

Letter from the Editor

In the midst of our current moment of ecological and environmental crisis, the current state of the global COVID-19 pandemic has only served to intensify the urgency with which we look towards our public institutions—chiefly, our government—for answers about where to turn, what to expect, and what to do next. Unfortunately, for those of us in the United States as well as many other places around the globe, the “official” response has fallen monumentally short of our needs and expectations. While television and print news sources have, in many cases, largely contributed to the chaos in this “post-truth” era, not all media threatens to catapult us into deeper panic. While some more moderate voices prevail in mainstream reporting, times such as these drive us towards our cultural repository of human experience—literature, film, and other modes of media that capture our humanity and reflect it for examination. Ironically, despite its many dire warnings by way of ecological and sociopolitical apocalypse, science fiction has consistently served as a serious, if cognitively estranging medium for frank discussions of the challenges at stake in the face of ecological devastation and social disarray.

Science fiction—and more broadly, speculative fiction—provides a medium for discussion of the ethics of technology and neoliberal capitalism, offers insight into alternative social formations and institutional possibilities, and echoes ominous warnings about the possible consequences of our current actions if left unchecked. Perhaps this is why science and speculative fiction, in their myriad configurations, so effectively reflect the imminent harm inherent to our current way of being, not just for human beings, but for all life on our planet.

A rich vein of literature and scholarship dating back to the pulp era of science fiction has echoed the growing fields of ecology and environmental studies, looking at society’s unsustainable capitalist practices and their inevitable impact on the earth and all of its creatures. This special issue of the MOSF Journal of Science Fiction stages an intervention at this critical moment, contributing to the field of environmental studies with a volume of critical articles, reflections essay, and book reviews on works and topics in environmental science

fiction. The essays in this issue include scholarly discussions of Jeff VanderMeer’s *Southern Reach Trilogy*, Margaret Atwood’s *Oryx & Crake*, and Paolo Bacigalupi’s *The Windup Girl*, amongst many other works of environmental science fiction from the last seventy years, both popular and obscure. Some take a look humanity’s role in ecological action, while others explore representations of animal and plant life that foreground non-anthropogenic cosmologies. Still others underscore the symbiotic relationship between (post)humankind and the environments in which they live, struggle, and survive.

In that vein, I also point you to the contributions of some of the top scholars in the field, including a Foreword offered by Dr. Gerry Canavan, and reflections by Dr. Christy Tidwell, Dr. Bridgitte Barclay, and Dr. Melody Jue, amongst the many other insightful voices featured in this issue.

Our current environmental moment is a dire one, to put things as lightly as possible. Even as I write this, wildfires are burning across Colorado and California, residents of the American Southeast and Midwest are recovering from the devastation of powerful tropical storms, and one of the hottest summers on record rages on across the U.S., compounding the current public health crisis which has already had disproportionately negative and severe effects on marginalized communities of color. As environmental concerns merge with discourses of race and privilege, it is not surprising that the mainstream resurgence of the Black Lives Matter movement has coalesced with the rise of a global pandemic.

Amongst many other things, science fiction demonstrates for us the ways that ecological and sociopolitical systems are—often begrudgingly—intertwined, reminding us that a society at war with its environment is inevitably a society at war with itself. Only by taking the warnings of authors, scholars, and scientists like those contained herein (and participating in this conversation through various mediums across the global stage) can we hope to piv-



Letter from the Editor (cont...)

ot towards a world where sustainability truly becomes synonymous with progress, and where we may still hope to turn the tide in favor of the environment—and the future.

- Aisha Matthews Walker

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