

# Andra Jenkin

Exegesis: Concepts of Creation, Representations and  
Vulnerable Populations: The Terraform of a Science Fiction  
Novel

Thesis: Prisoners in the Temple of Money  
(Abridged)

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Primary supervisor: Mike Johnson

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Centre for Creative Writing,  
School of Language and Culture

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## Attestation of Authorship

"I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgments), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning."

Candidate's signature

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be the name 'Andra Jenkin' written in a stylized, cursive-like font.

NAME: Andra Jenkin

## Acknowledgements

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## Intellectual Property rights

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## **Ethics Approval**

This research project did not involve human participants or any other potentially contentious elements, and as such did not require approval from the AUT Ethics Committee (AUTEC).

## Abstract

Prisoners in the *Temple of Money* is a science fiction novel with comedic elements, set against the socio-political backdrop of a world where humanity having fled a dead Earth to spread across the solar system, struggle to colonise further or feed and home the masses.

The opening terrorist action has the main character, Jeff Lovell, a jailed experimental pilot with PTSD, released to save the day. After being returned to the brig, he goes AWOL from Milforce, the private military company in which his brother is a controlling force. The terrorist action is a catalyst for the government to seek tenders for a defence contract, involving an investigation into prison systems, notably Milforce's.

The freedom of flying is juxtaposed against the confinement of prisoners. Both the gang (Vlads), responsible for the terrorism, and pilots, from Jeff's unit are detained as part of a larger cover up.

Escaping to his other brother's classified planet, Jeff's presence causes a pilot to arrive and the sleeper agent in the families' midst to activate. The resulting tragedy forces the pilots to go to Mars. Here Jeff teams up with a child assassin (and bodyguard for the leader of the Vlads), teaching her empathy in exchange for safe passage. He must overcome his PTSD to save his family and fellow pilots.

Using an omniscient narrative voice, there are times that the perspective changes to third person limited and in one instance, direct address to audience, where the reader is included as an integral observer without whom events are impossible in a nod to the interconnectedness of all things.

The large and complex cast impact each other and the dynamics between organisations, individuals and groups reveal themes such as power and control, vulnerable populations, corruption, oppression and freedom, with implications for human rights and institutional abuse.

## Exegesis

# Concepts of Creation, Representations and Vulnerable Populations: The Terraform of a Science Fiction Novel

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### Introduction

In writing my thesis, *Prisoners in the Temple of Money*, I wanted to contribute to the science fiction genre, a body of work renowned for exploring important themes of human rights, freedom and oppression and highlighting the plight of vulnerable populations. I position my creative work in this genre, characterised by building expansive and imaginative worlds reliant on science and advanced technology, and reference authors from whom I draw inspiration and further explore the place my work occupies in the postmodern literary tradition discussing signifiers such as intertextuality, metafiction, temporal distortion, faction, unreliable narrator, hybrid genres and reader involvement.

I wanted to express the themes of human rights by consciously ensuring my work was not exploitative of marginalised groups such as women, the LGBTQIA+ community and people of colour. In light of this I have examined the thesis reflectively with reference to feminist, queer, and Marxist critical theories. I briefly explain the political and historical context in which the work was produced, specifically corruption in international politics, the current rise of fascism, and the threat of global annihilation. I discuss choices of perspective and narrative and particularly structure, impacted by several factors including the fractal motif I envisioned as overarching scaffolding for the work and the abridgement required to prepare the thesis for examination

### Genre – Themes and World Building

My intention was for the novel to be a comedy, but I then read McKee (1997, p. 87) “*Comedy* contains myriad subgenres as well, each with its own conventions, but one overriding convention unites this mega-genre and distinguishes it from drama: *Nobody gets hurt.*” My book would not be mostly harmless. I retained comedic elements but adjusted my idea of genre.

That it was speculative fiction was clear to me. I took our current situation, the concept of a dying Earth, where governments, too slow to fix the problem, were forced to save as many as possible, then jumped forward 150 years.

It is a dystopian environment for the masses, illustrating systemic prisoner abuses, mass starvation and displacement and threats from lawless factions. Dystopia is defined by *The Oxford Dictionary* (1989) as “An imaginary place or condition in which everything is as bad as possible...” I contend this is not the case in *Prisoners in the Temple of Money*, as I explore the world through characters able to fulfil dreams, have meaningful relationships and work that supports them. The political backdrop is hopeful, as excepting for the temporary machinations of a corrupting company and a gang, the government is supportive of the democratic system and active in expressing utopian ideals.

Science fiction is defined by the free online Oxford dictionary (n. d.) as, “...fiction based on imagined future scientific or technological advances and major social or environmental changes, frequently portraying space or time travel and life on other planets.”

This is exactly the genre I was writing in. Set in space, with Mars colonised, the Midway is described as a ring of central orbiting hubs and manufactured planetoids on which most of humanity resides, in the Goldilocks Zone, which “...refers to the habitable zone around a star where the temperature is just right – not too hot and not too cold – for liquid water to exist on an [incorrect preposition in original text] planet” (Gary, 2016, opening heading).

This requires an advanced level of technology. Readers are often pedantic about scientific accuracy, which keeps the author honest in terms of research and authenticity, but can restrict imagination or complicate narrative from a practical standpoint, as well as requiring explanation in the form of exposition.

I enlisted help from a friend, an astrophysicist and expert in black holes, (the top two members of his team won Nobel Prizes for work he contributed to). He is now at NASA. He checked the science in my novel at several stages to ensure I hadn't made any glaring mistakes. We discussed solutions for concepts I was particularly struggling with when first discussing the book.

What about a nanoassembly of Jeff's molecules (see K. Eric Drexler's *Engines of Creation*? This is a famous book heralding the birth of nanotechnology, where he coined the 'nanotech' phrase) so his body structure extends & nerves etc penetrate/coagulate with the whole device, then the ship's like an extension of his

organism, just like a virus takes over host cells using its RNA. (Inta, R., Personal communication, November 8, 2001).

More recently, planning a solar engine malfunction to threaten the Midway, I asked how one would make a contraption to filter energy from the Sun to maintain its size. His reply was typical of the thought put in to getting the science right.

Why not poison the nuclear fusion process somehow? The best you can do is slow the natural evolution of the Sun, as it consumes its hydrogen, eventually having to burn its helium ash. Absorbing the energy won't do a lot unless you feed it back into the Sun. Incidentally, that process is what prevents it from collapsing in on itself. The gas heats up and expands. It emits energy and contracts, which causes it to contract a bit, which then heats up... (Inta, R., personal communication, June 12, 2019).

Further writing after his input risked mistakes in the science, and there were insurmountable science problems. While from a practical standpoint faster than light travel requires an impossible technological leap, however, the novel would suffer without it, with locations forced closer together. Other works in the genre take it as a given that technology doesn't require an explanation if it is not necessary to the narrative. The way one doesn't explain how a car works when writing 'She drove into the valley,' a science fiction writer can just as easily write, 'It was a quick trip to Mars'.

Therefore, in some cases I employed technological concepts vague rather than fully explored while maintaining the logic that longer distances take more time to get to, and communication between distant locations not be done by magic. I researched deep space communications for what was basically the internet in space and employed the same pragmatic approach as I had to travel, using assumptions people could relate to.

Science fiction and therefore my work is also characterised by world building. As a science fiction writer one cannot have characters live their stories until the reader is located in time and place. A location vastly different to the one they inhabit in the real world, which must be built from the ground up. Incidentally, the building of worlds within a science fiction setting is referred to as terraforming, and my main character is a terraform pilot.

In positing that readers create the book as much as authors do, in world building there is always the question, have I done enough to capture the readers' imagination? To enable them to see, not what I do, for that is impossible, but enough to understand what kind of a world it is and make it rich and vivid and real for them. Or conversely, have I done too much? Are the descriptive passages holding them back from connecting to the world and the characters and slowing the action? It's a fine line and one I was conscious of.

I noticed Banks (2010) honed in on some details, ignoring others. In *Surface Detail*, he describes an evil character's "exquisitely manicured hands" (Banks, 2010, p. 2) and nothing else, giving us free reign to visualise the baddie of our choice. This left me with the possibility that I could say less about the characters so the reader could do more.

### Word limit

I wanted complex socio-political underpinnings in my work, with a well realised universe containing agencies inept or corrupt, bad actors, an extensive cast and a lot of moving parts. With such science fiction novels, the length is necessarily longer than the average in other genres. This is common knowledge among writers and fans, with Banks for example, one of the most popular writers of the genre, exceeding 400 pages regularly, with books of 600 pages avidly consumed. Advice to science fiction writers in sending in their manuscripts states,

Science and fantasy fiction: are the exceptions to the 'word-limit' rule... Audiences of this genre are happy to read epic novels, they expect it to take time to build the fantasy world around them and want to immerse themselves into that world for some time. Publishers and agents know this and as a result they are willing to show more leniency when it comes to word limits (Carstairs, 2015, paragraph 13).

The wider universe of my creative work and the background to the story is a story in itself with multifaceted characters, agencies, groups and actions that needed to be understood before the events in the novel could take place. In a practical sense this was solved by creating an explanatory chapter at the beginning. An act of terrorism introduced the major players, organisations and institutions such as Milforce, Outworld Cargo and SEASure, the Sah Vladah gang and the heads of those groups appearing in the story as already known to the individuals within, cutting down on exposition.

The end result was a 399 page behemoth that despite being well within the normal range for a science fiction book exceeded standard examination practices at a Master's level. My supervisor described the work as "wide-screen baroque," with "large intergalactic adventures" (Johnson, M. personal communication, February, 24, 2020). Previously he suggested I analyse my work for an opportunity to divide it into three books to fit examination word limit requirements but when I did it was clear the essence or cohesion of the story would be lost, unfinished, with a beginning, middle or an end, but not all three. The only alternative was to cut the novel by half. I did a brutal edit, but it was still too big. Unable to include all chapters but needing to maintain narrative, pace and flow, choosing to keep chapters integral to the story and excluding those weaker, was a logical editing decision. These are chapters that I intend to edit more carefully once they are reinstated. This is also the case with some chapters close to the

end, that although crucial, I was trying to compact while writing. At this point, aware the book was already too large to examine, I attempted to cover narrative imperatives without adding to word count. I will examine these chapters again and develop them properly. The full version is available to examiners on request should any detail or completion of chapters need to be checked.

This lengthy world building serves a future purpose. I foresaw this book as one of many within a world containing multiple stories. I created tangential narratives in the process of writing that would have to be shelved for subsequent books. The origin story of Caitlin Quan Gin for example explains why she connects with Jeff Lovell immediately, and is more capable and aware than Mickey Laos' other child bodyguards, but while this story informed my choices for her character, and more specifically her introduction to Jeff, it was not told in this work.

Consecutive books set in the same universe, and using many of the same characters is another convention of the science fiction genre. The front covers of first editions of *Mostly Harmless* (Adams, 1992) proclaim it "The fifth book in the increasingly inaccurately named Hitchhikers Trilogy").

#### Literary Inspiration

My novel draws inspiration from the comedy science fiction series of Douglas Adams starting with the *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* (Adams, 1979), with my main character bumbling around space, often in a dressing gown. I also aspire to emulate the expansive culture series by Iain M. Banks, which started with *Consider Phlebus*, (Banks, 1987). The Culture series was set in a technically advanced future utopia and contains 20 books. I knew that with the sheer depth of the world I wanted to build, one that would not just scaffold this story, but many, I was tackling a massive and complex subject and was perhaps biting off more than I could chew, but in the words of the master himself, "One should never regret one's excesses, only one's failures of nerve" (Banks, 2012, p. 230).

#### Postmodernism

Though comfortably placed within the genre of science fiction, *Prisoners in the Temple of Money* has comedic and epic elements as well multiple other indicators it is a creative work of postmodern literature. Postmodernism is notoriously difficult to pin down, partially due to it being a reaction against another movement hard to define, that of modernity, and partly because it incorporates so much of what has gone before it that one is forced to use multiple exemplars rather than a unifying definition to get to

grips with it. Some of the examples found in my work include Metafiction, a self-aware reference drawing attention to the work being fiction, unreliable narrators in the form of Jeff Lovell, with brain damage, PTSD and memory loss, Ra Inta (named for the scientist who checked the work) after electric shock therapy and WaiShine hallucinating, which I discuss below. There is use of pastiche, in which known literary styles are pasted together to make new ones when I utilise a fractal motif from mathematics, as well as the multi-fractal taken from the pattern of sentences in *Finnigan's Wake* (Joyce, 1939) which I will explore later. These fractal motifs as well as the comedic element to my science fiction story indicate hybrid genres. Finally reader involvement and disruption to form as expressed in a scene in which all of these elements typifying postmodern literature coalesce.

My character WaiShine's replicator is tainted by magic mushrooms, making her a hallucinating unreliable narrator. She speaks in a fractal motif pattern indicating pastiche and in language play that is a structural disruption to form and a shift in perspective from omniscient to second person, in which the reader is directly addressed. They are invited to experience the world of the book, and hallucinate with her. This is a metafiction allusion to the act of reading being like taking a drug, as words once read are interpreted by the reader's brain and imagined, creating a vivid hallucination inside the mind. The invitation declares that the readers are part of the book and its characters, neither of which can exist in their correct and complete form without them imagining the words.

You are unique and part of an infinite puzzle, the piece that is you fitting its own special place in an infinite picture that cannot be complete without your presence, a world which would not exist without you. You are observing and observed, attached and necessary to the narrative of creation. (Jenkin, 2020, p. 58)

That the reader necessarily fills in details not provided proves that each time the book is read, an entirely different world than the one the author has created, is born. It is this that I signify in WaiShine's second person perspective, (also a shy nod to the cousin of the science fiction genre, the choose your own adventure story, which often shares a fan base). I indicated that narrative creation does not solely stay with me but the reader, in part, chooses their own adventure. There is interplay between the author as the all-knowing creator of the book, and the reader, the co-creator of the full vision. There is a connection between the words that have come from my mind, transferred into the mind of the reader. The most accurate form of mind reading I know.

Foucault (1969 p. 2) describes "...the singular relationship that holds between an author and a text, the manner in which a text apparently points to this figure who is

outside and precedes it". I contend this is part of the process, but equally could describe the relationship between reader and text. Just as I as author make editorial choices that determine the course of the novel, so too does the reader, from outside, and using knowledge and experience that precedes the text and are therefore creating the novel as they read.

This connection is also a reference to Douglas Adams' (1987) theme of the interconnectedness of all things, an intertextual reference also indicative of postmodernism.

Jeff shares similarities with Adams' (1979) Arthur Dent, first appearing in the *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, in that he is a reluctant participant in his own adventure, and he is repeatedly seen wearing a dressing gown. The referencing of other works in our own world, or Intertextuality, is present and more apparent in the full version. Xenn Calme can be seen reading a Douglas Adams book, an overt reference common only to postmodernism. The focus on the restaurant in the book, the Yakatori Eatery is also more pronounced, locating it in the centre of the universe, and with my original intent to locate it in the centre of the book, as opposed to *The Restaurant at the End of the Universe* (Adams, 1980) whose pun is important due to its apocalyptic nature. The sentient ships names are emblematic, and that the *Unknown Entity* has named itself is reminiscent of Banks sentient ships in the culture series, first seen in *Consider Phlebus* (Banks, 1987).

To add to that meta flavour, I used names poetic or with special relevance. Xenn Calme and Leolio for the sound and for meaning, a guard is Zara Granger, where Granger means 'farm bailiff'. The name Mickey Laos is a reference to Mickey Mouse, and while the rodent's kingdom is Disneyland, Laos' is kingpin of Mars, which is decidedly more adult and less happy, but his character is almost as cartoon-like in its evil.

Playing with language is also present in the character of General Komodo, inspired both by Trump and the use of oxymoron in Heller's (1963) *Catch-22*. The writing felt very much the way I wanted Komodo, my Milforce character to sound, literally working against himself. Like the double meaning that Iago utters in every statement he makes in Othello symbolising duplicitousness, General Komodo symbolises war, destruction and oppositional forces, and contradicts himself in every statement made in the book, making him the most difficult and constructed character to write. He becomes a comedic in the process, and is rendered more dangerous because he is both nonsensical and a fool, with power. He represents miscommunication and issues with command structure in the military organisation Milforce, and satirises the current situation in the American

Whitehouse. He illustrates the question of what can be done when the Commander in Chief wields so much power that their actions can't be curtailed in time to mitigate their destructive influence. He also represents stalled action on climate change, where we are at war with ourselves, torn between fulfilling our short-term desires and our long term survival.

As one of the intrinsic issues with postmodernity is its insistence that all things rely on what has gone before, all of these self-aware references can work against originality, or endanger science fiction into becoming satire.

Woodall (2016, p. 3) states: "I wondered if postmodernism was an end unto itself; a creative apocalypse that rendered originality obsolete" the implication of which encapsulates anything that might come after under its own banner. If originality belongs to postmodernity, then even a radical movement like dada could not sweep it aside, but would be incorporated into its purview. Originality was then dead, and anything I wrote, derivative.

#### Political and Historical Context

Derivative perhaps, but also a tribute, since happily, originality was not my main concern. Though not entirely satirical I did mean for the work to comment on our current socio-economic and cultural situation. The special place in history inhabited by those in the western world is both privileged and apocalyptic. There is the constant threat of a dying Earth in which the Doomsday clock has been at two minutes to midnight since January 2018. The historical and political context in which my work was produced is under the shadow of Trump's America, with overarching powers of corruption with a stacked Supreme Court, a President beyond impeachment and a despotic foreign government perverting the electoral process. Similar conditions to those preceding World War 1 are prevailing worldwide and fascism is on the rise. Combined with the consequences of late stage capitalism, in which ordinary people, while enticed to buy more also find themselves toiling for less are unable to see hope to improve their situation. Those in the top economic echelons of society increasingly control the mechanisms by which society is organised, echoing earlier positions in Marxist theory.

#### Critical theories

If the theory of immiseration was not borne out of *la lettre* [to the letter], then it certainly has in the no less frightening sense, that unfreedom, one's dependence on the

consciousness of those who serve an uncontrollable apparatus, is spreading universally over humanity (Adorno, 1968, paragraph 7).

Science and speculative fiction have long traditions of exploring cultural and structural issues in society. By writing about a situation reminiscent but removed from our own, set after the Earth had died, but with a comforting solution, I could explore themes of human rights, oppression vs freedom and corrupt systems of control.

Setting the book 150 years after the Earth became unliveable opened me up to other themes. Any expression of or attitudes towards ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation and identity would appear as I expected and designed them to have evolved from that time. I wanted to show the effects of the migration and evolution on language and attitudes, and that technology had advanced to the degree that body appearance could be changed more easily and completely and was therefore less of a defining factor for identity. It was my aim to illustrate gains made for women, people of colour and the LGBTQIA+ community and push forward ideals of equality for these groups now by ensuring positive representation.

I make more pronounced loyalties to the arks people escaped Earth on, than affiliation with ethnicity. There is less emphasis on white male privilege and more prevalent are those who group according to philosophy or common interest, or by necessity. Consent and choice is more relevant to sex than gender or orientation.

My concept was that arks left from diverse locations and people aboard interbred on the way and at their destinations. So planets were colonised by specific diverse groups. *The Cassandra* (not appearing in the novel), organised by celebrities, artists and computer giants with diverse backgrounds, left early, forming the Artist's Colony to help others escape. This group had a utopian humanist philosophy while those on the *Bohemia*, formed by rich despotic governments, gangs, and multinational organisations were more self-serving and violent, hoarding wealth and privilege. It was weighted in terms of Russians and Eastern Europeans with this more homogenous group having affiliations that pre-dated the ark.

To illustrate the usual flow of race, religion and culture across the galaxy I chose names from across the globe, like Vaenga, Jayden and Katya, or mixed ethnicity like Caitlin Quan Gin, furthermore names are more likely to be made up, like Xenn Calme, rather than matrilineal or patrilineal. The names of machines are also taken from different cultures, with a fast engine named for Savitr, the Hindu god of speed.

In using non-white cultural references, I noticed it was harder to access information on gods not deified or studied extensively by white cultures. At first I thought this was due to English language search engines, however, with Norse gods included, and easy to find, and Greek gods also prevalent, this seemed not to be the only factor. I questioned if it was a cultural phenomenon, favouring gods taught in a classical education, or currently popular due to Marvel films, or whether that was a chicken and egg issue where the films are picking up on the already popular gods due to an issue of racial bias.

As an aside, I didn't want the names of gods used as expletives. Only those who had genuinely carried their religion with them, or for contrast, the way Mickey Laos uses gods as some kind of insurance policy or to glorify himself, was present in the novel, otherwise, religion was absent.

I wanted to express a world that more recently in its history had access to plastic surgery that was indistinguishable from youth, gender and ethnicity. In my novel I discuss a server in the Yakatori Eatery who is deliberately ugly as a trend, and who would change his appearance later. I used Mickey Laos as an example of someone who had surgery earlier on when mistakes were made. This I would change in further development as I think he would have access to corrective surgery and I did not properly explain why he had not fixed the botched earlier jobs.

It also lays open the concept of gender and the indicators of ethnicity governed by appearance being optional and casual. Gender and ethnicity being fluid was not something I explored fully. From the perspective of a white woman, I wanted to ensure I wasn't being racist in my approach. Robinson (1991, p. 4) "For example, when white feminists speak of "women," are we actually speaking of white women, heterosexual women, middle class academic women? Critiques of liberal (mainstream) feminism as susceptible to racism, classism, and heterosexism have made such categorical statements problematic".

With reference to this feminist discourse around race, I was unwilling to explicitly postulate that advances in science and technology allowed people to change their ethnicity, even outwardly, and place myself in a likely racist position of erasing ethnicity entirely, especially from a position of trying to promote representation, which with my white privilege I worry I would have done poorly due to a lack of understanding of the impact. Instead I illustrated affiliations with arks, excepting where those affiliations are rejected as in the case of JaydenJ who expresses his ancestors' culture in wearing the moko to remind him of who he aspires to be.

White middle-class feminists Germaine Greer and J.K. Rowling have become embroiled in the trans exclusionary radical feminist (TERF) discourse differentiating between biologically born and transitioning women. Germaine Greer referring to gender reassignment surgery as reported by Wahlquist (2016) said “I’m not saying that people should not be allowed to go through that procedure, what I’m saying is it doesn’t make them a woman” and Rowling (2019) defended a woman fired for her TERF views, tweeting:

Dress however you please. Call yourself whatever you like. Sleep with any consenting adult who’ll have you. Live your best life in peace and security. But force women out of their jobs for stating that sex is real? [#IStandWithMaya](#)  
[#ThisIsNotADrill](#)

The feminist and literary giant both faced enormous backlash and controversy, so I need to be aware when writing transitioning characters with reference to feminism, second wave feminism and transfeminism can clash.

I did want to include a gender fluid character in my creative work but came up against a problem, other than my ability to write sensitively. When attempting to write in an inclusive way I discovered that there were language barriers to creating non-binary characters and gender neutral names. I wanted the character of Leolio to be referred to as They/Them, however implementation interrupted flow because it was confusing to read, but inappropriate for characters to explain gender when introducing Leolio. In testing they/them pronouns for Leolio, the writing ended up being ‘about’ that, which is the exact opposite of what I wanted, the idea that gender fluidity is usual, acceptable and in no way noteworthy in the future. I ended up making them a male, which felt like a cop out, but having this character’s gender identity fluid wasn’t pivotal to the novel and detracted from language construction. The further implication that anyone could change gender due to advance science and technology would have created a novel where pronouns and gender dynamics would have been irrelevant to the characters but confusing for readers. This would have negated my deliberate highlighting of women in power, and a lack of a main heterosexual love story component in the book, important to show representation now. Banks’ Culture series used transitory gender to good effect which I would like to analyse to further develop my novel.

To include gender fluidity, I used they/them in discussing a patron of the Yakatori Eatery, to show that popular and famous people who were well respected were gender fluid within the characterisations of the book. In this way it is my hope that I push out the boundaries of how we think about characters and pronouns to include non-binary characters, so that it will not be too long before the use of they/them won’t be confusing

for the reader, but a natural way to refer to gender fluid and non-binary characters, who are commonplace in literature.

I did want the emphasis to be on the story of the characters, with their gender, orientation and identification as background rather than integral to the story, so that it is natural to include diverse characters in a story without the story being about diversity.

As Lanser and Warhol (2015, p. 24) state:

I am reversing the emphasis of my earlier work: if in the 1980s and 1990s I was urging narrative studies to be queerer and more feminist, I'm now urging feminist and queer studies—and even narrative studies—to be more narratological.

I wrote one negative reaction to Leolio's orientation, by character Kien Merric, both to illustrate Merric's moral turpitude and to express the generally held opinions within the story when he is called a 'throwback'. Other characters have no reaction to gay relationships, and the only romantic relationship focused on in the book is that of a gay couple. This wasn't a deliberate attempt to place a gay relationship at the forefront, but the characters of Leolio and Klaus Bernard became more important as the book progressed. Jeff Lovell and Caitlin Quan Gin as main characters had a parent/child bond and Christine's family disappeared as her role changed.

To depict a world where feminism had by necessity come a lot further, I exchanged the gender of prewritten characters, so that I would negate any built in bias on my part by writing a character as a man for example, then simply doing a find and replace on the pronouns to change the character's gender. This was done with WaiShine and Wu Change whose names and genders were swapped, then Wu Change transformed again to Travis Rapana, retaining the gender change.

However, the book is not set in a post-feminist world where all things are idyllic and equal, as shown by the clear sexism and misogyny of Sah Vladah members. I portray that it is unusual for prisoners of mixed genders to undress together, as shown in a scene with Xenn Calme and Sian Silas being processed within a Milforce jail. Though this was meant to show their lack of privacy and that the prison itself was unfinished.

In demonstrating the misogyny of Mickey Laos and his cohorts it did seem like I was "...charting the experience of women's oppression" (Eaggleton, 1986, p. 200) which was undesirable. Yet I also wanted to show just how strong Caitlin Quan Gin was as a character and how extraordinary, to survive and exceed her peers in this environment. I also wanted to provide a balance of experience by having Leolio undergo more extreme institutional and sexual abuse by the staff at the Other Half resort to show that restricted populations are vulnerable to abuse. That he was initially meant to be gender fluid didn't sit well from a perspective of ensuring marginalised groups were not abused

for entertainment. I looked for obviously straight, white, cis male characters to put in similar situations, but other than evil characters in power, the most obvious was James Lovell. Already it was his lot to suffer the most and it would not have worked to have him further abused purely for the sake of balance. The character of Ra was a possibility, but again, I was exploring other abuses in his case. In the end I left it, but in a re-write, I could expand the scene in which Mickey examines the Tiger girls, to include both genders, as he would place financial gain ahead of gender bias. The point being that even if my work is not an overtly feminist novel, I intended that it withstand feminist critique.

With the exception of characters designed to show the evil nature of Sah Vladah gang members, the women in my novel hold powerful positions, affect change, have dominion over their lives, make choices based on their own wants and needs or to fulfil their jobs, and never to get or keep the attention of a man. In the next incarnation of the novel I would ensure that it passes the Bechdel Test, which requires there is at least one scene in which women, without men present, discuss a topic not about men. To date I have not checked this is the case.

### Structure

Initially the structure I wanted to employ in my exegesis and in my novel was that of the fractal pattern. While in the initial stages of the Creative Writing Master's Degree, an article went viral about physicists contending that the top 100 literary novels' structure resembled that of fractal patterns, while one, James Joyce's (1939) *Finnigan's Wake*, resembles a multi-fractal pattern.

The article seemed to say that by counting the number of words in a sentence I could essentially create a great work of art. Paul Mountfort warned in the exegesis workshop (Montfort, personal communication, March 26, 2019) that often there are trends that teach us that there are scientific ways to write a brilliant novel if you just use a certain formula, but be wary of such promises as they tend to become dated quickly.

Already interested in fractals, I read the original academic work, which involved physics too advanced for me to translate into a template. Unable to reach the physicists to discuss getting an appropriate fractal pattern sequence, I utilised the one that the article identified as almost indistinguishable from a multi-fractal, (Flood, 2016, p 2) the book *Finnigan's Wake* (Joyce, 1939). I counted the length of each sentence in the first chapter, using it as a template. On the webpage of Inkbot Design (2018, paragraph 25) "The most notable characteristic about fractals is that the repeating pattern can be noticed regardless of scale." The multi-fractal pattern meant that each chapter

represented the entirety of the book, so, my intent was to use this chapter to reconstruct the entire pattern to write the book as a multi-fractal. Immediately it was apparent the time it would take was prohibitive. Instead I formulated my own fractal patterns and used them in specific crucial moments in the story.

So that the reader was introduced to the concept organically rather than through exposition I used a short numerically expressed fractal sequence repeated by characters communicating using fractals. This sequence was 1,2,1,3,2,4,1,3,5,2,4,1,6,3,5,2,7,4,1,6,3,8,5 and this pattern of sentence lengths is first seen when Jeff Lovell flies an exotic craft in the second chapter and later when characters who speak in fractal patterns interact. The other pattern occurs in an earlier version of the novel called *The Temple of Money*. Wu Change, an excised character describes experimenting with magic mushrooms.

Wu Change became WaiShine and this passage evolved into her stream of consciousness direct address to the reader, which had to be cut down for the final edit which disrupts the fractal motif, but retains its unusual structure, with short sentences at the start and finish and long ones in the middle rejecting standard structural rules for sentence length. The passage still maintains logical internal consistency because in the scene her food replicator is tainted by magic mushroom spores explaining the odd language use. Her language is entirely fractal, synesthetic, mimetic, and not linear, breaking rules of structure, sense and perspective:

Artist. Wu Change. A colonist and scholar. She had taken one acid trip too many. Carving out dangerous approaches to art, she had descended into fractals, and ceased linear communication altogether. Painting and poetics were her primary occupations, motivating long bingeing nights where she would write well into the dawn until she wrote herself away and became an absence of herself even as she declared a new thing into existence that would turn and twist away from her and in her attempt to nail it down would thrash wildly demanding freedom from her as creator.

She knew this wasn't how others spoke, wasn't how they talked, sung, sketched, expressed or shined, but she was unable to communicate any other way now because once tapped into the rhythm of the universe, she refused to abandon it and become ordinary once more, once a being of light that had surfed the waves of the mechanics of the almighty, the taste of the stars would always rest on her thinking tongue, she could not, would not leave this alignment behind to trail in the dust and debris like a lost angel pining for the consciousness of heaven, the warmth of the creator and the collapse into the entire where her being would fold in on itself until all of the layers were subsumed into the one. Later she could be found in the detritus of her travail, naked but for the paint covering herself and her palette, the ground around her a mandala of colour radiating out from Wu herself, booming snores emanating from her comatose body, her hair a wild halo of rainbow locks, arms outstretched, legs akimbo vulnerable to any creature that might happen by, her artifice complete.

These pieces that she had created would make their way across the galaxy, further than any of the colonists themselves had explored, to hang in galleries in the Inworlds, mansions on Mars. In a SEASure boardroom one observed decisions implemented that would affect the colonists, galvanising their actions. Wu Change's mushroom motivated madness imagined this scene. Herself alone in space. The end. Now. (Jenkin, 2019, p. 130)

In a rewrite I would map WaiShine's journey through the Outworlds as a fractal pattern, and the Lightening Dancer's path also, perhaps creating a physical map to illustrate this.

Pareyon (2007 p 1) "...proposes that language as a whole, belongs to the group of what we recognize as "natural fractals"" and Pincus (2009) reviews a University of Cambridge study stating:

The study by Kitzbichler et al (2008) has added to much prior research suggesting that the brain exhibits fractal behavior. This makes a necessary link between the physical processes of the brain and each of the larger scale fractals we see in broader personality and social relationships. (Pincus, 2009, paragraph 9)

There are many implications to the concepts that language, relationships, personality and brains are organised in a fractal way for my book, that I would explore more fully in a re-write.

While I found the fractal concept intriguing, and used the idea of a secret language that only certain characters could understand to my advantage, ultimately without being able to design the novel using a fractal template there was no way of analysing the result the fractal motif would have had on the quality of the novel.

#### Structure relating to size

Much of the rest of the structure was linear and straightforward, but difficult to navigate due to size. Pragmatically I used descriptive headings in Microsoft Word listing characters and locations and key information as a film script might. This allowed me to ensure logistical alignment.

These were similar to synopses such as early 19 century authors like Charles Dickens utilised, which made sense when considering he wrote episodically for newspapers whose readers would need reminding of previous storylines. The same technique was used by Terry Pratchett as an organisational strategy once his Alzheimer's affected his writing, "Dodger gets a suit that is tough on the unmentionables, and Solomon gets hot under the collar" (Pratchett, 2012, p. 33). I saw that it was a good strategy for keeping track of multiple intersecting storylines, individual character narratives and as an aid to

memory. I then adopted the technique when it was essential to cut the book by half to maintain the word limit, aware that the narrative needed to maintain flow and to ensure it did not become incomprehensible once text was excised.

To serve the story I moved scenes around wholesale, ensuring that there were no anachronisms. I discovered I had characters discussing the defence contract handover before the decision was made, and had to re-edit for that lack of knowledge. Once heavily edited scenes at the beginning moved closer to the middle, I mitigated the unevenness of editing by ensuring surrounding chapters were reworked.

Structural changes also meant that some scenes and indeed whole chapters were now unnecessary. Reading in McKee (1997, p. 76) "The craft demands the invention of far more material than you can possibly use." McKee goes on to discuss a 5:1 ratio, and this gave me a more realistic concept of just how many darlings I would have to murder. The ratio allowed me to understand that even if they didn't serve the story the words that needed to be cut weren't a waste of time. I needed to honour my vision, and make choices that resonated throughout the whole, reflecting the choices the characters would make and the story that needed to be told.

#### Narrative Perspective

As mentioned, the novel is told in omniscient point of view, a deliberate choice after writing for several anthologies in which the convention was third person limited or first person, to avoid what editors called 'head hopping,' confusion over whose perspective was being written from, or too rapid a change from one point of view to the other. I found limited third and first person genuinely limiting. There was always some part of the action I wanted to explore that the person whose perspective I was writing from wouldn't have been privy to. It was crucial that I had unlimited access. I also considered that my favourite books were written from an omniscient point of view including Banks' Culture series, (Banks, 1987-2012), *The Hobbit* (Tolkien, 1937) and the Harry Potter series (Rowling, 1997-2007). It was as much a choice for omniscience, as a reaction against, limited perspective.

Despite this, there are moments in the thesis in which I write deliberate shifts to change psychological distance, as when WaiShine addresses the reader in second person as previously discussed. Disruption to the omniscient point of view is expressed when Sacha Lovell's perspective becomes paramount in his first scene on Mars when he observes his parents new dynamic from a place of psychological distance. This ironically narrows the gap between character and audience inviting the reader to see from the perspective of a psychologically damaged child.

Conclusions drawn are that this is a complex and expansive novel with multifaceted and diverse characters in the postmodern science fiction tradition. Though its unabridged version is a complete one, there are many opportunities for me to develop further the themes, characters and narrative in a way that is more satisfying to my initial aims and to explore my themes more thoroughly. I have undertaken a large project that with more time will be fully realised.

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