which assigns a certain code to the data. These codes can be further put in "bigger codes" or "categories" which in itself is a homogeneous category. This kind of categorization helps in sorting information/data and interpreting the information based on concrete larger parameters.

In addition, the writers have taken into cognizance the fact that many action research projects might not yield anticipated results or could possibly demand a series of "action research cycle" (p. 72) to be undertaken. In a nutshell, the book demands that ESL/EFL teachers should critically reflect their teaching practices and simultaneously engage in action research. The book is a valuable tool for in-service secondary school teachers who would like to continue researching their classroom and pursue continued professional development.

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Saint, T.K. & Verso, F. (Eds.). (2020). *Avatar - अवतार : Contemporary Indian Science Fiction. Fantascienza Contemporanea Indiana. Roma: Future Fiction. (312 pages).* **ISBN: 978-8832077117, ₹ 1300 (Hardbound), ₹ 249 (Kindle)**

Reviewed by Sumita Sharma

Speculative fiction may not be everyone's cup of tea, till it is or should be. Especially when the introduction to a new anthology gently nudges tentative readers away from Golden-Agish hard-SF expectations towards something which reads like a future's history of the rise of the techno-governmental (or corporate- their boundaries increasingly blurred), or of the shift away from anthropocentric and hierarchical thinking and towards multi-speciesism and versions of network thinking.

In his 2016 book *Four Futures: Life After Capitalism,* Peter Frase blends the tools of social science with those of speculative fiction to create what he calls "a type of social science fiction." What we find in Tarun K. Saint

and Francesco Verso's *Avatar - अवतार : Contemporary Indian Science Fiction*
is something like the zoomed-in details from any of these potentially
imminent futures. This bilingual (English-Italian) anthology is perhaps
more *Black Mirror* than *Interstellar*, with a sprinkling of fantasy and the
New Weird.

The collection begins with Anil Menon's delightfully paced story of Ringo
Singh Mann, a character whose name curiously evokes the proverbial
everyman except that he isn't one. He is, instead, an accidental specimen
of "our opaque ancestors"— the ones without "unique and permanent
identifiers," or, Aadhar IDs. In this version of a biopolitically surveilled
future, we find not just the government in an Orwellian "Big Brother"
avatar (called "Balasaheb") but an entire society made transparent in
service of a repurposed notion of trust.

S.B. Divya's "Microbiota and the Masses: A Love Story" seems tailor-
made for these COVID times. Here, an immunocompromised scientist
is forced to live in isolation in her high-tech, airtight house, albeit one
full of plants, fragrant earth, and eBees, till she falls in love and finds
herself taking tremendous risks just to be with the man she desires.
"Communal," by Shikhandin, is another story that is painfully topical
in its references to quarantines and stockpiling as Jaisalmer, no longer
a desert town, is on the verge of being subsumed by vegetation. The
urgent tone of the narrative as it describes the intensification of this
crisis turns green utopianism on its head—along with its concomitant
anthropocentric bias. With this story, the anthology dips its roots into
the New Weird, portraying less a (James) Lovelockean "revenge of
Gaia" and more of Donna Haraway's tentacular kin-making in a post-
Anthropocene future.

A similar privileging of tentacular thinking is found in Vandana Singh's
story "Indra's Web." The setting is a former slum on the outskirts of Delhi,
now transformed by Mahua and her team on the Ashapur solar energy
project into a vibrant assemblage of people, lanes, animals, trees, roots,
rooftops and suntowers. Thus, much as its metaphorical title suggests,
the story locates the interconnectedness of all things in these imbricated
networks. If Singh's story of meandering networks lulls the reader into
a sense of fuzzy warmth, Rimi B. Chatterjee's "Replacement" throws her
into a masculinist world of geo- and bio-engineering reminiscent of the
kind of hard SF which celebrated Big Dumb Objects in the Golden Age

of SF. Aiyzeh Dang finds herself living her dream of being a medical trainee in New Singapore, an artificial island inhabited mainly by ultra-high net worth individuals. But this dream turns out to be as prone to manipulation by the reigning corporate overlords as are human bodies.

Manjula Padmanabhan's "Upgrade" exposes the dark underbelly of a productivist world order which has no time for the elderly. But this does not rob the elderly of agency as is displayed by Mrs. Ganapathy when she finds herself coerced into accepting an elder care robot for her home.

Shovon Chowdhury's "Mother" depicts the female gendered AI counterpart to Menon's Balasaheb, only here she is nobody's instrument of surveillance—not any more, that is. A distillate of 60 million mothers, she has perfected mothering skills from micromanaging the everyday lives of her "children," disciplining and punishing them, to even playing match-maker. But this is not her story alone. It is also the story of love and resistance in the midst of this dystopian world.

"Paused" by Priya Sarukkai Chabria strikes a note very different from the rest of the stories in the anthology. An emergent life form in a far future ponders its optimal genetic design as it lies waiting to birth itself. Meanwhile, it recounts the history of the human species and its descendants as they adapted and evolved, reconfiguring their genes to survive in the ocean when life on land became impossible. Giti Chandra's "The Silk Route" is a borderline science fantasy which reads like a fresh breeze in these climatically turbulent times. At a time when governments and corporations seem keen to espouse increasingly grandiose (and expensive) geoengineering schemes to fix climate crises—such as those critiqued in Clive Hamilton's 2013 non-fiction book *Earthmasters: The Dawn of the Age of Geoengineering*, Chandra's story deftly picks up on the fancifulness of such ambitions and crafts a tale that functions simultaneously as a parody of such schemes and a sincere attempt to come up with (literally!) out-of-the-box solutions to such crises.

Mindful of the presumably unsettling shifts in time and locale in the story, Chandra intersperses her narrative with direct address to the "Gentle Reader"—a rhetorical device quite popular in the eighteenth and nineteenth century English novel. Thus, the inscription of the reader within the narrative both keeps her piece together and creates a sense of intimacy and community between the reader and the author—not just the author of this story, but coming as it does at the end of the collection,

all nine of them. And this is a rare feat for an editor to accomplish in an anthology.

While some stories definitely shine brighter than others—my own favourite being Anil Menon's "The Man Without Quintessence," chiefly for its delicious undertones of humour and irony, I confess—the entire collection makes for some very good reading indeed. Meanwhile, Cassandra-like, science fiction goes about its business of telling the histories of our futures.

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Mohan, N. (2019). *Long Poems of Narendra Mohan* **(Trans. V. M. Shukla). Authors Press: Delhi. (100 pages). ISBN: 978-9389110487, ₹ 295**

Reviewed by Lalit Kumar

The history of post-independent India is the history of disenchantment with the Nehruvian dream and Gandhian ideals of Ramrajya. The failure of our nation builders to translate high ideals into action in the early years of independence drew the attention of several novelists, satirists, poets and filmmakers. The process of disillusionment or *mohbhang* with independence had started with the communal violence unleashed during Partition. It was reinforced in later years owing to the structured inequality, caste rigidity, gender-based discrimination, rampant corruption, institutionalization of political dynasties, and the indifference of the political class to the masses. On the one hand, Saadat Hasan Manto, Khushwant Singh, Bhisham Sahni, Dharamvir Bharati, Amitav Ghosh and several others captured the violence, bloodshed and trauma of Partition in their fiction. And, on the other, Shrilal Shukla, Phanishwar Nath "Renu", Nagarjun, Harishankar Parsai and innumerable authors raised the issue of people's *mohbhang* with the new power structure in their works. In Hindi poetry, these two narratives—horrors of Partition and dissatisfaction with the new political