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Goodbody, Axel, and Adeline Johns-Putra (eds.), *Cli-Fi. A Companion* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2019), 236pp.



Goodbody and Johns-Putra's edited collection of essays *Cli-Fi* is a necessary and accessible introductory text to the genre of climate fiction. It provides a critical overview of documentaries, films, and novels that reflect on (and indeed might effect a new awareness of) the impact of anthropogenic climate change on human, non-human, and more-than-human worlds. With a growing public and academic interest in climate and environmental storytelling and a considerable body of works for the readership to peruse, this companion could not have come at a better time.

The editors have made an excellent selection of primary works for discussion in the companion. The range covers a lot of ground and includes documentary films (Franny Armstrong's *Age of Stupid*), Hollywood blockbusters (Roland Emmerich's *The Day After Tomorrow*), more and less hopeful novels (David Brin's utopian *Earth*; Ian McEwan's darkly humorous *Solar*), children's animated films (Disney's *Frozen*), non-English works (Bong Joon-ho's *Snowpiercer*, among others), climate-sceptic novels (Michael Crichton's *State of Fear*), and of course "proto" or early cli-fi works (such as J. G. Ballard's *The Drowned World*). The essays are grouped according to a number of different themes, among which dystopian and postapocalyptic future fictions, present and near-future realist narratives, and literary modernism. No clear chronology was applied when ordering the discussions, except in the first section (which follows the dates of publication of several proto-cli-fi novels).

Goodbody and Johns-Putra are acutely aware of the limits of cli-fi texts and take pains to discuss these. Issues within the genre include the risk of authors being overly didactic or even patronising (9; an oft-cited example is Jostein Gaarder's *The World According to Anna*, discussed in the companion by Reinard Hennig, 181–86); the importance of scientific accuracy despite fictional license (9); the need to avoid "info-dumping" (9); and perhaps the biggest challenge of all: representing multiple, often clashing temporal and spatial realities, for instance geological and human timescales or the local and the global (10).

At the same time, the editors as well as a number of contributors are quick to point out the various ways in which authors of cli-fi mitigate, or indeed capitalise on, these challenges. They show that some of the more inventive authors working in the genre come close to what might well be another instalment in the developing character of the novel, or at the very least are pushing for a recalibration of our narrative and reading conventions (12–14). Timothy Clark, for instance, demonstrates how George Turner's

reflections on the need for a new direction for sci-fi writing culminated in his own proto-cli-fi work, *The Sea and Summer*—which includes a metafictional narrative arc reflecting on this change of style (46–47).

What makes this collection so exciting to the reader is precisely the chance to discover these incredibly creative approaches to the subject of anthropogenic climate change. Hannes Bergthaller, for instance, shows the reader how the idea of the “risk society” is explored in Nathaniel Rich’s *Odds Against Tomorrow*—a work which pays very little attention to such “classic” cli-fi themes as personal responsibility or the generation clash (117–22). Meanwhile, Bradon Smith points out the value of satire in Will Self’s *The Book of Dave*, a work proving that humour can be used to enhance ecological narrative while also being employed to make very valid observations on religious fundamentalism and utopian ideas on the resilience of small community life in a climate emergency (153–58). These perhaps unexpected ecological narratives are explored in conjunction with the “classics” of the genre, such as Barbara Kingsolver’s *Flight Behaviour* and Margaret Atwood’s *MaddAddam* trilogy—all of which, by the way, are analysed with just as much skill as the less familiar primary texts.

The companion does not offer in-depth discussion of the parameters of the cli-fi genre itself, which might have been warranted considering the scope and impact of anthropogenic climate change and the societal transformations required to avert disaster. For instance, Timothy Clark’s admonition to read eco-critically works that have traditionally been regarded as “non-eco” (Clark, 64) receives no attention in the volume. At the same time, such in-depth reflection might overshoot the aims of this particular collection of essays. Moreover, challenges to a narrow understanding of cli-fi come aplenty from within the primary texts themselves. Many of the works discussed are shown to tackle an impressively wide scope of themes and issues prevalent in modern societies, therewith widening the notion of what constitutes “ecological disaster” or contributes to its making. Meanwhile, the inclusion of works like Jeff Nichols’s *Take Shelter* and Disney’s *Frozen* proves that at least some effort was made to push beyond the limits of what are generally understood as fictions and/or films “about” the environment.

Works Cited

Clark, Timothy. *Ecocriticism on the Edge. The Anthropocene as a Threshold Concept*. Bloomsbury Academic, 2015.