



Some Thoughts On Writing Fiction About Climate Change

By Gloria Geller

The Anthropocene era of human influenced change to the environment has arrived. What humans have wrought demands that we somehow undo or at least stop in its tracks. There is no shortage of solutions, the Green New Deal for one, is being promoted by U.S Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez in the United States. Ocasio-Cortez narrates a video made by Molly Crabapple along with Avi Lewis and Naomi Klein of LEAP, that presents an alternative vision of a carbon free world. The Swedish teenager Greta Thunberg is challenging leaders around the world to pay attention to the harm that has been caused to the environment and to the future of subsequent generations. Her warnings are supported by nonagenarian David Attenborough and reinforced by environmental organizations such as Greenpeace, 350.org, World Wildlife Fund among others. Nevertheless, it is difficult not to be pessimistic about the willingness of governments to disrupt the lives of their citizens in ways that are essential to bring CO2 levels down to zero emissions in enough time to prevent the catastrophes the world is heading toward.

We are bombarded with overwhelming facts about the future which we may feel helpless to do anything about and therefore we may just turn off and carry on with our daily lives. I believe our creative people, artists, poets, writers, dramatists, filmmakers provide us in books, films, art, theatre, and drama with alternative ways of seeing the future, ways that empower us to seek solutions to what appear to be intractable problems.

And that is where my story Operation Noah's Ark comes in; set in the mid-21st century when life on earth has become unsustainable and governments have failed, anarchy and chaos reign. Since Nature abhors a vacuum, in my story, computer scientists in conjunction with artificial intelligence have spent some thirty years preparing to resettle selected individuals on space stations and eventually on habitable planets. In the story recruits are first brought to the Central Command Post located in northern Ontario in an old radar station built during the mid 20th century Cold War era by the U.S. military along the 55th parallel in northern Canada.

In conducting research for this novella, I discovered that plans to leave Earth and settle colonies on other planets is not only science fiction. A 1975 NASA sponsored study quoted by the National Space Society (NSS) states: "The people of Earth have both the knowledge and resources to colonize space. We can do it, starting now. A future with space settlements is vastly better than one without them." It is the belief by the NSS that moving to space offers a better future in growth, wealth, energy, survival, spiritual development, knowledge, diversity, to solve serious Earthly problems, to fulfill a sense of destiny and responsibility and even to have fun (NSS). Much more could be written about the plans that are underfoot to find a way off-Earth by wealthy individuals and by government. Sadly, resources that may otherwise be used to improve conditions on Earth are being and will be used to leave Earth.

In writing a fictional account of something that is not totally beyond the realm of possibility I confront such questions as who would make the best recruits to establish new colonies in other worlds? Who will determine the criteria for making such decisions? Should it be the billionaires now working on building rockets and making plans for space tourism? Those who wish to exploit resources on other planets as suggested by the NSS? Those who go forward with the same mindset that has led to the destruction of so much of the environment? By Artificial Intelligence programmed by humans? Or should we stay where we are and do everything possible to save our precious home planet?