeful. ☺ ♡

I held my breath, waiting. Amazing and captivating © Hanna

environmental humanities, ecocriticism, blue humanities, littoral zone(s), Deep Time,

Hanna

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I hold the breath in my lungs
In a dance, while at one
With the ocean's ferocity
Outrunning it's crashing teeth
It's hungry, and I'm on the
edge of a cliff,
Going opposite, trying not to be
swallowed.

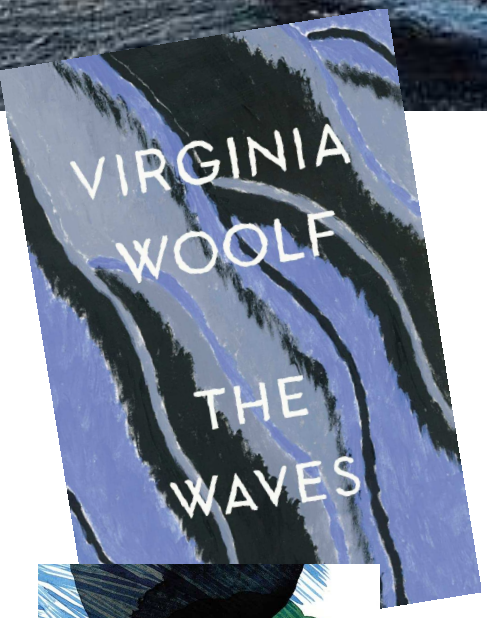
dynamic

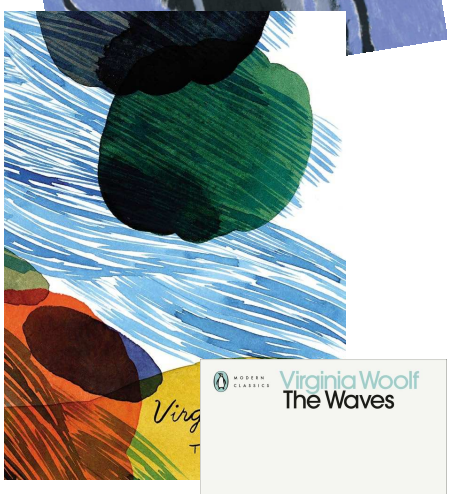
super cool, thrilling!

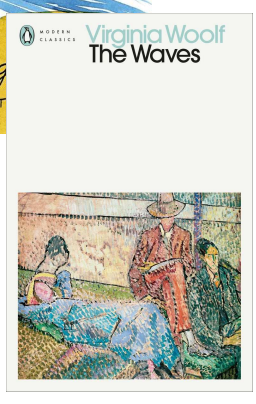
Thrilling ♡.

environmental humanities, ecocriticism, blue humanities, littoral zone(s), Deep Time, nature/'nature', Anthropocene, Anthropocentrism





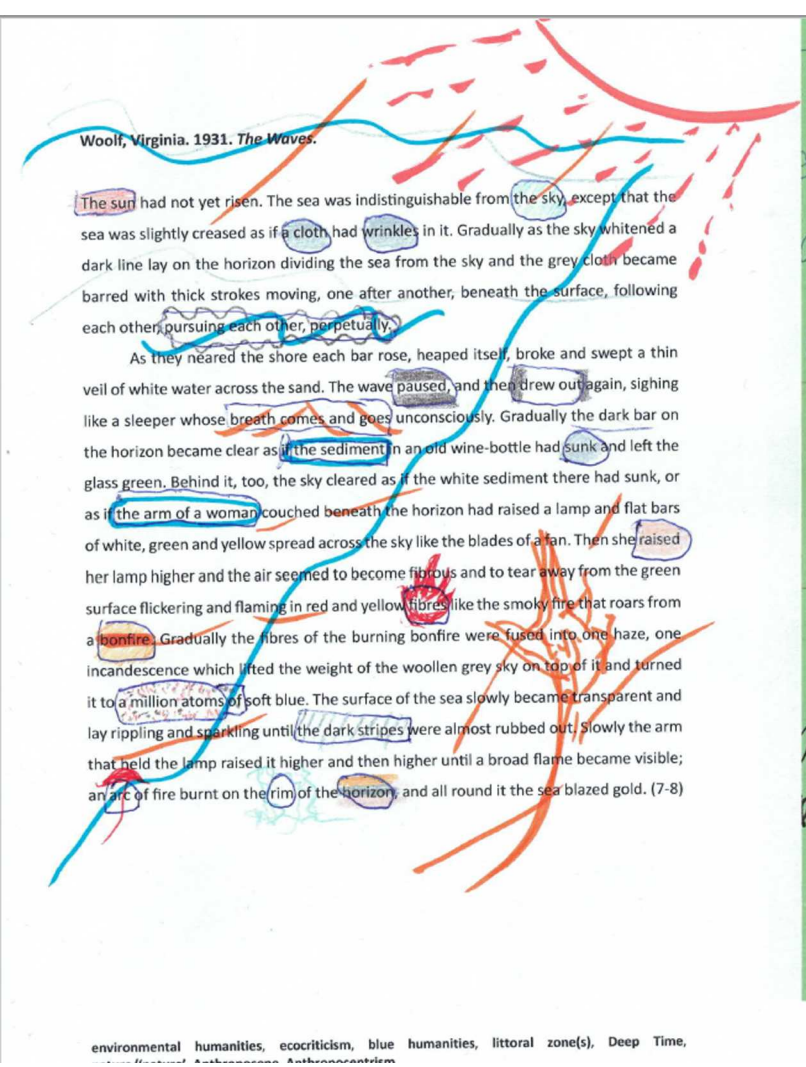




Woolf, Virginia. 1931. *The Waves.*

The sun had not yet risen. The sea was indistinguishable from the sky, except that the sea was slightly creased as if a cloth had wrinkles in it. Gradually as the sky whitened a dark line lay on the horizon dividing the sea from the sky and the grey cloth became barred with thick strokes moving, one after another, beneath the surface, following each other, pursuing each other, perpetually.

As they neared the shore each bar rose, heaped itself, broke and swept a thin veil of white water across the sand. The wave paused, and then drew out again, sighing like a sleeper whose breath comes and goes unconsciously. Gradually the dark bar on the horizon became clear as if the sediment in an old wine-bottle had sunk and left the glass green. Behind it, too, the sky cleared as if the white sediment there had sunk, or as if the arm of a woman couched beneath the horizon had raised a lamp and flat bars of white, green and yellow spread across the sky like the blades of a fan. Then she raised her lamp higher and the air seemed to become fibrous and to tear away from the green surface flickering and flaming in red and yellow fibres like the smoky fire that roars from a bonfire. Gradually the fibres of the burning bonfire were fused into one haze, one incandescence which lifted the weight of the woollen grey sky on top of it and turned it to a million atoms of soft blue. The surface of the sea slowly became transparent and lay rippling and sparkling until the dark stripes were almost rubbed out. Slowly the arm that held the lamp raised it higher and then higher until a broad flame became visible; an arc of fire burnt on the rim of the horizon, and all round it the sea blazed gold. (7-8)



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environmental humanities, ecocriticism, blue humanities, littoral zone(s), Deep Time,

The hopeless ending. Tragic and beautiful
© Hanna

great!

Awesome! poem.

Amazing
I love the words.

Good description

Life is constant fire.

I am surprised how so little words can deliver a meaningful

Tupanandiskama
(until we meet again)
Mother Earth

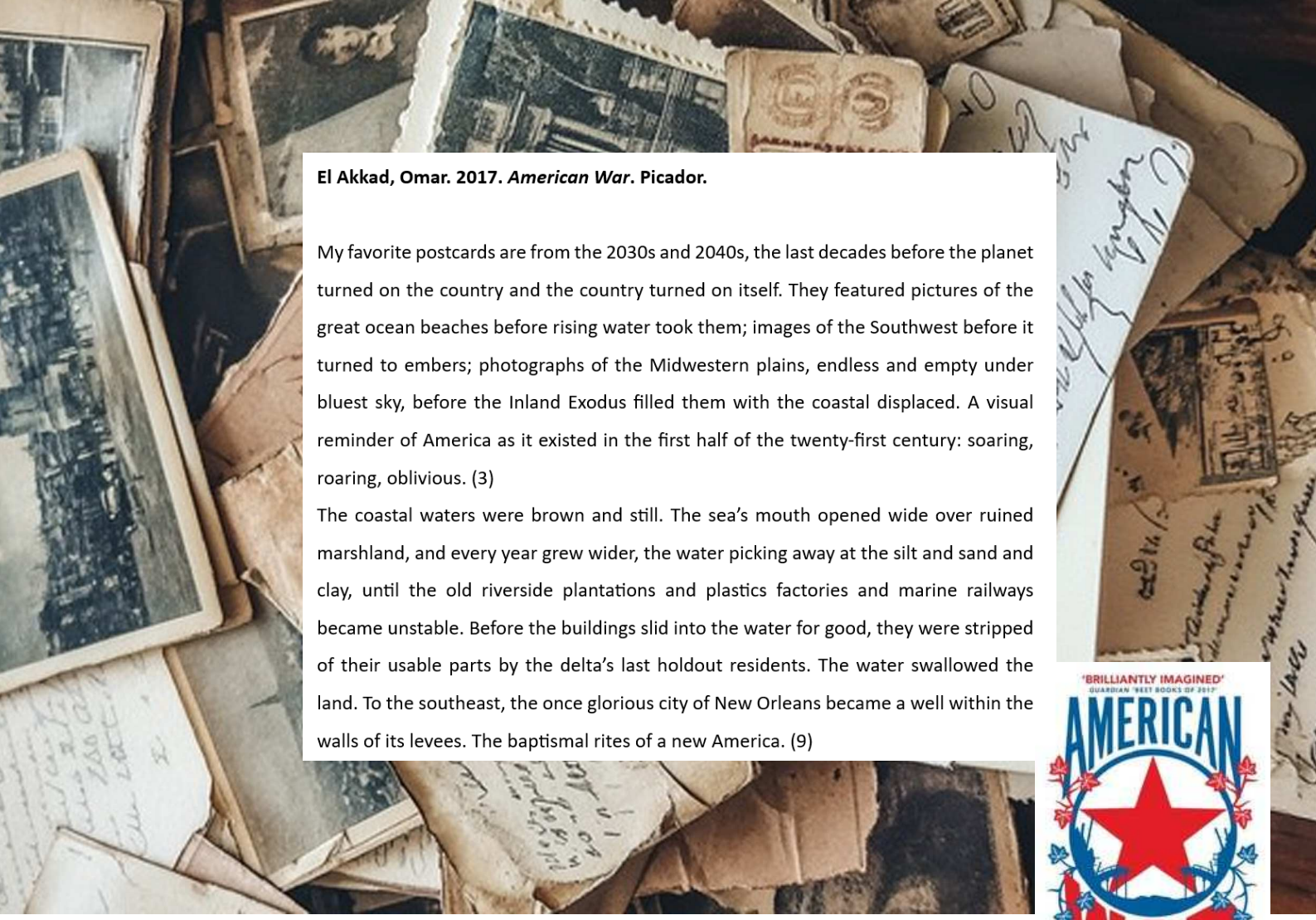
I feed on your fruits; with your waters,
I quench my thirst.
As we walk I take note of the beach and how it's changed under the rising tide, The ocean has taken great mouthfuls of the land. Many of the rocks are gone, washed by the storm.
Please help me to find a solution, so that together we can face what we as humans have caused you.

I love you and I hope to see You tomorrow at dawn, to thank You once again for life and for what You bestow upon me simply because I am your creature.

FRANCISCO ANUCH

very inspiring ♡

This is the most beatiful poem I read from all of them.



El Akkad, Omar. 2017. *American War*. Picador.

My favorite postcards are from the 2030s and 2040s, the last decades before the planet turned on the country and the country turned on itself. They featured pictures of the great ocean beaches before rising water took them; images of the Southwest before it turned to embers; photographs of the Midwestern plains, endless and empty under bluest sky, before the Inland Exodus filled them with the coastal displaced. A visual reminder of America as it existed in the first half of the twenty-first century: soaring, roaring, oblivious. (3)

The coastal waters were brown and still. The sea's mouth opened wide over ruined marshland, and every year grew wider, the water picking away at the silt and sand and clay, until the old riverside plantations and plastics factories and marine railways became unstable. Before the buildings slid into the water for good, they were stripped of their usable parts by the delta's last holdout residents. The water swallowed the land. To the southeast, the once glorious city of New Orleans became a well within the walls of its levees. The baptismal rites of a new America. (9)

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I like how you are somehow mocking America

very sustainable

Good discovery

Hopeful, discovery & new creations & new beginnings ♡ © Hanna

environmental humanities, ecocriticism, blue humanities, littoral zone(s), Deep Time, nature/'nature', Anthropocene, Anthropocentrism

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title: Capitalist nostalgy

Postcards, pictures, ~~photographs~~ images, photographs,
a visual reminder of the good.

endless, empty, displaced, and brown

decades before, the planet, great!

Still, residents holdout!

environmental humanities, ecocriticism, blue humanities, littoral zone(s), Deep Time, nature/'nature', Anthropocene, Anthropocentrism

I love the perspective.

I love the first poem in blue. Just words but it sends the message.

Sharp, critical and spot on.
©Hanna

This makes me feel nostalgic

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environmental humanities, ecocriticism, blue humanities, littoral zone(s), Deep Time, nature/'nature', Anthropocene, Anthropocentrism

Very ♥ emotional

Expected and tragic. Wonderful and painful ©Hanna

El Akkad, Omar. 2017. *American War*. Picador.

[redacted] the last decades before the planet turned on the country [redacted]. They featured [redacted] the great ocean beaches before rising water took them. Images [redacted] endless and empty under bluest sky, [redacted] A visual reminder [redacted] soaring, roaring, oblivious. (3)

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new world



environmental humanities, ecocriticism, blue humanities, littoral zone(s), Deep Time, nature/'nature', Anthropocene, Anthropocentrism

How ironical for a country that doesn't believe in climate change

Dramatic and real

Death and rebirth... captivating ©Manna

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©Manna

Master of Arts

CULTURE ECOLOGY CHANGE

What is "Culture, Ecology, Change"?



Interested in how **culture and literature** are affected by the **Anthropocene** and **climate change?** Interested in how they respond to contemporary challenges?

Determined to critically analyse, and **think beyond**, predominant modes of living?

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With a special focus on the Anglophone world, this **interdisciplinary M.A.** investigates the relationship between culture/literature and the environment. A wide variety of materials, theories, and approaches enables you to **critically engage** with ecologically relevant **narratives and poetics** and to bring them into dialogue with alternative framings – both real and imaginary. We invite you to **imagine transformations** toward a **sustainable future**.

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- **Anglophone Literary** & **Cultural Studies**
- **Interdisciplinary perspectives** toward addressing contemporary **environmental crises**

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- B.A. in cultural and/or literary studies or related fields. Interested applicants of other backgrounds are also welcome, contact us for details.
- English CEFR level C1.

Structure

Duration: 4 Semesters
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Esther-Marie Schilling, *coordinator*
phf.cec@uni-rostock.de / iaa.uni-rostock.de

Universität Rostock
Traditio et Innovatio