English internal 90852 (1.8)

Explain significant connection(s) across texts, using supportive evidence.

The four texts I selected to study for my connection were ‘Dear Mr. Cairney’ written by Graeme Lay,  ‘Fresh Bait’ written by Sherryl Clark, ‘Singing my Sister Down’ written by Margo Lanagan, and ‘My Sister’s Keeper’ directed by Nick Cassavetes. These texts all displayed prime examples of my selected connection; the extremes family will go to in protection of their loved ones. Often family will take huge measures, or put themselves at risk or inconvenience, to keep their own safe from harm or injury. Love will often cause people to place others’ welfare at a higher priority than their own.

In ‘Dear Mr. Cairney’, written by Graeme Lae, the author of the letter was acting in protection of his own son. Mr. Cairney had caused the letter writer trauma as a young child and was intent on his son never having to experience the same. At the end of a fairly formal letter, the writer made a menacing remark, although put in a rather light-hearted manner. ‘And if you so much as touch one hair on his head, Mr. Cairney, I will come along to your school and smash every bone in your face. Yours faithfully, a past pupil.’ The writer was willing to hurt another adult if he dared to put his obviously much loved son, through any kind of trauma, no matter how minor. Just the threat of that could have the writer charged with harassment. The writer would have loved to have the satisfaction of signing the letter, but held off because he did want his son being victimised in any way by Mr. Cairney. The author seems to be suggesting that if a parent has been through a certain trauma, they will be careful and wary that their child does not go through the same experience and be more alert to the risks whilst trying to protect them from it.

In ‘Fresh Bait’, written by Sherryl Clark, the sister of a murdered woman has been hitchhiking around in a dangerous attempt to be picked up by the same man who murdered her sister so she can get have justice served at last.  By doing this she is putting herself at risk of having the same fate her sister had, as well as catching rides with countless strangers of whom she knows nothing about. She is a young woman with nothing but a concealed, steel bar for protection, making herself extremely vulnerable. The hitchhiker is literally using herself as bait to lure in her sister, Melanie’s killer, hence the title, ‘Fresh Bait’. But this hitchhiker knew the risks and was prepared to take them purely for the satisfaction of seeing justice served. We see how aware she was of the dangers by the quote, ‘What did I hope to achieve, apart from ending up like Melanie?’. But we also see her pure determination and courage, ‘Melanie was my sister. I’d find her killer if it’s the last thing I did’. In both ‘Fresh Bait’ and ‘Dear Mr. Cairney’, both main characters were seeking the downright satisfaction of revenge on the offenders who had hurt, or could hurt, members of their family of whom they care deeply about. In ‘Fresh Bait’, the author seems to be implying that humans will put themselves into dangerous positions and disregard their own safety for their family or people that they love. Clark seems to imply that even the most intelligent of people (the hitchhiker is a highschool teacher), can neglect their safety and rationality due to love they possess for others.

In my third text, ‘Singing my Sister Down’, by Margo Langalan, ‘Ikky’s family is being forced to watch her slowly sink to her death in a tarpit due to her own wrongdoing. Although the family is agonisingly watching one of their own die, they all remain strong and do not break down, which I can imagine would be immensely difficult to do. You can see the effect it took on the family after Ikky has sunk, and the family allow themselves to show their emotions. ‘Mumma knew it was all right to be weeping now, now that Ik was surely gone’. Ikky’s brother could not summon the strength to walk properly, so Mumma carried him around her torso, although he was somewhat grown up. Mumma had offered to shoot Ikky in the head just before she sunk to the point of not being able to breathe, insuring a quick death. She was willing to go to the tremendous extreme of taking her own daughters life. Mumma would have to live with this burden perpetually just to make Ikky’s death less painful. If she was caught doing this, the same punishment would be served to her, but her daughters well being was of more importance to her than her own fatality or abiding by the laws of her country. The father in ‘Dear Mr. Cairney’, was also willing to break the law for his child by sending his ex teacher a threatening letter. This portrays the idea that our family is more important to our hearts than a law will ever be. Ikky did not allow Mumma to shoot her, showing she would have rather suffered a slower, more excruciating death than risk her mother being served the same punishment  as she was receiving. Ikky’s family was prepared to endure the humiliation of being with Ikky on the tar while the whole town watched in order to make her last moments the best that they could and show her she would die loved. In ‘Singing my Sister down’, Mumma did not want Ikky’s brother going through the same punishment Ikky did so warned him to choose who he loves carefully, and in ‘Dear Mr. Cairney’, the father does not want his son going through the same punishment Mr. Cairney put him through as a child so warns the teacher against doing so. This reinforces the idea that we will try to protect our loved ones from specific traumas after experiencing it personally or witnessing it.  I think Langalan in hinting at forgiveness in this text. Although Ikky has committed murder, it is portrayed as a very minor part of the text, the predominant focus is the infinite love the family still have for Ikky, regardless of the crime she has committed.

In my final text, ‘My Sister’s Keeper’, directed by Nick Cassavetes, Anna Fitzgerald had been conceived by vitro fertilisation, in a lab, to be a genetic match to her older sister Kate Fitzgerald, who suffered from leukaemia. Anna donated compatible blood, organs and tissue in order to keep her sister alive, despite this meaning she would never be able to play sport or give birth. Donations of this kind were also dangerous to Anna’s health, but she was inclined to doing it. My other three texts also included family members willing to put themselves in a dangerous position for their own’s sake.The girl in ‘Fresh Bait’ put herself in a danger by travelling with numerous strangers, Mumma, in ‘Singing my Sister Down’, put herself in danger of being caught killing her daughter, resulting in a death penalty, and the father in ‘Dear Mr. Cairney put himself in danger of getting charged for harassment. The Fitzgerald parents valued Kate’s life so much that they, especially the mother, Sara, were willing to place both their daughters into countless surgeries and transplants in a relentless effort to keep Kate alive. Kate tells Sara numerous times that she does not want to live any longer but Sara is too narrow-minded to listen and continues to persuade Anna to donate to Kate, undeterred by Kate’s protests. Sara is blind to Kate’s wishes because she loves her too much to let her go. The Fitzgerald father, Brian, accepts the risks of taking Kate out of hospital for the day upon her request to go to the beach one last time, but when he comes home to collect Kate and the rest of his family, Sara is furious that Kate has been checked out of hospital  and wants her back there immediately. Kate’s last request was so important to Brian that he threatened to divorce Sara if he did not let Kate go to the beach. This relates to “Dear Mr. Cairney”. Both texts have a loving father with their child's best interests at heart who are prepared to threaten something to another authority. Sara, later realising how important the request was to Kate, joins the family on the beach. Anna never really minded donating to her sister, but goes to a lawyer to sue her parents in the search of medical emancipation under her sister’s instruction. The family all gave up a lot for Kate after she got sick’ we see just how much through one of Anna’s monologues. ‘Since my sister got sick, things have changed, Aunt Kelly only works part time and Mom quit her job as a lawyer. Her life now revolves around keeping Kate alive, cooking and cleaning, everything steamed, organic, and germ-free.’ This shows the sacrifices family are willing to make for each other. Throughout this text, the author seems to suggest that love often makes parents blind to what their children’s wishes are. But it also suggests that their happiness is more important than anything else.

Overall, my texts show that family will go to monumental extremes in protection of their loved ones. My texts exhibited how family members will always try and protect each other from traumatic experiences they, themselves, have experienced. It also shows that love can cause even the smartest of people to put themselves in danger and that a family’s happiness is always of greatest priority. I think that most people who go to extremes for their family, are not acting with what their brain is telling them, but with their heart.