



## New World Disorder and America's Future

February 16-18, 2018

### Suggested Readings (Fiction) for the 31<sup>st</sup> Annual Camden Conference

There are many novels about Africa or Immigrants, the topics of the last two Camden Conferences, but how do you put together a list of novels addressing “World Disorder and America's Future”? Here is an attempt that gives the reader books classified as science fiction/speculative fiction when they were written. Several are set in the UK rather than the US, and a few even further afield, but in the future, these lines may blur or change completely. The ones with the \* range from utopian to post-apocalyptic, but not totally dystopian. The others are largely dystopian.

*\*Looking Backward* (1888) Edward Bellamy

From the dystopian economic situation of his era (with obvious parallels to our own) Edward Bellamy posits a utopian, socialist future in 2000 (from which his protagonist looks back). A classic, one of the most influential books of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, which can always bear re-reading and prompt discussion.

*The Sleeper Awakes* (1910) H.G. Wells

Setting is London in the year 2100. Themes, revolution, betrayal, manipulation of the population with technology and pleasure.

*Brave New World* (1931) Aldous Huxley

London, the year 2540, the author posits and a world of reproductive technology and psychological manipulation.

*Nineteen Eighty Four* (1949) George Orwell

The classic futuristic dystopian novel. Big Brother is watching all the time. All the world is at war. The “future” date 1984 has passed, but the novel is worth re-reading to see what was prophetic and to show what we fear that may still come to pass.

*Player Piano* (1952) Kurt Vonnegut Jr.

In the near future, ten years after World War III, the world is totally mechanized with conflict between those rich who are in charge and the rest of the population.

*The Running Man* (1982) Stephen King *writing as* Richard Bachman

A man living in the near future U.S. when the economy has collapsed and violence is rising becomes part of a “reality TV show” in 2025.

*The Handmaid's Tale* (1985) Margaret Atwood

Set in the near future in New England: a world of totalitarianism and Christian religious fanaticism.

*Children of Men* (1992) P.D. James

Near future: 1995-2021 in the UK. Issues include infertility, the break down of social order, despotism, haves v. have-nots.

\**Kirinyaga* (1998) Michael Resnick

This is a bit different – a series of inter-related short stories or parables focusing on preserving culture in the face of disturbances from the outside world and changing technology in an African utopia

*The Windup Girl* (2009) Paolo Bacigalupi

Thailand in the 23<sup>rd</sup> century in a world impacted by Global Warming and Biotechnology developments

*Legend* (2011) Marie Lu, first book of series

This is one of many, many dystopian YA book series (e.g. *Hunger Games*). The setting is America, second half of 21<sup>st</sup> century. The book explores the rich v. poor divide, labor camps, wars....

*Ready Player One* (2011) Ernest Cline

The year is 2044. In this future addresses poverty, global warming, the energy crisis, and a virtual reality game.

*The Circle* (2013) Dave Eggers

In the near future, the author spins out the possible impacts of the expanding reach of technology and internet companies.

\**The World We Made: Alex McKay's Story from 2050* (2013) Jonathan Porritt, Forum for the Future

This book uses existing technology to scale up and forward to a positive, collaborative, green future in the form of a novel looking back at how this was (can be) achieved – with lots of photos and graphs.

\**Station Eleven* (2014) Emily St. John Mandel

The book begins in 2007, but posits a global pandemic in the near future and what might happen in the aftermath in North America. The author calls this not “science fiction” but speculative, literary fiction.

*The Mandibles: A Family 2029-2047* (2016) Lionel Shriver

The story of one family in the U.S. after a complete economic collapse and the rise of supranational currency the bancor.

*Exit West* (2017) Mohsin Hamid

An exploration of the convulsive changes overtaking the world as tradition & modernity clash headlong, and as refugees-fleeing war, poverty or hopelessness-try to make their way to safer ground.