TJ. *The Coriolis Effect*. Bloomington, IN: Archway, 2016.
Pre-publication review by Allen Frantzen (July 11, 2016).

About one-quarter of the way into this novel, the director of the National Hurricane Center explains the science of the Coriolis Effect to an intern. The effect occurs when an action (such as throwing a ball) takes place inside a frame that is in motion (for example, throwing a ball on a revolving surface) instead of an inertial frame. The ball seems to be moving to one side or the other, but that's the effect of the frame, not the force propelling the ball. The Coriolis Effect deflects moving objects to the right in the Northern Hemisphere and to the left in the Southern Hemisphere.

The director calls this force "fictitious" and the intern describes it as "imaginary." The director adds that such forces occur "because your world has changed direction, and you do not know it—you have not changed; the world around you is changing and you sort of feel the effect." It's not a real effect, it turns out. Fictitious forces "only seem like forces because your frame is accelerating."

"The intern soaked up the information," and readers of *The Coriolis Effect* will want to soak it up too, because this effect also describes how men in this novel respond to the effects of social change around them, feminism in particular, which they wrongly see as inert. The technical explanation fits the plot, since there is a cyclonic storm system developing and making landfall at the novel's climax. But the device works on many levels besides that of the narrative framework.

The principal action involves two closely connected plots, one about drug smuggling and the other about art theft, disparate conspiratorial worlds populated by a cast of unsavory, unpredictable, and extremely violent characters. These two strands twist around another two-part structure, this one comprised of a father (a disgraced police officer) and son. These men are held together by a traumatic event in the past that is slowly clarified as the narrative develops. The father, Thomas, knows he has failed and seems unable to face his past. The son, Marco, is a stereotypical angry young man with a limited vocabulary and little insight into his power to shape his own world.

The novel takes a risk in putting several chapters into Marco's voice (clearly marked), but this strategy works in the end, creating more sympathy for the son than some readers might otherwise develop. It also allows the author room for unfolding the character's thoughts in relation to sexual politics and the possibilities of his own fatherhood.

As a narrative device, the Coriolis Effect operates on both small and large scales. The effect itself seems to be mentioned only once, in the scene with the intern and the director, which concerns the movement of tropical storms. But the effect is called to mind whenever hurricanes and their predictability are discussed, and sometimes the metaphorical power of the effect is grasped by a character. Racing to a showdown on his bike, for example, Marco says, "It's not the hurricane; it's awareness blowing forward at me from the past," and the word "inertia" occurs just two lines later. Marco's bike has been moving in a straight line, but has it taken him where he expects to go?

This is a complex and thought-provoking work. Readers who are worried about the state of men in the world of modern feminism will find their concerns expressed here. They will also enjoy the fast pace, the vivid violence, and the author's precise descriptions of how things, mechanical things in particular, work.

Despite a pervasive darkness, emphasized by what seems to be an almost clinical approach to violence, *The Coriolis Effect* manages to strike some benevolent notes. The account of Marco's growth allows the author to balance cynicism about feminism against a vision of a better future for men, and especially for young men.

The Coriolis Effect is a graphic, shrewd metaphor for the disorientation of men in the world of modern feminism. It helps to explain why men, in the novel—and in the world—find it hard to feel that they are making progress, even when moving in the right direction. Events are constantly changing their lives by reframing them, and the frame is not inert. We think we are reacting appropriately to circumstances and are protecting others and ourselves. Even so, we stumble, lurch, and lose our way, and the people we love seem to move farther from us rather than closer.

As *The Coriolis Effect* shows, the experience of events around us is compounded in unpredictable ways by the culture's framing of those events. That the frame itself is in motion is something we may be slow to realize—or fail to realize at all. Men are trying to move forward but find that "forward" isn't the straight line we think we are pursuing. There are other ways to imagine this frustration, such as moving the goal posts or raising the bar, but they less powerful for being more familiar, and they lack the complexity and invisibility of the Coriolis Effect.

Richly detailed, *The Coriolis Effect* is marvelously at home in the geography of New York, its highways, waterways, and bridges. The novel's staying power lies in its equally convincing account of the gap between father and son and in its painful, truthful vision of the hard work, good luck, and, yes, the chaos needed to heal old wounds and inspire men to make a new world.