

INDIGENOUS FUTURISMS

Workshop with Chelsea Vowel for PhD and advanced MA Students

Organizers: Stefanie Schäfer, Markus Schwarz, Barbara Gföllner, Alexandra Ganser

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University of Vienna

and hybrid

Call for Contributions

Science and speculative fiction is often steeped in colonial-capitalist logics, marked by technological ideas of “progress” narratives. Black and Indigenous scholars have investigated and critically engaged with this relationship between coloniality and SF and argued that alternative visions of the future “challenge notions of what constitutes advanced technology and consequently advanced civilizations” (Cornum). Since at least the publication of Anishinaabe scholar Grace L. Dillon’s *Walking the Clouds: An Anthology of Indigenous Futurisms*, speculative writing from Indigenous authors has gained more recognition in- and outside of academic circles. Recent anthologies (e.g. *Love After the End*, ed. Joshua Whitehead, 2020), the first Indigenous superhero series in the Marvel franchise (*Echo*, 2024), as well as the recent exhibition *Science Fiction(s): If There Were a Tomorrow* at Weltmuseum Wien, which draws heavily on Indigenous futurisms, are testament to the increasing visibility of Indigenous authors and artists in critical SF re-negotiations of past, present, and futures. Importantly, these works are not only a crucial addition to SF; rather, they are “central to cultural resurgence and the recovery of other ways of knowing, being, and abiding” (156), as Daniel Heath Justice writes. Thus, Indigenous literatures generatively refuse colonial epistemologies and “imagine otherwise” ways of being and relating.

Métis author, educator and scholar Chelsea Vowel’s short story collection *Buffalo is the New Buffalo* (2022) is a case in point. As Vowel writes in the introduction, her texts make “space for Métis to exist across time, refusing our annihilation as envisioned by the process of ongoing colonialism, and questioning the ways we are thought to have existed in the past” (14). The eight stories touch on technology, language, futurity, queerness through Métis epistemologies that counter the colonial gaze on Indigeneity and constitute an opening into the otherwise.

This workshop at the University of Vienna aims at bringing together MA and PhD students working in the field of Indigenous futurisms and Indigenous speculative writing with Chelsea Vowel to critically and ethically engage with their own scholarly work and gain new perspectives on Indigenous theory and writing. The workshop will begin with an opening talk by Chelsea Vowel on the intersection between theory and fiction writing. Students will then have the opportunity to present their own work and get a response and feedback from our guest. To close, Chelsea Vowel will read from her recent short story collection *Buffalo is the New Buffalo*.

Please submit abstracts incl. project title (max. 300 words) and a short biographical note to barbara.gfoellner@univie.ac.at **by December 15, 2023**. All applicants will be notified of their participation in the workshop by the beginning of January 2024.

Chelsea Vowel

Chelsea Vowel is Métis from manitow-sâkahikan (Lac Ste. Anne) Alberta, residing in amiskwacîwâskahikan (Edmonton). Parent to six children, she has a BEd, LLB, and MA. She is a Cree language instructor at the Faculty of Native studies at the University of Alberta. Chelsea is a public intellectual, writer, and educator whose work intersects language, gender, Métis self-determination, and resurgence. Author of *Indigenous Writes: A Guide to First Nations, Métis & Inuit Issues in Canada*, she and her co-host Molly Swain produce the Indigenous feminist sci-fi podcast Métis in Space, and co-founded the Métis in Space Land Trust. Her most recent work is the short story collection *Buffalo is the New Buffalo*, published by Arsenal Pulp Press in 2022.

Works Cited

Cornum, Lou. "The Space NDN's Star Map." *The New Inquiry*. 26 Jan 2015. Web. 16 Nov 2023.

Justice, Daniel Heath. *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter*. Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2018.

Vowel, Chelsea. *Buffalo Is the New Buffalo*. Vancouver, BC: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2022.