

Sunken Lands: A Journey Through Flooded Kingdoms and Lost Worlds

Gareth E. Rees

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An interdisciplinary history of flooding and flood stories, Gareth E. Rees's book *Sunken Lands* explores the eerie legacy of climate change in humanity's past.

Weaving the oracular, poetic, and horrifying together in tales of ancient watery disasters and modern climate upheaval, the book visits submerged fragments of humanity's past around the globe: an artificial lake in northern Italy out of which a fourteenth-century church steeple still rises; the hurricane-ravaged Ninth Ward of New Orleans; a sinking Welsh village on the shore of an underwater forest. Each locale yields an account of a submarine world that was once dry, habitable land and now stands as prescient warning that the natural disasters of today are far from novel.

Other stories, as of a twentieth-century mystic's prophecies of Atlantis, become a jumping-off point for exploring climate facts hidden in ancient texts from India, Greece, and Egypt. Through these tales and histories, thousands of years of human life are reframed in terms of environmental upheavals and great deluges. As the text puts it, "We are the children of the flood."

Distilling a huge range of knowledge, Rees traverses geological records and sociological studies, archaeological discoveries, and readings in folklore and oral history with colloquial erudition. A journalistic account of visiting a submerged forest on England's south coast slips into the millennia-old story of Doggerland, the landmass connecting the United Kingdom and Europe before they were separated by water. In such deft movements from the past to the present, the peril of climate change is shown as a frank inevitability that humanity must contend with, just as it did generations ago.

A stunning history of floods, changing climates, and natural disasters that shook human affairs, *Sunken Lands* connects human history to the realities of rising tides.

WILLEM MARX (January / February 2025)

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