*Climate Crisis and the 21st-Century British Novel*. By BRACKE, ASTRID. (Environmental Cultures Series) London: Bloomsbury. 2018. vii+177pp. £91.80. ISBN: 978-1-4742-7112-7.

A significant addition to the university library or the bookshelf of undergraduates and researchers alike, this timely monograph marks Bracke out as an important voice in the expanding area of ecocriticism. The book’s main theme is the effect upon contemporary British novels of the now ubiquitous awareness of ecological degradation and the way in which these novels allow us to rethink this stage through narrative. Bracke’s insightful literary analysis of twelve British postmillennial novels works to elucidate that these texts do not just reflect this new cultural backdrop but have structural and narrative devices within them which demonstrate that our awareness of climate crisis is altering certain aspects of novelistic production.

The book is organised into four chapters, each titled with a single word: ‘Collapse’, ‘Pastoral’, ‘Urban’ and ‘Polar’. ‘Collapse’ focuses principally on time and narrative structure which index the novels’ engagement with ecological crisis in the following three texts: *Cloud Atlas* (Mitchell, 2004), *The Carhullan Army* (Hall, 2007) and *The Island at the End of the World* (Taylor, 2009). ‘Pastoral’ works to revalidate the function of the pastoral mode in the present age: Bracke argues convincingly that the mode has a long history of responding to troubled times and is, therefore, amply suited to displaying the tensions of the present ecological crisis. Again, three British novels are discussed as examples of this revived pastoral tradition: *August* (Woodward, 2001), *God’s Own Country* (Raisin, 2008) and *Wish You Were Here* (Swift, 2011). Our attention is turned to three realist novels set in the inner-city environments so common to twenty-first century living in the chapter titled ‘Urban’: *The Translation of the Bones* (Kay, 2011), *NW* (Smith, 2012) and *Clay* (Harrison, 2013). For Bracke, these texts chart the necessary evolution of human-nature relations in a time of ecological crisis – a time which requires new traditions of nature writing, along with new definitions of the category ‘natural’. The final chapter – ‘Polar’ – begins with a fascinating and diverse overview of the polar regions in both literary and cultural history. Serving as a sharp contrast to the preceding chapter which focused on the all-too familiar urban environment, representations of the remote polar regions are explored as both a former crucible for British identity (referencing the Scott and Shackleton expeditions), and the site of the starkest evidence of contemporary climate crisis. Here, Brake draws together three novels which make use of historical narrative in order to show the shifts in cultural attitudes to the polar regions ‘from exploration to environmentalism to threat’ (p. 123): *The Collector of Lost Things* (Page, 2013), *Everland* (Hunt, 2014) and *The North Water* (McGuire, 2016).

Bracke’s discussion is regularly directed toward popular representations of climate crisis in blockbuster film, television programmes or advertising with the effect of building a convincing argument regarding the prevalence of the climate crisis narrative in the media. The issue of cognitive dissonance is raised in relation to the popular, defined by Bracke as ‘knowing about climate crisis, but continuing to live life as if nothing is the matter’ (p. 3). Yet this point reveals something of an impasse at the heart of the project here, as the postmillennial British novel itself seems exempt from this challenge on the grounds that it is more critical, sensitive, alert to complexity. Is there, however, a terrible intellectualised catharsis that takes place when we read such undoubtedly excellent examples of fiction as Bracke selects, an attitude along the lines of *‘I am doing something about climate crisis: I’m reading this novel’*? This line of enquiry perhaps merits a monograph in its own right, however, Bracke’s text admirably fulfils its aims in illuminating the pervasive effect of the ecological crisis narrative upon the postmillennial British novel.

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