



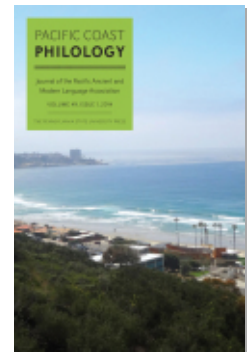
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Plenary Address 2013



Speculative Archives: Histories of the Future of Education

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Abstract: This paper explores the cultural history of UCSD and Southern California as places where speculative theorizing about utopia, dystopia, imagining the future, and reimagining the past has long been occurring. The first part is on Fredric Jameson's and Kim Stanley Robinson's theories of utopia and their relevance for the utopian project of public education; the second turns to alternate Afrofuturist worlds and Octavia Butler as an early theorist of neoliberalism; and the third focuses on speculative fictions of education, labor, technology, the future, and the idea of a radically networked enclave of resistance or social movement in the US/Mexico borderlands.

It's an honor to deliver the keynote for PAMLA's 2013 conference and great to see so many people here from the greater Pacific borderlands as well as from the many colleges and universities in the San Diego area and Southern California. I teach at the University of California, San Diego, up the coast in La Jolla, where I work in the Literature and Ethnic Studies Departments. For the past several years, I have also directed the Clarion Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers Workshop (fig. 1), a premier training ground for aspiring writers of fantasy and science fiction that was established in 1968. It is a utopian space in many ways, a place where an alternative pedagogy takes place that inspires me and makes me see things new ways. The Clarion students and teachers, as

well as our undergraduates and graduate students at UCSD, have taught me much about imagining the future. In fact, they have partly inspired my new project, *Speculative Archives: Science Fiction's Histories of Race, Sex, Empire, and the Future*, from which my remarks today are partly drawn.

It has also been instructive to teach science fiction at UCSD in the wake of literary critic Fredric Jameson's many years of being associated with the UCSD Literature Department and after the 2005 publication of his book *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions* (Duke UP). Jameson was Professor of Comparative Literature and Romance Studies, director of the Institute for Critical Theory at Duke University, and also a member of, and then later a regular visitor to, the UCSD Department of Literature through the early 2000s. In 2007, he and the great science fiction writer Kim Stanley Robinson, who received his BA and PhD from UCSD, spoke on campus on the subject of "Climate Change, Dystopia, and the Necessity of Utopia." As this event's title suggests, Robinson has explored, throughout his extensive body of work, and especially in the classic Mars Trilogy, the recent Nebula Award-winning *2312*, and his climate change trilogy, *Science in the Capital*, what we might call the utopian possibilities that could emerge in the wake of disaster. Both Jameson and Robinson ask us to think otherwise about utopian form, to push beyond reductive understandings of utopia as a "perfect system" that neglects "human frailty and original sin" in order to understand its necessity, even as both require us to think dialectically about its contradictions (Jameson xi).

What I have to say here today about speculative archives and histories of the future has thus been fundamentally shaped by this history of UCSD and Southern California as places where this kind of speculative theorizing about utopia, dystopia, imagining the future, and reimagining the past has long been occurring, as you will see in different ways in each of the three sections that follow. The first is on Jameson's and Robinson's theories of utopia and their relevance for the utopian project of public education; the second turns to alternate Afrofuturist worlds and Octavia Butler as an early theorist of neoliberalism; and the third focuses on speculative fictions of education, labor, technology, and the future in the US/Mexico borderlands. All three strands of this inquiry connect, as you will see, to Southern California spaces, including UCSD, which is itself, like all universities, a kind of utopian experiment, keeping in mind the structural ambiguities of utopian form, its possibilities and its closures. All three are also fundamentally linked to the creative labors of students, teachers, writers, and artists throughout Southern California who have used speculative fiction and other cultural forms to imagine otherwise; there are way too many to name, but it is important to recognize that there are other important hubs of speculative imagining elsewhere in the region, notably at California State Fullerton, San Diego State, and UC Riverside. Our sister

UC is now home to Professor Nalo Hopkinson, also a Clarion instructor and the author of many important works of speculative fiction, as well as several significant literary and cultural critics of the genre; UC Riverside also holds the Eaton Collection of Science Fiction and Fantasy, the largest publicly accessible collection of science fiction, fantasy, horror, and utopian literature in the world, now housed in the Tomás Rivera Library.

The three pathways I identify through this paper also open up to other worlds beyond the university. Part 2 considers the differentiated Southern California spaces where Octavia Butler lived and worked, including both black and Latino north Pasadena, where she was born and lived much of her life, and the Huntington Library, the archive to which she left her extensive papers. I also situate Butler's work in relation to Afrofuturism, an aesthetic and cultural movement in which black people of the African diaspora imagine alternate worlds and futures across a wide range of cultural forms, including literature, music, and film. Finally, part 3 takes up the transborder connections Alex Rivera makes among Tijuana factories, Mexican villages, San Diego, and the United States in his dystopian speculative fiction film *The Sleep Dealer* (2008), which still nonetheless has a utopian horizon, as I will suggest in what follows. That utopian horizon is the imagining of a radically networked enclave of resistance or social movement, something many other Latinofuturists, including several at UCSD, have also tried to imagine.¹

1

In *Archaeologies of the Future*, Jameson defines utopian form expansively, considering both its long history as a "genre" or literary "text" as well as "a Utopian impulse which infuses much else, in daily life as well as in its texts" (xiv). Drawing on the theories of Ernst Bloch, Jameson traces a utopian impulse "governing everything future-oriented in life and culture; and encompassing everything from games to patent medicines, from myths to mass entertainment, from iconography to technology, from architecture to eros, from tourism to jokes and the unconscious" (2). Jameson also thinks about the spatial and systemic dimensions of utopian form: its manifestations in revolutionary political practice, intentional communities, buildings, and "attempts to project new spatial totalities" such as the city itself. Staging this distinction spatially, he understands "the properly utopian program or realization to involve a commitment to closure (and thereby to totality)" (4). And this commitment to closure has "momentous consequences," Jameson warns us, as he calls our attention to the utopia as enclave, both as problem and as condition of possibility.

Jameson suggests that all utopias, for better and for worse, are built on a "radical secession": "the foundational difference between them and us" (5).

That is, enclaves are spatially differentiated from what surrounds them; they make other spaces, and sometimes other connections across spaces, in doing so. Jameson writes, for instance, of “the utopian enclave of the scientific collective,” associating it with “the emergence of secular science and its episodic transnational networks, foreshadowing the founding of the Royal Society” and “the fantasy of a whole world organized along the new research principles” (17). He also calls “the intellectual” the quintessential dweller in such “enclave spaces” (17). Jameson suggests that spatial differentiation, the formation of an enclave, and differences between them and us are foundational to utopia, yet he holds out for the power and significance of utopian form against cynics and naysayers, insisting that its significance lies not in its “representation of radical alternatives” but rather in the form’s “imperative to imagine them” (416).

Today, the utopian is still often identified with closed total systems and used pejoratively, like the word *enclave*, which, in popular parlance, now most often signifies the gated community, the wealthy retreat, the space of privilege that essentially depends upon the disposability of others in other spaces. Does spatial differentiation essentially depend upon the disposability of others in other spaces? Do all differentiated spaces, or enclaves, or utopias, require a radical othering of the outside, the other spaces? The world of popular culture, where dystopia now carries the day, might at first make one think so, but it is important to make distinctions among dystopias, for not all dystopias are anti-utopian: in fact there are utopian elements in many dystopias.

In his work on critical dystopias of the 1990s, *Scraps of the Untainted Sky* (2000), literary critic Tom Moylan suggests that the formation of collective enclaves of resistance on the margins of society trying to make a different world and the glimmer of a utopian horizon are two of the features that distinguish critical dystopias of the Reagan and post-Reagan era from classical dystopias, which focus on isolated individuals and imply that no alternatives are possible and that a recognition of the forces closing in on the individual is the most that can be hoped for. Jameson is not as interested in thinking otherwise about the problem of the enclave apart from the example of an emergent transnational science’s enclave existence, though we need to heed his warning that utopia as system’s commitment to closure has momentous consequences. Instead, Jameson emphasizes how different forms of anti-utopianism, including those that reductively understand the utopian as the creation of perfect systems, disregard at their peril utopia’s structural ambiguities as well as the “very real political function of the idea and the program of Utopia in our time” (xvi).

Kim Stanley Robinson takes up utopia’s structural ambiguities and political possibilities across his many novels, which is one reason *Archaeologies of the Future* ends with a long chapter on realism and utopia in Robinson’s classic Mars Trilogy. Robinson earned his PhD in literature after completing a

dissertation on the novels of Philip K. Dick. He was also a student at Clarion in 1975 when it was at Michigan State and has gone on to teach in the program at UCSD after the workshop moved here in 2006. He still puts a lot of energy into sustaining both Clarion and UCSD as vital pedagogical spaces where “new wish images of the social can be elaborated and experimented on” (16), as Jameson might say. After attending Clarion and leaving UCSD, Robinson wrote a series of novels with utopian and dystopian dimensions set in Southern California at different moments: *The Wild Shore* (1984), *The Gold Coast* (1988), and *Pacific Edge* (1990), all of which examine different alternate futures for California, including one following a nuclear strike in 1987, another extrapolating a dystopian 2027 Orange County from its history as defense industry center and nexus of real estate speculation, and a final one imagining a 2065 California eco-utopia. Robinson has since written many other significant novels, but the Mars Trilogy—*Red Mars* (1992) *Green Mars* (1993), and *Blue Mars* (1996)—along with the related work *The Martians* (1999) and *2312* (2012) are arguably his most ambitious and thought-provoking efforts to raise questions about the structural ambiguities of utopian form and the problem of the enclave and the closures it requires in the service of the spatial differentiation entailed by the founding of utopian institutions and projects.

In the Mars Trilogy, Robinson considers the utopian dimensions, as both limit and possibility, of the scientific collective and the international scientific project of an expedition to Mars. He makes us think about how such a utopian project is at the same time an extension of Cold War and emergent post-Cold War geopolitics as well as a colonization project. Robinson's theorizing of utopia as colony and the implications of that are apparent throughout the novels in his gorgeous attempts to render the difference of the Martian landscape in prose and in his attention to the battles over Mars waged between transnational corporations and the varied, heterogeneous Martian societies that emerge, as well as between the Greens, who want to terraform Mars, or make it more like Earth, and the Reds, who want to keep it as it is. The problem of the utopian enclave arises most pressingly in the form of the question of whether the Martians should remain connected to Earth, with obligations to Earth and the increasingly desperate people who live on that ruined planet, or whether Mars is better off seceding or withdrawing from its linkages to Earth so that the Martians can continue to try to fashion a better way of living without being subject to the interests of Earth-based transnats or weighed down by the baggage of Earth's economies, ruined ecologies, and large populations. In the trilogy, Nirgal, a member of the next generation who is born on Mars, is the character that most explicitly and sympathetically confronts this problem as he tries to mediate between Earth and Mars in ways that do justice to the people of both worlds. But the problems of the enclave and of the foundational

difference between “them and us” persist, haunting the Mars novels and raising enduring, provoking questions that Robinson worries over again and again.

Robinson’s recent novel *2312* once again explores the structural ambiguities of utopia in this imagined world, which is an extension of that of the Mars trilogy. Here Robinson elaborates variations of gender and sexuality in much more detail as he imagines a vast, heterogeneous universe made up of interplanetary networks as well as worlds fashioned out of asteroids, “little bubble worlds” cooked up “for our own pleasure, the way you would cook a meal, or build something, or grow a garden—but it’s always also a new thing in history” (40). Extrapolating from our world to this not so faraway time, Robinson also considers the utopian and dystopian dimensions of a future where lifespans are extended through longevity treatments and other kinds of medical technologies. He is interested in the possibilities of these treatments and technologies, but also attends to the complications and new hierarchies that will inevitably emerge in the wake of these “newly normative extended lifetimes, which keep getting longer,” thereby calling attention to how so-called scientific progress is never unilinear or distributed equally and how it may generate new problems even as it extends the lives of privileged subjects (88). In a section that provides a timeline of important events leading up to the world of *2312*, the narrator observes that from 2220 to 2270 the longevity project began to encounter problems and “was not completely distributed in any case” (246). Many Terrans did not get the longevity treatments, thereby threatening to produce a sort of “speciation of class” (232). The problems of the enclave, of spatial differentiation, closure, and confronting inequalities, then, remain central even in novels where Robinson builds worlds and imagines utopian spaces on a grand scale.

Robinson also confronts these problems in his trilogy of novels about global warming that partly take place right here in San Diego: the “*Science in the Capital*” series. In these climate change novels, the utopian dimension comes from Robinson’s rigorous effort to disentangle science, politics, and capitalism and thereby open up space for imagining a different and better response to global warming. While in many of Robinson’s novels he intricately imagines radically different worlds, however, the “*Science in the Capital*” trilogy offers a vision of a very near future built out of familiar elements of our present. In a sort of speculative twist on domestic realism, Robinson follows one of his protagonists, Charlie Quibler, a Senate environmental staffer and primary caretaker of an infant son, through the streets of Washington DC and the halls of government, while another protagonist, Frank Vanderwal, moves back and forth between the National Science Foundation in DC, the halls of the University of California San Diego, and the labs of the biotech industries that border it.

Throughout, Robinson explores the utopian dimensions of science as well as the boundaries that mark its enclave existence and the dystopian dangers posed not only by its entanglement with politics and capitalism but also by its own constitutive, if contingent, exclusions. Robinson represents intellectual curiosity as a utopian impulse, as well as the sharing of research to increase knowledge rather than make a profit, and even depicts the academic conference as a utopian space of sorts as he tries to imagine a science that can be disentangled from capitalism and politics to lead the way to an alternate future that would break radically with things as they are. He considers the dangers posed by politics to science in the form of the naysayers who deny that climate change is happening and who hold almost all of the political power in this world. He also focuses on the dangers posed by capitalism to science, especially neoclassical economics and “free market” fundamentalisms, which one character suggests falsely exteriorize “costs” and thereby “disguise” the undeniable fact that “humanity is exceeding the planet’s carrying capacity for our species, badly damaging the biosphere” (*Forty Signs of Rain* 210).

The novel also examines the university as a utopian space and as an enclave of sorts, for better and for worse. But the dangers posed by know-nothing politics and capitalism to a science dedicated to truth and justice, as well as the problems of spatial differentiation, inequality, and the enclave’s closure persist as Robinson moves the story from the nation’s capital to the university on the hill and the surrounding biotech industries of La Jolla. In a section of the trilogy called “Athena on the Pacific,” the narrator begins by alluding to the myths of California exceptionalism and Manifest Destiny, only to quickly revise them by saying that those moving West “did many things good and bad.” But “among the good things,” the narrator continues, was “the founding of a public university: Berkeley in 1867, the farm at Davis in 1905, the other campuses after that; in the 1960s new ones sprang up like flowers in the field. The University of California. A power in this world” (169). Throughout the trilogy, the ideal of the “public university” remains a somewhat utopian alternative to the entanglements of science, politics, and capitalism that Robinson addresses, but the novel also raises important questions about the limits of a science that cannot be disarticulated from capitalism and politics as well as the privatization of the University of California and the future of the public university as such.

For not only do the biotech companies surrounding the university depend upon venture capitalism, as Robinson suggests here, but the university itself is now a heavily capitalized space increasingly run by administrators who come from the corporate world or the world of politics and who are mostly interested in what’s profitable at the university, what will attract private capital and create political capital, and not truth and justice.² Of course, the

university was always already an enclave, spatially differentiated from what surrounds it, built on Kumeyaay land and refusing to acknowledge and give back the remains, penetrated by capital, and fundamentally shaped by the Cold War and post-Cold War state (Armstrong). But the state's commitment to making education accessible and affordable to the California public in the California Master Plan for Public Education, a utopian project if there ever was one, has vanished. Instead, corporate reformers spend big bucks trying to convince people that many young people (always other people's kids in my experience) really do not need to or should not go to college, and more and more, the poor and the disappearing middle class are offered online education, courtesy of the techno-utopians of Silicon Valley and beyond, as a substitute, while rich people continue to send their children to Harvard, Yale, Stanford, and the University of California.³ As the state withdraws and capital takes over, as truly public access is denied and the Master Plan is abrogated, the university becomes, more and more, a bad enclave, one even more removed from the public and the communities that surround it (Kroll). Robinson begins to get at this when he writes of the ideal of the public university: "University as teacher and doctor too, owned by the people, no profit skimmed off. A public project in an ever-more-privatized world.... What does it mean to give?" (169) At a time when tuition has skyrocketed and only 6.6 percent of UCSD's funding comes from the state, there are no easy answers to Robinson's question: the problem of the bad enclave worsens and the future of the utopian experiment of public education begins to look more and more dystopian.

2

This is the neoliberal world that the late great science fiction writer Octavia Butler, who passed away in 2006, was already critically anatomizing back in the 1990s, when she wrote *Parable of the Sower*, a 1993 dystopia that still speaks powerfully to our present. Butler was a working-class girl whose mother, a maid with three years' education, brought home all kinds of books her employers no longer wanted in order to feed her daughter's passionate autodidacticism. Octavia also did office, factory, and warehouse work before her stories began to sell; attended Pasadena City College at a time when community college was almost free; and won a school-wide short story contest that inspired her to become a writer. She also studied at Cal State Los Angeles, took extension courses at UCLA, and later, was first a student and then a teacher at Clarion.

There is nothing even remotely like any of these educational institutions in the world of *Parable of the Sower*: there are no colleges, no universities, no

public schools of any sort. Almost everything public has been eviscerated; transnational corporations have largely superseded nation-states; labor laws are almost completely eroded; debt slavery is all the rage; and border factories that resemble the maquiladoras of Tijuana and Juárez give new life to old forms of exploitation. Going outside is a perilous endeavor; instead, people retreat into whatever enclave they can find and try to survive the harsh world of all against all that has been created by disinvestment in the public.

Butler's cautionary tale about the privatization of everything public was very much shaped by her friendships in north Pasadena, where she lived much of her life. As she put it in an interview ("Science Fiction Writer Octavia Butler"), "I was paying a lot of attention to education because a lot of my friends were teachers, and the politics of education was getting scarier, it seemed, to me. We were getting to that point where we were thinking more about the building of prisons than of schools and libraries. My hometown, Pasadena, had a bond issue that they passed to aid libraries, and I was so happy that it passed because so often these things don't." Locating herself in a particular place, her "hometown" of Pasadena, here Butler connects her dystopian visions of the shrinkage of public space and the disinvestment in public education to political debates over taxes in the region, a history that shadows us today and still shapes the private and public spaces over which we continue to struggle. Butler's gift of her papers to the Huntington Library in San Marino, the swanky, well-watered, green island of wealth across town from Butler's old neighborhood, reminds us of the intimate inequalities of Southern California social space as well as the ties Butler made across the region even as it suggests she believed her archive might best be studied in close proximity to those spaces and places.

Since the 1990s, Butler has been widely acclaimed as a theorist of space, for her insightful, frightening Parable novels helped scholars across many different disciplines to better understand racialized political economies of space in the wake of the Los Angeles uprisings of 1992. In strong readings of Butler's novels, Mike Davis, Tom Moylan, and others have analyzed how her vision of a near future was built up out of elements of her present, notably the spaces around her, and bleakly anticipated many of the transformations that were on the horizon. In *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles* (Vintage, 1992) and *Ecology of Fear: Los Angeles and the Imagination of Disaster* (Vintage, 1999), Davis especially praised Butler's use of "disciplined extrapolation to explore the dark possibilities of the near future" and argued that she "simply takes existing helter-skelter and turns up the volume a few notches" (*Ecology of Fear* 362). The riots, shrinking public spaces, hardening of the urban environment, spread of security and surveillance technologies, slow evisceration of public schools, and rise of gated community enclaves that

Davis analyzes in his classic 1990s books are all building blocks of Butler's "low-rise dystopia, with urban decay metastasizing in the heart of suburbia" (*Ecology of Fear* 363). Butler's visionary theories of space also shape Moylan's readings of the Parable novels as critical dystopias that turn the utopian dreams of the Reagan/Thatcher era inside out and anticipate our world. As literary critic Peter Stillman puts it, Butler's "dystopian US of 2024 is a utopia for those who advocate a small government, lower taxes, an unregulated market, unimpeded corporations, unchecked wealth and power, and the devaluing or denigration of political life or public projects" (Stillman 17). In *Parable of the Sower* and *Parable of the Talents*, this right-wing utopianism generates the dystopian spaces of disaster, neglect, and everyday misery that mark our neoliberal era, from Los Angeles to New Orleans and beyond.

But it is important to recognize that Butler's dystopian visions are fundamentally different from classical dystopias such as Orwell's *1984*; Jameson calls the latter anti-utopian, since Orwell's novel suggests that the fundamental problem is "human nature itself, whose corruption and lust for power are inevitable, and not to be remedied by new social measures or programs, nor by heightened consciousness of the impending dangers" (198). Critical dystopias such as Butler's Parable series, on the other hand, are related, "negative cousins of the Utopian proper" in Jameson's analysis, since "it is in the light of some positive conception of human social possibilities that its effects are generated and from Utopian ideals its politically enabling stance derives" (198). Butler's writing is not anti-utopian because she does not rest content with the idea that human nature is fundamentally flawed and therefore no alternate worlds can or should be imagined. Even as she exposes the dystopian dimensions of neoliberal utopianism and criticizes the emerging neoliberal world around her, its closures and its enclaves, she still struggles to imagine an enclave of resistance that might begin to build a different world.

In the Parable series, the formation of an alternative community in the wake of disaster is Butler's main concern and the main thing that drives the plot after the old world of the gated community is destroyed. There is only a glimmering of a utopian horizon in this bleak novel, but the building of a multiracial community is at the center of the future Butler struggles to imagine, the phoenix that emerges from the fiery ruins of the old, unsustainable world. Thus there is a utopian dimension to the question with which Butler leaves us: How can speculative fiction help us to think about the history and human costs of the neoliberal policies we see all around us and how can it help us imagine a different world?

In John Akomfrah's now classic 1996 documentary *The Last Angel of History*, Butler makes a brief appearance, speaking about the Reagan era as the formative context for her great Xenogenesis trilogy, a series of novels in which

aliens rescue the few humans who remain after Earth has been destroyed by a nuclear conflagration. Remembering that people at the time were talking about winnable nuclear wars, Butler explained that when she wrote the trilogy she was thinking about how humans were both hierarchical and highly intelligent, and she was thus speculating about the contradictions this mix created and wondering which tendencies might win out. Akomfrah's documentary, which makes connections among science fiction, Pan African culture, intergalactic travel, and computer technology, suggests that Butler was not alone in this imagining of alternate worlds and near futures but was rather a part of a larger, transnational or diasporic cultural formation: the "digitized diaspora," as Akomfrah names it, which some have also called Afrofuturism.

One of the most prominent theorists of Afrofuturism as an aesthetic and cultural movement is Alondra Nelson, a professor at Columbia University and former undergraduate at UCSD, who received her BA in anthropology in 1994. In the 1990s, Nelson started an online message blog titled "Afrofuturism," serving as the first moderator; it then became a Yahoo group and eventually inspired an influential special issue of the journal *Social Text* on Afrofuturism, which Nelson edited. In 1998, announcing the formation of an Afrofuturism online community, she suggested that "Afrofuturism simultaneously references the past and imagines the future of black life using such symbols and concepts such as cyborgs, mad scientists, and alien abductions" and elaborating on such "science fiction themes" to "imagine possible worlds in the visual, digital, and literary expression of Afrodiasporic cultural producers" (fig. 2). Butler's prophetic gaze into the neoliberal future that was emerging, her prescient diagnosis of residual and emergent bad enclaves, and her efforts to imagine enclaves of resistance and, indeed, to create and sustain them through her work might usefully be situated within such an Afrofuturist formation. I have also tried to emphasize here how Butler's prophetic vision of the future was deeply connected to her past in working-class Southern California as well as to all those schools she attended and all her teacher-friends, a world that most definitely was under attack then and is shrinking and surrounded by danger in the United States today.

This is the privatized world of bad enclaves that Beatrice Pita and Rosaura Sánchez reimagine in their 2009 novella *Lunar Braceros*, 2125–2148. Pita and Sánchez are professors in the Literature Department at UCSD who previously contributed important archival recovery scholarship on Mexican-origin people in nineteenth-century California, including the novelist María Amparo Ruíz de Burton, whose work they edited and reintroduced to us and which has made a big impact on the fields of Latina/o studies and American studies. Even though with *Lunar Braceros* Pita and Sánchez move from the nineteenth century to the twenty-second century, their vision of the future is shaped by

the past and also by our own present, in which public education is under attack and policymakers increasingly act like formal schooling is only worth spending money on if it involves STEM fields (Kaplan-Bricker; Yamada).

In the future Cali-Texas nation state that Sánchez and Pita imagine, most people live on reservations, and two of the protagonists are from FrezRes, a large reservation in what was once the Fresno area. The reservations emerge as a “type of population control camp mechanism” or “prison” in a bad future that looks like our world, but worse. One of the narrators explains that the reservations were devised to keep the homeless and unemployed off of the streets and off of welfare. On the reservations, people are forced to work and are also guinea pigs for the experiments of bio-labs, which “have free reign” (Pita and Sánchez 15). If residents try to escape, they are shot. It thus perhaps comes as something of a surprise that schools, staffed by unemployed teachers, still exist on the reservations, but the purpose is to skim off those with talent in math and science, who are “looked over for admission to technological colleges or even to universities” (15), since their abilities might be valuable in some way to the state or to the transnational corporations that really run things. Two of the protagonists manage to escape the reservation in just this way, because they have science and math skills “at a moment when these skills were considered important to the state” (14). Eventually, they form, along with others, an enclave of resistance on the moon, where they are sent to work as moon tecos, technicians disposing of Earth’s hazardous waste on the moon. They are the new braceros, truly an “expendable, a surplus population” (14), in a twenty-second-century extrapolation of our own past and present that is one of the hallmarks of critical dystopia.

3

We might situate Pita’s and Sánchez’s work within an emergent Latina/o futurism that has significant roots in UCSD as well. The university likewise employs Professor Curtis Marez, currently the chair of the ethnic studies department, president of the American Studies Association, and author of his fascinating new book *Speculative Technologies: Farmworker Futurism and the Hidden Histories of New Media*. Marez is also the author of “The University of California in Popular Media” on the website Critical Commons. UCSD is, further, home to Professor Ricardo Dominguez in visual arts, co-founder of the Electronic Disturbance Theater, one of the inventors of the Transborder Immigrant Tool app, and a co-curator of Drones at Home, an exhibit that explored the “strange allure of drones and the push for their domestication—by governments, corporations, and everyday citizens.” As part of this last project, Dominguez and others invited digital media artist and filmmaker Alex

Rivera to present his work, which includes some fascinating shorts as well as the 2008 film *Sleep Dealer*, a science fiction film set in the future US/Mexico borderlands with a plot that pivots on struggles over the uses and meanings of drone technology.

Both *Lunar Braceros 2125–2148* and *Sleep Dealer* imagine a future based on the deepening of globalization, but as both texts take up questions of technology and labor in the future, they require the rethinking of current paradigms in order to understand the problems of workers who labor abroad while their bodies remain at home (*Sleep Dealer*), or those who move to the moon as disposable workers (*Lunar Braceros*). Together, their relentless focus on problems of embodiment and disembodiment, while imagining a future of bad enclaves, education, labor, and struggles over technology built out of elements from our present, raises important questions about more optimistic visions of technological progress and the transcendence of the body, even as both make central the construction of enclaves of resistance capable of mobilizing that technology in different ways.

Sleep Dealer was partly a response to the nativist backlash against workers who move across national borders. Struck by the contradiction between capital's desire for Mexican labor without the people—"The problem is that the worker comes with a body," Rivera has said—Rivera based his film on the premise that in the future, if it were somehow technologically possible to keep the work but "keep the body outside the United States," just "suck its energy and leave the cadaver or the problematic shell out of the picture," capitalists and politicians would eagerly do it (Silverman). Thus in the film, nodes on workers' bodies make possible a kind of virtual labor, which enables Rivera to satirize the desire for Mexican labor without the people and their bodies. Despite Rivera's fascination with technology, he thereby debunks a facile techno-utopianism that assumes technological advances will automatically bring about more equality. "We are being sold a false bill of goods, that the more connected we become the more equal we will be," Rivera says. "Statistically speaking, that's not what's happening." Instead, he claims, "the more connected we become, the more we are divided" (Silverman).

At the same time, however, there is a utopian strain in the critical dystopia that is *Sleep Dealer*: the formation of an enclave of resistance and the glimmer of a utopian horizon despite the difficulty of the struggle. In the film, the enclave of resistance crucially depends upon drones and drone vision. One of the protagonists, Rudy, played by Jacob Vargas, is a Chicano drone pilot from San Diego (fig. 3). Rivera explains of his disembodied *cybraceros*: "The millions of undocumented workers who are physically present but whose political body is denied by a legal regime, occupy a place in my imagination very close to the call-center worker or the drone pilot. The military drone

as a traveler headed from the global north to the global south is a kind of mirror image of these other histories that have brought human energy from the south to the north” (Harris). *Sleep Dealer* raises pressing questions about how drone vision and drone technology have changed our lives, as Rudy is asked to target the father of Memo, another protagonist who lives in rural Mexico, and then watches him die, is changed by this experience, and ultimately joins forces with Memo and his friend Luz in an enclave of resistance. Together, the three use drone technology to blow up the dam that ensures the privatization of water in behalf of a transnational corporation that impoverishes Memo’s family.

In this way, Rivera dialectically considers the problems and possibilities of new technologies for future Latinos. His analysis of drone technology is not completely dystopian, for he also wonders whether “Some of these virtualized transnational interactions can create new levels of connectivity, exchange, and vulnerability.” Rivera partly based Rudy’s story on stories he had been reading “about drone pilots having versions of PTSD, seeking out chaplains and psychiatrists to deal with the emotional blowback of performing and witnessing these horrible acts so close and sticking around for the aftermath. This is a visual phenomenon that no one in the infantry or air force has ever experienced.” Imagining that the very technology that makes these horrible acts possible could also be used in the service of a world beyond the private enclosure of everything public, Rivera reminds us that “the drone moment” that we live in is a time when “all kinds of actors in society are playing with the technology, including people who are directly opposed to violent deployments of drones. So you see the Occupy movement’s Occucopter, for example, or artists like myself building border-busting quad-copters.”

Connecting this struggle to the idea of social movements, such as the Zapatistas and cross-border labor movements, “organized over the network,” Rivera speculates “we’re in this moment when we don’t know who will be more empowered by this connectivity and by new technology.” And that, he explains, is the battle in *Sleep Dealer*: “It’s over the future of this connected planet and what kind of globalization we’ll be living in. When we were writing *Sleep Dealer* we were trying to think about what the future of a radically networked social movement would look like, but we couldn’t get there” (Harris). And that is the enclave of resistance and the utopian horizon in the critical dystopia that is *Sleep Dealer*. And that is today perhaps the best alternative to all the bad enclaves and the evisceration of everything public that are defining features of the neoliberal world around us, which desperately needs to be reimaged. Thank you.

NOTES

1. On the concepts of “utopian horizon” and “enclaves of resistance,” see Moylan.
2. The best introduction to and overview of the brave new neoliberal world of the university is Christopher Newfield (2011). See also Newfield’s and Michael Meranze’s blog, *Remaking the University*. On the top-heavy administration at the University of California, usually drawn now from business and politics, see “Editorial: UC insults public with its process of picking leader” (July 2013): “UC was once an institution of relatively even salaries between faculty and administrators, partly because the latter were nearly always drawn from the faculty, with plans to return to teaching after finishing their administrative terms. That has all changed, with UC administrators being treated like corporate CEOs and receiving salaries and benefits out of sync with every other form of public service. That bloat undermines their ability to work with faculty and lower-paid staff, and it undermines their credibility when they go to the Legislature to seek increased financial support for UC and its mission.”
3. Zac Bissonnette, “Top Three Flawed Arguments of the Anti-College Crowd.” See also “The Problem with Online College,” *New York Times*; Tressie McMillan Cottom, “The Audacity: Thrun Learns A Lesson and Students Pay”; and Gianpiero Petriglieri, “Let Them Eat MOOCs.”

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