



We See a Different Frontier: A Postcolonial Speculative Fiction Anthology

Fábio Fernandes (Editor) , Djibril al-Ayad (Editor) , Silvia Moreno-Garcia (Contributor) , Gabriel Murray (Contributor) , Shweta Narayan (Contributor) , Dinesh Rao (Contributor) , N.A. Ratnayake (Contributor) , Sofia Samatar (Contributor) , more... Benjanun Sriduangkaew (Contributor) , Lavie Tidhar (Contributor) , J.Y. Yang (Contributor) , Aliette de Bodard (Preface) , Ekaterina Sedia (Afterword) , Joyce Chng (Contributor) , Ernest Hogan (Contributor) , Rahul Kanakia (Contributor) , Rochita Loenen-Ruiz (Contributor) , Sandra McDonald (Contributor) , Sunny Moraine (Contributor) ...less

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This anthology of speculative fiction stories on the themes of colonialism and cultural imperialism focuses on the viewpoints of the colonized. Sixteen authors share their experiences of being the silent voices in history and on the wrong side of the final frontier; their fantasies of a reality in which straight, cis, able-bodied, rich, anglophone, white males don't get to tell us how they won every war; their revenge against the alien oppressor settling their "new world".

We See a Different Frontier: A Postcolonial Speculative Fiction Anthology Details

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From Reader Review We See a Different Frontier: A Postcolonial Speculative Fiction Anthology for online ebook

Colin says

This was solidly good; a wide variety of stories and styles, well-arranged to speak to larger themes of displacement, assimilation, cultural memory and resistance. This book is one of the reasons why online fundraising is a great thing--so glad Seattle Public Library purchased it for their collection. Recommended.

Ben says

This is an excellent anthology, one worth reading. Its stories explore the aftereffects of colonialism (in its broadest sense) from a variety of perspectives and concerns, and they generally do so quite effectively. Some of the stories here are very good, some are ok, a few didn't resonate with me at all, but almost universally these stories take on some aspect of the theme from a unique perspective. The anthology sustains unity of theme throughout without being too uniform (or too heavy-handed, for the most part). (I should note the preface and afterword are also quite worth reading.) The end result is to create a whole that, to use a cliché, is more than the sum of its parts. Which is to say that this collection's excellence rests not so much on the quality of the stories in it but rather on what the collection achieves in its totality.

Which is not to put down the stories themselves! "A Heap of Broken Images" by Sunny Moraine was especially worth reading; it is profound and thought-provoking. "Them Ships" by Silvia Moreno-Garcia and "Remembering Turinam" by N.A. Ratnayake are also in the thought-provoking category. "A Bridge of Words" by Dinesh Rao is quite a good story, and one of the most traditionally science-fictional story of the lot. "Dark Continents" by Lavie Tidhar is the least traditional of the stories, jumping between times and timelines, but it has in it some interesting what-ifs. I did not, as I said, like every story here, but some of that might be a matter of taste, and certainly I think the best stories more than make up for the weakest.

But whatever the artistic merits of this anthology, I think its social value is much greater. The effects of colonialism are not only worth discussing, they *need* to be discussed. That *We See a Different Frontier* explores this topic, and is so effective in doing so, is to be commended. I certainly found my thinking challenged and stretched by reading it, and sometimes, I was even uncomfortable. But I think that just demonstrates how effective this anthology truly is.

Rob says

...*We See a Different Frontier* is a fascinating piece of reading. It tackles a theme that is so hugely complex that there are countless of ways to approach it and the stories the editors reflect that. The diversity in these stories is stunning. The anthology offers no easy answers but makes the reader aware of issues that are rarely raised in science fiction. In her afterword Ekaterina Sedia mentions that the collection left her 'a bit whiplashed' and that is not far from how I experienced it. These stories are challenging and thought-provoking, qualities that good speculative fiction in my opinion needs to possess, but at the same time they manage to cover ground most readers of the genre will be unfamiliar with. This anthology is one of the best

themed anthologies I've had the pleasure of reading. It deserves a larger audience than it is likely to get.

Full Random Comments review

Luis Gallardo says

Leí este libro principalmente por la historia de Silvia Moreno-García "Them Ships", y aún cuando esa historia me encantó, terminé enamorado de "Old Domes" de J.Y. Yang, y aún no estoy seguro por qué se convirtió en una de esas narraciones que voy a recordar durante años, es simplemente hermosa. "Dark Continents" de Lavie Tidhar me pareció muy interesante así como "A Heap of Broken Images" de Sunny Moraine. Y creo que la más emocionante de las historias, para mi, fue "Vector" de Benjanun Sriduangkaew. Sin por lo anterior quitar mérito a las demás historias, por supuesto.

S.B. Wright says

A criticism that I think can be leveled at the science fiction community is that when it comes to diversity we are still not quite there. Sure there are lots of authors that include a more diverse range of characters in their stories but where I think we struggle is with supporting and promoting diverse authors. Paolo Baccigaluppi gets noticed for writing about Thailand, but what about Thai writers writing about Thailand using Science Fiction and Fantasy as the framework?

I think that white western writers need to be careful that in the rush to write more diverse characters that they aren't indeed silencing authors from those diverse backgrounds – the result if you are not careful, is almost a second wave of colonisation.

For this fact alone I find *We See A Different Frontier* to be a very important book. Some stories engage directly with the effects of historical colonialism, some tap into the experience, all the stories have something of value.

Beyond that of course is the fact that they are enjoyable fiction for the good stories they tell and the choices the authors make in structure and form.

The Arrangement of Their Parts by Shweta Narayan opens the collection and examines the arrogance that the coloniser displays in regards to the colonised, the perception of the colonised as inferior, especially intellectually. In this steampunk India, Shweta skilfully weaves an moralistic folktale with the main narrative of the story to underline her point.

Sticking with the steampunk theme, so often the preserve of western writers who want to experience the grace and refinement of the Victoria age without examining how that was arrived at, we have Pancho Villa's *Flying Circus* by Ernest Hogan. An American tale (in a geographic sense) that manages to combine Tesla, Deathrays and Hollywood. A subtle dig at American cultural colonisation is had here.

Them Ships by Silvia Moreno-Garcia, examines what American rescue might mean for different parts of a society colonised by Aliens. Mexico has been invaded by largely benevolent Aliens, their Jellyfish-like ships hang over the city and rich and poor alike are contained in cells until the aliens find a use for them. Silvia

contrasts the plight of the different classes, the rich and the poor in Mexican society. She asks the question would an American rescue mean freedom for everyone? The story, however, presents the reality that sometimes you just need to do what you can to survive.

JY Yang gives us *Old Domes*, the first of series of stories that tap into hidden or obscured history. I think this is about the third Yang story I have read and I like her mixing of traditional concepts with modernity. The erasure or forgetting of place due to colonialism or progress struck a chord with my experience of living in Darwin, a city where new seemed to replace old within decades.

Dinesh Rao's *A Bridge of Words*, carried through this theme of hidden histories. Our protagonist Riya is a outsider in her own culture- part coloniser, part colonised. This story is a mystery and comment on the way important cultural information can be conveyed through art.

Lotus by Joyce Chng is I think a piece that stresses the need for a different paradigm, a different way of viewing and being, one that does not require endless exploitation of finite resources or theft or control of resources that are needed by everyone. It's a post-environmental apocalypse piece that argues that we need to stop making the same mistake.

Lavie Tidhar's piece is perhaps the most experimental story in form. *Dark Continents* gives us an alternate Israel set in Africa. Tidhar remixes and restarts history before our very eyes, examining and imagining a wealth of possible histories and ending perhaps with an unlikely utopia?

Sunny Moraine in *A Heap of Broken Images*, focuses on humanity as colonisers of an Alien world where a great atrocity has been committed against the Aliens in the not too distant past. Our protagonist is a tour guide of sorts who works to guide human scholars and students around the scenes of the atrocity. It is a beautiful story that at its heart discusses the way in which the coloniser and the colonised set up structures to avoid having to deal with what has happened.

Remembering Turinam by N.A. Ratnayake, has shades of Steampunk but is really the story of a benevolent society colonised by an aggressive and militaristic one. It is also a brilliant examination of the way in which colonial powers destroy or subsume cultures through language ie the insistence that the colonised speak the language of the coloniser, either through threat of force or by making the Colonists language the one that is most beneficial or necessary. Ekaterina Sedia has some sombre thoughts on this very point in her afterword. What did astonish me was that this was Ratnayake's first professional sale. I hope we see more from him.

Vector by Benjanun Sriduangkaew left me breathless due to the second person present tense. It is a story whose form reinforces the sense to produce a direct hard hitting effect. It places you the reader in the driving seat, demands that you experience the feeling of being the colonised.

I have not mentioned all the stories in the collection, but this is not a comment on their quality. I need to leave some surprises for you to discover. I can't sign off however without mentioning the story that bookends the collection. Rochita Loenen-Ruiz leaves us with a very solid and thoughtful piece in *What really happened at Ficandula*. The story is based on a historical incident that happened during the American occupation of the Philippines and weaves a historical tale with that of the fantastic. I had the privilege of talking to Rochita for Galactic Chat and discussing the story and her decision to frame it within speculative fiction. Her answer was that "facts" surrounding the incident were limited and biased and that this story was the only way to present elements that needed to be spoken about or remembered. This story left me contemplating my own country's colonial history. How, stories and histories disappear for both the colonised

and the colonists.

The strength of this collection is, not surprisingly, its diversity in story, approach, and form while still being focussed on a theme. This is a book that anyone that wants to pay more than just lip service to the idea of diversity, needs to read. It is also a collection that I think you can point critics of speculative fiction toward when they say that the genre can't deal with serious issues.

Kudos to Fabio Fernandes and Djibril al-Ayad for bringing these writers together.

This review copy was provided by the publishers.

Tyrannosaurus regina says

I think this is, overall, the best multi-author anthology I've ever read. The writing and storytelling is of consistently high quality throughout. I usually like to pick out one or two stories that I particularly liked, but this time I realised that I would be listing nearly the entire table of contents if I tried. The stories represent several different situations and points of view, and are all fascinating (and enlightening) reads.

Derek says

I like the idea of a collection focusing on the other side of colonialism, especially when so much of SF is completely *about* colonizing. But I'm not sure that this collection accomplished what its editors set out to show. On the other hand, there's some marvellous stuff in here, anyway.

"What Really Happened in Ficandula" by Rochita Loenen-Ruiz is very good, but depressing. Are we really doomed to always repeat our history? Is this not just the colonized becoming the colonizers?

Silvia Moreno-Garcia's "Them Ships" isn't so much a tale of colonialism as poverty.

J.Y. Yang's "Old Domes", a story of some future-ish Singapore deftly weaves an Eastern mysticism into Western SF, and is the best example, to me, demonstrating the beauty that can come from the intersection of cultures.

"Droplet", by Rahul Kankia, makes it difficult to know who are the colonizers and who are the colonized. Subhir's parents and grandparents—Americans of Indian descent—are driven out of America, due to racism: or so Subhir believes. When he returns to the US, India is the colonizer, America is greatly reduced, and the truth turns out to be far more complex.

Morgan Dhu says

This anthology of speculative fiction stories written from a post-colonial perspective is well worth reading, if at times acutely uncomfortable for the member of a colonising culture that is thoughtfully reading them. A

brief concluding essay by Ekaterina Sedia summarises the recurrent themes of these stories far better than I could.

Fábio Fernandes says

Being the editor, I must say I read it all, of course. This is just a disclaimer - I will neither rate it nor review it, but I'll be glad if you want to do it. Thank you!

Alex MacFarlane says

This is a vital anthology and it pains me to suspect that it won't get the attention it deserves. There's been a lot of talk about diversity in SFF: well, here's a brand new anthology of stories by authors from around the world, writing post-colonial SFF. Sure, some individual stories are weak (it would be really great if Joyce Chng's "Lotus" explained how her characters drank from a still, low-lying body of water without boiling/sterilising it and didn't die of hideous infections, among other worldbuilding holes), while others are good-but-not-great (oh, how I wanted JY Yang's "Old Domes", about the history of buildings in Singapore, to be a little more sharp, more coherent).

Some, however, are absolutely brilliant.

My favourite is Benjanun Sriduangkaew's "Vector", one of the best stories I've read this year, about Western imperialists trying to infect - and destroy - the very held, lived memory of Thai culture. Needless to say, there is resistance. I also loved Shweta Narayan's "The Arrangement of Their Parts", one of a sequence of stories Shweta's writing in an India that resisted British colonialism. Then there's Lavie Tidhar's "Dark Continents", which examines the re-writing of history and the probability of alternative evils - and the possibility of better. As a historian, I really liked this one. It does things a lot of alt-history doesn't even bother to think about. Speaking of history, there's Rochita Loenen-Ruiz's "What Really Happened in Ficandula", an angry, wishing story about colonial violence.

Others I liked a lot: Sofia Samatar's "I Stole the D.C.'s Eyeglass", a steampunk-of-sorts. (To borrow the author's own words on her blog: "I am asking myself if it is possible to write an African steampunk story. Is it possible to engage with African oral traditions in a serious way and produce a story that a wider audience will recognize as science fiction?") Silvia Moreno-Garcia's "Them Ships". Dinesh Rao's "A Bridge of Words".

There is such a variety of approaches in this anthology, such a vitality often lacking in SFF anthologies where familiar (and often damaging) tropes are trod into the ground and applauded for their repetitiveness. I want people to read this instead. It is diverse, it is intersectional - will the people talking about diversity in SFF read it?

Ginny says

A truly remarkable collection. Many of these stories will be with me a long time.

I heard about this obscure crowd-funded collection on The Writer and the Critic podcast and I'm so glad they convinced me to read it. There is not a dud story in the collection, though there were some that blew me away more than others. The theme of the collection is post-colonial spec fic written not from the perspective of the colonizers (or even "colonizer who is good or sees the error of their ways") but of conquered peoples dealing with the effects of colonization. This, of course, is an incredibly rich theme in a genre so full of exploration and settlement stories (usually told from the colonizer's perspective). Neither, too, are any of these stories a pat "obvious alien stand-in for a human people here to make a ham-fisted allegorical point". These are all complex, intimate, deliciously drawn stories.

There are a couple of authors here that I had heard of, but none I had read before. One of the things I really appreciated about this collection is that none of the stories hold your hand, and if you're an Anglophonic reader who lives in the West you might have to Google a thing or two to understand the stories. Which is great! There are landscapes and experiences depicted here you almost NEVER get in mainstream genre mags.

It goes without saying every story is well-written and a good read. Just to highlight a few of my absolute favorites...

Favorites

Them Ships by Silvia Moreno-Garcia

Lotus by Joyce Chng

Dark Continents by Lavie Tidhar

A Heap of Broken Images by Sunny Moraine

Fleet by Sandra McDonald

Vector by Benjanun Sriduangkaew

Forests of the Night by Gabriel Murray

Read twice

Vector

Forests of the Night

Socked me in the frigging gut

Fleet

A Heap of Broken Images

Vector

I'm not going to go into detail about every great story here, but I do want to talk about a few.

Dark Continents by Lavie Tidhar has a really interesting narrative structure and is essentially about someone or someones with the power to travel in and re-write time and break down barriers between alternate universes using that power to totally rewrite certain parts of European conquest in Africa. Rich, inventive, intriguing, and surprising, this story keeps you on your toes.

A Heap of Broken Images by Sunny Moraine is about an alien tour guide whose planet was colonized by humans who committed an unspeakable massacre before he was born. He now takes human tourists to see the sites associated with the massacre. He agonizes over his own struggle to accept his own culture's unfailing politeness about the whole thing and to understand the humans he is obliged to host.

Fleet by Sandra McDonald is possibly my favorite story in the whole collection. It takes place in Guam after

an apocalyptic event wipes out all technology and communications and consequently the island is cut off from the rest of the world. The main character is a transgender woman who discovers a Russian cast-away and her ordeal in handling the situation the way her trainers taught her.

The other contender for my favorite story in the collection, Vector by Benjamun Sriduangkaew, was almost incomprehensible to me the first time I read it, even with some heavy Googling. But after finishing it, having an 'aha' moment and rereading it, I was completely knocked over. This cyberpunk thriller (view spoiler) (What precedes is not actually spoiler so much as basic plot points that I didn't understand until after reading the story the first time. I hid it in case you'd like to figure out what's happening in the story for yourself, which I recommend.)

So, although those are my absolutely cherished picks, the whole thing is just an incredible collection. Read it.

Stanyo Zhelev says

"We See a Different Frontier" is wonderful. Every story tackles complex sociocultural issues in it's own unique and thoroughly engaging way and there's something to love about each and every one of them. The range of the authors, both in terms of style and imagination is staggering. It took me a while to actually finish it, simply because I had to pause after each story and reflect. If there's anything wrong with it, it's that I wished a lot of the stories didn't end at all - their worlds and characters were so fascinating that I wanted to see more of them. Hopefully that will happen one day.

Ashleigh says

I didn't have time to read all the stories in this collection, and unfortunately I hit a few duds, but there were also some great ones. One I particularly liked was called Them Ships, and is actually available online here: <http://escapepod.org/2015/11/12/ep510...>

Charles says

Stuff I Read - We See A Different Frontier Review

This. I need more this. Really, I think collections like this, which take a much wider view of speculative fiction (dare I say, a worldly view), are few and far between. It's getting a bit better, maybe, but this is a great collection, a collection that really gets the brain working, that is uncomfortable in the best way possible because it confronts the reader with privilege and tries to foster empathy. It's not really an easy collection to read (and it has kind of a weird cover and name), but that's what makes it so important, that it doesn't try to soften the blow or apologize. It collects some great stories, with some powerful messages, and the world needs more like this. Make it so.

Really, there's a whole lot to like about this collection. There's the diversity of authors and of characters represented. There's also the diversity of genres. This collection shows just how pervasive colonialism can be, and how damaging and permanent the damage done can be. There is a push most of the time, in colonial narratives, to excuse the colonizers. To give them a pass. At least they brought "civilization," right? These

stories don't seek to excuse the harm, don't seek to really make things right. Instead they seem more intent on cataloguing that harm, on bringing it to the light so that people can see and not do it again.

Because by ignoring it, by making colonialism about how the colonizers can avoid feeling bad, people miss the whole point. It just paves things over to happen again. I really liked Sunny Moraine's story for that reason, because it dealt with the people after, with the children of both colonizers and colonized, and trying to find some way to move forward despite everything. Not to erase what happened, though, not to forgive it. All of the stories do a pretty excellent job of dealing with colonialism and post-colonialism. There were only one or two that I wasn't sure about, that I didn't really like, but even that led me to examine why which led me down entirely different avenues of thought.

It's an ambitious project, to be sure, and one that is successful in treating the subject matter in an interesting and nuanced way. The talent is spectacular and the stories range from quiet to raging. There's something for everyone and, if you're like me, basically everything for someone. There need to be more collections like this. Which means I'm giving this a 9.5/10.

Ian says

This is an anthology of, as the back-cover blurb puts it, “speculative fiction stories on the themes of colonialism and cultural imperialism”. It was financed by a kickstarter campaign, to which I contributed. The editors are online friends, as indeed are a few of the authors whose stories appear in the anthology. *We See a Different Frontier* contains sixteen stories, plus a preface by Aliette de Bodard and an afterword by Ekaterina Sedia. Its contents are, unsurprisingly, variable, with some stories working better than others. There's just as great a variety in style and setting – some stories are set on Earth, some on alien worlds; some are post-apocalypse, some are not. There's an admirable consistency of theme, however, which is something not all themed anthologies manage. I liked Ernest Hogan's gonzo steampunk ‘Pancho Villa's Flying Circus’, and the strangeness of Dinesh Rao's ‘A Bridge of Words’. By contrast, the straightforwardness of Rahul Kanakia's ‘Droplet’ also worked really well. Lavie Tidhar provides one of his alternate history speculations, ‘Dark Continents’, and Sandra McDonald's ‘Fleet’ rings an interesting variation on a post-apocalypse story. There are no bad stories in *We See a Different Frontier*, although not all were to my taste – but they're all worth reading, and I did like what they said and am certain it needs to be said.
