

Unlimited Futures: Speculative, Visionary Blak+Black Fiction

Summary

Unlimited Futures is an anthology of speculative and visionary prose and poetry from First Nations and Black writers, edited by award-winning authors Rafeif Ismail and Ellen van Neerven. This collaboration between Djed Press and Fremantle Press brings together twenty-one emerging and established authors, including well-known writers such as Ambelin Kwaymullina and Claire G Coleman. The collected stories reimagine the past, present and future of so-called 'Australia' in universes that run parallel to our own. They explore a wide range of themes and subjects including colonisation, the Stolen Generation, inter-generational trauma, connection to the land and to Country, strong ancestral bonds, climate change and more.

Contributors in this anthology include Tuesday Atzinger, Flora Chol, Claire G. Coleman, Zena Cumpston, Lisa Fuller, Meleika Gesa-Fatafehi, Chemutai Glasheen, Genevieve Grieves, Afeif Ismail, Ambelin Kwaymullina, Laniyuk, Jasmin McGaughey, SJ Minniecon, Sisonke Msimang, Merryana Salem, Mykaela Saunders, Aïsha Trambas, Alison Whittaker, Yirga Gelaw Woldeyes, Jasper Wyld and Maree McCarthy Yoelu.

About the editors

Rafeif Ismail is the managing director of Djed Press and an award-winning, multilingual writer published in anthologies and literary magazines across Australia and internationally. Her work explores the themes of home, belonging and the so-called 'Australian' identity through the lens of being a refugee and third culture youth of the Sudanese diaspora. She sees all forms of art as mediums for change and is committed to creating accessible spaces for young people of marginalised backgrounds in the arts.

Ellen van Neerven is an award-winning writer of Mununjali Yugambeh (South East Queensland) and Dutch heritage. Ellen's first book *Heat and Light* was the recipient of the David Unaipon Award, the Dobbie Literary Award and the NSW Premier's Literary Awards Indigenous Writers Prize. They have written two poetry collections: *Comfort Food*, which was shortlisted for the NSW Premier's Literary Awards Kenneth Slessor Prize, and *Throat*, which was shortlisted for the Queensland Literary Awards and the Victorian Premier's Literary Awards.

Questions for discussion

1. In the introduction, Rafeif Ismail says *Unlimited Futures* is about having a conversation through storytelling. What are some topics of conversation the stories in this anthology touch upon and inspire?
2. Why do you think the medium of genre fiction works so well in telling or re-telling the stories of the past, present and future?
3. Although 'The Prime Minister' was written in 1945, it remains relevant today. Why do you think that's the case?

4. Rafeif Ismail says, 'I can imagine *Unlimited Futures* being read ten years, twenty years, fifty years from now and still being a powerful body of work'. What are the book's more timeless elements that will still hold relevance for future readers?
5. Ellen van Neerven says storytelling is used as a way to imagine a better future and to have that conversation with the past as well. In what ways have the stories in this anthology imagined a better future? And what are they saying about the past?
6. 'Fifteen Days on Mars' and 'Night Bird' are both stories with a strong connection to Country and one's ancestors. What do you think these two stories are telling us?
7. 'Thylacine' talks about bringing back the Thylacine, or Tasmanian Tiger, through cloning. What does the story suggest is wrong with this?
8. 'Dispatch' and 'August 2029' tell of a future in so-called Australia that is thriving under the restoration of the land by First Nations peoples. What do you think these stories are urging us in the present to do?
9. 'Dis/Simulation', 'History Repeating' and 'The Girls Home' talk about The Stolen Generations. What are the similarities and differences between these stories?
10. 'Mami Wata' explores human-caused pollution through the legend of the Mami Wata water spirit in West, Central and Southern Africa. What do you think this story is teaching us? How is the moral of the story similar to 'The River'?

If you liked this book, you may also like ...

Brother Moon written by Maree McCarthy Yoelu and illustrated by Samantha Fry, Magabala Books, 2020

Meet Me at the Intersection, ed. Rebecca Lim and Ambelin Kwaymullina, Fremantle Press, 2018

Stories of Perth, ed. Alice Grundy, Seizure, 2018

The Fremantle Press Anthology of Western Australian Poetry, ed. John Kinsella and Tracy Ryan, Fremantle Press, 2017

Ways of Being Here by Rafeif Ismail, Yirga Gelaw Woldeyes, Tinashe Jakwa and Yuot Alaak, Margaret River Press, 2017

Women of a Certain Rage by Liz Byrski, Fremantle Press, 2021

Further reading...

Always Another Country: A Memoir of Exile and Home by Sisonke Msimang, Text Publishing, 2018

Fire Front, ed. Alison Whittaker, University of Queensland Press, 2020

Ghost Bird by Lisa Fuller, University of Queensland Press, 2019

Growing Up African in Australia, ed. Maxine Beneba Clarke, Magan Magan, Ahmed Yussuf, Black Inc., 2019

Growing Up in Australia, ed. Black Inc., Black Inc., 2021

The Old Lie by Claire G. Coleman, Hachette Australia, 2019

The Resurrection of Winnie Mandela by Sisonke Msimang, Text Publishing, 2019

Throat by Ellen van Neerven, University of Queensland Press, 2020

Tomorrow's Dream: A Poetic Anthology by Flora Chol, Primedia eLaunch LLC, 2019