

need both language and tools to steer collaborative problem-solving under conditions of uncertainty. There are few readers who will not learn something substantive from this volume about how to navigate urban complexity more thoughtfully. I, for one, found it thoroughly engaging and instructive.

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DARK LABORATORY: ON COLUMBUS, THE CARIBBEAN, AND THE ORIGINS OF THE CLIMATE CRISIS by Tao Leigh Goffe, Penguin Books, 2025.

The book challenges conventional narratives about the climate crisis and, in doing so, offers new pathways for confronting it. Already in the title, Goffe marks a new ground zero for the crisis – not the Industrial Revolution, as is commonly accepted, but the beginning of colonialism in the 15th century. Her central argument is that colonialism – as a pattern of inequality, environmental plunder, and the subjugation of peoples – was the driving force behind the climate crisis, and that the invasive processes that brought about globalization and capitalism still prevent us from adequately addressing it. In contrast, the ancient traditions of Caribbean indigenous peoples, with their deep and reciprocal connections to the land, animals, and plants, and their strategies for coping with the forces of nature, may offer paths toward change and healing.

Goffe's choice of the Caribbean as her 'laboratory' is not only historical, ecological, and literary – reflecting her research interests – but also genealogical, since she is of Black Asian (i.e., Afro-Asian) descent. She also takes into account social, environmental, and economic aspects, as in the model of sustainability, that stress the need to preserve the ability of Nature to perform processes in a stable manner over time. As such, a balance must be maintained between Nature's ability to continue to sustain its natural systems (ecosystems, life cycles, food chains, etc.) and to support life on Earth in the long run, as well as to meet the developmental needs of certain populations (human or otherwise) that depend on those processes; simply put, to secure a prosperous life today without depriving current and future generations of their rights to live at least as well as we did, if not better.

Her story begins with Columbus's arrival in the Caribbean in 1492, where she points out the introduction of sugarcane cultivation to the Caribbean as being the primary catalyst of the long-term climate change process. According to her theory, to take advantage of the Caribbean's humid, wet climate and mineral-rich soil, which offered the best conditions for the successful growth of sugarcane, a wave of violence was unleashed on the land and its indigenous peoples: slavery, disease, and death, accompanied by the exploitation of natural resources and the disruption of native biodiversity.

Goffe also presents another example, illustrating how humans have repeatedly and severely impacted natural systems in the Caribbean, referring to Humanity's effects on habitats, the food web, biodiversity, and ecosystems. She explains how the Europeans flooded the Caribbean with exported rats that disembarked from their ships. Then, to protect the sugarcane crops from being eaten by those rats, they imported mongooses from India. These 'invading' animals spread rapidly, dominating the Caribbean ecosystem, further damaging local, native biodiversity. Additionally, the 19th-century trade in guano – bat and seabird droppings used as fertilizers – from the Caribbean to Europe and North America is another example of such exploitative patterns.

Goffe resists telling the familiar tale of invasive species and unjust resource trade. Instead, she offers an opportunity for learning and a fresh start. For instance, she draws a lesson in collective survival from the mongooses that give birth on the same night and raise all their offspring communally. From Goffe's perspective, the use of guano reconnects us with natural, traditional cultivation methods, lost due to the industrial production of synthetic fertilizers, and even indigenous folk songs from across the globe can give us strength and hope in our fight against climate change.

Nevertheless, the climate crisis is a done deal. Its environmental and human consequences are clear, and the mitigating steps needed to adapt to it are well known. Yet most of us still fail to grasp the urgency, nor do we amend our destructive behaviors. Today, the Caribbean is one of the regions most vulnerable to climate change. But long before the colonial era, the islands' inhabitants faced hurricanes and storms as a natural part of life. They avoided settling along the coasts, used trees as wind barriers, and cultivated resilient root crops for food.

Given its subject-matter, this book is not an easy read. Goffe's frequent leaps between places, times, and disciplines may make it cumbersome. Yet these jumps reflect the nonlinear, chaotic nature of the crisis we face – like the *butterfly effect*, which describes how small changes in the initial conditions of a dynamic, nonlinear system can result in large-scale, long-term impacts. They force us to look at the crisis differently. The questions she raises are: Can the West, which led us into this crisis, lead us out of it? Might future technologies draw from older traditions that the West once dismissed?

In recent decades, the ongoing and destructive impact of Humanity on the natural environment, on its living and non-living components, as well as its ecosystems and the climate, has led to calls for defining a new geological epoch – the "Anthropocene Age" ('the age of the humans'). Over the years, more popular alternative names have also been proposed, ones that better suit our current era and reflect the key forces shaping our 21st-century reality, such as the 'Capitalocene Age'. But now, with U.S. President Donald Trump reinstated in the White House with an agenda aimed at erasing everything 'green', it seems more fitting than ever to declare the 'Trumpocene Age' – an era with rhetoric normalizing climate-change skepticism and denial, while sanctifying economic growth. White House policy influences public opinion and

political discourse, raising serious concerns that anti-environmental policies may become normalized and permanent. Above all, we are once again redefining the relationship between Humanity and Nature, contrary to all the scientific evidence and the profound changes unfolding before our eyes. Climate change, environmental pollution, and the loss of biodiversity threaten the global order, our way of life, and life itself on Earth.

“We must connect the dots between the brutal system of chattel slavery and the degradation of the natural environment”, writes Goffe, claiming that “as partisan politics slows any chance for climate repair through policy, climate scientists and climate philosophers can help us understand how environmental racism is a part of our current ecological crisis”. *Dark Laboratory* offers a consciousness-altering historical and personal journey to the roots of the climate crisis, alongside an opportunity for redemption. But it remains uncertain whether Goffe’s focus on social-environmental justice will ultimately result in poetic justice.

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