

*“Burning Worlds” is a new monthly column dedicated to examining important trends in climate change fiction, or “cli-fi.”*

It astonishes to think just how long humans have known that the Earth is getting warmer. The term “global warming” didn’t enter public consciousness until the 1970s, but scientists have studied our planet’s natural greenhouse effect since at least the 1820s. In 1896, a Swedish chemist named Svante Arrhenius concluded that human activity (like coal burning) contributed to the effect, warming the planet further.

And yet, here we find ourselves in 2017, still wrestling with manmade climate change like it’s a new phenomenon. Why have we not acted sooner? The answer may lie in what Indian author Amitav Ghosh calls humanity’s “great derangement”: our inability to perceive the enormity of the catastrophe that awaits us. That’s where fiction writers come in.

For years, authors have been writing climate change fiction, or “cli-fi,” a genre of literature that imagines the past, present, and future effects of climate change. Each of these novels help us to “see” possible futures lived out on a burning, drowning, or dying planet.

Here at the *Chicago Review of Books*, we feel it’s time to give cli-fi more attention. To that end, we bring you “Burning Worlds,” a new monthly column dedicated to examining what’s hot (sorry) in cli-fi. It’ll feature interviews, reviews, and analyses of the genre with the hope of generating a larger conversation about climate change and why imagined depictions of the phenomenon are vital to the literary community—and beyond.

Kicking us off is an interview with journalist and former teacher Dan Bloom, the man who coined the term “cli-fi”. Bloom founded and maintains *The Cli-Fi Report*, the web’s most comprehensive site dedicated to cli-fi. He is a tireless crusader for the genre, a self-proclaimed “cli-fi missionary.” In this interview, we discuss what inspired his passion for climate change fiction, why he thinks the term “cli-fi” caught on, and what he recommends we all read next.