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Decolonising Speculative Fiction

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#21

Table of Contents

Editors' Introduction. Isabelle Hesse and Edward Powell. 4

Articles

Living and Dying Countries: Ecocide, Consciousness & Agency in First Nations Futurism. Mykaela Saunders. 7

Indian Fantasy Fiction in English and the Post-Millennial Moment. E. Dawson Varughese. 10

'Runaway Cyclone,' Or: The First Bengali Science Fiction Story. Christin Hoene. 13

'Now I prefer to get to the heart of the matter, to not use metaphor': Hassan Blasim and Iraqi Science Fiction. Sinéad Murphy. 16

Filipino Futures: An Introduction to Philippine Science Fiction. Vida Cruz. 19

Cultural Heritage, Future Vision. Mark Bould. 23

Speculative Liberty 'with a Slant': Decolonizing Sovereignty through Irony in Vizenor's Treaty Shirts. Cathy Covell Waegner. 25

Decolonising Speculative Fiction in South Africa. Alan Muller. 30

The Twisted Mirror: The Postcolonial in Dean Francis Alfar's 'L' Aquilone Du Estrellas.' Roy Tristan Agustin. 33

PSA Funding Reports

A Brief Report on the PSA Convention 2017. Sibendu Chakraborty. 36

On Zapatismo and the Technological Character of Technology. Rodrigo Liceaga Mendoza. 38

#21

Table of Contents

Book Reviews

Genre Fiction of New India: Post-Millennial Receptions of “Weird” Narratives, by **E. Dawson Varughese**. Reviewed by Sambuddha Jash. 40

So Long Been Dreaming: Postcolonial Science Fiction and Fantasy, edited by **Nalo Hopkinson and Uppinder Mehan**. Reviewed by Andrew Stones. 42

Iraq+100: Stories From a Century After the Invasion, edited by Hassan Blasim.
Reviewed by Annie Webster. 44

Walking the Clouds: An Anthology of Indigenous Science Fiction, edited by **Grace L. Dillon**. Reviewed by Rebecca Macklin. 46

PSA News

CFP Next PSA Newsletter (#22) 48

PSA Membership 49

Notes 50

Editors' Introduction

Isabelle Hesse and Edward Powell

We are very excited to write the editorial for our first special issue of the PSA newsletter – Decolonising Speculative Fiction. We had a fantastic response to our CFP and received a number of great contributions that explore the topic of decolonising speculative fiction (SF) – what that means, how it is happening, and why it should be of interest to postcolonial critics.

SF, of course, isn't written only by white people: this has been the case ever since the genre's emergence during the height of European imperialism. All too often, though, the history of white SF has overshadowed those of African SF, of South Asian SF, of South American SF, and of the many Indigenous SFs.

Beginning with Nalo Hopkinson and Uppinder Mehan's groundbreaking anthology *So Long Been Dreaming* (2002) the last twenty-five years have seen increasing attention among academics, cultural gatekeepers, and mainstream metropolitan audiences to SF written from beyond the small space of white Euro-America.[1] 2011 saw a notable milestone, when Nigerian-American author Nnedi

Okorafor won the World Fantasy Award for her 2010 novel *Who Fears Death*: look out for HBO's forthcoming adaptation, to be produced by George R.R. Martin. The success of Marvel's 2018 film adaptation of *The Black Panther* was unexpected but hugely encouraging, as Afrofuturism found mainstream appeal.[2]

And yet, the producers of *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* (2015) were met with thousands of accusations of promoting 'white genocide', simply for casting John Boyega and Lupita Nyong'o in starring roles.[3] Meanwhile, the Hugo Awards have faced 'concerted campaigns' against nominations that are 'overtly to the Left'.[4] More generally, white SF remains overrepresented in literature, while in film, television, and other visual media, white protagonists continue to dominate.

The reduction of literary history to the contributions of whites; the subsequent overrepresentation of white voices and imaginations, past and present; a group of writers and critics contesting this overrepresentation by

recovering histories of SF beyond its hegemonic Eurowestern branch, while also reinventing the genre itself by drawing upon other cultural resources and historical experiences; and a subsequent reactionary pushback from the dominant group. This will sound all too familiar to scholars of postcolonial literature and culture.

But there are more fundamental reasons why the decolonisation of SF might be of particular interest to postcolonial studies. Consider Graham Huggan's description of the field's 'capacity to undertake a critical exploration of the territorial imperatives of colonialism, and its frequently speculative consideration of alternatives to these imperatives'.[5] The term 'postcolonialism' itself – so maligned for misrepresenting the neocolonial present – is speculative, invoking a possibility that remains unrealized. Like SF, then, postcolonialism is concerned not just with how the world currently is, but also what it could be like.

Meanwhile, as Okorafor has noted, SF 'carries the potential

Editors' Introduction

Isabelle Hesse and Edward Powell

to change the world. Literally. It *has* changed the world' [6]. Many of the world-changing technologies developed over the last century were inspired by SF. The genre has shaped the future, by shaping what we imagine the future to be, or what we want it to be – and thus, by extension, the Utopian desires that drive technological innovation and social change. Decolonising SF ensures that the futures the genre helps produce aren't marked by a grossly unequal distribution of political, economic, and cultural power that favours whites.

The contributions to this special issue take up the theme of decolonising SF in various ways: some recover the histories of SF beyond its white Eurowestern branch; while others consider what futures and alternative presents Indian, African, Filipino, and Indigenous SF imagine, and how they differ to those imagined by Eurowestern writers.

Mykaela Saunders's article gives an overview of SF in an Australian Indigenous context, and discusses how recent texts have engaged with notions of ecocide, consciousness, and

have engaged with notions of ecocide, consciousness, and agency.

E. Dawson Varughese examines SF in India, with particular focus on the post-millennial novel and its relationship with Indian mythology and fantasy.

Christin Hoene's article explores how the first Bengali SF work – Jagadish Chandra Bose's short story 'Niruddeshher Kahini' ('Runaway Cyclone') – brings together science fiction and magical realism.

Sinéad Murphy considers how Iraqi SF images the future through the example of a recent anthology edited by Hassan Blasim – *Iraq+100: Stories from a Century After the Invasion* (2015) – which is also reviewed by Annie Webster in the book review section of this newsletter.

Vida Cruz gives us an overview of the state of Philippine science fiction, with a particular focus on its post-colonial and post-imperial history; while **Mark Bould** discusses how Nigerian-American Deji Bryce

Olukotun's novel *After the Flare* (2017) presents a vision of the future rooted in Nigerian cultural heritage.

Cathy Covell Waegner's contribution turns to Indigenous SF in a Native American context, with a specific focus on irony in *Treaty Shirts*, Gerald Vizenor's speculative novel on the fortunes of the Constitution of the White Earth Nation (CWEN).

Alan Muller considers how the last year has seen SF in South Africa becoming less white; and **Roy Tristan Agustin** examines Dean Francis Alfar's short story 'L' Aquilone Du Estrellas' ('The Kite of Stars') in light of postcolonial theory.

The book review section includes reviews of both general theoretical works as well as creative anthologies.

Sambuddha Jash's discussion focuses on E. Dawson Varughese's *Genre Fiction of New India: Post-Millennial Receptions of "Weird" Narratives* (Routledge, 2016), followed by three reviews of recent anthologies in the field: **Andrew Stones** shares his thoughts on Nalo Hopkinson

and Uppinder Mehan's *So Long Been Dreaming: Postcolonial Science Fiction and Fantasy* (Arsenal Pulp Press, 2004); **Annie Webster** discusses Hassan Blasim's *Iraq+100* (Comma Press, 2015); and **Rebecca Macklin** reads Grace Dillon's *Walking the Clouds: An Anthology of Indigenous Science Fiction* (University of Arizona Press, 2012) for us. Finally, this issue also includes reports from **Sibendu Chakraborty** and **Rodrigo Liceaga Mendoza**, both of whom received PSA funding in 2017.

Happy reading!

References

[1] Over the last twenty-five years, various anthologies have collected SF from beyond Europe, North America, and Australasia: *Dark Matter: A Century of Speculative Fiction from the African Diaspora* (2001) and *Dark Matter: Reading the Bones* (2005); *Cosmos Latinos: An Anthology of Science Fiction from Latin America and Spain* (2004); *Afro-Future Females* (2008); *Walking the Clouds: An Anthology of Indigenous Science Fiction* (2012); *AfroSF* (2013) and *AfroSFv2* (2015); *Mothership: Tales from Afrofuturism and*

Beyond (2013); *We See a Different Frontier: A Postcolonial Speculative Fiction Anthology* (2013); and *Iraq + 100: Stories from a Century After the Invasion* (2015). Jessica Langer's *Postcolonialism and Science Fiction* (2009) was an early engagement with empire and race in contemporary SF in film, literature, and videogames; around the same time, John Rieder's *Colonialism and the Emergence of Science Fiction* (2008) traced SF's origins to the colonial adventure stories of late-nineteenth-century writers like H. Rider Haggard. More recently, Eric D. Smith's *Globalization, Utopia and Postcolonial Science Fiction: New Maps of Hope* (2012) discusses the Utopian import of contemporary SF from the peripheries of the world-system. Various periodicals have also broadened the SF debate beyond Anglophone metropolitan writers, especially *Science Fiction Studies*, which has featured special issues on 'Global Science Fiction' (March 2000), *Slipstream* (March 2011), *Afrofuturism* (July 2007), *SF and globalisation* (November 2012), *Chinese SF* (March 2013), and *Indian SF* (November 2016). Meanwhile, special issues on African SF have featured in *Paradoxa* (2013) and *The*

Cambridge Journal of Postcolonial Literary Inquiry (2016).

[2] Milena Mikael-Debass, 'How "Black Panther" is Bringing Afrofuturism into the Mainstream', *Vice News*, 7th February 2018

[https://news.vice.com/en_us/article/437d9j/how-black-panther-is-bringing-afrofuturism-into-the-mainstream]

[3] Ira Madison III, 'Some White Guys Are Boycotting *Star Wars: Episode VII* Because It Promotes 'White Genocide'', *Vulture*, 19 October 2015

[<http://www.vulture.com/2015/10/some-white-guys-are-boycotting-stars-wars-vii.html>]

[4] Anon., 'Hugo awards shortlist dominated by rightwing campaign', *The Guardian*, 26 April 2016 [<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/apr/26/hugo-awards-shortlist-rightwing-campaign-sad-rabid-puppies>]

[5] Graham Huggan, *Interdisciplinary Measures: Literature and the Future of Postcolonial Studies* (Liverpool UP, 2008), p. 15.

[6] Okorafor, 'African Science Fiction is Still Alien', *Nnedi's Wahala Zone Blog*, 15 January 2014

[<http://nnedi.blogspot.com/2014/01/african-science-fiction-is-still-alien.html>]

Living and Dying Countries: Ecocide, Consciousness & Agency in First Nations Futurism

Mykaela Saunders

Situated within the considerable body of creative material that is set in a future Australia, only a small body of this literary work has been authored by First Nations writers [1]. These works include Archie Weller's 1999 novel *Land of The Golden Clouds*, Alexis Wright's 2013 novel *The Swan Book*, Ambellin Kwaymullina's young adult *Tribe* series, Ellen van Neervan's 2014 short story "Water" from *Heat and Light*, and Claire G. Coleman's 2017 novel *Terra Nullius* [2]. This essay is concerned with how the future of Country is represented in these worlds, specifically the ways that the authors imagine Country as both living and dying in accordance with Aboriginal beliefs about the same. From the patterns that emerge I'll extrapolate a set of genre trends in this small but growing body of work.

In "Water", set in a pre-apocalyptic 2027 in urban Brisbane and Minjerrabah (Russell Island), Aboriginal people are about to be segregated to the island at the

expense of Country's health, and the narrator Kaden bands together with her wider community to save the island. Country is conscious through water spirits – Aboriginal ancestors who have returned into, and now embody, Country. They express desire for protection, curiosity, an understanding of history, and fears for the future. These ancestral beings are instrumental in the community's cohesion and fight for the future of Minjerrabah. Larapinta, one of these spirits, seduces Kaden. Their relationship may symbolise the union of human and non-human that the narrator's ancestors once lived and breathed, but that she has become disconnected from through colonial processes.

The latest addition to this field is *Terra Nullius* by Claire G. Coleman. It is set around 2041 in unspecified parts of Australia during an apocalypse, which is brought about by the invasion and subsequent colonisation of Earth by extraterrestrial Settlers. The landscape is

described as alien and unwelcoming by the Settlers, who introduce invasive species of plant and animal to transform Earth into resembling their home planet. Paddy, the only identifiably Aboriginal character, implies that 'Country chooses who can live there, it punishes those who don't belong' [3]. Country is then represented as a post-racial consciousness that no longer sees colour, but welcomes all of humanity as Native. The harshness of the landscape is the key to the Natives' survival under the Settlers' genocidal regime, as the Settlers are unsuited to living in such a hot and dry climate. Country then becomes instrumental in the Native resistance: Country is weaponised to destroy the Settlers, and then used as protection against further invasion.

Alexis Wright's 2013 dystopia *The Swan Book* takes place a few hundred years into the future. This is a world of floods and drought, and therefore set during an apocalypse. There is

Living and Dying Countries (continued)

no word of the causes of these runaway effects global warming, just a brief mention of ‘when the world changed...’, which is the first line of ‘Dust Cycle’, the first chapter of the novel proper [4]. Although we get a sense that climate change was the cause and the effect of the book’s global chaos, the apocalypse is vague, multi-faceted, global, and unspecified in time. We are told of all kinds of catastrophic weather, and governments collapsing like dominoes. It is set mostly on a swamp in the middle of Australia which is lush and green, within a concentration camp/prison compound. In the swamp, the community still hunt, fish and gather, and Country is alive as the weather and waters respond. The other major setting is a huge, Gotham-like coastal city that is overpopulated, polluted, frequently flooded and chaotic. There is still magic under the buildings and concrete, and the waters seem to have a consciousness. Portals to the Dreaming world can be accessed even in this urbanised area, and the protagonist Oblivia communicates with the swans and the weather. In all settings, Dreaming stories permeate the present, and totems feature heavily in this story – especially Oblivia’s swans. Country also heals Oblivia’s trauma, when she

is cocooned within the eucalyptus tree after her rape.

The *Tribe* series is set 300 years after ‘The Reckoning,’ an apocalyptic event which itself lasted for 100 years, although there is no mention of how far into the future this occurred. The earth’s plates have shifted and now form one large supercontinent. The Reckoning’s environmental collapse forced humanity to reconfigure the way people live with each other and with Country. The Tribe live in symbiosis with a forest sanctuary called the Firstwood. Country is conscious, existing in multiple dimensions, and Ashala’s ancestor, Grandfather Serpent makes himself known to her and speaks for Country. Country also communicates with Ashala and others through dreams, spirits and the voices of other animals. As the Tribe are a group of rebel Illegals who have escaped broader society and banded together, their mutations may have manifested as Country’s response to the suppressed Balance of Life. In this world, the Illegals’ superpowers are Country’s way of arming people to fight for its needs, just as the spirits in “Water” have done.

The post-apocalyptic *Land of the Golden Clouds* is set in Australia 3000 years into the future and is a warning of the runaway effects of

climate change. Nuclear war is mentioned as a cause of environmental and social destruction. In this world, global warming has dire consequences for all tribes, and country. Country is not characterised nor is it explicitly conscious, although the Ilkari tribes read the weather and other natural phenomena as messages and portents. Melanoma, for example, is the name of the goddess whose kisses result in skin cancer. The Keepers of the Trees are an ancient Aboriginal race who practice a version of culture very similar to our pre-colonial ancestors. The Keepers of the Trees utilise Traditional Ecological Knowledge in their caring for Country practises. As the Keepers of the Trees are perfectly symbiotic with Country, they may be read as the human expression of Country in this novel.

Ecocide is a major theme in these futuristic worlds. The apocalypse is of unspecified origin in *The Swan Book*, but is more specific in “Water”, *Terra Nullius*, *Tribe*, and *Land of the Golden Clouds*. *Tribe* and *Land of the Golden Clouds* are both set so far into the

Environmental and social catastrophes are mostly orchestrated by white people and settlers, and if they are resolved, it is only through Aboriginal community cohesion.

future that the world Countries are unrecognisable, but the causes of ecocide still linger in human memory. *Land of the Golden Clouds* features self-determining communities that have emerged after the apocalypse; Western-style governance is still the norm in *Swan Book*, "Water", *Terra Nullius*, and *Tribe*, although there are pockets of civil resistance working to undermine these structures in the latter three. Annihilation of Country is correlated with colonial rule; Mother Nature in turn breaks everyone's hearts, even those who love her most. All five worlds feature this problem at their centres. Environmental and social catastrophes are mostly orchestrated by white people and settlers, and if they are resolved, it is only through Aboriginal community cohesion.

Country's response to its own killing is performed in each world in different ways. In *Terra Nullius*, *Swan Book*, and *Land*, Country is given agency through the actions and voices of animal and plant emissaries, and weather events. In "Water" and *Tribe*, Country is explicitly characterised through entities who express distress at ecocide, and actively care about the First Nations protagonists. In the Aboriginal world-view, Country is conscious, and this precept is reflected in all five works to different degrees.

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- [1] Brian Attebery provides a good overview of the state of Aboriginal representation in science fiction and fantasy, up until 2005 in his article "Aboriginality in Science Fiction," *Science Fiction Studies* 32, no. 3 (2005). First Nations authors only began to write back and publish speculative fiction from the 1990s, with Sam Watson's fantasy *The Kadaitcha Sung* (Penguin Group USA, 1990).
- [2] Archie Weller, *Land of the Golden Clouds* (Allen & Unwin, 1999); Alexis Wright, *The Swan Book* (Giramondo Publishing, 2013); Ambelin Kwaymullina, *The Interrogation of Ashala Wolf*, vol. 1, The Tribe Series (Newtown, N.S.W: Walker Books Australia, 2012); *The*

Disappearance of Ember Crow, vol. 2, The Tribe Series (Newtown, N.S.W: Walker Books Australia, 2013); *The Foretelling of Georgie Spider*, vol. 3, The Tribe Series (Newtown, N.S.W: Walker Books Australia, 2015); Ellen van Neervan, "Water," in *Heat and Light* (St Lucia, Qld: University of Queensland Press, 2014; reprint, 2017), Claire G. Coleman, *Terra Nullius* (Sydney: Hachette Australia, 2017). [3] Coleman, Op. Cit., p.121. [4] Wright, Op. Cit., p.6.

Mykaela Saunders is a Koori and Lebanese-Australian writer who belongs to the Minjungbal-Nganduwal community in Tweed Heads. She's currently undertaking a Doctor of Arts degree in the creative writing program through the University of Sydney, where she also lectures in Indigenous Studies. Her doctoral project is called *Goori-Futurism: Envisioning the sovereignty of Minjungbal-Nganduwal country, community, and culture through speculative fiction*.

Indian fantasy fiction in English and the post-millennial moment [1]

E. Dawson Varughese

Speculative fiction in *bhasha* literatures has a rich history and has typically concerned itself with folkloric or Hindu epic inspiration [2]. Devaki Nandan Khatri's *Chandrakanta* (1888) is often cited as an early fantasy novel in modern Hindi fiction due to its predominant fairy-tale aesthetic. Khair and Doubinsky (2015) have suggested that Indian speculative fiction in English dates to the early 1900s with 'Sultana's Dream' by Rokeya Sakhaway Hossain (2015: 228), although a tradition of speculative fiction in Bangla was established by writers Jagadananda Roy and Jagadish Chandra Bose in the late 1800s. In a similar vein although nearly a century later, Lokenath Bhattacharya's Bangla novel *Babughater Kumari Maachh* (*The Virgin Fish of Babughat*) from 1972 is easily identifiable as a dystopian-speculative novel, as the story is set in a nameless detention camp where human beings are reduced to an animal-like status as the captors provide only for the detainees' physical needs. In the late 1960s, *Yakshi* (1967) was published, written in Malayalam by Malayatoor Ramakrishnan:

the novel explores Kerala's enduring fascination with myth, folklore, and the *yakshi* which in Malayali cultures at least, is an alluring female who entraps and kills or leads men to their death. In more recent times, Manoj Das (acclaimed writer in English and Oriya: *Cyclones; A Tiger at Twilight*), Ruchir Joshi (*The Last Jet Engine Laugh*), Ravi Shankar Etteth (*The Tiger by the River; The Village of Widows*) and Anil Menon (*Half of What I Say*) have all been described as authors of 'speculative' fiction.

Post-millennial mythology-inspired fiction

The post-millennial domestic market in genre fiction in English has been flooded with mythology-inspired novels, spear-headed by authors like Ashok Banker, Amish Tripathi, and Ashwin Sanghi from the first decade of the noughties. Marketed as 'mythology' or 'mythology-inspired' fiction, such paperbacks retail at ₹250 to ₹300 and are sold in book stores, at train stations, airports, and through India's online platforms such as Infibeam, Amazon.co.in, and Flipkart. Amish Tripathi's 'Shiva Trilogy', Samhita Arni's *The*

The post-millennial domestic market in genre fiction in English has been flooded with mythology-inspired novels.

Missing Queen, Ashwin Sanghi's [3] *The Krishna Key*, as well as many other novels in this genre published in the last decade, variously anchor their storylines in Hindu Indian epic narratives. This body of fiction evokes a range of cultural (and religious) reader receptions within and outside of India, some of which read these novels as fantastical (see Dawson Varughese, 2016). In the last few years, as the genre fiction book market in English within India has become ever more saturated with mythology-inspired fiction, novels that move beyond the 'mythology fantasy' storyline have appeared. My recent work has been interested in this production of Indian fantasy in English which is not (or less) recognisable by the tropes and style of the mythology-inspired fiction that has been so prevalent in the market in the post-millennial period to date.

Indian fantasy fiction in English (continued)

Beyond 'mythology'

Recently, novels such as *Dark Things* (2016) by Sukanya Venkatraghavan, published by Hachette India, *Savage Blue* (2016) by Vikram Balagopal, published by HarperCollins India and *The Liar's Weave* (2017) by Tashan Mehta, published by Juggernaut Books, demonstrate – I suggest, – a nascent trend that moves away from Indian (Hindu) mythology and epic inspiration for the creation of a 'fantastical' narrative. Rather, the novels of Venkatraghavan, Balagopal and Mehta create fantastical narrative worlds anchored in Indianness (of various kinds), and these worlds are devoid of Hindu deities, their adversaries, and the overall familiar narrative scapes of post-millennial, mythology-inspired fiction.

Both *Dark Things* (2016) and *Savage Blue* (2016) concern themselves with worlds other than Earth and yet, when Earth is mentioned within the storyline, it is conceived of through an Indian world view and set of sensibilities. Mehta's *The Liar's Weave* (2017) is set in early 20th century Bombay but the location is disrupted by the space of *Vidroha* – a forest and

'community' on the outskirts of the city - and thus the familiar world of 1920s Bombay is skewed and distorted until at times, it is almost unrecognisable. Despite this distortion of locale, *The Liar's Weave* (2017) is anchored in a sense of Indianness, not least via its fixation with an individual's astrological chart, but also through the Parsi identity that runs throughout the novel.

All three novels exemplify the fantasy genre according to Clute and Grant (1999) insofar as when they are 'set in an otherworld, that otherworld will be impossible, though stories set there will be possible in its terms' (1999: 338). This is particularly apparent in *Savage Blue* (2016) in which many worlds are created, all 'impossible' in their own individual ways. From black snow to stone giants, from the Insectoids to the swamp world, all the worlds of *Savage Blue* (2016) function within their own narrative, making what happens in them possible. In *Dark Things* (2016), the protagonist, Ardra questions the limits of what she perceives to be the universe, what she knows to be true, and thus what she assumes to be

mythical. In doing so, Ardra invites the reader to consider what is 'real' and what is 'fantasy', serving as a meta-commentary on the genre itself. In *The Liar's Weave* (2017), it is the space of the forest located beyond the salt pans on the outskirts of Bombay and the community of the *hata-daiva* – the ill-fated, 'people whose futures are disastrous, so ours may be good or balanced' (2017: 65) – that constructs a sense of 'worlds', because what is 'possible' in *Vidroha* is 'impossible' elsewhere.

A global trend?

Istvan Csicsery-Ronay (2012) suggests that the increasing frequency of speculative fictions, borne from outside the traditional Euro-American paradigm, is to be expected. Indeed, the advent of distinct Indian fantasy voices (in English) circulating amongst those of mythology-inspired fiction is both timely and significant. Venkatraghavan, Balagopal, and Mehta's works explore 'fantastical' Indias in which technology, science, and knowledge can be thought of through a framework that is devoid of manifest Hindu (epic) tropes. This type of imagining is powerful given these novels'

Indian fantasy fiction in English (continued)

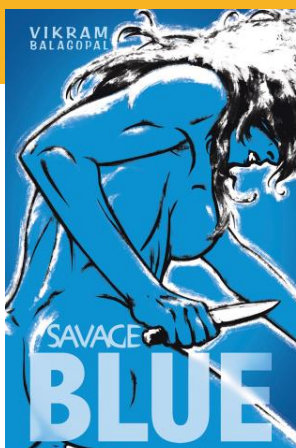


Image courtesy of
Vikram Balagopal

(potential) global dissemination circuits, such as HarperCollins India and Hachette who have published *Savage Blue* (2016) and *Dark Things* (2016) respectively, and Juggernaut Books' commitment to e-publishing. The novels briefly discussed here envisage a very different kind of imagined Indianness than that of mythology-inspired fiction, and in thinking of these novels as post-millennial, globalized 'products', they chime with much of young, urban India's ever-expanding outlook.

Notes

[1] Some aspects of this piece are more fully elucidated in: Dawson Varughese, E. 'Post-millennial "Indian Fantasy" fiction in English and the question of mythology: Writing beyond the "usual suspects"' in *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, 7th December, 2017 (online).

[2] Dastan-e- Amir Hamza (of the Lucknowi tradition) is an exception to this rule, given that its inspiration lies in the life of an uncle of the Prophet Muhammad. Interestingly, Dastan-e- Amir Hamza displays 'fantasy' tropes as defined by contemporary theorists (such as James and Mendlesohn; Attebery) despite its age (as a printed source it was circulating in Lucknow in the late 1880's).

For more on the Lucknowi dastan culture(s), see M. Farooqui (2000) 'The Simurgh Feather Guide to the Poetics of Dastan-e Amir Hamza Sahibqiran'. *Annual of Urdu Studies*. 15: 119–167.

[3] Although Ashwin Sanghi considers his writing as being conspiracy-inspired rather than mythology-inspired.

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E. Dawson Varughese's research examines the encoding of Indian post-millennial modernity through popular literary and (visual) artistic expression. She publishes on genre fiction, graphic novels and narratives, domestic Indian book cover design, and public wall art; a central theme to her research is (evolving) ideas of Indianness. Her most recent book is published by Palgrave, entitled *Visuality and Identity in post-millennial Indian graphic narratives* (2017). An independent scholar, she divides her time between the UK and India. She was a Visiting Fellow at the University of Delhi (English, 2017; Sociology, 2018). See her work at: www.beyondthepostcolonial.com

'Runaway Cyclone,' Or: The First Bengali Science Fiction Story.

Christin Hoene.

According to *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction's* entry on Bengal, the “most significant work of sf, and undoubtedly one of the best works of Bangla sf in the formative stage, is the highly subversive attack on colonial repression, ‘Niruddesh Kahini’ [‘The Story of the Missing One’] by ‘Acharya’ Jagadish Chandra Bose (1858-1937).” Born in British India, Bose was an internationally renowned scientist, public intellectual, and polymath who was mostly known for his work as a physicist and his research on electromagnetic (millimetre) waves (then called Hertzian waves) until his contributions were curiously forgotten and he became known instead for his work on the physiology of plants. Bose was also the president of the Academy of Bengali Literature for several years; he delivered the Presidential address at the literary conference held at Mymensing on 14 April 1911; and in 1896 he wrote what is arguably the first Bengali science fiction story.

Bose wrote “Niruddesh Kahini” as an entry for a short

story competition that was organised, somewhat peculiarly, by an Indian hair oil company. The condition for all entries was that the stories had to make reference to the company’s most prominent product, Kuntal Keshari (Kuntaline in the 1896 version), which in Bose’s story features prominently as the deus-ex-machina that saves Calcutta from impending doom by an approaching cyclone. Bose won that competition. 25 years later, in 1921, he republished an expanded version under the new title “Palatak Toofan”, translated as “Runaway Cyclone” in a 2013 translation into English by Bodhisattva Chattopadhyay, which was published in the online magazine *Strange Horizons* [1].

The story is about a cyclone that threatens to hit Calcutta and cause extreme destruction. Newspapers warn of the impending catastrophe, citing the latest readings by the Meteorological Department. But on the appointed day, the cyclone fails to appear, much to the astonishment of the newspapers, the Meteorological Department, and western

scientists. It is only in the second part of the story that the mystery is lifted by a personal account of a balding man, who is on a ship in the middle of the cyclone shortly before it makes landfall. Thinking that his last moment has come, he remembers that his daughter has packed him a bottle of Kuntal Keshari. He also remembers a scientific article that he recently read that describes how a film of oil on water calms the surface. The man throws the bottle of hair oil over board, which immediately calms the waters. The cyclone disappears, and disaster is avoided.

Several things are remarkable about this story when we look at it as a work of science fiction, on the one hand, and as a work of colonial literature on the other. The story is in two parts. Part one mainly charts the impending appearance followed by the sudden disappearance of the cyclone as described through the lens of western scientists and English-language newspaper articles. Everyone is equally puzzled by the cyclone that should have been but never was. In part

two we learn about the real cause of the cyclone's disappearance: the bottle of hair oil thrown overboard to calm the waves.

What is striking is that this resolution seems scientifically sound – after all, the protagonist had just read about the effects of oil on water in a scientific journal – and completely improbable at the same time: one single bottle of hair oil to calm a cyclone? This adds a supernatural dimension to the scientific one that is compounded by the origin story of the hair oil that Bose includes in the 1921 version of the story. In this later version, an English circus director once travelled to India, but upon arrival his lion lost its mane due to sea-sickness. In dire straits, the man prays at the feet of a Sanyasi, who in turn offers him a bottle of Kuntal Keshari and says that the formula had come to him in a dream. The hair oil cures the lion and makes its mane grow back within the week.

This origin story complicates our reading of "Runaway Cyclone" as a work of science fiction. After all, it does not add to the scientific element of the story, which is, at least within the context of the story, sound

and confirmed by that scientific journal the protagonist had recently read. The origin story, however, further mystifies the hair oil and renders this story a peculiar hybrid of science fiction and magical realism. On the science fiction side, there is the cyclone as a natural phenomenon, the expert opinions, and the effects of oil on water. On the magical realist side, we have the circus, the bald lion, and the circus director that prays at the feet of a Sanyasi, who in turn offers him a hair oil whose formula came to him in a dream.

both elements – the science and the magic – are integrated and mutually dependent, rather than mutually exclusive.

It is also interesting that both elements – the science and the magic – are integrated and mutually dependent, rather than mutually exclusive. The western scientists quoted in the story fail in their ability to account for the cyclone's sudden disappearance, and their failure is one of the imagination. As far as they know, there simply cannot be a rational explanation for the phenomenon. And strictly speaking, there is not. The

properties of the hair oil are as much scientific in their effect as they are supernatural in their origin. Merely relying on science and thus failing to see this bigger picture, the western scientists are partially blind to the whole truth of the matter.

This attack on western scientists echoes throughout Bose's non-fictional writings, particularly in the numerous speeches that he delivered from the 1910s to the 1930s at the inaugurations of universities, the opening of his own research institute in Calcutta, and on other occasions. Bose was an interdisciplinary scientist from India and worked at a time when neither interdisciplinarity nor scientists from India were particularly highly regarded in the west. Throughout his life, Bose had to battle the colonial prejudice that Indians were inept at the natural sciences because of their predisposition towards the metaphysical. This was plainly racist and untrue for Bose, who proved the prejudice wrong by sheer success.

In his speeches, Bose also rhetorically undermines the validity of the premise that a vivid imagination is bad for scientific pursuit, by first

'Runaway Cyclone' (continued)

acknowledging that this “burning imagination” is indeed intrinsic to the Indian mind, and by then arguing that it is beneficial rather than detrimental for scientific thought, because it opens up the mind for a “clear vision” of what is possible (1986, 69). “The excessive specialisation in the West”, on the other hand, “has led to the danger of our losing sight of the fundamental truth that there are not sciences but a single science that includes all” (45). Thus, the scientists’ inability to account for the runaway cyclone is not a failure of science as such; it is a failure of the western approach to science.

Notes

[1] According to the editors, Anil Menon and Vandana Singh, and the translator, Bodhisattva Chattopadhyay, this is the first translation of Bose’s story into English.

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Articles

Iraqi writer Hassan Blasim has been described as 'perhaps the best writer of Arabic fiction alive' [2]. He is one of a number of authors of Arabic science fiction whose popularity in English translation is soaring: Blasim's *The Iraqi Christ And Other Stories* (2013) won the *Independent Foreign Fiction Prize* in 2014 – the first time in its history that the prize was awarded to an Arab, and to a short story collection.

There seems little consensus, however, as to the precise kind of fiction Blasim is writing—as author Robin Yassin-Kassab says plainly, 'Blasim's work is so unusual it's hard to place' [3]. Most recently, Blasim edited and contributed to *Iraq +100: stories from a century after the invasion* (2016): its blurb observes that the narratives within exhibit 'a range of approaches—from science fiction, to allegory, to magic realism', converging in 'a new aesthetic for the "Iraqi fantastical"' [4]. These tentative inverted commas gesture to an emerging trend towards

these authors reach 'beyond mere realism and enter a surreal world'—using fantastical modes of writing not to abandon reality, but to estrange and critique it.

science and speculative fiction in Iraqi writing, one embodied by the work of authors such as Sinan Antoon, Ahmed Saadawi, and Lu'ay Hamza 'Abbas, as well as Blasim. Contrary to the realist prose which has dominated Iraqi fiction since the '1950s generation' [5], these authors reach 'beyond mere realism and enter a surreal world' [6]—using fantastical modes of writing not to abandon reality, but to estrange and critique it.

The fraught relationship between the real and the fantastical appears to be pivotal to the popularity of Blasim's fiction. Rachel Cardasco's review of *Iraq +100* is paradigmatic of the reception of Blasim's work in English-language forums. Cardasco deplores that 'our news reports tell us nothing about the Iraqi psyche', stating that 'English-language readers are fortunate to have this collection of speculative fiction by Iraqi authors in translation, since we can now catch a glimpse of the vibrant imaginations at work both within that country and abroad' [7]. Such reactions to *Iraq +100* reveal a curious dichotomy, wherein the anthology is lauded for its formal experimentation and unusual narrative strategies, while at the same time garnering prestige for its capacity as a vehicle through

“Now I prefer to get to the heart of the matter, to not use metaphor” [1]: Hassan Blasim and Iraqi Science Fiction
Sinéad Murphy

which to 'read the nation'. Another reviewer asserts that 'science fiction is one way of reflecting on human society and naturally the cultural background of the author lends a unique flavour to stories' [8]. This suggestion that the cultural context 'flavours' the genre reinforces a misguided notion that non-Anglophone science fiction is derivative rather than generative, and that it largely consists of straightforward adaptations of 'Western' science fiction. This is reinforced by the comparators which populate reviews of Blasim's work. In the space of one back cover, *The Iraqi Christ* is described variously as 'Bolaño-esque', 'Borgesian', and 'Gogol-like', likenesses which speak to the discomfiting, surreal, and magical-realist qualities of Blasim's writing. A

writer for the *Independent*—the sponsor of the aforementioned fiction prize—likens Blasim's style to that of Irvine Welsh, Franz Kafka, and William S. Burroughs [9].

The lexical *mélange* which gathers around texts such as Blasim's could be considered symptomatic of science fiction itself; defining the genre has proven evasive. Decades after it was uttered, Damon Knight's flippant observation that 'science fiction is what we point to when we say it' [10] continues to be invoked in scholarly criticism. Jerry Määttä acknowledges that definitions of science fiction 'are rarely free from apologia, rhetorical maneuvers and markings or annexations of bordering literary genres' [11], going on to suggest that a science fictional text is more readily identified by its paratext – the elements which gesture to the intended or supposed social function of the text. Although this perspective largely leaves considerations of narrative style and form aside, it helpfully foregrounds the material conditions in which these texts are written, published, and received. Narratives such as Blasim's circulate in an increasingly globalised literary marketplace which is unevenly

mapped across languages, cultures, and geopolitical boundaries.

To understand how such attitudes towards Arabic science fiction persist, I turn to John Rieder's conception of 'science fiction and the other genres usually associated with so-called genre fiction' as comprising a 'mass cultural genre system' [12]. This system, Rieder argues, is 'distinct from the preexisting classical and academic genre system' [13] and is best understood by its association with large-scale commercial production practices. That the boundaries of science fiction remain a moveable feast can be ascribed, Rieder poses, not to a desire for precision in the distinction of one genre from another, but to 'effects of prestige attached to positions in the contemporary genre system'. One such 'effect of prestige' in modern Western artistic practices is the violation of generic boundaries, rather than adherence to them. In English-language criticism, the conferral of prestige on Blasim's fiction on the basis of its experimentation with generic boundaries is clear. To simultaneously read his fiction as a straightforward national allegory, however, is to confine

Arabic science fiction the periphery of this 'genre system', even while it features the genre's recognisable tropes and devices.

What we see in Blasim's work is a reappraisal of this dynamic, by which science fiction itself is employed as a trope through which to express a 'new aesthetic of the "Iraqi fantastical"'. If 'the generic character of a text is precisely what is repeated and conventional in it' [14], then what is identifiable in Blasim's fiction is the use of narrative strategies which represent the 'Iraqi reality itself as monstrous and irrational' [15]. Blasim's work is populated by fantastical characters in surreal settings, but is also saturated with memorable dates, real place names, and actual historical events. The unifying motif across the *Iraq + 100* anthology, for instance, is the setting of a future Iraqi city:

The cities featured here – Baghdad, Basra, Ramadi, Mosul, Suleymania, Najaf – are all wildly different places, in fiction and in reality, but are united by the tragedy of modern Iraq – the tragedy of a people that is desperate for just a solitary draught of peace [16].

In Blasim's formulation, 'the city' takes on a kind of double signification, as a symbol of the various large urban areas in which the very real devastation of the 2003 invasion was felt, and simultaneously, as the imaginary space in which a future Iraqi nation is envisioned, in schematised form.

Blasim's writing is largely focused on the 2003 invasion and the 'many afterlives of violence' in its wake. He contextualises his work, however, as an intervention into a much longer history of colonial dispossession and destruction in Iraq—a form of cultural production which pushes back against 'the long litany of invaders that have descended on Mesopotamia and destroyed its treasures'.

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- [3] Yassin-Kassab, Robin. 'The Iraqi Christ by Hassan Blasim – review'. *The Guardian* online. 20 Mar 2013.
- [4] *Iraq + 100: Stories from Another Iraq*. ed. Hassan Blasim. Manchester: Comma Press, 2016
- [5] See Caiani, Fabio, and Catherine Cobham. *The Iraqi Novel: Key Writers, Key Texts*. Edinburgh University Press, 2013. 19-21.
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- [11] Määttä, Jerry, 'Commercial Market-Arrangement: Defining Science Fiction.' *Foundation* vol 37 no 103 (Summer 2008). The paratext of science fictional narratives is, he argues, 'so distinct when it comes to science fiction that it might be worthwhile to try to demarcate and define the genre using only its marketing and image'.
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Filipino Futures: An Introduction to Philippine Science Fiction

Vida Cruz

I. You can't talk about Philippine science fiction without bringing up history, whether of the genre or the country.

The Philippines is a young nation compared to much of the world. It became independent from Spain only 120 years ago, the Japanese only 73 years ago, and the Americans only 72 years ago. Though Spain had a hold over much of the archipelago for over 300 years – many Philippine cultures and languages have distinctly Spanish DNA – it was arguably the Americans who succeeded in culturally dominating the Philippines, the most westernized country in Asia.

Today, American English is one of the national languages. It is used in most signages and taught in schools. The school system is a holdover from the one brought over by the American missionaries in the 1900s – in fact, it has become even more American of late due to transitioning to the K-12 curriculum. Most cinemas play American movies, many shops play American pop tunes, and

most books in the local bookstore chains are from the United States, too.

So is it any wonder that the earliest samples of Philippine science fiction have undeniable Eurowestern influences (Ocampo 2014)?

For example, Mateo Cruz Cornelio's 48-page novel *Docktor Satan* (1946) is an R.L. Stevenson-esque tale starring a chemist racing to find a cure for his mother's terminal illness. He concocts a medicine that turns him into a horned, red-eyed demon and murders his fiancée before he is killed by the police.

Another early science fiction work is film director Nemesio E. Caravana's novel *Ang Puso ni Mathilda* (1959), translated as *The Heart of Mathilda*. In this story – a mix of Mary Shelley, H.P. Lovecraft, and Alfred Hitchcock – a surgeon gives his newly-dead lover a heart transplant that revives her but gives her more canine traits. It is later revealed that the heart belonged to the surgeon's beloved bulldog Mathilda.

(Incidentally, according to Victor Fernando Ocampo's article, these two examples, as well as Arnel M. Salgado's *Kidnapped by the Gods* (1995) and Eliza Victoria's *Project-17* (2013) are so far the only Filipino science fiction novels in the wide body of Philippine science fiction. The rest are short stories.)

But even this early on, the concerns of American science fiction (at least the pulp and dime novel kind) and Philippine science fiction diverge.

What drives the plots of the former is the characters' needing to explore lands that don't belong to them, to make something of themselves no matter the cost (Anon. 2016). These are perfectly encapsulated in the three categories of SF dime novel narratives:

- The Invention story, featuring teenaged boy genius heroes who triumph over their elders and 'savages' with the help of technology
- The Lost Race story, featuring Christian adventurers who felt

What drives the plots of Philippine science fiction, however, are the characters' relationships and the struggle to preserve those.

justified looting treasures from the idols of Pre-Columbian American peoples

- The 'Marvel' story, in which protagonists encountered strange, alien worlds and advanced technology

Very fitting of the literature of that period, as the United States had just conquered the lands of Native Americans, purchased a tract of land from the French, and wrested the colonies of Cuba, Guam, and the Philippines away from Spain (<https://www.encyclopedia.com/history/educational-magazines/guam-puerto-rico-and-philippines>).

What drives the plots of Philippine science fiction, however, are the characters' relationships and the struggle to preserve those. Even when the plot turns on trying to eke out or fight for a better life, there is always a heavy emphasis on that better life being for one's family.

Even in social science fiction, the concerns differ. George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty Four* (1949) and Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* (1953) are concerned with government Big Brotherism and censorship. In contrast, Gregorio Brillantes' short story "Apollo Centennial" (1981), while written as a commentary on the reign of the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos, zeroes in on the difficult journey via carabao of a poor family to the celebration of the 100th anniversary of the 1969 lunar landing. In this story, the dictatorship was never brought down and the Philippines' biggest island, Luzon, has become a protectorate of the United States. The story itself encapsulates the common Philippine fear that the developing nation will be left behind by the rest of the world – technologically, economically, what have you.

II.

Science fiction discusses possible futures while mirroring our present concerns. So then, what are the present concerns of Filipinos? Let the statistics paint a picture.

The Borgen Project reports that, while the Philippines' poverty rate has been decreasing over the years, it was at 21.6% in 2015. Meanwhile, 12.1% of Filipinos in a country of around 105 million are living below the poverty line (Suansing 2017).

"Fortitude" by Eliza Victoria, found in *Science Fiction: Filipino Fiction for Young Adults* (2015), features a young girl living in an abandoned and overgrown neighborhood, dreaming of joining her brother, who works on the settled planet of Fortitude.

In 2017, there were 2.3 million Filipinos working all over the world – that's 2.3 million people separated from their families, often for years, working long hours in occasionally unjust conditions.

The same YA anthology carries "The Ceres Girl" by Lakan Umali, in which a young girl faces the struggles of growing up without her mother, who is a nurse for an American company on an asteroid called Ceres.

The Philippines, a biodiverse tropical country, has also weathered 274 natural

calamities in the last 20 years, making it the world's fourth most disaster-prone country (Quizmundo 2012).

Kim Sarabia's "Jeepney Blues" from the same anthology deals with a permanently storm-flooded Philippine archipelago and a teenage boy surviving day-to-day on a floating jeepney.

In terms of infrastructure development, the Philippines ranked 106th out of 140 countries in the 2015-2016 World Economic Forum Global Competitiveness Report – this despite an increasing population and high economic growth (Anon. 2017b).

This lack of infrastructure, such as farm-to-market roads and irrigation systems, also contributes to food loss – specifically, 296,869 metric tons of wasted rice for the year 2008. Terrible, considering how millions of Filipinos cannot even afford to eat three meals a day (Rodriguez 2014). Bio-plasticine millet (BPM) is miraculously being turned into the real thing in order to feed a society that can no longer eat real food in "Milagroso" by Isabel Yap (2015).

The lack of infrastructure also makes the capital of Manila the third worst in terms of traffic in Southeast Asia (Anon 2017).

There are a lot more Filipino concerns that I couldn't find statistics for, but which have been crystallized in local science fiction.

Being a very sociable people, it is no surprise that some Filipino stories deal with robot companions, loneliness, and grief. "The Romeo Robot" by Raymund P. Reyes and "Surrogate" by Daniel Carlos Tan – both from *Science Fiction: Filipino Fiction for Young Adults* – are sterling examples of this. The title character from Dean Alfar's "Hollow Girl: A Romance" (2005) also deals with these themes from the robot's point of view.

The dirty, deceitful world of Philippine politics is also given a delightful twist with clones in Paolo Chikiamco's "Carbon" (*Philippine Speculative Fiction* vol. 5, 2010).

And with so many works of literature and oral tradition being lost to time or lying undiscovered in dusty old

archives, Victor Fernando Ocampo tells the tale of Earth's last librarian, a Filipino, beaming all of humanity's works into space before monsters overrun its last library in "Resurrection 2.0." This story can be found in his short story collection *The Infinite Library and Other Stories* (2017).

Similarly, there are plenty of other social, environmental, technological, economic, and political concerns for which there are stories that have yet to be written, or that I have not read. These include religious wars, racial tensions, Manila's worsening traffic situation, sluggish internet speed, and a lack of myriad other infrastructure projects. However, upcoming local anthology titles include *Kathang Haka: The Big Book of Fake News, Disaster: Pinoy SciFi*, and *Pook at Paglikha: Philippine Science Fiction & Fantasy* (meaning, "place" and "creation," respectively). Who knows what stories we'll find in these books?

III.

Given everything I have read – though I definitely haven't read everything there is – it seems that Filipino visions of the

future unanimously contain sustained social and familial ties. But these visions are also bleak. Dystopias, a stagnant society, and dwindling resources run amok in Philippine science fiction. Does that mean that even if society breaks down, we'll be all right so long as we have our communities?

However, it seems that Filipino young adult science fiction is overwhelmingly positive in its point of view. Since time immemorial, Philippine culture has often emphasized that its youths are the hope for the future, and Philippine YA science fiction does impress this upon its target market. I, for one, cannot wait to see what the future of Philippine science fiction will bring.

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Cultural Heritage, Future Vision

Mark Bould

In Nigerian-American Deji Bryce Olukotun's *After the Flare* (Los Angeles: The Unnamed Press, 2017), the sequel to his debut *Nigerians in Space* (2014), an unprecedentedly massive solar flare takes out electricity grids, and ensuing cyberwarfare destroys the internet and other communications systems. With a balkanised US (and others) rendered globally irrelevant, only the fledgling Nigerian space programme – with help from India – is able to put together a mission to retrieve an astronaut stranded on the International Space Station, the orbit of which is fatally deteriorating. At the centre of the Nigerian space agency's Kano complex is

a ten-meter-tall bronze spaceship, a stylized replica of the *Masquerade* – the ship being built to rescue Masha Kornokova – festooned with black-painted ziggurats and Gelede masks peering into new realms of time, the cultural heritage of Nigeria forged into a colossal sculptural vision of the future. (16)

This intriguingly nested image – seemingly a throwaway piece of scene-setting – cries out to be treated as a metaphor to think

about the sf that has emerged in such quantity and quality from Africa and the diaspora in the new millennium.[1] A stylized replica of a masquerade. A flamboyant caricature of a performative identity. A copy of a copy that, at both levels of simulation, contains critical and creative difference. It represents a collision neither of modernity and tradition, nor of Anglophone sf and African lore, but a locally articulated transnational modernity – just like Joyce or Starbucks – and a locally articulated transnational techno-fantastical imaginary – just like Heinlein or Apple.

In Yoruba mythology, Gelede is the daughter of Yemoja, the once-barren mother of all *oriṣà*. When Gelede, her brother Efe, and their respective spouses also prove incapable of reproduction, they repeat the dancing ritual their mother had undertaken and, like her, become fertile. The spectacular Gelede ritual, which celebrates mothers, older women, female ancestors, and female deities – while also placating witches – is performed by pairs of men cross-dressed as Gelede. Both the rocket and its replica, like

these performers, stand at the ambiguous threshold – to borrow a little Derrida – of *l'futur*, the attempt to lock down the future to a specific path as power and markets extend themselves forward in time, and of *l'avenir*, the unknowable future, which cannot be known precisely because it is the future, not yet locked down, full of potential.

Figurations of uncertainty, contradiction, and fluid identity recur in the novel. There are, for example, small creatures cyborgised into surveillance devices, including an insect 'evolved in nature to imitate a leaf' which is now 'a computer imitating a bug imitating a leaf' (148). On the replacement to the crashed internet, people can have several identities, each of which is tweaked so that its avatar physiologically matches, and thus 'belongs' to, a particular ethnic or national group. Protagonist Kwesi Bracket is a light-skinned Nigerian American who relocates to Nigeria – not returns, because he has never

Figurations of uncertainty, contradiction, and fluid identity recur in the novel.

been there before – to work on the rescue mission. He objects to being called *oyibo*, which means ‘white man’ (66), and he has ‘never [been] confused for white ... at least not until he came to Nigeria’ (90). His unofficial driver, Max, offers to call him ‘Yankee’ instead, but Kwesi says no: because he prefers hockey to baseball, and thus the Rangers to the Yankees, and because he is from Boston (the reasoning behind the latter is unclear, but might be about refusing a Confederate designation for Northerners). He just wants to be called by his name, but Max in turn objects because Kwesi is ‘an Ashanti name’ and he is ‘not from Ghana’ (66). Later, when Kwesi’s phone is compromised, he is told he can no longer use the ‘default identity’ of Yankee, to which it was set, and he should switch to Kalibari. ‘I can’t just be myself?’, he asks (149). No, he is told by Ini, who believes she was only ever considered for her job in security because she applied using a male identity: ‘You’ll have to shed your Yankee roots, but you may find that ... can work to your advantage’ (149).

However, as *After the Flare* makes clear, ‘You could switch your tribal identity online – if you could get online – but you

couldn’t forget your own history’ (56). And histories that have been forgotten, or suppressed, can be recovered – even if ‘All archeology is [also] destruction’ and we ‘ruin history with every breath we take’ (260).

The novel ends with an epilogue set a decade after the events of the novel. Drawing on its hard-earned expertise ‘in monetizing the extraction process’, combined with successful anti-corruption policies and a concomitant shift to ‘rigorous contracts and consummate transparency’ (282), and again with Indian assistance, Nigeria has established a colossal space station at one of the five Lagrange points – where the Earth and the Moon’s respective gravitational effects provide the centripetal force required for it to maintain its position relative to them both without needing fuel – in order to mine asteroids brought into cislunar space. The Compound, as the space station is known, is surrounded by the River – the thirty kilometre long ‘twisting helix’ (292) of the asteroid processing system – which is traversed by shuttles called canoes. As in Nigeria, the local currency is the cowrie. And the astronauts – Naijanuats, rather

– wear sari top-suits and Kente wrappers.

Cultural heritage forged

into a vision of the future.

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[1] Critical literature on African American sf and afrofuturism is relatively well established now, but African and other afrodisaporic sf has only recently begun to attract attention. A basic historical overview of African sf can be found at <https://markbould.com/2015/02/05/african-science-fiction-101/>, and Nick Wood blogs about the history of South African sf at <http://nickwood.frogwrite.co.nz>. The best place for the neophyte reader of African sf to begin is undoubtedly *omenana*, the first African sf

magazine, which can be found free at <https://omenana.com>.

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Articles

Speculative Liberty 'with a Slant': Decolonizing Sovereignty through Irony in Vizenor's *Treaty Shirts*.

Cathy Covell Waegner

A work of Indigenous speculative fiction with an actual *written constitution* as protagonist? Highly unlikely! And yet Indigenous/postcolonial sf flourishes on “highly unlikely” modes in ways that mark it as different from what might be labeled “mainstream” speculative fiction [1]. *Treaty Shirts* (2016), the latest work of fiction by the “elder” of Native American Studies, Gerald Vizenor (Anishinaabe, White Earth Nation), set in 2034, chooses just such an improbable protagonist. Ever since his first speculative – and at that time scandalous – novel published in 1978, Vizenor has encouraged the process of decolonizing Native sovereignty and cultural production, with *Treaty Shirts* demonstrating that this process is still ongoing and

developing [2]. In a reversal of the “first contact” paradigm, a reversal prevalent in much Indigenous sf [3], *Treaty Shirts* shows seven Anishinaabe narrators attempting to save the Constitution of the White Earth Nation (CWEN) from eradication by hegemonic forces. The exiled band of narrators flees with their abrogated constitution to the totemically and historically significant island of Manidooke Minis, a nexus of Indigenous/colonial entanglements in a geographically liminal space between Canada and the United States. Can these renegade exiles establish a decolonizing, utopian but viable self-government on this slippery isle?

The experimental postmodern novel *Treaty Shirts* deliberately ends before the reader can formulate a response to this final question; Vizenor’s radical discourse of irony pokes sharp barbs at (post)colonial master narratives of all stripe, including the policies of the official White Earth Nation leaders who have, in their corrupt casino culture, internalized the crippling capitalist attitudes of the 2034 Federal government. The potential success of the rag-tag band of CWEN rescuers is less important than their loyalty to the democratic,

Indigenous/postcolonial sf flourishes on “highly unlikely” modes in ways that mark it as different from what might be labeled “mainstream” speculative fiction

totemic, and literary thrusts of the CWEN, this allegiance signaled by their wearing of the grimy and ghostly “treaty shirts” that have not been washed for two decades, ever since the CWEN was implemented (in the novel) in 2014. The satirical narrative offers imaginatively creative alternatives to the politics of exclusion, exploitation, and subjugation. It admits empowerment of the banished through such startling acts as embracing ghosts past and future, ranging from North American beaver slaughtered for European fashion in the 17th century to toxically deformed fish, from broken treaties to rejected constitutions.

With regard to genre, the irony of *Treaty Shirts* emphasizes a unique form of topical speculation, since the real-world CWEN was authored principally by Gerald Vizenor and was approved through referendum by 80% of the White Earth voters, although it has yet to be implemented, and has indeed been seriously

Articles

Decolonizing Sovereignty through Irony (continued)

thwarted [4]. This new projected constitution strengthening self-governance is intended to replace the somewhat revised version (1964) of the 1934 constitution prepared by federal functionaries for six Anishinaabe bands largely expressing privileges granted and regulations controlled by the U.S. government. As the main writer of the CWEN in conjunction with Constitutional Convention meetings from 2007-2009, Gerald Vizenor attempted to combine certain political structures from the U.S. Constitution, above all the separation of powers into legislative, executive, and judicial, with a list of rights. These rights include Anishinaabe cultural imperatives such as the importance of story and the establishment of advisory bodies reflecting traditional Anishinaabe decision-making processes: Community Councils, a Council of Elders, and a Youth Council. Vizenor proposed a system of negotiated sovereignty with the state and federal governments but prioritizing White Earth

self-determination. The many non-reservation citizens were granted representation, and banishment is prohibited. “Restorative justice” (chapter 15, article 4) is called for, with emphasis placed on, as CWEN co-author Jill Doefler puts it, “healing and restoring balance for all parties involved”, as opposed to “retributive justice” [5]. A far-reaching and not uncontroversial feature of CWEN is the definition of citizenship *not* through “blood quantum” but through linear descent. Some of the influential neologisms from Vizenor’s impressive body of theory have worked their way into the CWEN text, such as “survance” and “continental liberty.” Readers familiar with Vizenor’s novels and essays are not surprised to see that the CWEN protects “academic, artistic irony” and “literary expression” as a citizen’s right [6].

The novel is structured dialectically, with each chapter narrated in 2034 by a different exile (although the first and last chapters are told by the same renegade), each narrator offering his/her own perspective on the CWEN, own totem, and own – often inherited – mode of activism, as well as each encoding some autobiographical component of the author of this novel and of the CWEN, Gerald Vizenor.

The chapters speak to each other as they revolve around five key events – three historical and two speculative – that “perform” (de)colonization in constantly adjusting spaces. The independent-thinking, asylum-seeking narrators are colorfully nicknamed Archive, Moby Dick, Savage Love, Gichi Noodin, Hole in the Storm, Waasese, and Justice Molly Crèche. The nonagenarian sopranoist Chewy Browne joins them with her dancing chickens, although she sings rather than narrates. The nicknames take on significance, because in Anishinaabe culture and in this novel, they are earned names rather than imposed ones. In their respective chapters, these idiosyncratic figures refer metafictionally to previous Vizenor novels as well as to the book *Treaty Shirts* in the past tense. But in the present tense the narrators convince the reader of their unbroken commitment to working toward ever-developing notions of sovereignty with a productively playful component, or, as Molly metaphorically puts it in connection with their puckered island sanctuary, Native “liberty with a slant” (33). The attempt to undermine the still-reigning colonial settler-mindset of greed, ecosystemic destruction, and disrespecting, dislocating, or even eliminating exposed

Articles

Decolonizing Sovereignty through Irony (continued)

populations requires such unsettling activism as “Panic Hole” radio broadcasts, sci-fi “holoscenes” projected onto the night sky, dogs trained to bark at the absence of irony, and, yes, inventive constitutions [7].

Although focusing on a specific community and a specific constitution addressing particular issues of sovereignty, Vizenor’s *Treaty Shirts* has global and global-future ramifications. The “native association” (9) formed by Justice Molly Crèche to support the CWEN has, according to *Treaty Shirts*, a membership of 3,000 individuals spread all over the world. A far less positive development than a community of diasporic citizens is the omnipresence of uncontrolled consumer trash and infelicitous weather developments: “commercial debris forever awash in the oceans” and “global turns of the weather” (87) signal a centuries-long violation of Native reciprocity with the environment demonstrated in the creation stories and inherited attitudes of the *mino-bimaadiziwin* [8]. The toxicity of

the waste caused by careless industrialization can result in the mutancy of those deformed fish that narrator Moby Dick calls “global migrants” – an image that can be related to the human global migrants fleeing from poisoned and destroyed homelands. This apocalyptic scenario is intensified by the dire economic plight of national governments in 2034, which in *Treaty Shirts* has led to Washington’s abrogation of treaty rights and White Earth’s CWEN in order to take over the lucrative casinos on Native reservations. Indeed, the global markets which were fed by North American fur pelts in the 17th century continue to suck up the rich resources of less industrially developed global-South countries in the 21st with only nominal regard for sustainability. The increasing international technical surveillance has reached White Earth in 2034: technical objects for control and surveillance were “everywhere” (20) on the largely rural reservation – drones, digital cameras, aerial monitors. Like the 19th-century newspaper printed by Archive’s indomitable ancestors on the White Earth reservation, Vizenor’s novel is global, both publications “clearly revealing a cosmopolitan perspective on native politics and the cultures and problems around the world” (115).

As other Indigenous bands struggle to validate constitutions embodying new forms of fairer sovereignty, *Treaty Shirts*’ discursively ingenious enfolding of past, present, and future conditions provides a possible model and a warning. In Vizenor’s speculative novel, the site of utopian refuge for the outlandish asylum-seekers brings us back full circle to the ghosted beginnings of the westward-moving fur trade of unprincipled monetary gain. Can the renegades’ utopian impulse, the activating of ethics and imagination to strive for optimal justice and reciprocal sovereignty, break the circle of hegemonic exploitation? In both local and transnational postcolonial contexts, confrontational political strategies based on stubborn and self-serving fixity have proved to be of limited effectiveness in sustainably resolving problems of governance and sovereignty. Why not give novelist and constitution writer Gerald Vizenor’s envisioned and envisaged ethics of “liberty with a slant” a chance?

Articles

Decolonizing Sovereignty through Irony (continued)

Notes

[1] In her introduction to the influential 2004 volume *So Long Been Dreaming: Postcolonial Science Fiction and Fantasy*, Nalo Hopkinson has energetically and famously epitomized “writing back”-approaches for decolonizing postcolonial speculative fiction; she and her co-editor Uppinder Mehan have collected “stories that take the meme of colonizing the natives, and, from the experience of the colonizee, critique it, pervert it, f*** with it, with irony, with anger, with humour, and also, with love and respect for the genre of science fiction that makes it possible to think about new ways of doing things” (8-9).

[2] Vizenor’s first novel was originally published as *Darkness in Saint Louis Bearheart* by Truck Press, 1978 (a somewhat revised version was issued in 1990 as *Bearheart: The Heirship Chronicles* by University of Minneapolis Press). See Waegner 2017 for a discussion of the functions of the deliberately grotesque violence in this (post)apocalyptic novel. The full title of Vizenor’s 2016 novel is *Treaty Shirts: October 2034 – A Familiar Treatise on the White Earth Nation*.

[3] In *New Directions in Diaspora Studies* (Sarah Illott, Ana Cristina Mendes, and Lucinda

Newns, eds.), Agnieszka Podruczna (2018) offers a perceptive discussion of this reversal in connection with science fiction’s generic legacy of the colonial project. The second section of Grace Dillon’s anthology of Indigenous science fiction (*Walking the Clouds*, 2012) is titled

“Contact” and presents texts in which the action of conquest disguised as discovery of the Other is countered.

[4] In 2014 officials were elected to the Tribal Council who oppose the CWEN, particularly because eliminating blood quantum would bring in too many new members, straining the White Earth and federal services (see Glass-Moore and Uran for details, opinions, and further objections).

[5] Doerfler in Vizenor and Doerfler, eds. (2012), 93.

[6] See Lisa Brooks (2011) for a thought-provoking discussion of the importance of naming “irony” as a right. She sees this as a productive way to permit dissent, arising from the Native oral storytelling tradition of ironic tricksterism.

[7] In a consideration of interplanetary colonization in speculative fiction and the rhetoric of actual projects to settle Mars, Rachel Rochester (2018) points out that the traditional model of settler-colonialism still serves as a foundation. She also discusses the genre of the “locus-colonial novel” that centers *place* in a counterdiscourse telescoping history, present, and future. *Treaty Shirts* could perhaps be counted as such a novel.

[8] Molly Crèche defends animal rights as part of the Anishinaabe philosophy of *mino-bimaadiziwin*, explicitly mentioned in the CWEN, which translates approximately as ‘living the good life,’ including respect and reciprocity for non-human animals and the natural world.

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Decolonising Speculative Fiction in South Africa

Alan Muller

In comparison to 2015 and 2016, 2017 was a quiet period for South African speculative fiction with only a handful of texts appearing throughout the year. With the literary award season for 2017 approaching, three speculative novels have been longlisted for the Barry Ronge Fiction Prize (formerly the *Sunday Times* Literary Award), one of most prestigious and certainly the country's wealthiest literary award. Marcus Low's dystopian novel, *Asylum* follows Barry James as he is detained in a quarantine facility in the Great Karoo after an outbreak of nodular lung disease that is reported to have killed most of the population of South Africa. Low is himself an expert in epidemiology so the novel is well researched and has been reviewed in a 2017 issue of *Journal of Public Health Policy*. Writing in light of South Africa's current crisis with drug resistant tuberculosis, David Banta described the novel as both "timely and important as it presents a human story behind untreatable infectious disease" (Banta 386). Another of the novels to be longlisted is Tammy Baikie's *Selling LipService*

which is a futuristic consumerist dystopian novel where all of humanity, around the age of 18, comes of 'hemorrh-age' and suffers a stroke that destroys the language centre of the brain. As a result, each person is fitted with a language patch implant that allows them to speak and write again. The catch, however, is that each patch is commercially branded and the language of its wearer is scripted by copywriters and lexically reflects the brand of the patch they wear. The third novel longlisted for the award is Paige Nick's *Unpresidented* which is a near-future satire that imagines the life of former president Jacob Zuma in 2020 having served his sentence for of fraud and corruption charges. Despite the quality of these novels it remains to be seen if they will make the shortlist as no speculative fiction has yet won the award. Sticking with awards of the year, Lauren Beukes' highly acclaimed *Zoo City*, although published in 2010, won the Helsinki Science Fiction Society's 2017 Tähtivaeltaja Award for best science fiction

book published in Finland in 2016.

As I write this contribution on 19 April 2017, the African Speculative Fiction Society has announced its shortlist for the 2018 Nommos award for novels published throughout 2017. This includes Gavin Chait's *Our Memory Like Dust*, Deon Meyer's *Fever* (originally published in Afrikaans as *Koors* in 2016), and Masha du Toit's *The Real* – incidentally all three post-apocalyptic and dystopian in feel. While definitely exciting news, it is unsurprising that all South African authors on the shortlist are white – another testament to the pervasive

historically, speculative fiction in South Africa has been produced almost exclusively by white writers and filmmakers.

whiteness of the speculative mode in South Africa. But what does this have to do with decolonizing speculative fiction? The answer is quite simple: very little. The awards line-up is hardly surprising

Decolonising Speculative Fiction in South Africa (continued)

since, historically, speculative fiction in South Africa has been produced almost exclusively by white writers and filmmakers. The whiteness of speculative fiction is something I have myself done extensive research on, beginning with the earliest examples of speculative fiction first set in, and then originating from, Southern Africa – H. Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* in 1885.

However, I believe that 2017 is a watershed moment since the face of South African speculative fiction becomes progressively less white. Khulekani Magubane's *The Sirius Squad: Earth's Last Defence* (2017), a science fiction novel set in contemporary Durban, revolves around the young Menzi who turns out to be a Nommos left on Earth to serve as its defender in case of attack. Drawing on Dogon mythology, western science, and pseudoscientific conspiracy theories, *The Sirius Squad* impresses with its dynamism. Khaya Maseko's *Mashu oMusha* was also published in 2017 and this futurist science fiction novella, likewise set in Durban (there must be something in that Indian Ocean air), takes place in an unspecified time

post-2033. While the narrative resists the idea of having a protagonist proper, it revolves around Mer, a god that comes to Three-Rock (Earth) and takes on the form of a woman, and Sapien, a Durban local who meets Mer and is swept up into a neo-colonial war.

The year also saw a considerable change in this status quo with the emergence of bold new voices from underrepresented groups and in languages other than English or Afrikaans. Although initially appearing in 2016 in English, the superhero graphic novel *Kwezi* came out in isiZulu and isiXhosa translations in 2017. While these translations currently include only issues 1-3, they are likely to include the entire series in the near future. It is problematic that a graphic novel of this kind featuring the country's first black superhero should first appear in English but, seeing as almost all publishers in South Africa function exclusively in either English or Afrikaans, it seems almost inescapable without first overhauling the country's Anglocentric publishing industry. Thankfully, there are young and upcoming publishers that are working to change this.

Kwasukela Books, founded by Wade Smit in 2017, focuses on literature written in isiZulu. Of enormous significance is the fact that their first publication is an anthology of speculative fiction titled *Izinkanyezi Ezintsha* (New Stars). The collection, published entirely in isiZulu, includes both established writers and new voices and is, to my knowledge, the first book-form piece of speculative fiction published in one of South Africa's 11 official languages other than English or Afrikaans.

This linguistic progress has not been limited to literature. The 2017 BRICS (an association of five major emerging national economies: Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa Film Festival held in Chengdu, China saw the debut of Jahmil XT Qubeka's 20 minute short film, *Stillborn*, which follows the android Nobomi SXI as she tries to uncover the cultural past of the now extinct humans that created her. With dialogue entirely in isiXhosa, the film is the first South African science fiction film not in English. The narrative, audio and visuals of the film are outstanding and its symbolism of past/future and organic/synthetic is intertwined

Decolonising Speculative Fiction in South Africa (continued)

in ways that undermines the all too common juxtaposition of tradition and culture as the enemies of progress.

So what then does the future of South African speculative fiction look like? 2018 is but a young'un, so pickings are yet slim but Imraan Coovadia's *A Spy in Time* is due out in July and looks set to be a poignant contribution to intersections of time, space, and race in South African literature. I suspect that the next few years will bring about even greater change in speculative fiction with publishers like Kwasukela Books and creators like Qubeka, Magubane and Maseko working to bring unique

alternative presents and futures to the fore.

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The Twisted Mirror: The Postcolonial in Dean Francis Alfar's 'L' Aquilone Du Estrellas.'

Roy Tristan Agustin

Dean Francis Alfar's short story, "L'Aquilone Du Estrellas" was originally published in the first volume of the *Philippine Speculative Fiction Anthology*. Alfar's story is one of fantasy, set in a fictional world, whose main city is called "Ciudad Meiora." The story repeatedly references names and terms which are easily recognizable to Filipinos as slightly altered Tagalog terms. However, in this world, these terms are made to appear foreign, local Filipino words and locations are made exotic by italicizing them in the text, which, when applied to a term, ordinarily connotes that this term is not local. As the story exoticizes the local, it simultaneously presents other names for locations which are Hispanicized, a technique that could be a reference to the colonial history of the country. Alfar twists the postcolonial in this case, perhaps in an attempt to be ironic, as he presents a fantasy story which appears to be set in a place that is the Philippines, but it is a Philippines that has embraced its colonizers, rather than rebelled against it.

In brief, "L'Aquilone Du Estrellas" is about a young woman, named Maria Isabella du'l Cielo, who falls in love with a young astronomer as she sees him cross the street. She averts the death of the astronomer and decides that she must meet him. She asks a butcher's boy about the astronomer's identity, who tells her that the man only has eyes for the stars, which he and his family name. Undeterred, she decides that she must then rise to the stars, so that he may see her and meet her, sure that this is all she needs to win him over. She decides to see the best kitemaker in the city, who sets about giving her an impossible list of items which he will need to create the kite that will carry her to the stars. Despite warnings that the task is impossible, she goes off on her quest, accompanied by the butcher's boy, who decides to join her on her quest.

The quest takes her sixty years to complete, and in the process, she travels to many exotic lands. She and the butcher's boy go on many adventures, learning a myriad number of skills as well as

encountering all sorts of creatures, both human and divine. Eventually, they finish the list and return to the city to find the son of the kitemaker (the original kitemaker has long since died) and, though he is incredulous, finds his father's designs and builds her kite. Maria finally flies to the stars, thrilled at the idea of finally being seen, to the sadness of the butcher's boy who has always loved her. The story ends with an implication that, as she rises to the stars, Maria passes away, not knowing that the astronomer she was so excited about had long retired, and he was blinded by cataracts.

The terminologies used in the story are what makes it a curious work. The words Alfar uses sound Hispanic but are not correctly spelled. Take, for example, the name of the city in the story, Ciudad Meiora. Ciudad is, clearly, Spanish for city. But Meiora is not a Spanish word. However, Meiora sounds like the Spanish *mayor*, or major. Thus, "Ciudad Meiora" can be read as "major city." The word is not Spanish, but it does sound Spanish. This is

significant because most Filipinos do not speak Spanish but are very familiar with how it sounds, as Tagalog uses Spanish terms. The work of “decoding” a Spanish-sounding term would not be too difficult. Another example is the word “Qalesa,” a reworking of the *Calesa*, a horse-drawn carriage. The story, however, does not just use Spanish. When Alfar describes the kitemaker, he calls him someone “famed throughout Ciudad Meiora and environs as the Master Builder of *aquilones*, *cometas*, *saranggola*, and other *artefactos voldadores*.” (Alfar) This quote contains three different words for “kite.” The first two are Italian and Spanish, which are italicized. The third one is Filipino, which is not.

The work of exoticization also involves locations. Alfar alters the spelling of Filipino locations. In the story, the “world,” or overall setting of the story is a place called Hinirang, which is the Filipino term for “appointed” or “chosen.” Thus, the world is a “chosen” land, which can refer to its being a product of Alfar’s imagination (a land that he “chose” to create) or it can also be an allusion to the Philippines; the Philippine national anthem’s title is

“Lupang Hinirang” or the Chosen Land. Other Filipino locations are exoticized by spelling them as if they were more Polynesian in character. Palawan, for example, is spelled as “Palao’an.” Siquijor is “Siqui’jor.” Calamian is “Islas du’l Calami’an.” The mythical *Tikbalang*, a creature who has the head of a horse and the body of a man, is called the “Tiq’Barang.” One can see clear aesthetic choices in how Alfar alters the spelling of terms; the European is made more “Castillian” in appearance, the local more “islandic.”

Most of the terms are easily recognizable to a Filipino reader, who will see the familiar in the altered names and places. It is, however, the main setting, and the point of origin of the characters, that prove intriguing. Ciudad Meiora is portrayed as a progressive, modern place, yet it is also part of an “empire.” Given the Philippines’ history as a colony of an empire, what discourse does Alfar make by creating an alternate Philippines that never rebelled? Alfar’s work presents a world where both the European and the local are made exotic.

His mixing of several European languages, and the alterations in grammar and spelling, point to an act of pastiche, Jameson uses the idea of pastiche to describe an aesthetic that he found present in works produced during the Postmodern, or Late Capitalist as he termed it, period. This conception of pastiche was based on the fragmentation of the postmodern subject, while freed from modern psychopathologies, was also devoid of a sense of subject or individualism. Thus, individual style disappears and instead of the social norms of the modern period, the postmodern subject is faced with “codes,” or, as Jameson puts it, “a field of stylistic and discursive heterogeneity without a norm.” (Jameson 16) Thus, pastiche is not merely imitation of a unique style, but a humorless parody, one which misses the very point of being



(c) Ray Hutchinson
<https://bit.ly/2wrtBfp>

parodic, instead, it practices the mimicry with no sense of mockery or satire. Thus, because of the collapse of the “high-modernist ideology of style – what is unique and unmistakable as your own fingerprints, as incomparable as your own body...the producers of culture have nowhere to turn but to the past: the imitation of dead styles...” (Jameson 16-17) Alfar’s work uses the “style” of high fantasy by creating terms which seem unfamiliar or exotic sounding, much like how in many works of fantasy names are made to sound uncommon. Similarly, Tolkien’s *Lord of The Rings* trilogy goes to the extent of inventing entire language systems to emphasize the difference Middle Earth has with our own world. However, in the case of Alfar, the variation in the terminology seems to present something more than just a desire to present a “different” world. The exoticization of local words, and the Hispanicization

Alfar’s story presents an example of a hybrid story, one that resembles and dissembles; a work that is recognizable, but not familiar.

of others indicate that the postcolonial experience is something that can be explored in a speculative fiction work. Alfar’s story presents an example of a hybrid story, one that resembles and dissembles; a work that is recognizable, but not familiar. The world is not Filipino, but it speculates on a history that every Filipino is aware of. There are strains of polyphony and polysemy in these altered terms, and the polysemy can be ambiguous. The fantasy in the story is the sense that it presents both the West and the East as strange and desirable. The mirror, in Alfar’s story, faces both ways, but, in the tradition of fantasy, it twists both reflections, revealing a mutually exotic

locale; an appropriate setting for non-realist story.

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A Brief Report on the PSA Convention 2017

Sibendu Chakraborty

At the outset I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to the Postcolonial Studies Association for partially funding my trip from Kolkata to London with £250, which enabled me to present my paper titled “Problematising Australian Cosmopolitanism: A Discourse on Australia’s Postcoloniality with reference to Aboriginal Theatre” at the PSA Annual Convention held at the School of Advanced Studies, University of London from 18th-20th September, 2017. Since the theme of the convention was ‘Globalisation’, the postcolonial negotiations with economic, political, cultural and historical factors that opened up new areas of contingent discourses between the global North and South came to be reflected in many papers presented at the convention. My paper engaged with recent attempts at viewing Australian Aboriginal theatre as a celebration of cosmopolitanism rather than as a mode of instrumental protest against dehumanization and genocide, hinting at its oppositional postcolonialism. The syncretic as well as representative significance of performative indigeneity in

recent Aboriginal productions seeks to incorporate both the global and the local. In other words, a passage to transnationalism critically informs the postcoloniality of Aboriginal theatre with a notion of scrutinising the depth of the theatrical praxis. What connected my paper with the two other papers in the session was the Australian context. While Michael Griffith spoke on the ‘politics of visibility’ as represented in the depiction of Aboriginal peoples in settler colonial contexts, Az-Zubidy’s discourse went on to consolidate his arguments, focusing on the alternative representations of Middle Eastern migrants related to the complexities of their lives and their relationship to Australia and their homeland. The paper went on to critique dysfunctional models of the inclusion of migrants in the national space that are complicit in simultaneously marginalising and alienating them. Griffith’s paper, while very subtly reflecting on the politics of visibility/invisibility of the Aboriginal peoples/settlers, opened up the scope for inspecting the representations of migrants in Az-Zubidy’s

paper. My paper went on to meaningfully add to these politics of representation of the marginalised in terms of envisaging a definitive step forward by upholding the ethics of cosmopolitanism in negotiating between Indigenous and Australian identities.

A few other sessions really caught my attention and provided ample food for thought. Deepika Marya’s “Globalizaion and the Politics of Resistance”, Giulia Maria Olivato’s “The DNA Journey and Globalization”, Sourit Bhattacharya’s “Fashion Victim: Postcolonial Diasaters and Resistant Art-work” and Christinna Hobbs’ “The Aesthetics of Nationalism and Global Modernity in Nordic Postcolonial Literature” deserve special mention. Some of the most fascinating panels included “Postcolonial Disasters: Globalization, Conflict, and Representation” and “Postcolonial Comics: Graphic Narratives as Globalising Form.” The postcolonial functions of comics emerged strongly across all kinds of political, economic, linguistic, cultural

I certainly feel that my attendance at the convention will positively help me nourish an experience based on the rigorous critical thinking and engagement of the presenters and the attendees.

and geographical borders as a globalising form.

The keynote address by Sharae Deckard titled “The Second Scramble for Resources: Neoliberal Extractivism and World Literature” very aptly set the tone for the convention. Rosi Braidotti’s keynote address titled “Posthuman, all too human” opened up the discourse of locating posthuman critical theory at the convergence of anti-humanism and anti-anthropocentrism. In other words, while anti-humanism engages with the critique of the humanist ideal of ‘Man’ as the indisputable representative of the human, anti-anthropocentrism denounces species hierarchy and paves the path for ecological justice. Braidotti used the term ‘anthropocene,’ following Nobel Prize winning chemist, Paul Crutzen who coined this

term in 2002 to describe our current geological era. The term encapsulates both the technologically driven power acquired by the human species and its potentially lethal consequences for everyone else. By derecognizing the implied neutrality of the term ‘human,’ Braidotti located the grossly hierarchical, hegemonic representations of the human species whose uniqueness is now challenged by a combination of scientific progress and global economic concerns. The convention, in my opinion, was exemplary in including many dimensions of the postcolonial with a critical eye on recent socio-political, cultural and economic changes. I certainly feel that my attendance at the convention will positively help me nourish an experience based on the rigorous critical thinking and engagement of the presenters and the attendees. I want to thank the organizing committee (especially Dr. Anshuman Mondol and Dr. Esha Sil) for organizing and running such a successful convention.

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PSA Funding Reports

The presence and use of technology is generally taken for granted as part of everyday life in urban and increasingly technologically mediated contexts. While the notion of technology itself is rarely questioned regarding what constitutes its technological character, the internet has almost everywhere acquired a sense of neutrality and naturality as an inevitable fact of contemporary life. Revisiting what technology means in times of pervasive digital connectivity appears as something increasingly challenging in many places across the world. Mexico is no exception, although it presents a huge opportunity to do otherwise.

Mexico as a nation comprises a great diversity of cultures and forms of life. Besides the European ascendancy there are 68 indigenous peoples living in this country, which, although never fully recognised and listened to as nations (communities with their own collective identity, language, traditions, knowledges, legal forms and forms of organisation and representation) have endured throughout the existence of the country as a state community. Over the months of January and April 2018 and as part of an endeavour to further explore the political meaning

and orientation of technology (as a generally assumed reality), I sought to interrogate the sense of naturality of technological mediation, mainly digital technologies and the internet, through a series of encounters and conversations in Chiapas, Mexico. Approaching different experiences (and even realities) and forms of living with technology, specifically the use of the internet in contexts where technological mediation is not taken for granted, meant an opportunity to revisit what technology means as an assumed and inevitable reality. Furthermore, it presented an opportunity to explore what the implications of stabilising its meaning and use could entail for different political praxes all over the world.

Chiapas is a southern state of Mexico, where inequality proliferates and where the Zapatista rebellion emerged, becoming highly visible on the international stage in 1994. This rebellion has been paradigmatic for their use of information technologies, mainly the internet, in gathering support, coordinating actions and diffusing information against capitalism and the neoliberal agenda. Strategic skills and savvy use of the media have proved fundamental for the Zapatista organisation. Being informed about other worlds'

On Zapatismo and the technological character of technology

The internet and the multiplicity of forms of living with technology

Rodrigo Liceaga Mendoza

experiences (recalling the Zapatista motto of 'a world where many worlds fit' as a sign of respect for diversity) and the grievances committed against them in the name of capital, as well as establishing solidarity with those worlds, has been a crucial motivation for using the internet. The collective use of the internet has thus maintained a shared political meaning and orientation within the framework of the organisation. However, above and beyond this, there is a rich collective experience and memory that diffuses the technological character of what we may understand as technological objects.

After spending a few weeks of sharing conversations, perceptions, thoughts and imaginations about the internet with Zapatistas and members of Mayan communities of different age, gender and language, the category of

On Zapatismo and the technological character of technology (continued)

technology itself appeared inadequate to the context. Assuming the technological character of technology and its predominant status, as a neutral category and pervasive reference in today's social interactions, appeared as a highly impersonal operation. From those encounters, the notion of something technological, of technology as a set of objects within a category, elicited curiosity and required attention, turning visible the difference between assemblages of everyday interaction and its interpretation as part of a collective life. Then, the common perception of technology, as a human action directed at a goal and which uses specific objects to achieve that same goal, was persistently displaced by what I perceived as difference in metaphysical and ontological referents, recalling a potential event of mutual affection and experience among beings rather than mere instrumentalism.

In terms of the internet, distinctions in its use among members of the same

community appear as variegated depending on geographic, topographic, economic and social conditions. Among members of the Zapatista organisation it is the same situation. However, the reasons for and possibilities of using the internet and some other social media platforms are not the same as in urban centres; the social imperative of connectivity did not appear as an integral part of collective life. Social reality in its multiplicity of interactions does not compel use of the internet as some basic feature of everyday life, despite its at times attractive appeal. In between allegedly 'modern' tendencies of technological innovation and the collective time of face-to-face encounter and production, those experiences appeared to be an ongoing field of tension and negotiation, underpinned by much more than a merely utilitarian, optimistic or essentialist signification of objects as objects. From mere curiosity and distance to strategic diffusion of information and organisation, the use of the internet and even social media platforms express a multiplicity of groundings and interpretations other than the homogeneous expansion of a developmentalist drive with digital technology as a necessity and accepted reality. This multiplicity, if thoughtfully

This multiplicity, if thoughtfully considered (as opposed to a digital divide agenda), opens up a threshold for revisiting the inevitability of technology and the scope for a different way to address the politics of technology and the internet across different political praxes.

considered (as opposed to a digital divide agenda), opens up a threshold for revisiting the inevitability of technology and the scope for a different way to address the politics of technology and the internet across different political praxes.

Rodrigo Liceaga Mendoza is a PhD Candidate in Politics at the School of Sociology, Politics and International Studies, University of Bristol. He received his Bachelor's degree in International Relations from the Faculty of Political and Social Sciences, National Autonomous University of Mexico (Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico), and his Master's degree in Communication and Politics by the Metropolitan Autonomous University of Mexico (Universidad Autonoma Metropolitana [UAM]). His primary research interests are in critical approaches to technology, political philosophy and international relations. He focuses in particular on how the internet affects political praxis in multicultural countries like Mexico.

Book Reviews

Genre Fiction of New India: Post-Millennial Receptions of “Weird” Narratives, by E. Dawson Varughese.

Reviewed by Sambuddha Jash

Emma Dawson Varughese’s book is a rich addition to the repertoire of knowledge that she introduced through her earlier publication *Reading New India: Post Millennial Indian Fiction in English* (Bloomsbury, 2013). Varughese crafts an alternative account of contemporary Indian English writing that is critically informed by the changes noticeable within the post millennial publishing landscape of India. The time of the post millennial is located within the implicative spatiality of post-liberalization India during the latter half of the 1990s. Varughese discusses the global outreach that India achieved through liberalisation measures like the adoption of a free market economy and globalising processes like the establishment of call centres within the IT hubs of Noida and Bangalore in India. The first chapter of the book outlines the creation of a distinct Indian space that was fed with international branding and wished for greater representation of consumptive practices within every medium

that carried aspirationally contingent ideas of ‘New India’. It is within this cusp of aspirational value and international immediacy that we find the creation of a different character of writing, which tried to destabilize the largely high-brow and ensconced notions pervading the Indian English novel at the time. Varughese identifies this form of writing as ‘genre fiction’, a term that also has connotations of the ‘commercial’ and the ‘popular’ within their respective connotative categories in the publishing world and the readership.

The second chapter traces the linguistic etymology of the word ‘wyrd’ through its old Norse origins, and establishes a relationship with Varughese’s category of ‘Bharati Fantasy’, which refers to a contemporary strain of ‘mythology-inspired’ fiction. She discusses the various connotations of the term ‘wyrd’ and analyses the definitions of ‘weird fiction’ offered by critics like H. P. Lovecraft, China Miéville, Jeff

Vandermeer, and others. She discusses the categories of ‘wyrd’ and ‘weird fiction’ through the different responses they evoke within the minds of the readers, which are at the same time fascinating and innovatively unsettling. The book tries to free itself from this ambiguity through Varughese’s delineation of the term ‘Bharati Fantasy’, situating it at the intersection of *Itihasa* or history, myth, and the Indian scientific imagination. All these categories which have come down to us through their respective traditional connotative history now assume a different character that reflects both contemporaneity and the suave

Varughese crafts an alternative account of contemporary Indian English writing that is critically informed by the changes noticeable within the post millennial publishing landscape of India.



narrative skills of their authors which is entrenched at times within the author's deep personal conviction. The novelty of narration itself is a moment of genre creation, since this form has hardly been discussed within literary novel writing and their analytical trajectories.

The third and fourth chapters unpack the connotations of 'Bharati Fantasy' further, as the chapters are divided through the titles 'Eternal *Bhava*' and 'Modern-Day Sensibilities'. They discuss eight different authors: Amish Tripathi, Shatrujeet Nath, Samhita Arni, Jagmohan Bhanver, Ashwin Sanghi, N P Choudhury, C C Doyle, and Pervin Saket. The first four writers are grouped together within the category of 'Eternal *Bhava*' as they try to retain the origins of *Bhava* drawing heavily from the *Vedas*

and *Upanishads*. Meanwhile, the latter four writers negotiate with different characters of the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, by depicting them within the settings of the modern world. This exercise of mapping fiction within the category of 'Bharati Fantasy' responds to the several formulations of 'wyrd' writings with which Varughese began the second chapter, some of which are namely 'teratology', 'emphasis on weird presence', 'the numinous as a threatening force' – all of which, in one way or the other, have been developed through various situations and characters by these eight authors.

What makes Varughese's analysis praiseworthy is her critical acumen in reading various formative theories of the 'wyrd' and discussing it through the dimension of Indian English genre fiction writing and the variety it offers. As noted in her conclusion, the present stage of Indian fiction is full of possibilities with the plethora of writings that are emerging every day. Her book offers a fresh and significant contribution to analyzing this category within the context of Indian English writing, which for a very long time was

sequestered only to the academic and high-brow categories of literary expression. At the same time, Indian English genre writing has become the moment of freedom from rigid canonicity and the expression of the ancient India in unconformity within the contemporary national biases.

Sambuddha Jash

Sambuddha Jash has completed his Masters and M.Phil in English literature from University of Delhi, India. Presently he is pursuing his PhD from the Department of English, University of Delhi. He is working on the growth of Indian English genre fiction writing in the 90s decade and after. His work is based on the sociological analysis of the cosmopolitan culture in globalised India and its impactful creation of readership spaces. His work interrogates this space which is located at the cusp of aspirational necessity through which Indian English genre fiction is trying to negotiate with the global and the local. He has presented papers in national and international conferences. His areas of interests are African-American literature, Cultural Studies, Book History, Gender studies, and the Literature of the Progressive Writers Association.

Book Reviews

So Long Been Dreaming: Postcolonial Science Fiction and Fantasy, edited by Nalo Hopkinson and Uppinder Mehan

Reviewed by Andrew Stones

Released in 2004, Nalo Hopkinson and Uppinder Mehan's edited collection of stories by postcolonial authors of science fiction and fantasy represents an important intervention into the fields of both science fiction studies and postcolonial studies.

Refreshingly, the importance given to genre definitions ('science fiction' vs 'speculative fiction' vs 'fantasy') is less so than in some of the more well-known theoretical attempts to understand what speculative writing does, such as Margaret Atwood's *In Other Worlds: SF and the Human Imagination* (2011) or Darko Suvin's iconic *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction: On the Poetics and History of a Literary Genre* (1979). Instead of placing speculative themes (such as futurity, technology, utopia or the alien) in postcolonial contexts, the collection frequently problematises questions of form, knowledge, and allegory when it comes to an encounter between science fiction and postcoloniality. As Nalo

Hopkinson remarks in her introduction:

"Arguably, one of the most familiar memes of science fiction is that of going to foreign countries and colonising the natives, and as I've said elsewhere, for many of us, that's not a thrilling adventure story; it's non-fiction, and we are on the wrong side of the strange-looking ship that appears out of nowhere. To be a person of colour writing science fiction is to be under suspicion of having internalised one's colonisation" [1].

Here Hopkinson alludes to one of the collection's central problems—the relationship between science fiction and utopian thinking as a political endeavour. Fredric Jameson, in his landmark study of the genre, notes that utopia and science fiction are often historically indistinguishable [2]. Whereas for many canonical authors of science fiction, the

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ethical crisis engendered by encounters with the Other enables one to imagine a utopian world (but rarely if ever on the Other's terms), many of the stories in *So Long Been Dreaming* divorce the politics of speculative fiction from its erstwhile utopian aspirations. In 'When Scarabs Multiply', Nnedi Okorafor (here writing as Nnedi Okorafor-Mbachu) imagines an Afrofuturistic society which succumbs to misogyny and totalitarianism before the return of its alien benefactors. In 'The Forgotten Ones', Karin Lowachee recasts humanitarian intervention by a future space-faring humanity as existential violence—the descendants of a lost colony, now subject to an alien genocide, are no longer

the humans for whom a galactic humanism attempts to speak. Hopkinson's remark on science fiction's colonial fantasies, therefore, has an inverse, in which the strange-looking ship is beset on all sides by hostile forces, and colonialism is instead a fantasy of *self-defence*.

Tobias S. Buckell's 'Necahual' plays on this imagery as a technologically-advanced unit of colonial soldiers are rendered helpless by an alien virus, which the story vocalises in the patois of its creole human-alien protagonists. Fred Moten and Stefano Harney relate how this reversal of coloniser and colonised is a feature of Hollywood cinema, where the settler is surrounded by dangerous natives: "Indeed, aggression and self-defence are reversed in these movies, but the image of a surrounded fort is not false. Instead, the false image is what emerges when a critique of militarised life is predicated on the forgetting of the life that surrounds it" [3]. To write speculative fiction under a postcolonial lens is to self-consciously write for the life of the surroundings that science fiction intentionally forgets in the false image of its encounter with otherness.

In the years since its publication, the publication of

science or speculative fiction by postcolonial writers has risen exponentially, such that a sequel to the collection would need to be at least twice the length. In Australia, for example, indigenous authors such as Claire G. Coleman and Alexis Wright are experimenting with speculative fiction as a means to explore apocalypse and dystopia as, in the first instance, a historical reality for the victims of settler and other colonialisms. As Coleman argues, when dystopia becomes the historical condition of fantastic speculation, 'realism' is unconvincing: "novels about the history of Australia are post-apocalyptic, because all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people alive today are the descendants of people who survived an apocalypse" [4]. Perhaps it no longer makes sense to speak of 'fantastic' vs 'mimetic' fictions, since, for many Aboriginal and indigenous writers of speculative fiction, their dystopia is a realism. In anticipating these questions, the stories collected here are vital to postcolonial theorists, science fiction scholars, and fans of speculative fiction in general.

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Book Reviews

In *Iraq+100* (2016) ten authors of Iraqi origin respond to the question: what will Iraq look like in the year 2103? The premise for this anthology of short stories was devised by Hassan Blasim, an Iraqi author now living in Finland, whose own short stories have gained significant attention in recent years, and by Ra Page, the founder of Comma Press [1]. In 2013, shortly after the tenth-anniversary of the 2003 U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, they invited authors to 'imagine Iraq a hundred years after the US occupation through short fiction' [2]. Although the collection is marketed on the cover as the 'first anthology of science fiction to have emerged from Iraq', authors were free to choose any genre to imagine the country's future. What emerged was an anthology filled with a cacophony of troubled, haunted and disturbing voices describing a spectrum of absurd, surreal and fantastic futures. Out of Iraq's current political fragmentation authors piece together and remould an imagined homeland.

Blasim introduces the collection by describing how it was difficult to persuade Iraqi authors to write about the future when they were 'already so busy writing about the cruelty, horror and shock of

the present, or trying to delve into the past to reread Iraq's former nightmares and glories' [3]. However ten authors – some writing from within Iraq and others in exile, some writing originally in Arabic and others in English – agreed to participate in this literary exercise, producing an anthology which departs from the retrospective personal accounts and retellings of the 'Iraq War' that have emerged over the past decade from both coalition soldiers-turned-authors and Iraqi writers. These stories look instead to un-lived futures. While the anthology departs from traditions of historical writing in modern Iraqi literature, it also incorporates the country's ancient literary history through references to *The Thousand and One Nights* and even further back to *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, texts which might be understood as precursors to fantasy fiction in their surreal accounts of transformative journeys and contemplations of human from traditions of historical writing in modern Iraqi literature, it also incorporates the country's ancient literary history through references to *The Thousand and One Nights* and even further back to *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, texts which might be understood as precursors to fantasy fiction in their surreal accounts of transformative journeys and contemplations of

Iraq+100: Stories From a Century After the Invasion. by Hassan Blasim. Reviewed by Annie Webster

human mortality. Building on this literary genealogy in its speculative nature, *Iraq+100* might therefore be best described as a genetic mutation of such writing traditions.

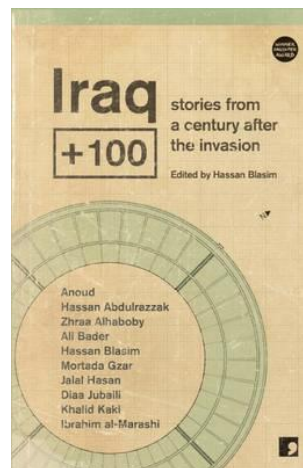
The stories are set across Iraq – Baghdad, Basra, Mosul, Suleymania, Najaf – and present a plurality of voices, some of which are familiar figures in contemporary Iraqi fiction (a soldier, a writer, a refugee) while others less so (an alien, a statue, a hologram). Each writer plays with possible political shapes of a future Iraq: Anoud's 'Kahramana' envisions an Islamic Empire bordered by NATO-run Baghdadistan; Hassan Abdulrazzak's 'Kuszib' confronts readers with an Iraq taken over by aliens who delight in eating its human inhabitants while contemplating the ancient culture of 'Baggy-Dad'; Blasim's own story 'The Gardens of Babylon' reimagines the ancient city as a centre for technological development in

Book Reviews

'Federal Mesopotamia' governed by the Chinese who have reconstructed the mythical metropolis as a series of glass domes. Such disparate configurations of how Iraq might evolve are testament to the constantly shifting kaleidoscope of political violence that has permeated the country's recent history.

These tales do not just reimagine the political structures of Iraq but also the personal experiences of its future citizens. Zhraa Alhaboby's 'Baghdad Syndrome' describes the experience of an architect losing his sight as a consequence of a genetic mutation caused by his ancestors' exposure to toxic substances during the twenty-first century; Ali Bader's 'The Corporal' follows an Iraqi soldier who fought against coalition troops in 2003 while secretly supporting the invasion, and who was killed by an American soldier and returns to Iraq one hundred years later as a prophet only to face charges of terrorism; Ibrahim al-Marashi's 'Najufa' describes a member of the Iraqi diaspora travelling from Alaska to a futuristic Najaf with his grandfather who turns out to be nothing more than a hologram. Collectively, these characters question what it might mean in the future to be

both human and an Iraqi citizen, identity categories not always represented as mutually inclusive in our own age.



Significantly, most of the stories in the collection were written before the rise of IS in the region and their visions of the future articulate a hopefulness that Iraq might move away from the violence that defined the early years of the twenty-first century. Yet in his afterword to the collection, Page reflects on the fall of Mosul to IS in 2014 and describes how 'the immediate reality of Iraq has since become more terrifying and unpredictable than anything fiction could envision, even in the distant future' [4]. This anthology was conceived during a political interstice, a brief moment of optimism in Iraq's recent history, which indicates the unsettling speed with which events in Iraq continue to develop, threatening to render even recent imaginings of the future out of date. Yet the anthology contributes towards a gradually growing body of science fiction and genre fiction more generally emerging across the Middle East. There is now a

suggestion that *Iraq+100* will be the first of a series following the same format; a *Nakba+100*, which invites Palestinian authors to imagine their homeland in the year 2048, is currently in progress. In its specific speculative structure *Iraq+100* therefore offers a response to moments of political crisis that is unbound by temporality or geography. The new mode of forward-looking fiction it generates might help to imagine a spectrum of futures throughout the Arab World.

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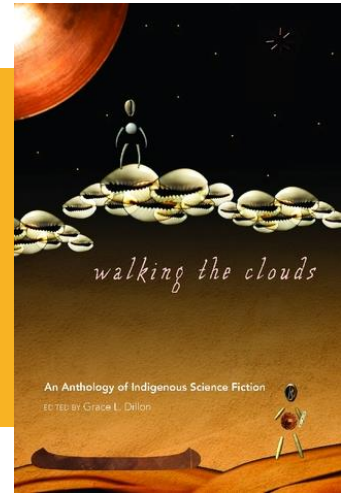
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- [3] *Ibid.*, v.
- [4] Ra Page, 'Afterword', *Iraq+100* edited by Hassan Blasim (Manchester: Comma Press, 2016), 176.

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Book Reviews

Walking the Clouds: An Anthology of Indigenous Science Fiction, edited by Grace L. Dillon.

Reviewed by Rebecca Macklin



In the six years since *Walking the Clouds* was published, the world of science fiction has been transformed. The genre, once firmly associated with “the increasing significance of the future to Western techno-cultural consciousness” (*Wesleyan Anthology of Science Fiction*, qtd in Dillon, 2), has been reclaimed by postcolonial and Indigenous thinkers, who are using the genre to imagine decolonial futures. The increasing global interest in Indigenous and Afro-futuristic narratives demonstrates that this genre, to draw on Dillon’s words, has “the capacity to envision Native futures, Indigenous hopes, and dreams recovered by rethinking the past in a new framework” (2). But, rather than a recent development, speculative fiction has *always* belonged to these cultures: as Dillon notes in her introduction, “Indigenous sf [science fiction] is not so new – just overlooked” (2).

Walking the Clouds, the anthology curated by Anishinaabe scholar Grace L. Dillon, was published on the crest of this wave. Dillon’s volume paved the way for other forays into Indigenous speculative

literature, such as the remarkable *Love Beyond Body, Space, and Time: An Indigenous LGBT Sci-Fi Anthology*, published in 2016. *Walking the Clouds* deserves recognition as the first Indigenous anthology of speculative fiction, the significance of which cannot be overstated. Incorporating works from Native American, First Nations, Maori, and Aboriginal Australian authors, this collection is notable for its trans-Indigenous approach. The anthology foregrounds transcultural exchange and, in this spirit, Dillon writes that the title itself is an “homage to Afrofuturisms” (2): recognising the parallel conversations that are occurring across different fields of decolonial thought. This act of looking outwards across geographical, cultural, and disciplinary borders comes amidst what has been termed the ‘transnational turn’ of Native American studies. This recent development, observed by Cherokee scholar Daniel Heath Justice in 2011, has seen an increased number of Indigenous Studies scholars globally, “reaching out, learning

about themselves and one another, looking for points of connection that reflect and respect both specificity and shared concern.”¹ Dillon’s volume is framed by a clarion call of an introduction that is as expansive as it is impassioned. Her goal is to “open up sf to reveal Native presence” and explore the Indigenous roots within the genre, which have for the most part been effaced. She understands the act of writing Indigenous science fiction as a mode of resistance to Western hegemony: highlighting the racialized legacies of a genre that “emerged in the mid-nineteenth-century context of evolutionary theory and anthropology profoundly intertwined with colonial ideology”. With this context established, Dillon adopts the words of Taiaiake Alfred (Kanien’kehaka) to ask: “What better terrain than the field of sf to ‘engage colonial power in the spirit of a struggle for survival’”? (3)

The collection brings together an impressive array of authors from different cultural backgrounds, writing in distinct historical moments: from canonical Indigenous authors, such as Leslie Marmon Silko (Laguna Pueblo), Simon Ortiz (Acoma Pueblo), and Gerald Vizenor (Anishinaabe), to newer voices, such as Nalo Hopkinson (Taino/Arawak and Afro-Caribbean descent) and Stephen Graham Jones (Piegan Blackfeet). While some works are more easily recognizable as science fiction than others, all challenge the reader's understanding of the genre and its conventions: particularly through the foregrounding of Native traditions, temporalities, and worlds; and the blending of Western science with Indigenous knowledge. Across many of the stories, dreams create space for traditional Indigenous knowledge to come to the surface and provide access to new levels of meaning. For example, in Ortiz's 'Men on the Moon', the elder Faustin has a dream of a machine monster on the moon, which is juxtaposed with television images of the first lunar landing. Ortiz thus invites the reader to consider the ways that different forms of knowledge can be communicated: as Faustin

observes, "It's a dream, but it's the truth" (Ortiz, 91).

The chapters, consisting of stories as well as extracts from longer texts, are organized according to what Dillon suggests are the major categories or tropes of Indigenous science fiction: Native Slipstream; Contact; Indigenous Science and Sustainability; Native Apocalypse; and Biskaabiiyang. The final of these is an Anishinaabemowin word connoting the process of "returning to ourselves". Foregrounding the need to recover ancestral traditions in order to heal and adapt to the (post-)colonial or "post-Native Apocalypse world" (10), this idea shares much with the concept of decolonization. A clear example of Biskaabiiyang is the extract included from Silko's *Almanac of the Dead*: a novel that calls unapologetically for the overthrow of global capitalism and the re-establishing of Indigenous worldviews. *Walking the Clouds*, too, Dillon suggests, is suggestive of Biskaabiiyang, as it enables "Native writers to write about Native conditions in Native centered worlds liberated by the imagination". Produced across geographic, cultural and temporal borders,

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each piece in the volume evokes the creative potential and disruptive power of decolonial imaginative processes. And, as Dillon asserts, it is only through such processes that decolonial futures can come into being.

Works Cited

Dillon, Grace L. 2012. *Walking the Clouds: An Anthology of Indigenous Science Fiction*. Tuscon, The University of Arizona Press.
Justice, Daniel Heath. 2011. 'Currents of Trans/national Criticism in Indigenous Literary Studies', *The American Indian Quarterly*, 35.3, pp. 334-352.

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Call for Contributions

For the next issue of the Postcolonial Studies Association newsletter, which is a general issue, we invite original contributions from a range of disciplines that engage with issues related to postcolonial, global, and world studies. We also welcome reports on recent events or conferences as well as reviews of recent books related to postcolonial, global, and world studies.

Original contributions and **reports** should be between 700 and 1,200 words, and should be fully referenced, using the Harvard referencing style.

Book reviews should be between 500 and 1,000 words and fully referenced, using the Harvard referencing style.

The deadline for submission is **15th September 2018**. Please submit your contribution along with a **short academic bio (50-100 words)** via email to the editors Edward Powell (edjohnpowell@gmail.com) and Isabelle Hesse (isabelle.hesse@sydney.edu.au)





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