

Oregonians' impact on cli-fi

You may already be familiar with the cli-fi genre that in the last few years has gained increasing currency.

The term was coined eight years ago by a retired journalist with links to Oregon. Dan Bloom had been a grad student at Oregon State University in the 1980s. He went on to work in journalism and public relations all around the Pacific Rim.

Throughout his career, Bloom became increasingly concerned about the impacts of global warming. But he noticed that even as the reports came in about hurricanes of increasing magnitude, lengthening tornado seasons, harsher winters, sequentially epic fire seasons in some areas and epic flooding in other places, policy makers were slow to respond, and climate deniers continued to wield influence.

Discouraged that news reports alone were not going to be enough to wake people up to the urgency of the matter, Bloom looked at the fiction writers who were

tackling the subject of climate change in their novels, and realized that literature might be another way of helping people come to grips with the issue. For his part, he promoted "cli-fi" as an organizing PR principle to help draw more attention to that budding genre.

For a recent example of cli-fi, take a look at "Weather Woman," an engrossing novel that came out late last year.

Author Cai Emmons taught in the University of Oregon's writing program for several years. But with the publication of "Weather Woman," her third novel, she now declares herself a full-time writer.

The heroine in this tale is Bronwyn Artair, who skipped out on her doctoral program in atmospheric sciences at MIT to become an on-air meteorologist at a TV station in New Hampshire. But only a year into the job, Bronwyn is unsettled. She has become disenchanted with the superficiality of broadcasting, yet she

isn't inclined to go back to the stiff hierarchical world of academia.

Then, when her steady boyfriend dumps her, she finds herself becoming untethered from the expectations of the workaday world.

But as she begins to shed these mundane routines, she realizes she is increasingly able to tap into a profound connection with the natural world. Concentrating her attention and energy, she discovers that she can actually affect natural phenomena: rain clouds, tornados, wildfires and more.

But how will she exercise this newfound power?

And with whom can she share this staggering secret? Her best friend from childhood? Her former mentor at MIT? Meteorologist colleagues? The tabloid journalist who comes sniffing around for a story?

Emmons' wordsmithing is ornate but beguiling. Her evocations of landscapes,

THIS WEEK'S BOOK

Weather Woman

By Cai Emmons

Red Hen Press

360 pp

\$16.95

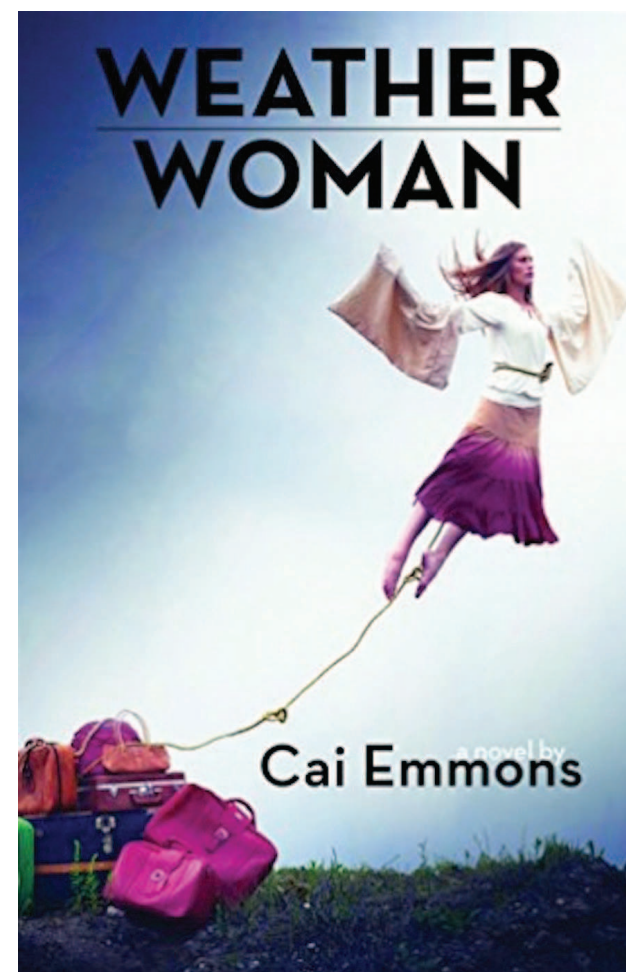
skies and bodies of water are as carefully drawn as her fully-fleshed characters.

The plot rambles some, but it is inventive and thought-provoking.

Throughout much of this book, readers will be in a position to judge Bronwyn's responsibilities and actions with respect to climate change, but by the end of the story, they may be considering their own.

"Weather Woman" is worth a look.

The Bookmonger is Barbara Lloyd McMichael, who writes this weekly column focusing on the books, authors and publishers of the Pacific Northwest. Contact her at bkmonger@nwlink.com.



Red Hen Press

The cover of Cai Emmons' third novel, 'Weather Woman.'

Crossword Answers

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