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Johan Höglund, *The American Climate Emergency Narrative: Origins, Developments and Imaginary Futures* (Palgrave MacMillan, 2024), 214 pp.

In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, which devastated New Orleans in the summer of 2005, the bands U2 and Green Day released a cover of 'The Saints Are Coming" (1978) by Scottish punk group Skids. Chris Milk's music video presents an alternative history in which US troops are redeployed from Iraq to Louisiana, overlaying real footage of submerged US homes with columns of M1 Abrams battle tanks and fleets of nuclear-capable B-2 heavy bombers. This militarised response to ecological disaster belongs to a genre perceptively identified and theorised by Johan Höglund in *The American Climate Emergency Narrative: Origins, Developments and Imaginary Futures* (2024).

Höglund's principal achievement is to identify the American Climate Emergency Narrative (hereafter abbreviated ACEN) as a genre in which 'socio-ecological breakdown' necessitates the redeployment of military forces and security logics from the periphery to the core of the world-system (Höglund, x and passim). Höglund builds upon Immanuel Wallerstein's popular conception of world-systems theory, which takes the world, rather than the nation, as the basic unit of enquiry, identifying core, semi-periphery, and periphery states. As such, the ACEN complicates readings of climate fiction—a genre which explores socio-ecological breakdown more generally—by naming a related genre in which the military is presented as a solution to climate disaster, as in Milk's film, without confronting the causal relationship between biospheric breakdown, the military, and logics of securitisation.

For Höglund, the ACEN is a product of the world-system's "core," which justifies particular attention to U.S. literature produced primarily by white, male, straight, and financially secure Americans, with the important exception of the eighth and final chapter, which identifies other types of ecologically-oriented narratives, including Helen Marshall's *The Migration* (2019) and Waubgeshig Rice's *Moon of the Crusted Snow* (2018). As a product of the "core," the ACEN provides implicit reinforcement of the contemporary capitalist world-system and the military violence through which it is perpetuated. This logic is smuggled into works which may otherwise "project the sense that [they are] about the biospheric crisis" (Höglund 11), including Jeff VanderMeer's *Southern Reach* trilogy (2014). Höglund's intervention is thinking with world-systems theory to identify the operation through which climate



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fiction may implicitly defend the dominant global world-system responsible for anthropogenic climate change.

In support of this thesis, Höglund reads texts across periods, genres, and media—from Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) to the film *Godzilla II* (2019); from Paolo Bacigalupi's *Ship Breaker* trilogy (2010-2017) to the video game *Battlefield 2042* (2021)—ultimately tracing the logic which structures the ACEN to the settler capitalist writing and plantation texts of the 1600s, including John Underhill's *Newes from America* (1638). In this sense, the entire project productively complicates disciplinary conventions, suggesting that a broad scope is necessary to identify an undertow of cultural logics and to precisely situate the contemporary ACEN in relation to both its cultural antecedents and to the material history of extractivist capitalism.

This historical scope allows Höglund to argue, for instance, that various genocides of Indigenous people across North America in the seventeenth century are, in fact, partially motivated by the logics of enclosure, privatisation, extraction, and accumulation (that is, the core processes of the contemporary capitalist world-system). Crucially, this sort of trans-historical work deconstructs the notion that socio-ecological breakdown, caused by extractivist capitalism, is located somewhere in the future. Höglund is rightly critical of definitions of climate fiction which do not acknowledge this history and the global inequalities that it has produced. Such justice-oriented thinking is heightened in the sixth chapter as Höglund considers the figure of the climate refugee within in the ACEN as occupying one of two roles: the first as a racialised and monstrous being whose disregard for borders threatens the stability of the world-system, as in Marc Forster's 2013 film *World War Z*; the second as a white American, able to exploit their global mobility to escape (or delay) the material consequences of socio-ecological breakdown, as in *The Road* (2006), by Cormac McCarthy, and Brian Hart's, *Trouble No Man* (2019). Each of these two inflections of the ACEN rely upon the logics of enclosure and securitisation, supporting, rather than challenging, a fundamental structure.

While the book is primarily concerned with literary representation, discussions of film and video games permit productive criticism of the market mechanisms that shape multi-million-dollar narratives. Höglund notes that *Battlefield 2042,* for example, omits China from the story precisely as a prerequisite for selling the game in their market, and compares this to films produced by the US Military Entertainment Complex—including *Top Gun* (1986), directed by Tony Scott—in which the script is approved by the US AirForce. In each example, Höglund reveals *de facto* censorship, motivated by market forces, to constitute an operation through which the logic of extractivist capitalism directly intervenes with the content of the ACEN. This multi-media approach permits application of theory in surprising and productive ways, which includes applying Mark Fisher's capitalist realism—meaning the inability to imagine a world without capitalism—to the gameplay of *Battlefield 2042,* which, despite a "surface layer" critique of extractive capitalism, positions the player as "stuck rehearsing a procedural rhetoric" with limited agency (Höglund 126).



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Ultimately, the concept of the ACEN is premised upon a distinction between the "biospheric crisis" and the "capitalist crisis" as two "intimately entangled" but "very different, and differently lived, crises" (Höglund 10). They are combined in what Höglund perceptively terms "socio-ecological breakdown," a phrase which he returns to throughout, and which neatly captures the mutual imbrication of the biosphere and capitalism. In critiquing this relationship, Höglund's volume makes a substantial contribution to the materialist strand of ecologically-orientated literary studies. The clear writing style works as a guide to several major conceptual waypoints in the field, including Jason Moore's Cheap Nature, Giorgio Agamben's state of exception, Andreas Malm's fossil fiction, and Mark Fisher's capitalist realism. In other words, Höglund's well-evidenced argument serves as a glossary through which productive ecological thinking can be conducted, while contributing to that list the useful concept of the American Climate Emergency Narrative.

**Works Cited**

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