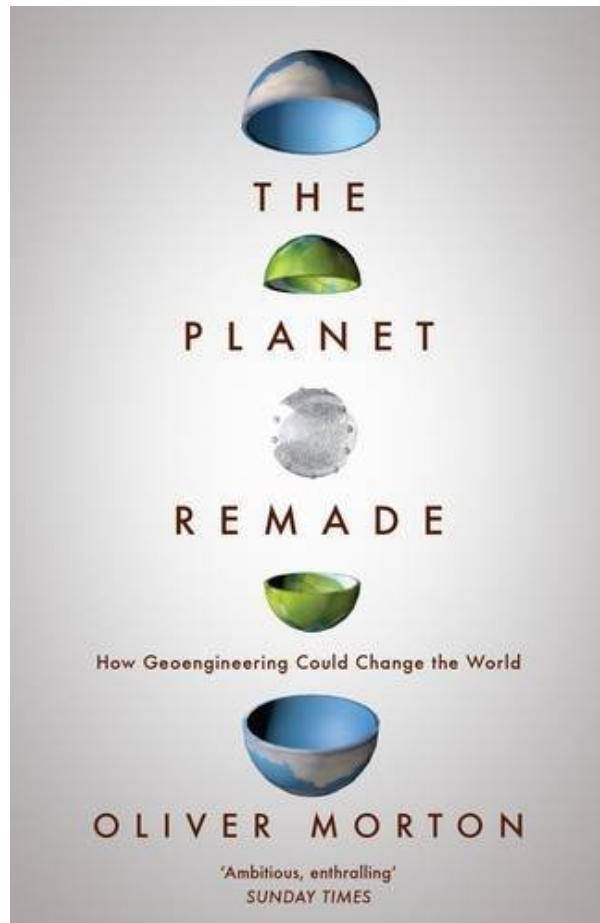
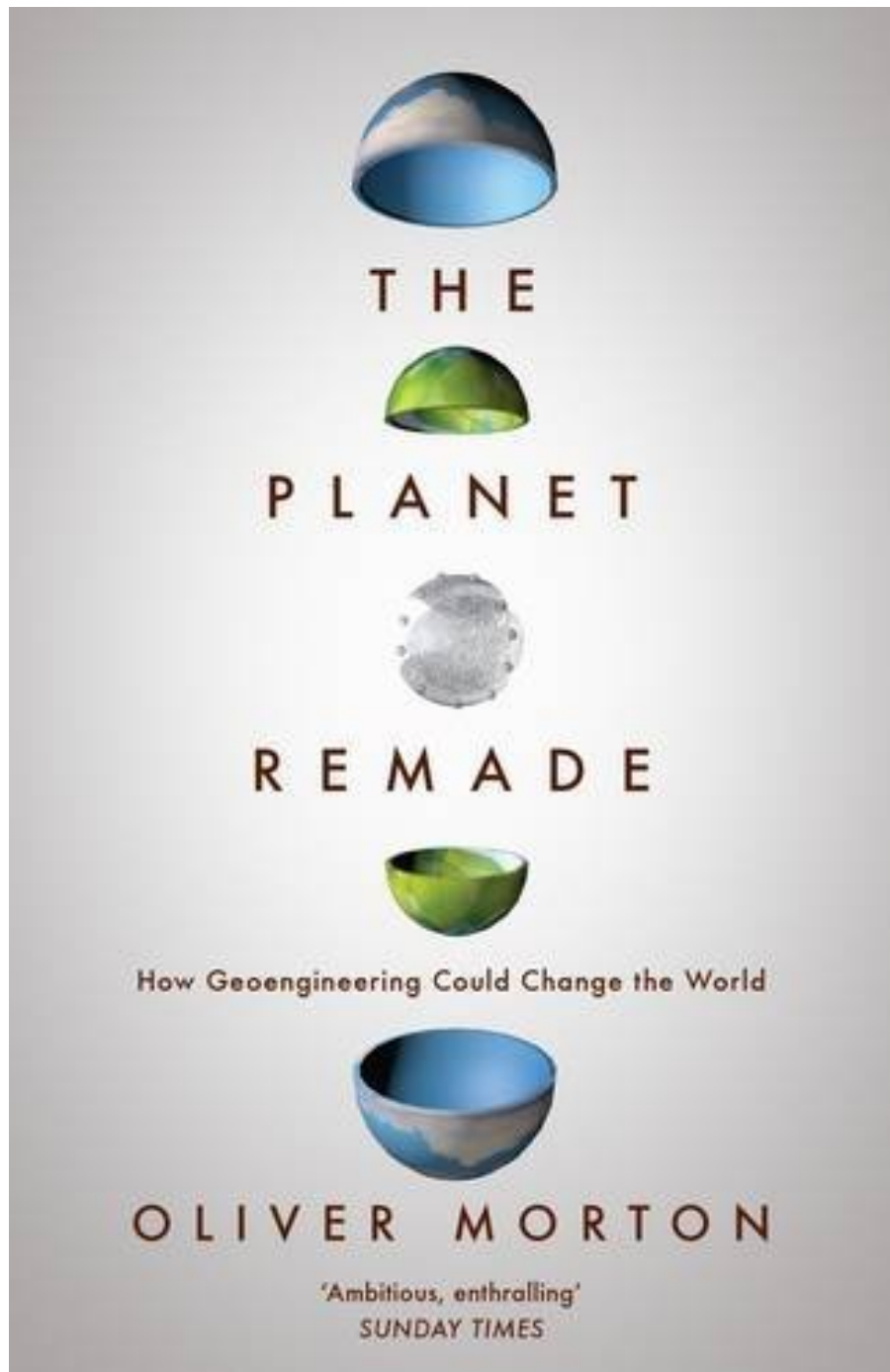


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The risks of global warming are pressing and potentially vast. There is an urgent need to rethink our response to the crisis. To meet that need, a small but increasingly influential group of scientists is exploring proposals for planned human intervention in the climate system, including a stratospheric veil against the sun, the cultivation of photosynthetic plankton, and fleets of unmanned ships seeding the clouds. These are the technologies of geoengineering and, as Oliver Morton argues in *The Planet Remade*, it would be as irresponsible to ignore them as it would be foolish to see them as a simple solution to the problem. Morton explores the history, politics, and cutting-edge science of geoengineering and weighs the promise and perils of these controversial strategies. He addresses the deep fear that comes with seeing humans as a force of nature, and asks what it might mean--and what it might require of us--to try to use that force for good.

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#### Most helpful customer reviews

13 of 13 people found the following review helpful.

Can geoengineering be re-imagined?

By Holly Jean

If you go to a library and peruse the shelves of what writers from past decades thought future technologies might be like, you're liable to find some funny stuff. I expect that many of the existing books on geoengineering will be quaintly amusing to library-goers of 2050 or 2100.

This book, however, I expect to have a long shelf-life: it's written not just for the present moment or the next climate conference, but for posterity; it will help future generations understand the deliberations & decisions of this time.

Firstly, it's not plain "science writing"—this "book about the boundaries between physical planets and imagined worlds" is rich with history, & the best passages are literary or philosophical. The earthsystem is evoked as lived dynamic experience: "like wind on the skin, or the tremor in the ground from rushing water

nearly, or lightning sensed through shut eyelids..."

That said, there is a lot of accessibly-explained science. I've seen the Mt. Pinatubo powerpoint slide projected more times than I can count, but never fully grasped where climate modeling was at the time of Pinatubo, or understood the contribution of the eruption to climate science, before reading this book. I learned more about the stratosphere here than in 50 lectures on geoengineering; that is, I learned about it in a whole manner— not just stratosphere-as-object or place, but about the human conception of it and how that evolved.

One of the book's gifts is its ability to easily place geoengineering into alignment with history; to tell the broader story — about both the earthsystem, and "men of human empire; the sort of men who can attract the interest and admiration of wealthier and more powerful men." You'll read about imperialism & the opening and closing of the frontier; about the jaded, gilded fin de siecle (lack of) spirit. In a media ecology that doesn't lend itself to seeing events within the broad context of history, this is quite refreshing — this subject really did need a book-length treatment that was more than just reportage. Speaking of grand narratives of history, I appreciate that this book doesn't hang its hat on "the Anthropocene"; it reckons with the term without making it central or a key tag. Smart move.

There's a lot here I sympathize with — for example, the critique that natural and social scientists make the mistake of talking "as though what geoengineering is has already been decided, rather than treating it as something still up for grabs"; the argument that broadening the debate is not just about bringing more and different expertise in, but reimagining it. The comparison to human intervention in the nitrogen cycle was well-argued and compelling.

I do wish the book had discussed gender in relation to its topic, and I'm curious to hear how the scenario near the end is received. The text suffers a bit from the syndrome of nearly all "environmental" books these days: you spend all your chapters tracing the roots and contours of a present phenomenon, and then there's only a chapter left for the future (Morton has made it explicit that the problem / solution framing is not useful here, so I won't use those terms, but it seems like a variation on the classic problem / solution book). Perhaps a companion volume is needed.

Yet my favorite thing about this book is how nestles its utopian dream comfortably in small passages scattered throughout the text — there's no program, no bullet points, no grand utopian design, no grandstanding or ego-driven polemic: just a humble, powerful seed-planting type of strategy to encourage the reader to think & imagine. The basic idea: that exploring geoengineering "could spurt and shape the development of a new way of making planetary decisions", not just to develop a new thermostat, but to develop "a new hand to use it". The basic question: how can the challenge of remaking the planet "be used to bring about a world that could be trusted with the power to meet that challenge"? The simple-machines metaphor of levers and fulcrums used throughout actually works for me — no more spoilers here, though, you'll have to read it, and then, perhaps, be compelled to work with it.

7 of 7 people found the following review helpful.

An Important, Thorough, and Difficult Book

By Richard A. Frederick

This is a book everybody who is interested in climate change should read, regardless of his political opinion. The book is a bit tedious, as is the subject if pursued rigerously and thoughtly. The subject of climate change presents no simple, easy answers and many, many trade-offs and compromises. This book explores those issues. Early on, the author asks the reader to answer two questions: Do you think human activity impacts the climate? Do you think the problem is difficult to solve? The author posits that most people fall into two

groups: the No - Yes group and the Yes - No group. The author and I are in the the Yes - Yes group which may explain why I appreciate this difficult book.

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful.

Informative and optimistic

By SLB

Engagingly written -- I could hardly put it down! -- comprehensive, thorough, and optimistic without being credulous, this book contains a wealth of information about the "earthsystem" (as Morton likes to call it) and the effects we're already having on it as well as those we could potentially create intentionally. The book makes an excellent case for expanding research into geoengineering, and I hope it gets widely read.

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