

Review: Anthropocene Fictions: The Novel in a Time of Climate Change

By Adam Trexler

Reviewed by Ryder W. Miller

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The name of our current historical time, The Anthropocene Age, reflects the fact that we have changed the environment - the world - since the previous age, the Holocene. In *Anthropocene Fictions*, Adam Trexler, an independent scholar from Portland, Oregon, explores novels that have been written during and about this time, with the focus being about global warming and climate change. The book does not list what needs to be read or what the classics are, but it does focus on a dozen or so books that have tried to address the issue. Some of the books described include: J.G. Ballard's *The Flood* (1962), Richard Cowper's *The Road to Corlay* (1976), Arthur Herzog's *Heat* (1977), George Turner's *The Sea and the Summer* (1987), T.C. Boyle's *A Friend of the Earth* (2000), Maggie Gee's *The Flood* (2004), Will Self's *The Book of Dave* (2006), Saci Lloyd's *Carbon Diaries* (2008), Matthew Glass's *Ultimatum* (2009), and others. The most explored novel in this treatment of the subject is Kim Stanley Robinson's "Science in the Capital" trilogy from 2004, 2005, and 2007 focuses on what the government has done and not done to try to solve the problem. Trexler also explores books by Bruce Sterling, Margaret Atwood, Ben Bova, and Paolo Bacigalupi, showing that Science Fiction writers have risen to the challenge of confronting the subject.

Writing a novel about confronting global climate change can be a difficult challenge. Trexler notes that there is a lot of non-fiction, journalism, Hollywood disaster films, documentaries, and academic books, on the subjects that can be chosen for one's time instead. It is also a change in direction for some novelists. We can write about the effects of climate change, the causes, the struggle to resist it, and what has been done by government to combat it, but when does fiction begin in a novel? Trexler writes:

I worried that the rest would be preachy, politically partisan in the worst sense, apocalyptic rather than scientific, or, yet worse, craven rehearsals of the "facts."
(p.6)

Some of the things that Trexler worries about though are still necessary, but better found elsewhere other than novels. Trexler adds though that these other sources "...lack the novel's capacity to interrogate the emotional, aesthetic, and living experience of the Anthropocene" (p. 6). Sadly, it is not clear who will have read the novels discussed.

This is a great book to explore what has been written on the subject of climate change and global warming by novelists and science fiction writers. One does not get a sense

here that classics will emerge on this subject. One is likely to think that some of these novels may become dated. This book is a good way to search for books that have been written about this subject. The writing is academic and challenging, and the book, which does not seek to be definitive, is still a good place to explore what, in the book, is referred to as “cli fi” as in “climate fiction.” Literature professors will find books here that they can use on the subject. Eco-critics will get from this book a general sense of what “cli fi” is available. Literary Critics will learn some interesting ways to think about these novels. Some might find some of the language puzzling, but not necessarily on a close or second reading.

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