

Wintering: The Role of Fantasy Fiction in Illuminating Environmental Challenges

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THE WINTERING is an exploration of the ways in which fiction, notably environmental fantasy, can illuminate environmental challenges of our current world. This narrative explores how a group of women in an arctic climate adapt to and attempt to make sense of the slowing and speeding of a fictional version of the Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation (AMOC) because of anthropogenic climate change. In THE WINTERING, the slowing of the current has led to glacial decay and snowmelt, which reveals long-frozen human caused radiation and contamination. This group of people both mythologizes this change in climate and ignores its effects, and then further attempts to make sense of the ensuing contaminated landscape.

I explore this story within the more scholarly frame of environmental amnesia, destruction, and climate change. The use of fantasy to convey environmental problems is important in children's, young adult, and adult literature because the fictional world provides a mirror for peoples' own world. Watching the characters' understanding of their world evolve throughout environmental fantasy allows us to shape our own ethics, morals, and view of our society. It allows us to question the role of our interaction with our environment in massive problems like climate change, and offers a safer—in some ways less frightening—space to think about and deal with the consequences of a rapidly changing environment. During the presentation, I will be reading an excerpt from THE WINTERING and discussing how I incorporated environmental themes and research.