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Short Book Reviews

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Brief comments on recently read literature.

- **Kim Stanley Robinson** doesn't quite prove the famous Fredric Jameson quote used as [*Ministry for the Future*](#)'s epigraph incorrect but he does offer a readable speculative future centered around contemporary struggles. I fear the happy ending comes all too easily (it *is* science fiction) even if one were to calculate the total death toll imagined in the book from heatwaves and other climate change-induced natural catastrophes. It's certainly a book parents should read if they need a fictionalized account of the current trajectory their offspring are on. Tip: Learn what "wet bulb" temperatures mean for human survival before you begin reading the book.¹
- **Margaret Randall** has led an extraordinary life. Fortunately, she continues to chronicle it for us. A New Mexico-based (after a mid-life spent on the other side of the Iron Curtain's Latin American fronts) poet and writer with 200+ books to her name, she's published at least four of them since I learned of her upon the release of her latest memoir, [*I Never Left Home: Poet, Feminist, Revolutionary*](#) (Duke Univ. Press, 2019), last year. Her prose corpus alone provides me with a continuing source of thought-provoking, compassionate writing that provides a significant counterpoint to that produced by so many of her contemporaries, especially male writers. Smug self-satisfied certainty they'd summited the peak of human existence and knowledge (and, indeed, they may have but only because they laid the conditions for the impossibility of humanity's continued existence and development much beyond their own deaths) is the opposite of Randall's evolving perspective on our world. I can also recommend her [*My Life in 100 Objects*](#) (New Village Press, 2020), [*Haydée Santamaría, Cuban Revolutionary: She Led by Transgression*](#) (Duke Univ. Press, 2015), [*To Change the World: My Years in Cuba*](#) (Rutgers Univ. Press, 2009) and [*Exporting Revolution: Cuba's Global Solidarity*](#).
- [*On the Nature of Ecological Paradox*](#) (Springer, 2021) is a good pairing with the overly optimistic *Ministry for the Future* and a reminder of humans' striking and continued ignorance — a lack often filled with baseless hubris rather than investigation or education.
- **Mitchell Dean** and **Daniel Zamora** offer a reading of the later works of Michel Foucault finding agreements among his "turn to the ethical" and neoliberal political economy and values in [*The Last Man Takes LSD*](#) (Verso, 2021).
- **Dominique Eddé** makes one hope he or she might think things worth someone pondering at book-length after our deaths when she writes about [*Edward Said*](#) (Verso, 2021).

William O. Pate II is the founding editor and publisher of San Antonio Review. He lives in Austin.

Footnotes

1. **“Wet Bulb Globe Temperature (WBGT):** This is an environmental temperature arrived at by measuring dry air temperature, humidity, and radiant energy (i.e., usually direct sunlight being absorbed by clothing), used to calculate a thermal load on the person.” NIOSH [2016]. *NIOSH criteria for a recommended standard: occupational exposure to heat and hot environments*. By Jacklitsch B, Williams WJ, Musolin K, Coca A, Kim J-H, Turner N. Cincinnati, OH: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, DHHS (NIOSH) Publication 2016-106. [↵](#)