

1. In your book, you suggest that contemporary fiction has not yet been able to narrate improbable or catastrophic events in a way that is truthful to the experience of living through climate change. I'm wondering what that fiction might look like if it was successful in rendering the reality in which we live, or if you think the novel itself, with its formal and narrative constraints, is poorly positioned to accomplish such representation. I'm also wondering what a literary device such as "foreshadowing" might look like in a novel where catastrophe is not the climax of a narrative, but rather, is part of the recurring plot points?

A. Many contemporary novelists have written about improbable and catastrophic events. I have cited the names of many such writers in *The Great Derangement* (TGD), and I am sure there are many others that I do not know about – the list is potentially endless. The point is not whether such writing exists or is possible. The point is that such novels and stories are almost without exception regarded as being outside the mainstream of fiction, and especially of serious literary fiction. Their subject matter ensures that they are relegated to various genres, such as science fiction, apocalyptic fiction and so on. This means that they are regarded as being not about the world that we actually inhabit but about some other, fantastical universe – in other words they are seen as 'wonder tales' (to use Margaret Atwood's words). This is itself an important symptom of what I have called 'The Great Derangement'.

2. Writing about climate despair is a way of writing trauma, and sometimes trauma requires more frantic, slightly fragmented storytelling which can often be at odds with narrative fiction. Given your own essayistic writing ("Ghosts of Mrs. Gandhi," In an Antique Land, Countdown), what can non-fiction offer us, perhaps formally, that fiction cannot?

A. Of course non-fiction can and does address climate change: most of our information on the subject comes from non-fiction. But my concern in TGD is with fiction, specifically literary fiction.

[pl note that the name is Gandhi, not Ghandi]

3. Reading this book before and after the American election has drastically changed my interpretation of the title of the book. Before the election, I understood that people have full illusory worlds that they occupy though I thought at least that there was a general consensus that climate change needed to be addressed. Under a Trump administration, I think it is not alarmist to think that climate data might actually be suppressed. Is this derangement a kind of cognitive dissonance? A willful ignorance? A greed? A laziness?

A. We live in an era that worships and fetishizes science. Yet, no matter whether in politics, art or literature, we seem to be unable to heed certain very urgent warnings that scientists are trying to communicate to us. This, to my mind, is the essence of the great derangement.

4. I was so compelled by your description of witnessing that rare phenomena of a tornado in Dehli in 1978. You wrote: "What had happened at that moment was strangely like a species of visual contact, of beholding and being beheld..." and I was hoping you expand on articulating what you meant here. The language choice felt so deliberate and spell-like as if this was a trance encounter with an unknown force. In what ways can we conceptualize that nonhuman vitality that does not feel so exotic or other-worldly to us?

A. As I note in TGD, over the last few years many disciplines in the humanities have suddenly begun to address the question of non-human agency. This is of course itself a symptom of non-human agency.

5. At the end of your section on politics, you suggest that perhaps religious leaders might be able to mobilize people in a way that politicians have not. However, in the United States at the moment, there seems to be a growing, highly visible movement of Christian White nationalism sweeping the country. In what ways can

religious leaders respond, counter, or challenge religious ideologies that are being politicized often against climate science?

A. Sadly, very few religious leaders seem to be interested in climate change: Pope Francis is by far the most important among them, and fortunately he is able to reach a very big audience. But for the rest, as I note in TGD, most contemporary religions are 'accelerationist' in ways that mimic Protestantism.

6. In the last five years, is there a book on climate change that you have found to be the most influential on your thinking?

A. Many very good books have been written on climate change in the last few years. Some prominent examples are Naomi Klein's magisterial 'This Changes Everything'; George Marshall's 'Don't Even Think About It: Why our brains are wired to ignore climate change', and Roy Scranton's 'Learning to Die in the Anthropocene'.