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ARTICLE

Making the Invisible Visible: How the Blue Humanities Translate Climate Change to the Public

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Abstract

I've long reflected on how our work in the Blue Humanities (an interdisciplinary water-centric approach) can reach broader audiences, so it becomes meaningful and impactful, rather than buried in academic silos. Water, after all, is universally captivating. It resonates across age groups, cultures, professions, and disciplines. This article examines how the Blue Humanities can advance the Global Public Literary Humanities by engaging broader audiences in urgent conversations about climate change. At a time when the climate crisis demands cross-disciplinary and public engagement, the Blue Humanities offers a unique framework that bridges two persistent gaps: the divide between scientific and humanistic knowledge, and the disconnect between expert science and public understanding. At its core, the climate crisis is not a crisis of information; it is a crisis of imagination and communication between the humanities and sciences, as well as between science and the public. Drawing on my experience of teaching the Blue Humanities and using Twitter/X as a platform for public engagement, I explore how narrative tools—such as short fiction, film adaptation, video games, and social media—serve as effective Public Humanities media. These platforms evoke affect, ethical reflection, ecological awareness, and action by translating specialized climate knowledge into shared cultural narratives. They make the invisible climate change visible. By synthesizing blue, public, global, and literary humanities, I argue that narrative forms—whether textual, visual, or digital—can help build a civically engaged, media-diverse literary public capable of confronting the planetary challenges of our oceanic and climate futures.

Keywords: Blue Humanities; climate change; environmental humanities; Global Public Literary Humanities; Public Humanities

1. Introduction: Two gaps between knowledge and the public

Environmental disasters today—such as climate change and its manifestations of floods, droughts, heatwaves, and rising sea levels—are not only scientific or natural but also cultural ones. They are shaped by how societies produce, distribute, and respond to knowledge.[1] Such crises, I argue, are the result of two critical gaps in environmental knowledge systems: (1) the gap between the humanities and the sciences, which prevents effective interdisciplinary collaboration, and (2) the gap between scientific experts and the general public, which weakens societal understanding and response to climate change.

[1] Etkin and Ho 2007; Hulme 2018; 2022.

Unless we address these gaps, the public will remain disconnected from the very knowledge that could protect and empower it. What's needed is a new, integrative approach that moves across disciplines and speaks to real-world audiences. I argue that the Blue Humanities—through its water-centered, cross-disciplinary lens—can serve as a connective force across these two divides.

But what do we mean by "environmental knowledge systems"? Sarah Cornell et al. describe them as networks of people, institutions, and practices that organize how knowledge is produced, transferred, and applied.[2] These systems are broader than science alone. They encompass literature, storytelling, digital platforms, and more. The humanities—through novels, films, games, and even tweets—represent powerful subsystems within this broader matrix. The Blue Humanities, in particular, act as a "bridge discourse," translating complex marine science and sustainability themes into culturally resonant narratives that can raise awareness and motivate change.[3] Martin Bauer and S. Howard introduce another system: the Public Understanding of Science (PUS), which tracks how lay audiences grasp scientific knowledge.[4] Mike Hulme expands the view further, adding "local" knowledge and reflective self-knowledge as important contributors to climate understanding.[5] Ville Kumpu explores how public engagement itself is conceptualized in climate research.[6]

Science and humanities are "stereotypically thought to be at opposite ends of the intellectual spectrum," as Fraser and Ardalan argue in their "Reflections on Science, Art & Sustainability."[7] "Culture Wars" is the term Kurt Spellmeyer uses in *Reinventing the Humanities for the Twenty-First Century*.[8] The division between the sciences and the humanities has a long intellectual history. C. P. Snow famously described it in *The Two Cultures*, while Jerome Kagan later introduced a "three cultures" model including the social sciences.[9] Others, like Matthew C. Nisbet et al., have proposed "four cultures" to include broader frameworks that incorporate creative arts, religion, and philosophy.[10] In each case, the call is the same: to connect multiple streams of human insight to respond meaningfully to global challenges. Michael Crow, President of Arizona State University, recently summed up the problem at a summit on university excellence: "We decided to allow the disciplines not to talk to each other. We decided to create a hierarchy of knowledge that says that biology is certainly more important than ecology, and all of that is wildly more important than the [academics] who are in the social sciences."[11] That disconnect, echoed by the climate critic Eric Dean Wilson, has left science and the humanities speaking in parallel but isolated languages.[12] As Wilson puts it:

> What we as interdisciplinary academics need to push for is the need for the natural sciences, which are so obviously important, to work more closely with the humanities and social sciences. *I think that the climate crisis and ecological crisis are a partial result of the separation of the disciplines.* You have one conversation going on in philosophy and

[2] Cornell et al. 2013.
[3] Rozwadowski 2021.
[4] Bauer 2009.
[5] Hulme 2011.
[6] Kumpu 2022.
[7] Fraser and Ardalan 2020, 2.
[8] Spellmeyer 2003.
[9] Snow 1959; Kagan 2009.
[10] Nisbet, Markowitz, and Besley 2010.
[11] Crow, quoted in Mitchell 2022.
[12] Wilson 2022.

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literature, and you have another conversation going on in biology and geology. *Their separation is the problem.*[13] (emphasis mine)

As Christopher Uhl puts it in his book title, we must work toward "Developing Ecological Consciousness" and "The End of Separation."[14] This means restructuring universities, collaborations, and scholarly practices so that knowledge is co-created across disciplines and responsive to public needs. Cornell et al. remind us that universities shape which knowledge is deemed valid.[15] And for knowledge to contribute to sustainability, it must be shared and negotiated across institutional and societal boundaries. Hulme suggests that knowledge gaps arise from "poor connectivity" between different systems of understanding, requiring "better integration of existing knowledge" to build "more comprehensive and faithful replicas of reality."[16] This integration across "domains and regions" enables "more joined-up action" by bringing together "multiple and diverging worldviews, beliefs, and value systems."[17]

The second major gap lies between scientists and the public. Scientific knowledge about climate change is often complex and abstract. Studies show that laypeople frequently misinterpret climate dynamics or conflate them with other issues like ozone depletion.[18] Victoria Wibeck notes how climate science is hard to communicate due to its abstract and uncertain nature.[19] Mental models—people's internal representations of how systems work—play a key role here. Sterman and Sweeney define these models as belief systems that shape how individuals interpret cause and effect.[20] This means that simply presenting facts is not enough. People act based on their interpretations, not on raw data. To bridge this gap, scientists must work alongside social scientists and humanists to align messages and make climate knowledge more accessible and relevant. Scientific facts alone rarely drive behavioral change.[21] To overcome the so-called "knowledge–action gap," we need storytelling, aesthetics, ethics, and engagement—tools that the humanities, and especially the Blue Humanities, excel at providing.[22] The sections that follow will explore each of these gaps in detail, showing how water narratives across media—from short stories to social platforms—can help reshape public climate imagination and strengthen our shared environmental future. I draw from my teaching experience of the course Narratives of Ocean Cultures.

2. Response to Gap 1: Bridging science and the humanities through the Blue Humanities

2.1. What is Blue Humanities?

While science provides essential data on climate change, it often lacks the narrative and emotional depth needed to engage the public. The Blue Humanities approach bridges this gap by uniting scientific and humanistic knowledge through water-centered narratives,

[13] Quoted in Than 2022, 4, emphasis mine.
[14] Uhl 2013.
[15] Cornell et al. 2013.
[16] Hulme 2011, 333.
[17] Hulme 2011, 334–35.
[18] See Seacrest, Finucane, and Monk 2000; Sterman and Sweeney 2007; Ungar 2000.
[19] Wibeck 2014.
[20] Sterman and Sweeney 2007.
[21] Cook and Overpeck 2019; Howarth, Sharman, and Jasny 2020.
[22] Nixon 2011; Sutton 2023.

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aesthetics, and ethics. As a form of public literary humanities, it fosters civic engagement and shared meaning-making. Blue Humanities scholars like Serpil Oppermann and Elizabeth DeLoughrey rightly observe that addressing today's oceanic and aquatic crises—and the broader manifestations of climate change—requires a fundamentally transdisciplinary approach.[23] This approach must *think with*, immerse in, and deeply engage the ontological, material, political, and cultural dimensions of water, which makes up most of our biosphere. It necessitates crossing disciplinary boundaries—linking marine sciences, social sciences, the humanities, and the arts—by bringing literary and cultural theory into conversation with water-centered creative and scientific practices. This, in essence, is what defines the Blue Humanities. At its core, the Blue Humanities approach represents a shift in perspective —employing water as a lens to understand the entangled relationships between humans and the environment across time. It is inherently interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary, engaging with fields such as history, geography, literature, culture, linguistics, art, religion, philosophy, psychology, sociology, economics, anthropology, archeology, law, and marine sciences, including oceanography, marine biology, marine chemistry, and marine physics. After all, water flows through all these domains. As Oppermann rightly observes, "as a truly transdisciplinary field, the Blue Humanities studies planetary waters from sociocultural, literary, historical, esthetic, ethical, and multiple other perspectives, and lays bare the broader social implications of hydrologic sciences."[24] The conceptual fluidity of the Blue Humanities—mirroring the fluidity of its subject—enables it to connect these diverse disciplines meaningfully. It is marked by "fluid poetics" and "disciplinary fluidity," both of which invite transdisciplinary cooperation.[25] This allows the Blue Humanities to "criss-cross boundaries," moving "beyond the boundaries and methodologies of land- and nation-state-based environmental perspectives, while also foregrounding the colonization, territorialization, and militarization of the oceans."[26] Committed to inclusivity, the field seeks "a truly global, multilingual, and inclusively creative methodology."[27] As Craig Santos Perez articulates, this discourse "flows across disciplines; dives into submarine depths and submersions; swims into multispecies entanglements; intersects with feminist, indigenous, and diasporic epistemologies; recognizes the agency of a warming, rising ocean; and transforms our critical inquiries and reading practices."[28] Steve Mentz, who coined the term "Blue Humanities," reflects this ethos in his section "Blue Humanities as Collaboration and Connection," which challenges dominant narratives about water by shifting the focus away from human-centered thinking and toward water and its ecosystems.[29] Thus, the Blue Humanities approach attempts to close the divide between humans and nonhumans (including water bodies and animals), the latter of which have their own legal personhood in front of human law.[30] The approach of the Blue Humanities offers a counterpoint to the predominantly green orientation of ecocriticism. It addresses the so-called "ocean deficit" or "blue hole" that has long characterized environmental humanities scholarship. It interweaves critical and creative processes and embraces forms of writing that move

[23] DeLoughrey 2017; Oppermann 2023.
[24] Oppermann 2023, 1.
[25] Jue and Ruiz 2021, 2; Bakker 2019.
[26] Oppermann 2023, 5; Perez 2020, 2.
[27] Mentz 2024, 18.
[28] Perez 2020, 2.
[29] Mentz 2024, 32–33; Oppermann 2023, i.
[30] Rivers, in some regions, are now recognized as legal entities with rights comparable to those of human beings. In Māori tradition, whales are similarly granted rights and respected as kin. Even jellyfish are appreciated for their unique aesthetics, while the octopus—celebrated in the documentary *My Octopus Teacher*—is increasingly acknowledged for its intelligence and emotional complexity, offering lessons for how humans might relate more ethically to nonhuman life.

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"beyond the Atlantic, beyond the traditional canon, beyond English, and beyond literature as such."[31] It examines how water operates across multiple scales and strives to develop "an interpretive method that embraces all three phases of planetary water."[32] In doing so, the Blue Humanities opens up new pathways for public engagement by connecting literary and cultural studies with urgent, globally relevant issues such as climate change, sea-level rise, and water justice—topics that are inherently public in scope.[33]

2.2. *Blue Humanities as Public Humanities*

In responding to the disciplinary divide, the Blue Humanities aligns with a growing body of work in the Public Literary Humanities that calls for literary scholarship to serve public and civic life. Here, civic engagement, shared meaning-making, and co-created knowledge become central. The Blue Humanities, with its narrative power and esthetic resonance, naturally aligns with this vision by responding to global crises and inviting public participation in scholarly reflection. In this sense, I see the Blue Humanities as Public Humanities in action, which has increasingly sought to bridge the long-standing separation between scientific and humanistic knowledge. As Kathleen Fitzpatrick writes, "The humanities must not stand apart from the conversations around science, technology, and public policy, but rather must engage with them, helping to shape both the questions and the methods by which we seek answers."[34] This emerging field, that is, Public Humanities, advocates for literary scholarship that engages directly with public life and real-world problems—especially those, like climate change, that demand both empirical insight and cultural understanding. Within this framework, civic engagement, shared meaning-making, and co-created knowledge are central. Public Humanities work challenges the deficit model of expert-to-public knowledge transmission by fostering reciprocal and dialogic learning processes, where knowledge is co-created through inclusive dialogue rather than unidirectional dissemination from experts to lay audiences.[35] This approach values the contributions and experiences of all participants, recognizing multiple forms of knowledge and promoting collective meaning-making.[36] The Blue Humanities, with its narrative power, esthetic strategies, and interdisciplinary reach, exemplifies this vision by responding to global crises and inviting public participation in scholarly reflection. It brings marine sciences, environmental ethics, and literary practice into collaborative dialogue. Publicly engaged scholarship "enriches all participants in the knowledge enterprise and enlarges the public roles of scholarship."[37] In this sense, the Blue Humanities operates as Public Humanities in action—bridging disciplines while fostering civic awareness and planetary responsibility. I wonder if this type of humanities is "the humanities to come" or the "Greater Humanities" to use the terms of Gayatri Spivak and Clifford Geertz, respectively.[38]

2.3. *Case study: Teaching the ocean as Public Humanities in action*

The course "Narratives of Ocean Cultures" I taught serves as a living example of the Blue Humanities as Public Humanities, where literature, film, climate science, and philosophy

[31] Dobrin 2021, 1; Gillis 2011, 16; Mentz 2024, 31.
[32] Mentz 2024, 5.
[33] DeLoughrey 2017, 33–35.
[34] Fitzpatrick 2018, 172.
[35] Flecha 2000; Freire 1970; Reincke, Bredenoord, and van Mil 2020.
[36] Flecha 2000; Freire 1970.
[37] Ellison and Eatman 2008, 4.
[38] Geertz 1973; Spivak 2004, 526.

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were taught in tandem to foster interdisciplinary and civic engagement. Students became co-producers of knowledge and active participants in environmental discourse—an approach I extended beyond the classroom through my public pedagogy on X/Twitter. We (teacher and students) "simultaneously" were doing humanities and science—I think we were *Doing Public Humanities* to borrow the title of Susan Smulyan's book.[39] As Smulyan suggests, Public Humanities emerges when scholars and students collaborate to make knowledge accessible, relevant, and socially embedded. In this spirit, my course functioned as Public Humanities in action. We were not just reading about the ocean—we were studying it scientifically, culturally, and ethically, making literary analysis a gateway into environmental knowledge and civic engagement. We read literature, film, art, biology, physics, archeology, history, philosophy, ethics, and many more. It was a course that erased the boundaries among genres, disciplines, religions, cultures, and geographies. We read Nathaniel Rich's short story "Hermie," watched a film adaptation with the same title, read climate change poems, and introduced cli-fi games. Since 2022, on a semi-daily basis, I have been publishing on my X/Twitter page about the most up-to-date publications in the Blue Humanities, in a simpler language for the public.

The syllabus itself demanded an interdisciplinary approach that blurred the boundaries between the sciences and the humanities. Teaching Rich's short story *Hermie*, for example, meant teaching not only literature but also the science of ocean acidification, climate change, and marine ecosystems. The narrative's ethical questions required us to explore environmental philosophy, theories of responsibility, and ecological justice. Discussions touched on economics (resource use and sea-level impacts on coastal communities), psychology (climate anxiety and cognitive dissonance), and even media studies (the adaptation of the story into film). Alongside *Hermie*, we analyzed climate change poetry, explored cli-fi games, and drew insights from oceanography, archeology, history, geography, art, and religion. In this way, the course became a space where science and story coexisted—and more than that, where disciplinary boundaries dissolved in favor of shared inquiry and public engagement. Through the lens of the Blue Humanities, we bridged the empirical and the narrative, fostering both ecological knowledge and civic imagination.

Since 2022, I've extended this approach beyond the classroom. On a semi-daily basis, I share recent Blue Humanities publications on X/Twitter, translating emerging research into public-facing commentary. This public pedagogical effort reflects the same ethos: making scholarly insight on climate, oceans, and storytelling accessible and impactful beyond academic circles. My affiliation with the *Bremen–Cardiff ScienceHumanities* (one word with no hyphen) *Alliance* and *Fiction Meets Science* (FMS) anchors my work in an institutional landscape that actively bridges literature, science, and public engagement—core to the ethos of the Blue Humanities. As an associate member of FMS—a network of over 40 humanities scholars, scientists, and fiction writers—we explore climate fiction and environmental texts in dialogue with scientific research. At Cardiff, Martin Willis (Head of the School of English, Communication and Philosophy and Editor of the *Journal of Literature and Science*) and Keir Waddington (Professor of History) are key figures fostering collaboration across fields. Within this alliance, we have conducted a Blue Humanities workshop that gathered scholars from science, humanities, and social sciences. We also delivered lectures as part of a Blue Humanities Summer School. Together, these networks model the Blue Humanities in action: interdisciplinary, publicly engaged, and globally relevant.

[39] Smulyan 2020.

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It is worth mentioning that the interdisciplinary, publicly engaged nature of the course also inspired tangible behavioral changes among students—evidence of how the Blue Humanities can cultivate civic awareness and environmental responsibility. After a discussion on how electricity consumption is linked to fossil fuel use and carbon emissions, students collectively initiated a habit of switching off unnecessary lights during class sessions. Similarly, several students reported that they had significantly reduced their use of printed materials, recognizing how paper production contributes to deforestation, water waste, and carbon output. These seemingly small shifts reflect a deeper transformation: students were not just absorbing information—they were applying it. This integration of knowledge and action exemplifies the Blue Humanities as Public Humanities, where the classroom becomes a site for ecological literacy, ethical reflection, and civic participation. As a teacher, witnessing this shift in my students' daily habits—changes they can carry into their communities and pass on to others—was, for me, a profound affirmation that one of the core aims of the teaching process had been fulfilled. When students begin to act on what they learn—by switching off unnecessary lights or reducing their reliance on printed materials—they are embodying the values of sustainability, responsibility, and awareness. This, I believe, is what meaningful education looks like: not just the transmission of knowledge, but the cultivation of practices that ripple outward. It is a quiet but enduring act of Public Humanities—and a truly sustainable one. Each one of them will pass their knowledge and action to their families and societies. If at least one student becomes a change leader, my job as a teacher is almost fulfilled.

2.4. *Feeling the climate*

What moved my students to action was not science alone, but the powerful interplay between science and the humanities. It was literature, story, ethics, and emotions paired with scientific understanding—that inspired real change. In the face of the climate crisis, the humanities still matter. In fact, they may be what makes science meaningful enough to act on. Scholars like Helen Rozwadowski, Deborah Sutton, Sverker Sörlin, and Zackary Michael Jackson have shown that humanistic tools—storytelling, ethics, affect, and memory—are essential for engaging the public with climate change. Science alone cannot move hearts or mobilize action; it is through the emotional and narrative dimensions of the humanities that awareness becomes urgency and knowledge becomes a call to act. Therefore, I join Rozwadowski, who believes in her article "Ocean Literacy and Public Humanities" that the solution to our "present environmental challenges [is that] the humanities must complement the science [...] because ocean literacy is aimed at public audiences rather than specialists or academic groups."[40] True, facts are not enough, and "statistics don't bleed."[41] And everything is connected to everything else—a philosophy and practice of the German scientist Alexander von Humboldt, who was an explorer, scientist, geographer, and philosopher, and believes that "science is an important way to know the world, but it is one among many." Knowing the world intellectually and *esthetically* is enriching and empowering, and strengthens our bonds with nature and humanity, and our respect for both" (emphasis mine).[42]

It is this esthetic part—among many other benefits—that the humanities can offer and which can reach a far wider public than science does. As Sarah Sutton notes in *The Arts and Humanities on Environmental and Climate Change*, "they can engage a far wider public in

[40] Rozwadowski 2020, 365.
[41] Koestler 1944, para. 13.
[42] Quoted in Jackson 2019, 1075.

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learning, conversation, and action than science can alone."[43] Through public-facing tools such as historical photographs, ship logs, museum collections, and underwater sculptures (like those of Jason de'Caries Taylor), the humanities help "humanize climate change," appealing to those less responsive to scientific data.[44] Jonathan Bate similarly argues that the humanities help us live more sustainably through their affective force.[45] The humanities make "the invisible visible."[46] While climate change may be described in textbooks, it is the humanities that bring it to life—on screen, in stories, and in the public imagination. As Sörlin argues, the long-held belief that science alone can solve our planetary crises is no longer tenable; instead, we must recognize that sustainability depends on rethinking ecologically relevant knowledge through the humanities, which address the cultural values, beliefs, and human behaviors driving global pressure.[47] This cross-disciplinary momentum is echoed by Miranda Massie, Director of New York's Climate Museum, who emphasizes that the museum's mission is to move climate discourse beyond the "science silo" and into public life.[48] Yet, a single museum, storyteller, or scientist cannot tell the full story—we need both scientists and humanists to complete the picture.[49] Environmental humanities complement environmental science and policy by offering "narrative, critical thinking, history, cultural analysis, aesthetics and ethics."[50]

3. Response to Gap 2: Blue Humanities translate climate science into public action

3.1. Water narratives and aesthetics as a bridge

The Blue Humanities not only build bridges across disciplines but also reimagine how climate knowledge reaches and resonates with the public. Climate science often struggles to engage public understanding and action, a gap the Blue Humanities seeks to bridge through narrative, affective, and esthetic forms of communication. The problem is not a lack of facts or data, but the inaccessibility of scientific knowledge—often locked within elite frameworks—making it difficult to understand, relate to, or act upon. What's needed is not just more information, but a deeper, more effective way of communicating what we already know. At its core, climate change is a crisis of imagination. How people envision the climate crisis—their "climate imagination"—is crucial in shaping their response. While scientific data are essential, imagination is more often stirred by story, image, and emotion. The Blue Humanities, with its cross-media tools and focus on narrative, opens the possibility for cultivating a "public climate imagination" rooted in lived experience rather than abstract models. A film or theatrical performance about rising seas can communicate urgency more powerfully than a scientific report. Art, literature, and digital media thus become essential tools in countering climate apathy. They do not simply inform—they move. The Blue Humanities invites us to listen more, tell more stories, and engage broader publics, not by opposing science but by translating it into human terms. This integration is vital because scientific literacy alone is insufficient; behavioral change requires emotional and ethical resonance.

[43] Sutton 2023, i.
[44] Sutton 2023, 1.
[45] Bate 2022.
[46] Grobman and Ramsey 2020, 1.
[47] Sörlin 2012, 788.
[48] Massie 2025.
[49] Sutton 2023, 14.
[50] Oppermann and Iovino 2017, 1.

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Studies confirm that laypeople often struggle to understand the dynamics of climate systems.[51] Climate scientists and social scientists alike have called for a reframing of public engagement—one that aligns scientific messages with public understanding.[52] The Blue Humanities approach offers just such a reframing. Scholars like Rozwadowski, Ian Buchanan, and Celina Jeffery argue that literature, film, and the arts are vital for fostering ocean literacy and ecological consciousness.[53] These media can dramatize ecological catastrophe, invoke emotional response, and inspire environmental action—addressing the "knowledge–action gap" that science alone cannot close.[54] The climate crisis is not merely informational—it is narrative. Etkin and Ho note the lack of cultural narratives within which the climate crisis can be meaningfully situated.[55] Such stories help people make sense of complex realities, even without technical understanding.[56] Stories of "ordinary people" taking climate action are particularly effective because they reflect and reinforce constructive social norms.[57] As Oppermann writes in *Blue Humanities: Storied Seascapes in the Anthropocene*, "the Blue Humanities has persistently encouraged new stories that would immerse us in speculative attention to aquatic life to cultivate better imaginative relations to the seas and to revise our ways of thinking and acting in the face of the devastating changes occurring in salt waters."[58] This narrative turn dissolves anthropocentric habits of thought and invites new ethical engagements with the ocean as a storied, living world.

This is where the Blue Humanities excels. By emphasizing aesthetics, affect, and narrative form, it makes the invisible visible and the abstract tangible. Buchanan and Jeffery assert that art can help us imagine the climate futures, particularly in relation to the ocean. Bogna Konior calls for a Blue Media Studies that visualizes the Anthropocene and engages public audiences through new modes of storytelling.[59]

The Blue Humanities contributes to ocean literacy by generating new narratives—stories, metaphors, and images—that help people understand their relationship with the ocean in the past, present, and imagined future. It "historicizes" the sea, making it visible in ways that can galvanize environmental action.[60] As Rob Nixon argues in *Slow Violence*, without the attention of writers, artists, and storytellers, many ecological crises remain unseen and unaddressed.[61] Syma Ebbin reinforces that Blue Humanities can elicit emotional responses that spark conservation ethics and deepen our understanding of oceanic life.[62] Narrative is a powerful vessel for bridging the academic–public divide. Through literature, oral histories, and visual media that center water, Blue Humanities scholars make environmental issues legible to diverse audiences. Books like Rachel Carson's *The Sea Around Us* or Amitav Ghosh's *Sea of Poppies* embody this tradition, blending human–ocean relationships with ecological awareness. Public Humanities initiatives—museums, community storytelling, and digital archives—extend this engagement beyond academia.[63]

[51] Seacrest et al. 2000; Sterman and Sweeney 2007.
[52] Cook and Overpeck 2019; Howarth et al. 2020.
[53] Buchanan and Jeffery 2019; Rozwadowski 2011.
[54] Knutti 2019; Mooney et al. 2022; Nixon 2011.
[55] Etkin and Ho 2007.
[56] Wolf and Moser 2011.
[57] Howell 2012.
[58] Oppermann 2023, 8.
[59] Konior 2019.
[60] Rozwadowski 2011.
[61] Nixon 2011.
[62] Ebbin 2020a, 2020b.
[63] DeLoughrey 2017; Mentz 2020.

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The field itself is inherently public-facing, involving scholars, journalists, artists, and community members in co-creating humanistic knowledge. It includes activist work, policy engagement, and education across multiple platforms. As Rachel Arteaga and Rosemary Erickson Johnsen have emphasized, public literary humanities is not just outreach—it is practice: rooted in reciprocity, collaboration, and shared inquiry.[64] This field also recognizes that the "public" is plural and dynamic: from neighborhood groups and schools to global diasporas and transnational communities.[65] Its practitioners come from diverse disciplines —history, philosophy, digital media, and visual arts—and work across institutional and cultural boundaries.[66] These public engagements shape what questions are asked, what methods are used, and how knowledge is produced.[67]

Interdisciplinary and community-centered frameworks are increasingly central, as seen in *The Routledge Companion to Public Humanities.*[68] Arteaga stresses that literary Public Humanities should bridge academic and public worlds. Similarly, Carin Berkowitz and Matthew Gibson call for an expanded vision of the Public Humanities that integrates scholarly and public engagement as a core academic mission, while Roopika Risam, Brian Yothers, and Araceli Hernández-Laroche frame it as a critical space for crossing disciplinary, cultural, and geopolitical borders.[69] Teaching literature in Athens, Greece, or Athens, Georgia, and circulating Global South literatures across Europe and the Americas are examples of this expansive engagement.

The Blue Humanities aligns closely with these goals. It emphasizes water as a medium that connects rather than divides, and centers stories from coastal, island, and Indigenous communities. It challenges Eurocentric, land-based frameworks and amplifies voices most affected by ecological disruption.[70] Pacific Islander and Caribbean writers, for example, use oceanic metaphors to resist colonial narratives and reclaim cultural sovereignty. Meanwhile, research into Atlantic, Indian Ocean, and Mediterranean crossings reveals how water routes have long shaped global identities.[71] Ultimately, the Blue Humanities exemplifies the ideals of Public Humanities: outward-facing, collaborative, and rooted in lived realities. By placing water at the center of environmental and cultural inquiry, it offers a powerful framework for public engagement, education, and action—helping societies imagine more just and sustainable futures.

To speak of the "global" in Global Public Literary Humanities is to imagine a field unbound—by nation, language, or discipline. In a world defined by migration, digital flows, and planetary crises, literary studies can no longer retreat into linguistic silos or national canons.[72] Literature's publics are multiple and mobile, shaped by histories of colonization, translation, and diaspora.[73] Public literary humanities, then, must meet this complexity not only with scholarship but also with humility and openness. Digital platforms such as BookTok and YouTube have cracked open new spaces for literary exchange, yet access

[64] Arteaga and Johnsen 2021.
[65] Anderson 1983.
[66] Davies et al. 2021.
[67] Fitzpatrick 2018.
[68] Fisher-Livne and May-Curry 2024.
[69] Berkowitz and Gibson 2022; Risam, Yothers and Hernández-Laroche 2025.
[70] DeLoughrey 2017.
[71] Mentz 2024.
[72] Damrosch 2003.
[73] Chakrabarty 2000; Spivak 2003.

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remains unequal.[74] Marginalized communities—from Indigenous storytellers to Global South voices—still face structural exclusions. Decolonial and transcultural approaches offer not just correctives but also new ways of imagining engagement: through oral traditions, translation, and collaborative authorship. As Arteaga notes, Public Humanities now means "learning from various publics beyond the academy"—a call to co-create knowledge rather than simply broadcast it.[75] In this spirit, community archives, multilingual readings, and participatory art blur the line between scholar and audience.[76] The Global Public Literary Humanities is thus a provocation and a promise: to rethink what counts as knowledge, who gets to speak, and how literature might help us imagine more just, inclusive futures.

3.2. From crab to climate: Storytelling as public practice

The course "Narratives of Ocean Cultures," which I designed and taught, offers a dynamic educational model that bridges climate science with narrative, water ethics with oceanic science, and maritime history with future imaginaries. Whether in the classroom or on platforms like Twitter/X, I have found that the most effective pedagogy is one that renders knowledge tangible, embodied, and relevant to everyday life. This was especially evident when students in the course engaged with a short story that profoundly deepened their understanding of climate change, illustrating how narratives can powerfully shape public perceptions of complex environmental issues.[77] In this way, the Blue Humanities emerges as a vital bridge between scientific knowledge and public engagement. By translating ecological data into emotionally resonant and culturally situated stories, the field enhances environmental literacy and catalyzes the transformative changes needed in our knowledge systems.[78]

Rich's short story "Hermie," originally published in *I'm with the Bears: Stories from a Damaged Planet* (2011), offers a powerful case for literary studies as public practice. Set against a backdrop of climate crisis, the story follows a marine biologist who encounters a talking hermit crab—named Hermie—in a hotel bathroom in Salzburg. Their reunion is not only surreal but also emotionally charged: Hermie was once the narrator's childhood companion during summers in Sarasota, Florida. Now, he is a displaced creature searching for refuge in a world increasingly shaped by environmental collapse.

The story resonates deeply with the concerns of the Blue Humanities. Hermie's beach home has vanished—eroded by hurricanes and bulldozed for beachfront development. "They tore it up... exploded the beach and inserted columns," he laments.[79] His new shell is grotesque, covered in garbage and sea gunk, and his marine friends are "long dead," victims of pollution, toxicity, and habitat loss.[80] These details vividly reflect the ecological devastation described in Bill McKibben's introduction to the anthology, which frames climate change as "larger than usually makes for good fiction"—a reality filled with record temperatures, floods, and fires.[81]

[74] Arteaga and Johnsen 2021.
[75] Arteaga and Johnsen 2021, 1.
[76] Brier 2019.
[77] Etkin and Ho 2007; Howell 2012; Hulme 2011; Kumpu 2022; Wolf and Moser 2011.
[78] Cornell et al. 2013, 61.
[79] Rich 2011, 7.
[80] Rich 2011, 7.
[81] McKibben 2011, 1.

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What makes "Hermie" so compelling is how it personalizes environmental destruction. Hermie asks the narrator, now a scientist specializing in coastal degradation, if he has found "a new place? A new home?"[82] The narrator cannot help. He cites his life in Philadelphia, his wife's allergy, and even airport security. His scientific expertise cannot offer Hermie safety. Ultimately, Hermie's final wish—to be flushed down the toilet—is granted. The story ends with the narrator lost in nostalgic memory, underscoring the tragic disconnection between knowledge and responsibility. This tension captures the emotional and ethical stakes of the climate crisis in ways no data chart can. The Blue Humanities, which centers water's material and symbolic force, encourages this kind of narrative engagement—linking planetary instability to lived experience.[83] *Hermie* is not just a story about a crab; it is an allegory of ecological grief, human complicity, and our often-failed attempts to care for the more-than-human world.

The story's form is essential to its function. Its accessible prose, ironic tone, and fantastical premise invite a broad readership, making it an example of public literary humanities—literature that sparks ecological awareness and cultural conversation beyond the academy.[84] Hermie's voice, both whimsical and haunting, reminds us of the ocean's fragility and our entanglement in its fate. He indicates that the water is growing warmer, the shells scarcer, and the food harder to find. His world is shifting constantly, unpredictably—a mirror to the ocean's instability and the human systems that disrupt it. As a narrative rooted in both whimsy and devastation, "Hermie" offers a model for how literature can intervene in public ecological discourse. It does not just depict crisis—it makes readers feel it. In doing so, it affirms the essential role of literary studies in cultivating environmental empathy, ethical reflection, and public imagination.

Reading Rich's "Hermie" through the lens of public literary humanities reveals how stories can powerfully bridge ecological crisis and public awareness. At its heart, "Hermie" is more than an eco-fable—it's a platform for emotional and ethical engagement with environmental issues. The story invites readers to see the world through the eyes of a nonhuman protagonist—a displaced hermit crab—whose fate is intricately tied to human action and ecological collapse. In one evocative scene, Hermie dodges marine debris like a plastic ring, a tangle of fishing line, a bottle cap.[85] Not all of his neighbors, however, are so lucky. This moment dramatizes the daily struggle of marine creatures and lays bare the invasive, often invisible presence of human waste. It echoes what Mentz identifies as core to the Blue Humanities: the recognition of oceanic spaces as unstable, vulnerable, and deeply entangled with human histories.[86]

Rich also captures the interconnectedness of ecological systems in lines such as: Hermie's fate was tied to the fate of the reef, and the reef's fate to the whims of the tides, the weather, and the distant land-dwellers he would never meet. This poetic insight models what oceanic thinking demands: a planetary consciousness that acknowledges how far-reaching and relational environmental harm truly is. What distinguishes "Hermie" is not just what it says but also how it says it. Rich's metaphors, narrative voice, and formal experimentation elevate a simple story into a meditation on resilience and vulnerability. "To survive,"

[82] Rich 2011, 8.
[83] Mentz 2015.
[84] Arteaga and Johnsen 2021.
[85] Rich 2011, 9.
[86] Mentz 2024.

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Hermie realizes, he had to adapt, to find a new shell, to keep moving even when every instinct told him to hide. These lines become allegorical: a call to persist through precarity, to evolve with shifting ecosystems—a theme central to the Blue Humanities.[87]

"Hermie" also invites reflection on the role of literary studies in public life. Practicing literary studies "in public" means more than simplifying scholarship for broader audiences. As Arteaga and Johnsen argue, it means honoring the power of literary form itself—its metaphors, structures, and emotional resonance—as a mode of public engagement.[88] Through its accessible yet layered storytelling, *Hermie* exemplifies this approach. It makes complex climate issues legible through the eyes of a vulnerable creature, challenging readers to feel, imagine, and respond. In doing so, the story affirms literature's role not just as a mirror to society but also as a medium of ethical transformation and civic dialogue. Ultimately, *Hermie* shows how literary studies can matter beyond the classroom. It reminds us that stories do not merely inform us—they move us, and in doing so, they help shape the worlds we create and inhabit.[89]

3.3. Visualizing the climate: Film adaptation as public practice

While adaptation reshapes a story's form, public engagement determines its function—how it lives in the world, who it reaches, and what dialogue it inspires. In the context of climate storytelling, media adaptation plays a crucial role in transforming literary works into civic, pedagogical, and ecological interventions. Adaptation is more than translation from one medium to another—it is a shift in how a story functions in public space. In the case of Rich's "Hermie," originally published in *I'm with the Bears* (2011), the film adaptation invites broader participation in ethical and ecological conversations. As McKibben notes in his introduction to the anthology, fiction helps us "understand what things feel like" in a world marked by record heat, floods, and disappearing coastlines.[90] Visual adaptations amplify this affective dimension, making climate change legible, personal, and immediate. In the text, Rich evokes emotion through metaphor and introspection. Hermie's "filthy, unwieldy, carbuncled" shell relies on the reader's imagination.[91] In the film, however, visual and auditory cues—Hermie's appearance, his gravelly voice, the actor's silent reaction—create an immersive, sensory experience.[92] These differences suggest a key trade-off: the literary intimacy of internal narration is replaced with the visual immediacy of performance.

The adaptation of *Hermie* prompts a fundamental question: Can the literary persist when narrative shifts to visual media? I argue yes. Although the film departs from written language, it retains core elements of literariness—metaphor, character arc, and emotional resonance—through audiovisual form. Hermie's line, "completely gone... it's condos now," preserves the story's ecological symbolism and poetic compression.[93] This reframing expands the notion of public literary humanities. The film adaptation does not merely convey a story; it performs the narrative in public, encouraging emotional investment, ethical reflection, and ecological consciousness. Adaptation becomes an act of public storytelling—one that blurs disciplinary boundaries and mobilizes broader publics.

[87] Mentz 2024.
[88] Arteaga and Johnsen 2021.
[89] Damrosch 2003; Nussbaum 1997.
[90] McKibben 2011, 11.
[91] Rich 2011, 5.
[92] YouTube 2023, 0:15–0:25.
[93] Rich 2011, 22–23; YouTube 2023, 0:53–1:01.

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In literary form, "Hermie" offers introspection and ambiguity. The narrator's anxiety, memories, and guilt are central to the reading experience. In the film, internal monologue is absent, but emotional cues are conveyed through performance.[94] Some psychological depth is lost, but broader accessibility is gained. For many of my students, the film proved more emotionally immediate and engaging than the text, highlighting how different media foster different forms of literary connection. By circulating on platforms like YouTube, the adaptation reaches diverse, global audiences, including those unlikely to encounter the original short story. This turns adaptation into a civic act: it raises awareness about climate change, centers nonhuman perspectives, and fosters empathy. Following our Blue Humanities course, students reported seeing the ocean differently. One student even explored marine storytelling in narrative video games, suggesting that public literary humanities can travel not only across genres but also into emerging digital worlds. These multimodal responses underscore the untapped potential of adaptation as a bridge between climate knowledge and cultural imagination. Ultimately, adaptation reshapes how stories speak and who they speak to. In adapting "Hermie," the literary transforms—yet it endures. The film retains metaphor, emotional weight, and ecological urgency, but reconfigures them for a new medium and public. In doing so, it illustrates how public literary humanities are not bound to the page but are capable of evolving across platforms to meet the world where it listens, watches, and feels.

3.4. Digital and interactive spaces as public practice

In the digital age, the boundaries of literary practice extend well beyond books and lecture halls. Today, video games and social media platforms operate as powerful venues for public literary humanities, engaging broad audiences in ethical, emotional, and intellectual dialogue. Whether through the immersive storytelling of games like *Abzû* or the microcommentary of a tweet, digital environments cultivate new forms of readerly attention and narrative empathy—what Richard Lane calls the rise of the "Big Humanities" in digital laboratories.[95] This section explores how these media engage publics not simply as consumers but also as participants in the co-creation of literary and ecological meaning.

3.4.1. Video games as public literary humanities

Abzû, an ocean-themed video game by Giant Squid Studios, exemplifies how interactive media can function as public literary humanities.[96] Without dialogue or traditional plotlines, the game invites players to explore a submerged world filled with mythic ruins, marine life, and environmental allegory. Its visual language—rising currents, glowing fish, and collapsing structures—evokes a narrative arc of ecological ruin and renewal. As the player dives deeper, the ocean reveals itself not just as space but also as a story. This form of immersive, nonverbal storytelling fosters a kind of literary engagement that relies on movement, atmosphere, and affect. *Abzû* echoes themes of the Blue Humanities by positioning the ocean as an active agent and archive of ecological memory. The player becomes a reader, navigating watery landscapes and interpreting environmental loss through symbolic interaction rather than exposition. The game thus becomes a site for cultivating ecological imagination, where the ocean's beauty and fragility are rendered in ways that provoke reflection and emotional response. Games like *Abzû* challenge traditional definitions of literature by shifting narrative authority from text to experience. Yet they also extend the

[94] YouTube 2023, 0:03–2:42.
[95] Lane 2017.
[96] Giant Squid Studios 2016.

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reach of literary practice to new publics—particularly younger audiences and gamers—inviting them into a deeply affective and metaphor-rich engagement with environmental themes. In this way, interactive media complements Public Humanities by democratizing literary access and translating ecological crisis into participatory storytelling.

3.5. Public literary engagement on social media: A personal reflection

My Twitter account serves as a digital site of public literary humanities. Through curated quotes, commentary, and reflections from Blue Humanities texts, I seek to make academic knowledge legible and relevant to diverse audiences. These tweets function as micro-publications—bite-sized, accessible insights that circulate well beyond scholarly circles. They foreground themes such as marine environmental justice, the poetics of water, and climate narrative, drawing attention to the literary dimensions of ecological discourse. Crucially, this activity fosters transnational engagement. Analytics from my posts show responses from Yemen, India, Canada, the United Kingdom, and beyond. Many readers are students, educators, or environmental advocates outside elite academic networks. This confirms that Twitter can serve as a global public sphere—an informal but effective space for the circulation of literary thought, environmental ethics, and interdisciplinary dialogue. While tweets lack the depth of long-form scholarship, they offer immediacy, reach, and resonance. They allow for experimentation in form and tone, enabling moments of humor, provocation, and poetic insight. As such, they embody the spirit of public literary humanities—scholarship that listens, speaks, and evolves with the world it addresses.

To better understand how the Blue Humanities engages the public, it's helpful to reflect on how social media operates differently from the classroom. In what follows, I explore in detail how the publicness of these platforms is changing the way climate knowledge is shared, discussed, and experienced. Classrooms are structured and confined, typically serving a limited group of students. Evelyn Langmann calls them a "holding environment" for emotion and conflict in sustainability and climate change education.[97] On the contrary, social media platforms are vast, uncontained, and possess an unprecedented publicness that fundamentally alters audience engagement and communication about climate issues within the Blue Humanities framework. As Danah Boyd highlights in "Social Network Sites as Networked Publics," social media blur boundaries between presence and absence, time and space, control and freedom, personal and mass communication, private and public, and virtual and real. This affects how old patterns should be understood and raises new challenges and opportunities for people engaging others through new technologies.[98] This blurring is central to understanding the "publicness" of these platforms, as discussed in works like "Social Media: A Case of Publicness" and "Media on the Move: Personalized Media and the Transformation of Publicness."[99] Platforms such as YouTube, X (formerly Twitter), and Instagram serve as fluid arenas where climate narratives circulate in real time, shaped by visual culture, hashtags, and user interaction. Unlike classrooms, these platforms are not designed for deliberative learning but for immediacy and amplification. Yet, precisely because of this, they enable Blue Humanities content to reach broader audiences, invite unexpected collaborations, and provoke public discourse beyond academic enclosures. The concept of "bounded social media places" is beginning to emerge as a way to understand varied levels of visibility and control within these broader platforms.[100]

[97] Langmann 2025, 1.
[98] Boyd 2010.
[99] Brooksby 2014; Drotner 2005.
[100] Malhotra 2025.

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For instance, it was through X that I connected with Sameer Mohammed, the author of the Arabic novel *Mocha City: An Autobiography of the History of Coffee*, and initiated discussions about my plan to translate the novel into English. This project was then enthusiastically welcomed as both urgent and timely by scholars of the Indian Ocean and post-Mocha studies, including Nancy Um, whom I also connected with via X.[101] Similarly, my engagement on social media led to a connection with Kritish Rajbhandari, who generously shared his encyclopedia essay on postcolonial seas and fictions that I taught in the course Narratives of Ocean Cultures.[102] Such spontaneous, transnational, and intellectually generative encounters are unlikely to emerge within the bounded setting of a classroom.

Therefore, to engage the public on climate change issues, I would argue that Blue Humanities scholars must shift how they approach authority, storytelling, and knowledge. In classrooms, for instance, traditional academic authority resides with professors and peer-reviewed journals, and knowledge flows largely from recognized authorities to students. Social media, however, allow anyone to publish, share, and comment. This means the "authority" over a topic can be claimed by influencers, activists, personal anecdotes, or even viral content, not just credentialed scholars. For scholars to effectively engage the public on ocean climate issues via social media, they cannot just expect their academic credentials to automatically confer authority. They need to understand *how* credibility is built and perceived in these new spaces. This might involve adapting their tone, engaging directly with a wider range of voices, and accepting that their "authority" is part of a broader, more decentralized conversation. Academic publishing and traditional media act as gatekeepers of knowledge and authority. Social media bypass these gatekeepers, allowing scholars to share their work directly with wider audiences. But this also means competing for attention and credibility in an increasingly noisy digital environment. And when scholars embrace tools like memes or short videos, they are not just changing their medium; they are implicitly acknowledging that effective communication in these spaces might require a different kind of authority—one that is more relatable, accessible, and participatory, rather than solely based on traditional academic credentials. But while this democratizes knowledge, it also opens the door to misinformation, disinformation, and oversimplified narratives. For the Blue Humanities, this means the challenge of ensuring accurate and nuanced communication about complex ocean issues amidst a sea of potentially misleading content. The blurred boundaries between "digital intimate publics and social media" further complicate this dynamic.[103]

This profound shift aligns directly with Baym and Boyd's observation that "That level of moderate, widespread publicness is unprecedented. There are more layers of publicness available to those using networked media than ever before; as a result, people's relationship to public life is shifting in ways we have barely begun to understand."[104] Indeed, the heightened visibility offered by these platforms is a key characteristic; social media inherently makes audiences more visible.

Here's how this publicness of social media manifests in at least four ways, in addition to the authority challenge I explained above. First, social media offer global reach, connecting with diverse audiences regardless of age, background, or geographical location. This publicness allows for the dissemination of Blue Humanities perspectives to coastal communities,

[101] Um 2009; 2017.
[102] Rajbhandari 2022.
[103] Dobson, Carah, and Robards 2018.
[104] Baym and Boyd 2012, 322.

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policymakers, artists, activists, and the general public who might otherwise never encounter these ideas. This broad reach of social media also supports recent eco-literacy initiatives.[105]

Second, social media promote rapid, often informal, and highly interactive engagement. Users can comment, share, remix, and contribute their own content, transforming passive recipients into active participants. This aligns with the Blue Humanities' emphasis on diverse voices and lived experiences, enabling conversations that transcend traditional academic hierarchies and incorporate local knowledge, Indigenous perspectives, and artistic interpretations of difficult climate change science. This capacity also enables what Hutchinson refers to as "micro-platformization for digital activism on social media."[106] In other words, activists can create their own small, focused spaces on social media to spread their message and organize, even when larger platforms try to limit their visibility. Furthermore, the very recent emergence of "immersive speculative environments" within virtual and mixed reality suggests future avenues for engaging publics with complex environmental narratives, including those relevant to the Blue Humanities.[107]

Third, social media allow for a wide array of content formats (images, videos, personal stories, memes, and infographics) that can evoke emotional responses and appeal to different learning styles. This publicness is particularly potent for the Blue Humanities, which seeks to communicate climate issues not just as scientific facts, but as cultural, emotional, and ethical challenges. Narratives about ocean heritage, the impact of climate change on coastal communities, or the beauty of marine ecosystems can quickly "go viral," garnering millions of hits, extending their impact far beyond traditional media. I've witnessed, both as a scholar and a participant, how such posts can unexpectedly spark wide public conversations around marine heritage and vulnerability. A case in point is BBC's documentary *Blue Planet II*, which generated immense buzz and millions of views across various social media platforms (YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter). The scene of the pilot whale calf dying from plastic contamination, for instance, became a powerful visual narrative that circulated globally, triggering emotional responses and driving awareness and action against plastic pollution. Similarly, imagery of a solitary, emaciated polar bear struggling on melting Arctic ice, widely shared from documentaries and news reports, has served as another profoundly impactful visual narrative, encapsulating the devastating effects of climate change on polar ecosystems and their iconic inhabitants. You must have also seen the powerful image of Alan Kurdi, the Syrian child who drowned in the Mediterranean, which instantly humanized the refugee crisis and its connection to the sea. In addition, new methods for understanding environmental change through visual narratives are also emerging, such as Photovoice.[108]

Finally, social media possess an inherent immediacy that can prompt action. Viral campaigns, real-time reporting of environmental events, and direct appeals for support can translate awareness into tangible efforts, such as advocating for policy changes, participating in beach cleanups, or supporting marine conservation initiatives—all central to the applied aspects of the Blue Humanities. The power of visual icons on social media, such as the widely shared image of Kurdi or the visceral image of a plastic straw being removed from a sea turtle's nose, vividly illustrates how a single image can emerge to create what Mortensen

[105] Abdullah 2023.
[106] Hutchinson 2021.
[107] Pykett et al. 2025.
[108] Mortensen et al. 2025.

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and Trenz call an "impromptu public of moral spectatorship," driving global awareness and emotional response to tragic human–ocean encounters.[109] Millions of people around the world were *watching*, *feeling a shared moral outrage or sorrow*, and often *demanding action* as a result of that spontaneous, collective viewing experience. Thus, in bridging *Abzû* and Twitter, this section has underscored the need to theorize public literary humanities in digital terms. The "public" is no longer a fixed audience but a shifting constellation of global readers, players, and followers. And the "literary" now includes not just texts but also screens, sounds, hashtags, and underwater worlds.

3.5.1. Engaging oceans: Science communication as public narrative

As digital adaptation and storytelling expand the reach of ecological narratives, science communicators play a parallel role in translating complex knowledge into public understanding. Whether through immersive oceanic games, short films, or micro-commentary on social media, these forms rely on affect, metaphor, and accessibility—qualities shared by scientific storytellers like Antje Boetius and Hashem Al-Ghaili.[110] Their work exemplifies the same interdisciplinary ethos that animates the Blue Humanities: making the ocean thinkable and feelable across genres, platforms, and publics. Boetius, a leading marine biologist and director of the Alfred Wegener Institute, is widely recognized for her public engagement, including hosting the 2024 *Terra X* documentary series on ZDF. She also brought scientific insight into the 2023 television adaptation of Frank Schätzing's novel *Der Schwarm*, serving as an advisor to a project that dramatizes oceanic agency and global ecological crisis, firmly placing marine life at the center of public imagination.[111] By contrast, the Yemeni science communicator Al-Ghaili reaches global audiences through data-rich infographics and viral videos, disseminated on platforms such as Facebook and LinkedIn, where his content has garnered over 10 billion views. Together, their work demonstrates how interdisciplinary storytelling—whether through televised fiction, documentary, or viral media—can bridge science and the humanities, expanding the reach and resonance of Blue Humanities in public discourse.

4. Conclusion: Toward a public Blue Humanities

In the face of planetary crisis, the Blue Humanities offers more than a new academic field—it proposes a vital reimagining of how climate knowledge is created, circulated, and lived. By bridging disciplines, media, and publics, it transforms scientific abstraction into emotional resonance, cultural meaning, and civic engagement. Whether through short stories like "Hermie" and its adapted film, immersive games like *Abzû*, or digital platforms like Twitter, the Blue Humanities makes the ocean—and climate crisis—thinkable, feelable, and shareable. This is the power of Public Humanities at their most fluid and responsive: to translate knowledge into narrative, data into empathy, and crisis into action. A Public Blue Humanities must continue to foreground collaboration, accessibility, and storytelling as tools for imagining more sustainable, just, and interconnected futures. In doing so, it invites us all—not just academics, but communities, artists, students, and storytellers—to co-create the narratives we need to navigate this shared world.

[109] Mortensen and Trenz 2016.
[110] Boetius 2024; Al-Ghaili 2025.
[111] Schätzing 2004; ZDF 2023.

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