Nationalism, Masculinity, and the Politics of Climate Change in the Novels of Kim Stanley Robinson and Michael Crichton

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Abstract

This paper explores the complex interplay between narratives of American masculinity, nationalism, and environmentalism in novels by Michael Crichton (State of Fear) and Kim Stanley Robinson (Science in the Capital trilogy). Considered in the context of public debates about climate change as well as the discourse of the “war on terror,” this article argues that these novels enlist climate change as an occasion to dramatize the recovery of an imperiled national masculinity, adding to the crowded stage of perceived challenges to the privileges of an elite majority whose supposed “citizen trauma” (Berlant) threatens to overshadow the real consequences of environmental calamity.

References


A new piece by Kim Stanley Robinson in The New Yorker discusses some of the ways the coronavirus pandemic has changed us. "In mid-March, in a prior age, I spent a week rafting down the Grand Canyon. When I left for the trip, the United States was still beginning to grapple with the reality of the coronavirus pandemic. This reader found Kim Stanley Robinson’s THE YEARS OF RICE AND SALT particularly poignant reading for the current moment. It’s been a year since I’ve posted here. A long year. Climate change fiction is now a recognisable literary phenomenon replete with its own nickname: “Cli-fi”. The term was coined in 2007 by Taiwan-based blogger Dan Bloom. In this century, we can count Atwood, Michael Crichton, Barbara Kingsolver, Ian McEwan, Kim Stanley Robinson, Ilija Trojanow and Jeanette Winterson as major authors who have written about climate change. The past five years have given us notable examples of cli-fi by emerging authors, such as Steven Amsterdam, Edan Lepucki, Jane Rawson, Nathaniel Rich and Antti Tuomainen. Creative challenges. Added to this is the networked nature of climate change: in physical terms, the climate is a large, complex system whose effects are
difficult to model. Kim Stanley Robinson. A major new novel from one of science fiction's most powerful voices, AURORA tells the
incredible story of our first voyage beyond the solar system. Brilliantly imagined and beautifully told, it is the work of a writer at the height
of his powers. **Our voyage from Earth began generations ago. Kim Stanley Robinson has been an ongoing force in the Science Fiction
genre for over twenty years, with his novels (Year’s of Rice and Salt, Forty Signs of Rain) crossing over to the mainstream, and routinely
appearing on the New York Times best sellers list. During the 80s and early nineties, his short fiction continued to push the boundaries of
science fiction, defining the science-focused side of the science fiction genre.