

## From world sf (via, if we must, World Sf) to world-sf: an introduction

Despite the cosmopolitan and theoretical tendencies of sf studies, it is only in the new millennium that it has really turned, rather belatedly, to postcolonialism, to race and ethnicity, and to a broader global range of sf – a turn signalled by several conferences,<sup>1</sup> and by the appearance in quick succession of a number of monographs,<sup>2</sup> edited collections,<sup>3</sup> journal special issues,<sup>4</sup> and book series.<sup>5</sup> As evidence of this turn, let us consider the field's most theoretically inclined journal, *Science Fiction Studies*.

From its launch in 1973, *SFS* mapped out sf as an international object of study. In its first four years – alongside work on such American and British writers as Aldiss, Asimov, Ballard, Brunner, Clarke, Dick, Huxley, Le Guin, London, Moorcock, Poe, Spinrad, and Wells – it published articles by and on Lem, as well as on French sf criticism, Borges, Diderot, Iambulus, Kepler, Lasswitz, Lucian, Nabokov, Jean Paul, Rosny aîné, Verne, and Zamyatin. This range reflects that found in earlier critical endeavours, and can be mapped (albeit reductively) against the experience and taste of the journal's US founder, RD Mullen, an sf fan since the early days of the pulp magazines, and his co-editor, the Croatian Darko Suvin, then resident in Montreal, whose *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction: On the Poetics and History of Literary Genre* (1979) demonstrates a preference for an older, primarily European, literature of cognitive estrangement that only occasionally coincides with Americo-British genre sf.<sup>6</sup>

To the extent that *SFS*'s formulation of the genre as an object of academic study is typical, sf was primarily an American and British field but always open to Anglophone and non-Anglophone sf from continental Europe (especially France) and beyond. This default position, more of a liberal humanist cosmopolitanism than a radical internationalism, can be traced back through earlier Anglophone sf criticism to (at least) the fan writing of the Futurians in the 1930s. For *SFS*, it prompted special issues on Lem in 1986 and 1992, on French sf in 1989, and has been pursued more programmatically in the new millennium, beginning with special issues on global sf (1999, 2000), and followed by others on Japan (2002), the thaw and post-thaw Soviet Union (2004), Jules Verne (2005), Afrofuturism (2007), Latin America (2007), globalisation (2012), China (2013), Italy (2015), India (2016), and Spain (2017). These issues, as well as many

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<sup>1</sup> For example, *A Commonwealth of Science Fiction* (SF Foundation/University of Liverpool 2004), *ICFA 25: Here Be Dragons: The Global Fantastic* (2004), *Global Sf: The 2011 J. Lloyd Eaton Conference* (UC Riverside 2011), and of course *Global Fantastika* (2016), the conference that inspired this issue.

<sup>2</sup> For example, Ferreira, Kerslake, Langer, Polak, Rieder, and Smith.

<sup>3</sup> For example, Feeley and Wells, Fritzsche, Ginway and Brown, Hoagland and Sarwal, Huang and Niu, and Raja, Ellis and Nand.

<sup>4</sup> For example, *Foundation*'s Australian (2000), Canadian (2001), and Commonwealth (2004) issues, *Extrapolation*'s 'Indigenous Futurisms' double issue (2016), *Science Fiction Film and Television*'s issues on anime (2014) and adaptations of the Strugatskiis (2015), and the run of *Paradoxa* that includes 'Africa SF' (2013), 'SF Now' (2014), 'The Futures Industry' (2015), and 'Global Weirding' (2016).

<sup>5</sup> For example, *Studies in Global Science Fiction* (Palgrave Macmillan) edited by Anindita Bannerjee, Mark Bould, and Rachel Haywood Ferreira since 2016, and *World Science Fiction Studies* (Peter Lang) edited by Sonja Fritzsche from 2017.

<sup>6</sup> 'Americo-British' is an ugly term, but it estranges the more euphonious and familiar 'Anglo-American' while better reflecting the hierarchy within the dominant version of Anglophone sf (including the implicit subsumption of Scottish, Welsh, and Northern Irish sf into English sf, and the relative marginalisation of other Anglophone sf).

standalone articles focused on material from outside the Americo-British tradition, are part of a broader and absolutely invaluable development in sf studies that can also be seen in other journals and publishers' lists. But is it enough?

### **world sf and World sf**

Writing about World Literature, Pascale Casanova cautions that "it is not enough to geographically enlarge the corpus ... still less to try to provide an impossibly exhaustive enumeration of the whole of world literary production" (xi). Franco Moretti, wrestling with the sheer insurmountable quantity of literature produced in the world, argues that

Reading "more" is always a good thing, but not the solution. [...] the sheer enormity of the task makes it clear that world literature cannot be literature, bigger; what we are already doing, just more of it. It has to be different. The *categories* have to be different. [...] world literature is not an object, it's a *problem*, and a problem that asks for a new critical method: and no one has ever found a method by just reading more texts. That's not how theories come into being; they need a leap, a wager – a hypothesis to get started. (55, original emphases)

The 'global' turn in sf studies – which is, I admit, an unsatisfactory way to identify several often-but-not-always-related-and-still-unfolding phenomena – coincided with instructive and overlapping developments in American Studies, Comparative Literature, and World Literature. Around the start of the new millennium, American Studies – building on earlier efforts to reshape the study of specific national literatures in a less parochial manner by opening up to *soi-disant* new voices and transnational currents<sup>7</sup> – witnessed various efforts to move the field beyond its "nation-centredness" and "exceptionalist perspectives" (WReC 3).<sup>8</sup> For example, in her 1998 Presidential Address to the American Studies Association Janice Radway recognised the preceding decades' work "pursued by feminists, by those working on the question of race, by ethnic studies scholars, by people working on gay, lesbian, and queer histories, by those preoccupied with the lives of the laboring classes and with the achievements of the indigenous populations of this continent," and then pointed to the violence done to this dissensus "if you already assume the unity and coherence of a distinctly 'American' history":

Is difference merely to be posed as a qualifier of some prior whole? Does the perpetuation of the particular name, "American," in the title of the field and in the name of the association continue surreptitiously to support the notion that such a whole exists even in the face of powerful work that tends to question its presumed coherence? Does the field need to be reconfigured conceptually in response? Should the association consider renaming itself in order to prevent imaginary

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<sup>7</sup> Historically, of course, the proponents of parochialism considered themselves to be championing universal rather than particular values.

<sup>8</sup> Dimock and Buell set their contributors a similar task of "rethink[ing] the adequacy of a nation-based paradigm" (Dimock "Introduction" 2) for American literature.

unity from asserting itself in the end, again and again, as a form of containment?  
(2–3)<sup>9</sup>

At the same time, Comparative Literature went into a crisis so deep that Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak diagnosed the *Death of a Discipline* (2003); seven years later Revathi Krishnaswamy reported on this apparently terminal disease's progress:

obituaries for comparative literature continue to be written apace. Some mourn the discipline's demise while others try to bring it back in a new avatar. In the wake of globalization and the rise of postcolonialism and multi-culturalism, a debate has ensued over reinventing Comparative Literature in the form of World Literature (Moretti, Damrosch, Cooppan), World Bank Literature (Kumar), Globalit (Baucom), and Planetary Literature (Dimock, Spivak). (400)

Seemingly a lone voice in this wilderness, Thomas Docherty argues that Comparative Literature is “not ‘in crisis’ at all,” merely subject to the neo-liberal university's “market-driven demand for novelty” (27); lacking all modesty, it thrives on the simulation of crises, not least through supposedly abrupt (and sometimes career-making) paradigm shifts and imperative new directions.

In contrast to the purported and perpetually imminent demise of Comparative Literature, World Literature became, from the early 1990s onwards, “increasingly prominent” as “a disciplinary rallying point of literary criticism and the academic humanities” (Apter 1).<sup>10</sup> However, to the extent that this new, post-postcolonial, multiculturalist Comp Lit that has unthought its unthinking Eurocentrism actually represents the recurrence of *Weltliteratur*,<sup>11</sup> it has substantial baggage, not least a fanciful image of the globalised world as a unified space and magically-levelled playing field.

To narrow world literature, “which may be considered a descriptive catch-all for the sum of all forms of literary expression in all the world's languages” (Apter 2), down to a more manageable World Literature requires some principles of selection and judgement. From Goethe onwards, *Weltliteratur* – described by Maire and Edward Said as “universal literature, or literature which expresses *Humanität*, humanity, and ... is literature's ultimate purpose” (1) – has sought to be more than, but has constantly fallen back into, a selection of supposedly transcendent ‘great works’ from different national traditions. They are the works sanctified by translation and by, in order of significance,

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<sup>9</sup> Paul Giles argues that the “association of America, and by extension the subject of American literature, with the current geographical boundaries of the United States is a formulation that should be seen as confined to a relatively limited and specific time in history, roughly between the end of the American Civil War in 1865 and the presidency of Jimmy Carter, which ended in 1980, after which globalisation rendered “the premises of U.S. national identity” as uncertain as they were in the antebellum period (39). This periodisation broadly coincides with that proposed for African American literature in Kenneth W. Warren's 2007 W.E.B. Du Bois lectures, roughly from 1877 to 1965, that is, the period of Jim Crow. He argues that “a dim awareness that the boundary creating this distinctiveness has eroded” is indicated by a subsequent “turn to diasporic, transatlantic, global, and other frames” (8) – which is surely also a part of globalisation's unravelling of American certainties.

<sup>10</sup> It was followed, after a decade's lag, by a notable spike in Translation Studies (Apter 4).

<sup>11</sup> On the history of the concept, from Goethe, through Marx and Engels to Jameson and Bhabha, see Pizer.

Paris, London or New York publishers.<sup>12</sup> (And they are blessed by what Peter Hitchcock disenchantedly calls “the drab hierarchization of petty-bourgeois desire” (5).)

Let us consider an example Anglophone sf studies currently faces, having for decades effectively reduced early French sf to Jules Verne and a handful of other authors mentioned more or less in passing, such as Camille Flammarion, Maurice Renard, Albert Robida, and J.H. Rosny aîné. Lagging considerably behind the French academy, sf studies is slowly reassessing Verne, thanks in large part to an array of new, high quality, unbowlerised translations<sup>13</sup> – a vital trend that also threatens other early French sf writers with further obscurity. At the same time, however, Brian Stableford has translated into English more than 150 previously untranslated *romans scientifique*, and written a monumental critical history of the form, *The Plurality of Imaginary Worlds: The Evolution of French Roman Scientifique* (2016). Are the products of his astonishing labour destined merely to be subsumed into world sf, to be the neglected foothills out of which the enhanced Verne rises to even greater heights, with the far more modestly enhanced Flammarion, Renard, Robida and Rosny aîné – all of whom Stableford translates, among many others – merely confirmed in their distinctly secondary positions? (And will Stableford’s recovery of the *roman scientifique* alter – or even disturb – hegemonic understandings of sf?)

To the extent that World Literature recapitulates *Weltliteratur*’s liberal-humanist inclusiveness, which tends to mistake its own particularity for universality and thus eradicate difference, it also ‘has the collateral effect of blunting political critique’ (Apter 41). While languages, cultures, and literatures are functionally equivalent, encounters between them are not equal but determined by material histories and by the structures and relations of power.<sup>14</sup> The same, of course, is true within any particular language, culture, or literature; neither singular nor monolithic nor univocal, their very particularity is a product of their internally (and externally) contested multiplicity. Even where World Literature succeeds in provincialising Europe, as Dipesh Chakrabarty urges, and does so without substituting some other -centricity, the tendency towards “cultural equivalence and substitutability” (Apter 2) often remains intact, as if texts are free to flow across a uniform space.<sup>15</sup> But the space of World Literature continues to be marked by styles, typologies, and periodisations derived from Western publishing and academic practices.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, English is

increasingly the root language – our Latin, as it were, almost no longer a vernacular – into which everything is “resolved”; and it is the ground – spoken or

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<sup>12</sup> See Casanova.

<sup>13</sup> By William Butcher, Sarah Crozier, Teri J. Hernández, Sidney Kravitz, Karen Loukes, Sophie Lewis, Stanford L. Luce, Charlotte Mandel, Walter James Miller, Adam Roberts and Frederick Paul Walter, among others. The editorial efforts of Arthur B. Evans are also to be lauded.

<sup>14</sup> See Calvet, Chow, and Lanser. Within American sf, for example, whenever Afrofuturism, Indigenous Futurism, Latin@futurism or Chican@futurism are identified as specific phenomena – or grouped together as ‘alternative futurisms’ – material histories and power relationships are in play, identifying asymmetries while nonetheless (re)inscribing difference and normalising what is, sadly, never called – or called out as – Honkyfuturism or Gavachofuturism. This is neither to disparage these strategic identities, nor to wish the subsumption of their distinctive practices/traditions into a hegemonic sf of pallor.

<sup>15</sup> Alongside this provincialising move, there is the contending phenomenon of “nationally and ethnically branded ‘differences’ that have been niche-marketed as commercialized ‘identities’” (Apter 2).

<sup>16</sup> On the problem of periodisation in literary history, see Jackson.

unspoken – on which all Comparative Literature stands. [...] there is the implicit assumption in the institution of Comparative Literature that, in the end, all linguistic difference can be rendered a matter of commensurability: French and German literatures can be “compared,” and therefore can share a common (if unspoken) ground. Although unspoken, this ground nonetheless is the foundational language [...] of Comparative Literature; and thus, language differences are resolved, finally, into superficial differences which mask an essential homogeneity. (Docherty 29)<sup>17</sup>

Casanova recognises that the “strictly literary events” are determined by “non-national [...] rivalries and competitions, [...] subversions and conservative reactions, [...] revolts and revolutions,” but even she keeps the “relations of force and [...] violence peculiar” to this “*international literary space*” at arm’s length from “the forms of political domination” upon which they “may in many respects be dependent” (xii). (She is even more reluctant to consider the economic dimensions of these international relations, despite Goethe noting the emergence of *Weltliteratur* in concert with that of the *Weltmarkt*). Ultimately, such dematerialisations perpetuate what Emily Apter describes as World Literature’s “comfort zone – its ready promotion of identifying over differing and its curiously impassive treatment of ‘world’ and anemic planetary politics” (335).

### **world-sf**

Building on the Marxist theory of combined and uneven development, and on world-system theory,<sup>18</sup> the Warwick Research Collective (WReC) proposes world-literature as an alternative term and as a method with which to address the accumulation of world literature without reiterating the shortcomings of World Literature – not least the way in which “the categorical turn, in literary studies, to world literature often ends up deflecting attention away from the anti-imperial concerns that a materialist postcolonial studies foregrounded” (Nixon 38).

Leon Trotsky argued that when capitalism is imposed on a hitherto non-capitalist society, that society’s existing forces and relations of production, its social structures and cultural forms, are not swept away, but violently amalgamated into capitalism. Thus, rather than producing global uniformity, capitalism reproduces modernity in a global array of particular forms. That is, “capitalist development does not smooth away but rather *produces* unevenness, systematically and as a matter of course” (WReC 12). To perpetuate itself, capitalism requires imbalances and unevenness, and thus it is committed to “the development of underdevelopment, of maldevelopment and dependent development” (13). Understood as a world-system, global capitalist modernity is composed of cores, peripheries, and semi-peripheries. Although they may coincide with particular nation states, these terms are not primarily geographical distinctions – your place in the system is not determined by how many miles you are from the core – but

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<sup>17</sup> This, he continues, “assumes that English is itself internally homogeneous,” whereas “the merest glimpse at the history of English demonstrates that it is not one language; and the merest understanding of its historicity demonstrates that the English spoken at any single moment in the world is multiple and various, not single and unified” (29).

<sup>18</sup> The best introduction to world-systems theory is Wallerstein; for a rather different take on sf and world-systems theory, see Milner.

relations imposed by the world-system between localities, peoples, and cultures. Markers of capitalism's necessary unevenness – even a core nation or bloc, such as the US or Europe, will have internal peripheries and, thus, also internal semi-peripheries – they are subject to change, although a core will generally exercise its accumulated capital, power, and development to maintain its position within this system of relations.

The usefulness of this model was brought home to me during a Q&A session at the *Africa of the Past, Africa of the Future: The Dynamics of Time in Africanist Scholarship and Art* conference at SOAS back in May, when someone in the audience said, “What I want to know is why capitalism doesn't work in Africa – it works here and everywhere else, but never there.”<sup>19</sup> There was a sharp collective intake of breath at the proposition that capitalism *worked* anywhere (and perhaps at the implication that somehow Africa was essentially premodern and/or corrupt,<sup>20</sup> the very opposite of a capitalism that considers itself reasoned and reasonable). Among the flurry of responses to this provocation an important point was made. That capitalism does *work*, but it *works* precisely by *working* here and *not working* there. For example, it *works* in one part of Kensington by *not working* in another part – that part where unsafe, unmaintained tower blocks were not fitted with sprinkler systems but with flammable cladding to improve (at the lowest possible cost) the view from the first part. It *works* everywhere else by *not working* in Africa, and it *works* in, say, South Africa – the S sometimes appended to the otherwise BRIC nations – by *not working* in other African nations and also, of course, by *not working* in many parts of South Africa itself. Capitalism *works* by and through the systematic and permanent production of unevenness: of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat; of the urban and the rural; of metropole and colony; of development and underdevelopment; of core and periphery.

WReC argues, therefore, that, faced with the endless accretion of world literature, we should consider world-literature. An analytical, rather than an aesthetic, category, it is not the ‘world-class’ literature of ‘great writers’ who are elevated into a deracinated canon that ultimately preserves “an unalloyed and irrevocable Eurocentric particularism” (23). Rather, world-literature, whatever its point of origin, whatever its critical standing, “variously registers ... in both its form and content” the “combined unevenness” of the “radically uneven world-system” of capitalist modernity (49):

We understand capitalism to be the substrate of world-literature [... and] its “political horizon” [...] we understand modernity to constitute world-literature's subject and form – modernity is both what world-literature indexes or is “about” and what gives world-literature its distinguishing formal characteristics. (15)

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<sup>19</sup> Apparently, some version of this question is frequently asked of Google.

[https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/jun/28/why-africa-so-poor-google?CMP=share\\_btn\\_fb](https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/jun/28/why-africa-so-poor-google?CMP=share_btn_fb)

<sup>20</sup> Corruption, of course, is not an absolute or innocent term, though it is often treated as one. What gets counted as corruption is the result of an exercise of power. For example, on the day I first drafted this passage, the UK's Conservative government, now lacking the parliamentary majority necessary to enact its legislative programme, negotiated a payment of over a billion pounds of tax-payers' money to Northern Ireland, in return for which it obtained the support of the DUP – and the handful of votes needed to achieve a parliamentary majority. Did the former bribe the latter, and use public funds for party ends? Did the latter blackmail the former? Does this count as corruption? And if so, where now is the line between corruption and business as usual?

Inspired by Michael Taussig's work on peripheral cultures that use fantastical resources to figure and critique their violent dispossession by and incorporation into capitalism, WReC focuses in particular on works produced in the semi-periphery in times of "systemic crisis" when "forms of irrealist narrative and catachresis" seem to proliferate (66). For example, they devote chapters to Victor Pelevin and Ivan Vladislavić, whose fantastic fiction articulates the semi-peripheral experience of disaster capitalism and neoliberalism in, respectively, post-Soviet Russia and post-Apartheid South Africa, and exemplifies the necessary turn away from 'realist' forms in order to respond to the material impacts of increasingly immaterial or fictitious capital.

One recent sf story that captures the sense of combined and uneven development, as well as the shocks to which the world-system subjects its peripheries, is Muthi Nhlema's "One Wit' This Place" (2015).<sup>21</sup> It is set 500 years in the future, in a world ravaged by anthropogenic climate change. The protagonist lives in the habitable strip between the Oce and the Sah, between the Indian Ocean, which has risen, sweeping away Dar es Salaam and then inundating the rebuilt Neo-Dar, and the Sahara, which has expanded southwards, devastating the Sahel.<sup>22</sup> Ancient sea-borne wind turbines float on a sea polluted by the same oil "that had seeped into the ground, poisoning the water and rendering a livelihood impossible on land or Oce" (21). The landscape and the characters' home is an odd – or, rather, particular – mix: artefacts and social arrangements which date back through and even to before modernity, interspersed with futuristic technologies, some of which are now derelict.

The protagonist awaits the return of her lover, wondering how to explain that she is pregnant by another (the circumstances of her pregnancy are never explained). He left her some years ago, abandoning ocean-farming to join the army of the Geo-Engineers, who promised to "save the old world" (15). But they failed. Perhaps the task was always beyond their abilities, or perhaps it was because of the armed resistance they faced. Regardless, it was "a war that raged on for far too long and took more than it had given" (17). When her lover comes back, he is clearly suffering from post-traumatic stress. He refuses her touch, cuts himself off from her. He returns to the filthy sea, his fishing expeditions ranging ever more widely and hopelessly.

A tsunami strikes, and they flee into the Sah. He abandons her because, realising she is pregnant, he thinks she broke her promise to wait for him. Undaunted, she picks up the few supplies he has left her and heads on deeper into the Sah. A mutant moth flies by her ear and it climbs into the "scorched sky ... she gazed with a smallish smirk and swore she had seen a butterfly. Fly, babi, fly!" (26).

The ironic happiness of this ending expresses the necessity of adapting to the new world being created, a world from the viewpoint of which a mutated moth – or a foetus – can seem like a thing of beauty. At the same time, it underscores the story's focus on survival in an environment shaped by forces beyond one's control. In this, it is not just about anthropogenic climate change, but also about the uneven development of capitalist modernity, the structural violence and the slow violence that have rendered Africa

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<sup>21</sup> Originally published in Billy Kahora's anthology *Imagine Africa 500: Speculative Fiction from Africa*, it is now available online at <http://www.themanchesterreview.co.uk/?p=7902>.

<sup>22</sup> It is possible Nhlema in fact intends 'the Sah' to refer to the Sahel, but in this future the Sahel is no longer a green transition zone between the Sahara desert and the Sudanian Savanna, but just more desert.

peripheral and continue to do so.<sup>23</sup> The Geo-Engineers, who are from elsewhere, fill the sky with battle drones; their human soldiers, recruited from the so-called developing world, do not see or interact with them directly. And yet the protagonist's lover fought on their side, without ever asking precisely which 'old world' they were trying to preserve.

Geo-engineering describes various hypothetical scientific projects undertaken on such a scale as to counteract the effects of global warming and other anthropogenic planetary catastrophes.<sup>24</sup> However, any attempt to engineer on a planetary scale will involve immense risks and consequences, and these will not be distributed equally.<sup>25</sup> Naomi Klein describes one Solar Radiation Management plan to slow and possibly reverse rises in the Earth's temperature by injecting vast quantities of sulphur into the stratosphere. If such injections took place in the Northern hemisphere, computer modelling projects "a 60-100 percent drop in [...] plant productivity in [...] the Sahel" (270), the consequences of which would include famine, desertification, and the turmoil that they bring. If "the injections happened in the Southern Hemisphere instead," the Sahel "could actually see an increase in rainfall," but "the United States and the Caribbean would see a 20 percent increase in hurricane frequency, and northeastern Brazil could see its rainfall plummet" (276). These scenarios not only point to the complexities of geo-engineering projects but also highlight the kinds of political choices they entail. Unsurprisingly, however, geo-engineering tends to be among the few ameliorative strategies countenanced by those who benefit most from the current global economy (or, at least, the subset who are prepared to acknowledge the already unfolding reality of climate change), not least because such projects are easily reconciled with refusing profound – and necessary – structural changes to that economy and its associated political systems. There is a fortune to be made in letting it all burn; and as we well know, since capitalism invariably externalises human misery and environmental destruction, there is way more profit to be had in insurance and treatment than in prevention and cure.

In some respects Nhlema's story is unremarkable. Thanks to sf's global perspectives and its commitment to building coherent imaginary worlds, it frequently maps out, responds to, critiques, and/or champions the world-system. Verne's many expeditions and circumnavigations bring the world into the purview of capitalist modernity, while cataloguing (or inventing) its particular and uneven forms. The not-quite-anti-colonial opening of H.G. Wells *War of the Worlds* reproduces a racial hierarchy that considers Tasmanians as stone-age throwbacks left behind by evolution and progress, who thus had to die out (with dire implications for the Britons who genocided them, now faced with Martian invaders). But behind this racist ideology can

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<sup>23</sup> On structural violence, see Galtung; on slow violence, see Nixon.

<sup>24</sup> Climate change is just one of nine non-negotiable biophysical thresholds identified by the Stockholm Resilience Centre that should not be crossed if we are to avoid catastrophic global environmental change; the others involve ocean acidification, stratospheric ozone depletion, the nitrogen and phosphorous cycles, global freshwater use, change in land use, biodiversity loss, atmospheric aerosol loading, and chemical pollution. For the first seven of these, physical measures have been developed and clear thresholds that we should not cross have been established. The thresholds for the first three are tipping points that will lead to qualitative changes on a scale that could destabilise the entire earth system; the next four thresholds merely signify the onset of irreversible environmental degradation. See Rockström et al.

<sup>25</sup> Morton provides a good, if insufficiently sceptical, overview of geo-engineering proposals; Klein offers a sharp critique of them.



be glimpsed a world-system of combined and uneven development, the coexistence of all within global capitalist-modernity.

In the US, the fantastic initially responded to the neoliberal turn with the relatively 'realist' mode of cyberpunk, which imagined computer network technologies so as to figure the flows of global capitalism, and embedded them in a noirish, post-national, post-society. However, as the neoliberal project unfolded – accumulating by dispossession, by impoverishing and immiserating billions – sf's 'realism' proved inadequate at imagining the growing disparities between cores and their internal and external peripheries, at figuring the sudden and violent disruptions of life and life-worlds by finance capital, market deregulation, structural adjustments, and so on. It is arguably no coincidence that the alterglobalisation movement emerged just as genre boundaries, never as rigid as some liked to imagine, seemed to evaporate, blown away in the wind by the New Weird – identified by China Miéville as “post-Seattle fiction” (50)<sup>26</sup> – and sundry interstitial, post-genre cadre.

It is significant that it is women of colour, a doubly marginalised group, who are at the forefront of finding new ways to figure uneven development during this, our time, of successive systemic crises. Imbalances between cores and (internal and external) peripheries appear in the novels of Nalo Hopkinson and Nnedi Okorafor that also brought Caribbean, Yoruba, and Igbo folk culture into the core of genre sf at the same time as working to explode it. More recently, N.K. Jemisin's *Broken Earth* novels (2015-2017) feature a fantasy world repeatedly wracked by cataclysmic geological upheavals that can easily be read as a metaphor for anthropogenic climate change. But as their coded commentary on #BlackLivesMatter, hardened borders, and refugee-panics indicate, these profound shocks are also those to which capitalist cores expose their internal and external peripheries.

It is also significant that the consolidation of Afrofuturism represented by such authors (however uncomfortable they might be with the label) has been accompanied in the new millennium by the development of self-identified Latin@futurism, Chican@futurism, and Indigenous futurism, all of which can, to an extent, be understood as responses from internal peripheries and semi-peripheries.

And by, of course, the turn to world sf, to World Sf and, maybe soon, to world-sf. (And, should that happen, no, it will still not be enough, but I think it will be one more step in the right direction.)

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<sup>26</sup> For Miéville's recent reflections on this, see Bould and Miéville.

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