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Viewing Cross Cultural Approaches to Climate Change

by

Jason Robert Kuhn

An Honors Capstone

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Abstract

The problem of climate change is not a local one. It will take the whole of the world to solve those issues that face us now. As we look into various cultures of the world the fact is obvious that we all hold beliefs and opinions on climate change. In viewing these opinions, we can begin to identify those beliefs that span cultures and can be utilized to make lasting change in the world. It is also possible to see those beliefs that conflict with others and in doing so identify challenges that may come. An examination of various materials from literature to film makes evident that there exist persistent themes in almost every culture. As such we can start to identify the problems that each culture views as prominent and how those aspects of optimism, persistence, and determination in each respond to these crises. In doing so we begin to understand the unique perspectives of each culture and how it may be possible to bind those themes together in the pursuit of a common good.

Preface

The purpose of this work is not to debate the validity of climate change in our world. The climate is changing. The oceans are heating up, the polar ice is melting, and each year brings with it more natural disasters, from hurricanes and typhoons to droughts and wildfires. In simple terms we are on the precipice (if not already undergoing) a climate crisis. This is not a fact that is up for debate and throughout this paper we will discuss this crisis in no uncertain terms. We need to understand the way in which the world, and all its various cultures, treat the climate so that our attitudes may be improved.

Introduction

The cultures of our world are innumerable and wildly different from one another. Throughout the world there may be cultures who see nature very differently. Some may see the coming rain as salvation while others hail it as a harbinger of death because it brings with it floods and tidal waves. Heat and sun may be a blessing after a cold winter, but what about the heat and sun during a long drought in an arid plain? With such different opinions and desires from different peoples and cultures how could one create plans and approaches to curb climate change that please all cultures? It is the hope of that through the examination of various cultures it is possible to find bridges and cultural similarities that may help to ease the difficulty of a comprehensive climate plan. Most cultures in the world are not solitary and have a blend of beliefs and perspectives that they share with neighboring cultures. Looking at the interpretations of these cultures, representative through their literature (or media) we begin to see those

similarities and how they might be useful in determining solutions that can be implemented in many cultures.

This paper focuses mainly on dystopian literature, with a slight intermixing of other forms of media; a movie, a television series, and a slave narrative with an ecological focus. These sources may differ in form, but they all hold a focus on a larger sort of crisis involving the environment as well as depictions of people inextricably connected with the environment, from the inescapable radiation of *Chernobyl* to the living in nature life of Antonio José in *The Old Man Who Read Love Stories*. These sources span several distinct cultures as well as a major portion of the English-speaking world. These sources are all categorically products of “The West.” The majority are English speaking or hold traditionally European philosophies and cultures. From this knowledge we see there is a lacking of contributions from Eastern cultures such as Japan, India, China, etc. It is important to note this lacking of eastern-Asian cultures, and in knowing this we can see that any conclusions drawn from this paper are best put to use in a Euro-Americentric based model. The only noteworthy mention of any western philosophies is in *Memory of Water*. This novel is also of a particular note when looking at its origin and implications. While it was written by a Finnish author it also holds many cultural references to eastern Asia, most specifically China. From the nation itself, New Qian with the capital of Shanghai, as well as the tea masters who hold their ceremonies in traditionally oriental teahouses surrounded by rock gardens. Although there are many eastern Asian influences in the book it is important as well to notice that the book is set in the “Scandinavian Union”, a distinct province of New Qian, and is written by a Finnish author and therefore is much more representative of the Euro-Scandinavian perspective.

These narratives give us many ideas and perspectives on climate change and show just how divisive an issue it is for everyone. Some sources give direct instructions on what could be done to help combat the current problems. Others take a more hands off approach and use nature as a background, on which the entirety of the story depends. Others still show us what our world does to those people with the capacity to see the true cost of our destruction. In all cases these works shed light on how certain cultures are reacting to our changing climate and through these reactions we can determine where best to focus on when it comes to improving our approaches. While many of the cultures analyses here are doing well in terms of environmental protection it is important to know that even those who lead the world in climate awareness and environmental activism can strive to do better. These disparate works all confront various manifestations of climate change, but offer contrasting perspectives on the implications of climate change as well as the potential for dealing with climate change. As such, these works, while spanning different eras and cultures, simultaneously highlight the common challenges as well as the difficulties in encountering and finding solutions for these challenges.

Review of Sources

The following is a brief description of the sources reviewed and used in this paper, as well as a brief cultural explanation of their origin. The sources are broken up into three non-distinct categories that are all centered around the human reaction and response to climate change within a culture.

Dystopian Novels

Drowned World, Clade, Memory of Water, New York 2140

The bulk of the works in this paper focus on a dystopian world. Starting with the oldest of the sources, *The Drowned World* by J. G. Ballard, dates back to 1962. This novel follows a scientist on an expedition to explore a drowned London, through the novel we follow the characters as they attempt to discover what is happening at a molecular level to the animals that remain in their superheated world. We also see the extent of human greed as pirates take over the city in search of the city, only to be thwarted by the re-flooding of the city. The story ends much as it began, with little hope other than a faith in what may come, ending with the death of a Christ-like figure once his three days of suffering come to an end, leaving the rest of the world to pick up the pieces.

Possibly the most influential source of this paper is another dystopian novel, James Bradley's *Clade*. In Bradley's book we find ourselves following the perspectives of a family along three generations starting with a man who has just completed his studies on climate sciences and is doomed to see the world declining without being able to do anything about it. From one natural disaster to another we follow this dysfunctional family as the world is torn

apart and see how each member attempts to rectify the wrong, they see in the world, in the unique ways they know how to. The story ends as if in midsentence, with the introduction of the next generation of the family and the death of the first protagonist.

In the beginning of Emmi Itäranta's *Memory of Water*, we see the aftermath of a climate catastrophe in a world that is in desperate need of freshwater. We follow a tale about a tea-master's daughter as she finishes her training in a small corner of the world. As the story progresses the state of the world declines, and we see a tyrannical government using more and more excessive force to keep citizens compliant. Meanwhile, the protagonist must keep the secret of her family's freshwater spring a secret from friends and foes alike, all the while attempting to discover the secrets the government is hiding. While the story ends with the death of the protagonist, it sounds a note of optimism as her death suggests that the fight will continue, as she uses her death as a way to convey vital intel to others.

The final dystopian novel, Kim Stanley Robinson's *New York 2140*, is also one of the most distinct sources. As the title suggests this work is set on the American east coast a little over one hundred years in the future. This is a future where many of the current climate crises have escalated or already occurred. Ice caps have melted, and lower Manhattan is a "New Venice" (*New York 2140*, 8). In a world where a large portion of the land mass has been lost to water, we are shown the lives of several individuals living in this new city. These individuals are all unique characters who show different aspects of the post-apocalyptic world, and through the novel fight against tyrannical mega-corporations that are attempting to control the world through finances. The novel ends with the complete destruction of their system and the promise of a new, not perfect, system.

Other Literature

Voices from Chernobyl, Slave Old Man, Lamentations of Zeno, Old Man who Read Love Stories

While these pieces of literature do not perfectly fit into the dystopian novel category, they do hold a lot of similarities. The first example of this is found in *Voices from Chernobyl* a collection of oral stories captured and curated by Svetlana Alexievich. There is no linear story here, but instead a diverse collection of people directly affected by the Chernobyl catastrophe. Throughout the book we find ourselves learning of the events that led up to and followed the reactor meltdown from various sources.

In *Slave old man* by Patrick Chamoiseau, we are introduced to a non-traditional slave narrative that also give us a unique Caribbean perspective on nature and our place in it. We follow the story of an old slave who is almost a mystical character. He has always been a worker on a certain sugar cane plantation, and in this story, he defies logic and chooses to run away, or commit a “Décharge” (*Slave old man*, 24), when on deaths door. We follow this décharge as the old man runs through an ancient forest and reconnects with his ancestral roots, culminating in a peaceful death and his story becoming an irresistible myth.

Another non-traditional, semi-dystopian piece of literature is *The Old Man Who Read Love Stories*, by Luis Sepúlveda. In this novel we follow the life of an Amazonian colonist as he is forced to hunt a wounded ocelot. Throughout this hunt we recollect what occurred to lead up to the events of the hunter, Antonio José Bolívar, and his current situation. From his living with the native Shuar peoples to his leaving his hometown due to infertility we discover his infatuation with sad ending romance novels and the vast amount of practical knowledge he holds. We finish the story with the merciful death of the ocelot and the wounded José leaving in disgust, as he fantasizes about his romance books with unhappy endings.

The Lamentations of Zeno by Ilija Trojanow is the final novel in this study and it is a unique narrative, written in the style of a journal following the events of the protagonist Zeno. We learn that after the glacier Zeno was studying in the Alps dies, he too falls apart emotionally and is pushed out of his university. He now teaches groups of ecotourists on cruises to the Antarctic all about ice and snow for weeks at a time, all the while feeling conflicting emotions and loathing and hatred for not only the passengers but everyone he encounters. The story focuses on these emotions and the hypocritical behavior of not only Zeno but all of humanity. In the end we see how far he has mentally deteriorated as it is left to the imaginations of the reader as to whether he hijacked the ship and left the passengers and crew on the Antarctic shore in an attempt to promote his message of preservation.

Other Forms of Media

Wall-E, HBO mini-series: *Chernobyl*

While the majority of sources in this study are literary works, a film and a TV series add important details. The American childhood classic film, Disney Pixar's *Wall-E*, focuses on an earth that is no longer inhabitable by humans due to over consumption and pollution. We follow a robotic protagonist as he tries to convey a plant, and with it a message of hope, to the humans left wandering the cosmos. Through some wacky and childish escapades, the arks, those ships containing the remains of humanity, end up returning to earth and reestablishing humanity through sustainable means.

The HBO miniseries titled *Chernobyl* in turn follows many of the stories found in Alexievich's *Voices of Chernobyl* but in a more linear story line. In this story we find ourselves

following the perspective a scientist sent into Chernobyl to help solve the crisis, and in doing so we find out that there is no solution. We then follow the attempted clean up through various individuals involved, including miners, soldiers, and doctors. For a large amount of the series, we follow a government official struggling to meet the needs of the people while also keeping up a strong front so that the Soviet Union's foreign enemies do not suspect weakness. This tension between confronting the needs of the people and the geopolitical challenges in turn several additional issues and leaves many larger systemic issues unfixed. While many of the occurrences are similar to those in *Voices From Chernobyl*, the viewer can arguably empathize and understand them better in this format, due to the linear storyline as well as the dramatization of the events. The ending of the miniseries also demonstrates that the Chernobyl disaster is not a thing of the past and that it will take a large amount of human cooperation to improve and solve this problem.

Analysis of Themes

This summary of the works under study here point to many common themes. Although these works depict these themes in varying ways, they all at their core convey similar messages. These common themes provide opportunities to imagine encompassing plans and ideas because the identification of shared concerns and beliefs across cultures offers a much better chance of finding consensus for approaching the many climate crises we face. The following is a collection of the ideas that were most prevalent in the sources as well as those themes that people and institutions could employ to the greatest effect. While this paper will not present solutions, it is the hope that the identification of commonalities across cultures regarding climate change can inspire dialogue the path toward finding solutions.

Human Interactions

Even though the majority of the sources used for this paper have an ecological focus there are many times where the sources focus more on the interaction between humans within ostensibly natural environments. *Drowned World* is a prime example of this as the story follows individuals as they survive in a world covered in water. Their last refuge is the far north, within the arctic circle, but throughout the novel there are no times when we actually experience these northern havens and instead, we are treated to the interactions between humans in these flooded southern cities. It is in the interactions between these people that we see that not only is the climate crisis an external problem but also that opportunists will also emerge as a result of this crisis to further perpetuate the greed that led to these situations in the first place. This theme is also found in *New York 2140* as the main story line does not focus on the drowned city but how

the inhabitants react to the actions of each other. In the case of *New York 2140* they are much more helpful with each other and are focused on protecting what is left of the world, as opposed to the opportunist of *Drowned World* or even the looters briefly mentioned in *Chernobyl*. A final example of this is found in the oral histories of *Voices From Chernobyl*. This book tells the scattered tales about the meltdown of the Chernobyl reactor that occurred in the Soviet Union on “April 26, 1986, at 1:23:58” (*Voices From Chernobyl*, 1). This event had such a profound effect, with so many catastrophic implications, that the book itself starts with its historical implications before beginning its focus on individuals’ experiences. In the ensuing stories we see how the majority of people are in some way affected by the changing world, but in large part it is their interactions with others that has a larger immediate impact on their lives. A specific example focuses on those people who emigrated away from the Chernobyl area. These people are dubbed “Chernobylites” (*Voices From Chernobyl*, 198) and face discrimination due to their previous place of residence. This even extends to their children. The book goes into detail about how children would bully other children from Chernobyl, or who had parents from Chernobyl, even going so far as to make one child “go into the yard at night so they could see if she was glowing” (*Voices From Chernobyl*, 199). *Chernobyl* also gives us insight into the types of interactions that can lead to certain crises. Mainly the risk of arrogance and unchecked pride that proved destructive to the USSR and will continue to erode our world if not looked out for. These people hold various beliefs and perspectives, and the book does its best to show how diverse the reactions to the incident was and how no single viewpoint can encompass the total opinion of a culture, similar to how Zeno’s singular perspective in *The Lamentations of Zeno* cannot give a perfect representation of his culture. Both of these ideas are important lesson that we must remember while looking at our other sources.

Another example of the interaction between people and the environment can be seen in the treatment of the native Shuar peoples in *Old Man who Read Love Stories*. Here we can see how a people may treat those who they deem as lesser. While it is not the largest focus of the work, these interactions reveal how the desires of one society can create greedy monsters while the pure hard workers of a naturalistic society, seen in the Shuar, lead a life of fulfilled contentment. These natives seem to best fit the definition that is the basis of *Clade*. A clade is defined by the Oxford dictionary as “a group of organisms believed to have evolved from a common ancestor”, and in this definition we see not only an explanation on the premise of the book itself, but also an important lesson for us all to learn, something the Shuar seem to already know. We are a clade, every human as well as every other living being on the planet. No matter who or what culture we are now we are all evolved from the same ancestor, and as such we are all one big family and should treat each other as such.

One of the most reoccurring themes, and the cause for the many of the worst conflicts in several sources is human greed. This manifests in various ways, from the tyrannical government in *Memory of Water* that uses its power to oppress the people and retain power to the intensely capitalistic society of *New York 2140* where the lives of everyday people are determined largely through stock trades managed and manipulated by mega-corporations, with the intent of making a profit at all costs, including the destruction of the world. This is also similar to *Wall-E* where the planet is uninhabitable because of the excessive consumerism of their society. There are other forms as well, the Chernobyl disaster itself is a real-world example of human greed causing catastrophe. Throughout the novel and miniseries, we are shown the consequences of corruption and mismanagement, specifically by the government of the soviet union, but more generally it is the corruption that anybody of legislation is capable of. The miniseries goes on to reveal the

many ways in which the crisis could have been avoided; a lessening of nepotism, more sufficient instruction, more funds, more transparency. Along similar lines, the story of *Old Man who Read Love Stories* also holds a system of colonization that leads not only to suffering of the indigenous population as they are pushed out of their native lands, but also leads to the suffering of the colonist as they were ill prepared for their colonial efforts. In most cases this human greed is for an excess, things that are not necessary. Whether that is an extra zero at the end of an already ridiculously long number in a bank account or a recreational tour of the arctic, the people who envy and want the most are shown to usually already have what they need, and it is in their lust for more that suffering and destruction comes.

There are several mentions in the sources about one of the possible repercussions of a climate catastrophe and that is eco-immigration. This itself could use a full thesis to discuss the intricacies of this problem but for the purpose of this work it sufficient to mention that several of the cultures covered here are aware of the disastrous consequences that can result from a mass emigration of people. These sorts of effects can already be seen through past and current events, such as natural disasters of the past or modern wars displacing people and causing immigration and the problems that can come from it. whether the cause of immigration is the destruction of a nuclear power plant, like in *Voices From Chernobyl*, or rising sea levels as seen in *Clade*, *Drowned World*, and *New York 2140*. Though the work that most prominently describes a worst-case scenario is *Wall-E*. It presents a future in which all humans are eco-immigrants wandering the cosmos with nowhere to go. While it may not seem important to look at the results of climate crises before looking for mitigation strategies it is important to see how cultures view what may occur as a result of climate change and in so doing, we are ultimately led to the discovery of which cultures see the validity of climate change as more or less pressing. We can infer that if a

culture is already looking at the possible outcomes and implications of a climate crisis, they have most likely already realized the possibility of such a future and therefore would be more open to mitigation for such a disaster.

A more subtle, but still crucial, theme found in every story is the integration of humans and nature. Although this may appear to come in contrast to the human focus of several of the sources in many of the works, we can see that it is a well-established idea in every culture that humans are a part of this planet and all its functions. Some cultures go further and state that as a part of this world we have a duty to keep it pristine and do our best to preserve a natural harmony between ourselves and our environment. In *Lamentations of Zeno*, we hear many of Zeno's own ideas on the subject (and by inference some level of the cultures own ideas). Others do this by showing us what happens when we do not live in harmony with nature and the catastrophic repercussions it can have. *Chernobyl* shows a nightmare scenario in which we have destroyed the bond between ourselves and nature and in doing so we destroy not only our environment but ourselves in the process. Even now the areas of Chernobyl that were most heavily affected in the accident are still uninhabitable and will remain that way well into the future.

Other works show us a more optimistic envisioning of what we can become once we are acting in harmony with nature. *Old Man who Read Love Stories* and *Slave Old Man* both show how this harmonious lifestyle can lead to a better manner of living. While talking about the protagonist of *Slave Old Man* some worshiped him, some hated him. In this we see a metaphor for nature itself. Just as the old man "had always been" (*Slave Old Man*, 4), so too has nature always existed. It is not that this existence is a bland and unimportant one relegated to the unimportant background either. They mention in the story that just the old man's presence is enough to invoke the power within. "He does not dance, does not speak, does not react to the

cattle-bell summons of the drums. He seems inert but manages to decipher undecodable things. His presence reinforces the drumming of the [drums] ... in his company the dancers ... discover unsuspected muscular resources. The songs as well surround him” (*Slave Old Man*, 28), and here we see his similarity to the true essence of nature and how we react to it. When we finally see his perspective, we can actually see that he himself is just a man with his own desires. The story follows his escape and subsequent integration into the forest surrounding the plantation. As the plantation master and his mastiff hound get closer to catching him, the runaway slave becomes more and more entwined with nature. Through this depiction, we as readers see how ourselves are as much a part of that nature as the trees and the rocks of the forest, and as much a part as the old man himself is. In the end of this story, we are shown that we are not just observers of nature but instead are part of it. Our bones and the bones of all of our ancestors will whittle to the dust and become the soil. We too shall retake our place as a part of nature.

The idea of coexistence takes on a different aspect in *The Old Man Who Read Love Stories* as we see the protagonist’s interactions with the Shuar. Through these indigenous people he learns not only how to survive in their harsh environments but also how to be a part of it, not a separate entity fighting and struggling to survive, but thriving as a coexisting member of the ecosystem. It is even mentioned that while the other colonist starved, José “ate whenever he felt hungry. He selected the tastiest fruit, rejected fish that were too slow for his liking, trailed a wild animal, but as soon as it was within range of his blowpipe he might feel like eating something else” (*The Old Man Who Read Love Stories*, 34). This is in direct contrast to the other colonist who were constantly struggling and dying in an attempt to conquer the jungle and its beasts, all the while José lived an easy life as part of it. Through Sepúlveda’s narrative we can see the belief that even a civilized man can come back to find his true self to coexist with nature. We also see

the idea that this coexistence is a more natural and simpler life than the constant woes and worries of civilization. Put into perspective of the other narratives it is possible to say that the greed of humanity is often brought on by the unsatisfiable nature of civilization itself. While both protagonists find peace in their harmony with nature it is also of note that this is a personal peace and not a grand cultural revolution. It goes to show that our world might do better to focus on the smaller battles we all face and try, in our own lives, to live harmoniously with nature and create a better world.

A Non-Human Focus

A less common, but still important theme is the economic and political focus found in handful of sources. The most prevalent example of this is *New York 2140*, in which the first few chapters, and then several throughout the book, are a drawn-out economics lesson in investment and real estate. The novel even begins and ends with conversations between two characters talking about the economics of the time and how they are a large part of what led the world towards catastrophe after catastrophe. Through this perspective the characters use the system to beat the system, largely through the manipulation of money. The Voices of Chernobyl in turn portray the significance of the political focus. In this work, we hear from various people who were either members or leaders of the Communist Party in the Soviet Union, and while many denounced what happened as a failure of leadership and possibly in some way due to the faults of the system itself, there was one individual interviewed who held fast to their belief that the catastrophe was not the government's fault but some sort of sabotage done by enemies of its system to be used as anti-communist propagandist, "They're the ones who blew up Chernobyl. The CIA and the democrats... If Chernobyl hadn't blown up, the empire wouldn't have

collapsed” (*Voices From Chernobyl*, 205). While his arguments seem largely irrelevant for the larger focus of the text, this individual does show us a problem that is very real, namely that of people stubbornly holding pride in a system irrelevant to the actual value of said system, whether environmentally or economically. While the individual himself is not a very relevant person to the book, this idea can span across cultures. There are many individuals in various cultures that will cling to ideas and beliefs that have long since proven defunct. Many times, this is done because it is all they have known and ever will know. Another example of this political focus can be seen in *Old Man Who Read Love Stories*. Here we see how the conflict of the story is brought on because of the inept mayor of the town. More than just the mayor specifically, it is his representation of the system he works for, one that focuses on pleasing higher ups and exploiting nature for profit, that shows us the larger issues. In the end, *Chernobyl* shows us that there is no way to fix a catastrophe that has already occurred, and in this we receive a grim warning of what could come if we sit idle and do not change our current course.

The last example of this economic focus is less prolific throughout the works, but it is found in the economic system of oppression in *New York 2140*, as well as the colonization of the Amazonian jungles of *Old Man who Read Love Stories*. These colonists are there in large part due to the plan of the system to transform the jungles into money making adventures, whether through mining for rare minerals or long-term farming. In truth it is this colonization, and the system behind it, that causes all of the conflicts of the book. Through these examples we can see that while economic systems may vary across cultures, they do often play integral roles in a culture's capacity to protect the environment and we may do good to pay attention to those systems that put nature before economic progress.

It is also an interesting note that a majority of the sources focus in some way on water. For many of the cultures this makes sense. The Scandinavian area is surrounded by water of all sorts, ice and snow in the north, oceans to the west, and the Baltic sea to the south. There are also many island cultures in the sources; Great Britain, Australia, and Martinique (and general Caribbean culture). Even those countries not surrounded by water have a crucial reliance on it, as we all do. A large portion of the HBO series on Chernobyl was dedicated to crucial endeavor of preventing the contamination of the ground water supply. *Lamentations of Zeno* is set on the Antarctic ocean and holds a specific focus on glacial ice, something that is extremely prevalent in southern Germany, central Europe, and the world. In *Memory of Water, Clade* and *New York 2140* sea levels rise at an unprecedented rate and in doing so create the stories' settings. This focus on water across these works reflects our current predictions and worries associated with water. On the first page of *Memory of Water* it says, "Death is water's close companion" (*Memory of Water*, 5), and we see through all of these stories that this statement is more than true. Through this we learn another important lesson, that too much of anything can be a bad thing. Even something as vital to life as water.

Optimism

A theme found in the majority of works is optimism. Whether this is something shown throughout the book, as is the case in the American works such as *New York 2140* and *Wall-E*, or if it comes at the end like in *Memory of water* and *Clade*, a majority of the sources convey a certain amount of optimism. In connection with this optimism, a faith in people, technology, and the future likewise frequently appear in these works. *Memory of Water* is a good example the optimism of an inherent faith in the people of the future. The story ends with the

death of the protagonist, but in her death, she furthers her goals and forwards vital information to the people who need, and can do with, it the best. Therefore, we can see that even in her death the people who come after her will do the good that she could not. These sources have the general belief that those who come after will do better than those who are trying now. The sentiment in *Clade* is similar. The story ends with a showcase of young people at a party and a generation of people that can do better and not make the mistakes of their predecessors. Much of this story is told with an underlying message about legacy and the importance of leaving behind a world for our children and our children's children. It is also through the daughters' eyes that we finally come to see hope in the world again, as the technology of the time transitions and evolves to support a coexistence with nature instead of consuming it. *Clade* shows and promotes this idea that humanity itself must change to be more inclusive and caring about the people outside of our regular life for the world to survive and prosper. In a similar light the ending of *Wall-E's* credits scenes gives a quick introduction to a world where the humans come back to inhabit an inhospitable planet but unlike the humans of the past, they live a humble and hardworking life in harmony with nature.

Not all the sources only have this faith in the people that are to come, in many there is a faith in the people that are. In *New York 2140*, we end with election of a leader who vows to put the money, and with it the power, back into the hands of the people leading to a complete economic and political revolution that is sustained by the people's desire for the world to change into a better one. Through this we see people living their daily lives and striving to find happiness even in a world that is technically post-apocalyptic, people of anytime will strive to live a content life with those they love.

The second portion of optimism is found in the faith that different cultures place in the technology of the future to keep up with human need. Both American works, *Wall-E* and *New York 2140* have this inherent faith that as humans face new challenges and adversity, they will develop better and better technologies to help adapt to these situations. In *New York 2140* specifically, the novel goes in depth about the new inventions such as “sprayable concrete” (*New York 2140*, 37), as well as “new high strength composite materials” (*New York 2140*, 78) from which one of the main characters ends up developing floating city blocks that are sustainable and help to create a more stable society. In *Wall-E* we see this faith in how they left robots behind in order to clean the planet while they waited, in yet even more technologically advanced ships that could sustain them indefinitely.

It is important to note that there are also those novels that diverge from the idea that technology is inherently helpful. In *Memory of Water*, we see a world that has been ravaged by the need for human technology, specifically fossil fuel driven technology. In the novel the reason so much of the world is covered in saltwater and the majority of drinking water is contaminated was because of wars fought in the arctic for the last scraps of oil. In *Chernobyl* and entire climate crisis was caused in part by the advanced science of nuclear fusion, although in truth it was ultimately the mismanagement of this technology that led to disaster. It is still easily arguable though, that without the technology itself the crisis never could have existed. *Wall-E* itself is another example of this advanced technology leading to destruction. While people had faith in the technology it was this technology and the over usage and exploitation that led to the crisis it solved.

Clade is possibly one of the best examples of an optimism attitude and what it can accomplish. In this Australian novel we are introduced time and time again to immediate

impending crises, whether they are gigantic floods in the UK, swarms of unstoppable insects, or melting southern polar ice, the characters face adversity and earth-shattering problems time and time again. At every interaction they choose to continue to struggle and fight for a good life not just for them but also for future generations. As the novel finishes, we see a world that could be. There are people enjoying a party with not just each other but in harmony with nature, as bioluminescent plankton glow in the ocean to the pleasure of people who arrive to an island via rowboat instead of engine powered boats. Throughout it all there is the subtle hint of optimism and hope that this is what the world can and will become.

Wall-E likewise depicts this optimism, but in a wholistic tone. Although this film is ostensibly a children's movie, the underlying themes and implications are incredibly profound and carry messages for adults as well. We see that a society left to its own devices with no care for the implication will seek pleasure at all costs and in doing so will destroy the planet. It is a cautionary tale for us, but in the ending we see that there is still hope. The overall theme of this movie is the hope and persistence seen through the protagonist's actions. The entire tone of the work is and incredibly optimistic and this reflects the intrinsic American belief in the ability of persistence and hard work to overcome any problem.

Conclusion

Through the dissection of these sources, we can uncover many of the cultural implications that pertain to how various cultures view climate change. While no two cultures will be the same, there are many bridges and similarities between all of the sources in at least one way or another. Throughout all cultures, there are a few direct similarities, and one of those is the agreement that we, humans, are a large and integral part of the planet's ecosystem. As such, our actions affect more than just our own life and species. In this knowledge, we discover that many cultures believe it is our duty to preserve and nurture this world to the utmost. The works in this study all convey an acknowledgement that the world is changing, and in almost all cultures, there is an optimism that the world can change for the better and not for the worse. We are also shown how this can only be done through the removal of our greed and want of more, and how we need to learn to be better contented with the happiness we have instead of always seeking that which we do not have. We must all work together towards the betterment of ourselves and with humanity, whether that be through improved technology or an increased capacity for compassion.

In these sources, we are reminded of an important fact that we already know. There is no simple solution to climate change. Not for any single culture and definitely not for all cultures, but in studying the different perspectives of many cultures, we can begin to discover those reoccurring themes and ideas that bridge cultural gaps. In doing so, we can hope to determine what best to focus on to make meaningful change in our world. These cultural differences and perspectives do not mean that all cultures must fight their own climate crises, but instead, they mean that it will take a combined effort at different levels, large and small scale. Through these stories, and their prominent themes, we can see the conclusion that these sources all reach, that

we need to change, and that there will be changes for everyone, but these changes will come in different ways for each culture, but the goal will be the same for each. To create a better sustainable world not just for ourselves but for those to come.

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