

Interactive comment on “This bookmark gauges the depths of the human: how poetry can help to personalise climate change” by Sam Illingworth

Anonymous Referee #2

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General Comments The article ‘This bookmark gauges the depth of the human: How poetry can help to personalize climate change’ is a highly interesting publication, connecting modern literary criticism with the current public debate about climate change. The focus is on analyzing 72 poems by various authors to identify how climate change is framed and represented in contemporary poetry. The underlying notion is that poems can bridge the divide between academic evidence and the still remote but needed change in personal lifestyle and attitude. This is in accordance with results from modern communication and social sciences which have shown that despite climate change is widely accepted, the human impact on the climate is still questioned. The author therefore seeks to find new ways to provoke the public to connect academic knowledge about climate change with individual actions on a very personal level. Poetry –

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as other forms of arts such as theatre, music or painting – might be able to become a catalyzer for this transformation.

Specific Comments The role of emotions in science communication is not explicitly addressed but seems to be critical. Here, further reference to current research on the role of emotionality in science communication can increase the rationale for this article. (e.g. Smith & Leiserowitz (2014) The Role of Emotion in Global Warming Policy Support and Opposition. Risk Analysis. Vol 34 (5). Doi:10.1111/risa.12140) [Line 86 to 90] Stuart Hall’s concept of ‘Encoding – Decoding’ can help to shed light on the central problem discussed in this publication. While the ‘academic language’ is used by scientists to convince decision makers to take action against climate change, this language is not successfully decoded by the public. Poetry can offer a different “language” that might help to decode climate change from another perspective. Hall – while being somewhat outdated – might present a theoretical frame for this article from a social or even cognitive science perspective and to introduce a somewhat more critical perspective on the interpretation of poetry as well. Hall, S.: Encoding/decoding in Television Discourse, in: Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies: Culture, Media, Language: Working Papers in Cultural Studies, 1972–79, Hutchinson, London, 1973.

[Line 157 to 175] To better understand the sample, an introduction into the readership of the Magma magazine would be helpful. Otherwise, one might wonder about potential social-cultural biases or a moral framing effect (maybe even some sort of confirmation bias) related to the overall magazine’s concept and marketing strategy.

Methodology and operationalization is very well described in chapters 2.3 and 2.4. Nevertheless, the description of the analytical method lacks reference to e.g. the thematic analysis approach, which has been critically described for example by Braun and Clark (Braun & Clarke (2006). Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology. Qualitative Research in Psychology Vol. 3 (2)).

[Line 406 to 412] A very lively discussion among anthropologists is addressed here

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– the conception of nature and the role of humans within (or outside) this concept. This could be addressed by referring to e.g. Habermas (2004). *The Future of Human Nature*. or Descola (2013). *Beyond Nature and Culture*.

[Line 727 to 741] I highly appreciate the critical element in this chapter, but I may have missed the link to the analysis of the climate related poetry. While I fully support the statements in this paragraph, I would like to recommend a more robust transition from the analysis results to the statement proclaimed. Since 3.6 represents the core message of this article, a sound argumentation is needed to strengthen the claim, that “the central role occupied by humankind” can be derived from the poetry analyzed.

[Lines 769 to 770] I am surprised, that there is no category dedicated to the actors/main characters of the poems. Especially, while you argue that all categories are “underpinned by an emergent theme of the need to re-center climate change around humankind.” Maybe you can briefly explain, while you have not focused on the actors?

No technical corrections required

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