

SURPRISING, THOUGHT PROVOKING & MIND-BLOWING VISIONS OF TOMORROW

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Abstract

Women writers have made an amazing contribution to literature, science and culture. Present study highlights amazing postmodern science fiction by women writers' noteworthy literature like Beggars in Spain (1991), by Nancy Kress, The Shore of Women (1986), by Pamela Sargent, and The Daughter That Bleeds (2020), by Shewta Taneja. The study also explores how inferiority and superiority complex plays a vital role in human life for their eternal development? All men and women are not created equal. Everyone can feel engendering feelings of equality and excellence. Devastating nuclear war empower women to come in power in the world, they explored their ideas and dared to reject men power. Women worship fantasy goddesses in shrine. However, whenever they are exiled, they became rebellious and created their own world and fought for equality. Women also raise voices against their oppression and suppression. They have been oppressed for decades; the study focuses on traditional, modern and postmodern female voices accordingly and raises some introspective questions like, is there a voice behind closed doors? Does postmodern literature explore and enhance female voices? Even though women are educated, organized and agitated their voices are suppressed and oppressed. Women writers in postmodern science fiction raise voices against patriarchal societies across the globe. Science fiction has a vital role in the lives of all human beings and relationships. The selected women writer's works stressed on suppressed inner female voices.

Keywords: *postmodern science fiction, post-apocalyptic India, oppression, power, equality.*



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It is impossible to define science fiction in particular words whereas that deals with amazing world than we live, it deals with new scientific discoveries, new technologies and different social systems. Science, politics, sociology and the philosophy of the mind and any curiosity about future can be used in science fiction. Science fiction elements are found in religious and texts and poems that describe the creation or destruction of the universe and many God and Goddess are associated with powers that science fiction has since utilized. Some ancient philosophical texts also have science fiction imagery, Plato's *The Republic* that deals with surprising, thought provoking and mind blowing visions of tomorrow. Human history and society did not change rapidly where people to be able to envision a future that was different from their own. Science fiction from this period is likely to address to social

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rather than scientific problems because science fiction offered an ideal medium to make social comments that could not be published as fact.

Cyrano de Bergerac wrote the first novel to involve powered space travel in the 17th century after the Copernican revolution. Voltaire discussed the Earth from the perspective of super advanced alien from another star system in the 18th century. Mary Shelley warned of the dangers of science, Jules Verne depicted scientists as heroes and H. G. Wells used science fiction to satirize society and make predictions about the future. The World Set Free by H. G. Well, describes a new type of bomb fueled by nuclear reactions and it would be discovered in 1933 and first discovered in 1933 and first detonated in 1956. Physicist Leo Szilard contributed for the creation of the Manhattan Project which led to two nuclear bombs being dropped on Japan in 1945. Yevgeny Zamyatin, Aldous Huxley, and George Orwell provided the first dystopian science fiction in the first half of the 20th century and Philip K. Dick, Arthur C. Clarke, William Gibson, and Greg Egan explored the nature of reality and the human mind, through the creation of synthetic life and artificial realities.

Salt Fish Girl (2002) by Larissa Lai is the mesmerizing tale of an ageless female character who shifts shape and form through time and place. Told in the beguiling voice of a narrator who is fish, snake, girl, and woman - all of whom must struggle against adversity for survival the novel is set alternately in nineteenth-century China and in a futuristic Pacific Northwest. At turns whimsical and wry, *Salt Fish Girl* intertwines the story of Nu Wa, the shape-shifter, and that of Miranda, a troubled young girl living in the walled city of Serendipity circa 2044. Miranda is haunted by traces of her mother's glamorous cabaret career, the strange smell of durian fruit that lingers about her, and odd tokens reminiscent of Nu Wa. Could Miranda be infected by the Dreaming Disease that makes the past leak into the present? *Salt Fish Girl* is framed a playful sense of magical realism and reveals a futuristic Pacific Northwest where corporations govern cities, factory workers are cybernetically engineered, middle-class labour is a video game, and those who haven't sold out to commerce and other ills must fight the evil powers intent on controlling everything. Rich with ancient Chinese mythology and cultural lore, this remarkable novel is about gender, love, honour, intrigue, and fighting against oppression.

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Brown Girl in the Ring (1998) by Nalo Hopkinson, The Washington Post describes that a young woman must solve the tragic mystery surrounding her family and bargain with the gods to save her city and herself. The rich and privileged have fled the city, barricaded it behind road blocks, and left it to crumble. The inner city has had to rediscover old ways -- farming, barter, and herb lore. But now the monied need a harvest of bodies, and so they prey upon the helpless of the streets. With nowhere to turn, a young woman must open herself to ancient truths, eternal powers, and the tragic mystery surrounding her mother and grandmother. She must bargain with gods, and give birth to new legends.

Nancy Kress is an American science fiction writer; she was born on January 20, 1948. Kim Stanley Robinson describes Nancy Kress as one of the best science fiction writers working today. She is the author of more than twenty novels, including the Probability series and the Green Tree series. She's best known for her novella *Beggars in Spain* (1993), about children who are genetically engineered to never have to sleep. Nancy Kress's landmark genetic engineering story, one of the most critically acclaimed SF novellas of the last decade. A rich financier compels scientists to create for him the perfect daughter--smart, beautiful, and with no need to sleep. Kress masterfully explores the social implications of *Sleepless* people in a novella you will never forget. It is set in a future in which genetic modification allows parents to give birth to children with pre-selected traits, the book's plot revolves around the emergence of highly intelligent, highly accomplished *sleepless* individuals who are bred so that they do not require sleep. The novel is divided into four parts, with the original novella making up the first part. In Book 1, the year is 2008. Chicago entrepreneur Roger Camden and his wife Elizabeth approach Dr. Susan Melling about a new form of genetic modification she developed that removes the need for sleep. Elizabeth becomes pregnant with twins and gives birth to a genetically-modified Sleepless baby named Leisha and her normal twin sister, Alice. Susan later finds out that Sleepless do not age past young adulthood and will have extended lives.

As a teenager, Leisha socializes with other Sleepless teenagers including Tony Indivino and the ultra-wealthy orphan, Jennifer Sharifi. As the Sleepless teenagers come of age resentment between unmodified Sleepers and the Sleepless grows. Tony and Jennifer

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build a refuge for Sleepless called Sanctuary, which Jennifer later moves to a space station. Tony arranges for the escape of an abused Sleepless boy and is arrested for kidnapping. While Tony is awaiting trial in prison, fellow inmates murder him. Leisha's relationship with her Sleeper sister, Alice is complex. Tony called Sleepers, *beggars in Spain*, and Leisha tended to agree. When Alice and another Sleeper rescue an abused seven-year-old Sleepless girl, Leisha realizes that Tony's characterization of Sleepers as envious parasites is deeply misguided. She meets with Calvin Hawke, an industry leader in the We-Sleep Movement, a Populist consumer revolution in which Sleepers only buy sleeper-made products. Leisha attempts to act as a bridge between the Sleepers and Sleepless communities. Meanwhile, new Sleepless are born naturally to other Sleepless living in Sanctuary, led by Jennifer. Geneticist Dr. Walcott claims to be able to transform a Sleeper into a Sleepless, but suggests that Jennifer stole his research. Later, Walcott's assistant is killed in a car accident caused by sabotage, and Leisha points to Jennifer as the murderer. Susan informs Leisha that Walcott's research is a fabrication, designed to lure Jennifer into stealing it. Hawke is the mastermind behind the scheme, motivated by his hatred of Sleepless and the boost in profits he received after Jennifer's arrest. Jennifer is acquitted. Leisha retires from her law practice and goes to live in exile at Susan's home in New Mexico. Leisha still lives in New Mexico. With most of the labor in the world economy now automated, 80% of Americans live entirely on government assistance. They are known as Livers.

Meanwhile, Sanctuary breeds a new *super sleepless* baby named Miri, whose brain is three to four times faster than that of a normal Sleepless. Miri is also Jennifer's granddaughter. Due to their increased brain-speed, Miri and the other Supers twitch, stutter, and struggle to keep their over sized heads upright. Back on Earth, Leisha mentors a 10-year-old Liver boy named Drew Arlen. During a physical altercation with Leisha's nephew, Eric, Drew loses the use of his legs. After an experimental surgery, Drew goes on to invent hypnosis that mimics lucid dreaming. Miri takes part in Drew's art and learns to fix the Supers' abnormalities. On Sanctuary, Jennifer orders the death of a Sleeper baby born there and a Sleepless woman who became disabled after an accident. Soon after, she has Miri's brother killed after he falls down an elevator shaft. Led by 16-year-old Miri, the Supers start a

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resistance group known as “The Beggars,” who thwart Jennifer’s plan to release bioweapons in major American cities. Jennifer is arrested for treason, and Leisha represents her at her trial. Leisha provides a haven for Miri and the Supers.

In a world where the slightest edge can mean the difference between success and failure, Leisha Camden is beautiful, extraordinary intelligent and one of a growing number of human beings who have been genetically modified to never require sleep. Once considered interesting anomalies, now Leisha and the other sleepless are outcasts, victims of blind hatred, political repression and shocking mob violence meant to drive them from human society and ultimately, from Earth itself. But Leisha Camdem has chosen to remain behind in a world that envies and fears her gift, a world marked for destruction in a deadly conspiracy of freedom and revenge.

Pamela Sargent is an American feminist, science fiction author, and editor. She has an MA in classical philosophy and has won a Nebula Award. Sargent wrote a series of books concerning the terra forming of Venus that is sometimes compared to Kim Stanley Robinson’s Mars trilogy, but predates it. She also edited various anthologies to celebrate the contributions of women in the history of science fiction. She is noted for writing alternate history stories. She also collaborated with George Zebrowski on four Star Trek novels. After a nuclear holocaust, women rule the world. Using advanced technology, they’ve expelled men from their vast walled cities to roam the countryside in primitive bands, bringing them back only for the purpose of loveless reproduction under the guise of powerful goddesses. When one young woman, Birana, questions her society’s deception, she finds herself exiled among the very men she has been taught to scorn. She crosses paths with a hunter, Arvil, and the two grow close as they evade the ever-threatening female forces and the savage wilderness men. Their love just might mend their fractured world if they manage to survive.

Pamela Sargent’s *The Shore of Women* (1986) is a dystopian novel. It explores both gender as well as religious issues. The book has been called a feminist classic, a dystopian classic and a science fiction classic. Though perhaps not a classic, I found it to be a worthy story and a thought provoking exploration of important themes. Sargent depicts a world divided by gender as well as power after a nuclear war. In the future that Sargent depicts

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women exclusively live in cities. Their society is high technology and their lives are comfortable. They segregate themselves from men in order to prevent violence and war from encroaching on their civilization.

At a young age, males are sent out of the cities. The all male culture that exists outside of the cities is primitive. The society consists of small, violent hunting bands. The men adhere to a religion that worships the image of women. This belief is reinforced through a virtual reality system, controlled by the women, that presents them with deistic and sexualized visions of women. All the virtual women that they encounter are seen as Aspects of a single Goddess known as “The Lady”. From time to time men are called to cities where their semen is collected so that the procreation of humanity can continue. Laissa is a young woman who begins to question the tenants of her society. Birana is another young woman who is exiled from the cities into the wilderness as punishment for being an accomplice to murder. Arvil, who is Laissa’s brother, is a young man who encounters Birana after she is exiled. Much of the narrative consists of Birana and Arvil coming to understand one another, falling in love and encountering various groups of men and women as they travel. Their encounters provide lots of grist for social commentary. The book is told in first person narrative split between three different main characters. This novel tells an interesting story using interesting characters as vehicles. It is a thoughtful exploration of themes that relate to humanity. The book is full of observations on gender, religion violence, etc. Arvil’s character presents, among other things, an examination of a person learning to question religion. Even before he meets Birana, he as questions why “The Lady” allows cruelty and suffering in the world. Furthermore he begins to doubt several assumptions of his theology. At one point he ponders the following, When he first encounters Brianna, Arvil believes that she is a Goddess. He slowly begins to realize that she is a human being like himself as his skepticism reaches a zenith. However, I believe that the social construct argument is unsupported by both history and science.

Obviously this story explores gender issues in all sorts of ways. This book is thoughtful. Even when I disagree with Sargent’s speculations, it is clear that the author has thought deeply and carefully about these topics. I think that one thing that the author gets

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right is her depiction of violence and cruelty as it relates to gender. The all - female society that is depicted has some violence in it. Furthermore, its leadership is the source of terrible oppression of the male portion of the population. At times mass murder is even committed against bands of men for various reasons. But this female - only society is still less violent than human societies have been throughout history. Violence between women exists but is rare. There is no war. I think that there are evolutionary biological reasons that support this picture. Large groups of women will be less violent on average than large groups of men, but at times will still display violence and cruelty. This depiction is contrary to those who argue that gender is entirely a social construct. The male society in this book is extremely violent. This depiction also makes sense. Such hunter - gatherer, illiterate and non - technological cultures are almost always more violent than more organized urbanized and agricultural based societies. This is contrary to certain theories that can be characterized as belief in the noble savage. That is, primitive societies are usually non - violent and possess other ethical attributes that more technologically advanced societies lack. I think that such theories are unsupported by evidence.

Sargent is also saying something controversial about the female - only culture that she depicts. Though technologically advanced, it is stagnant. There are many references in the text to the fact that there is no longer any collective will to make scientific advances or to explore the universe. At several points in the narrative, Laissa and some of the other women speculate that men, and even violence, might be an important part in spurring human progress. At one point, a critic of this society observes,

Shweta Taneja is a bestselling Indian fantasy and science fiction author. Her work is described somewhere between feminist, horror, experimental and humorous. Imagining new future is a central theme of her works. Shweta Taneja is thrilled; her short story set in a post-apocalyptic India has been nominated for a French literary award, there is a wonderful homecoming gift for Shweta. Her short story, *The Daughter That Bleeds* (translated into French as *La Fille Qui Saigne* by Mikael Cabon) has been shortlisted for the Grand Prix de l'Imaginaire Awards of 2020, a French literary award for science fiction and fantasy.

Shweta says, “I wrote it between the Anantya Tantrist (a fantasy trilogy featuring a tantric detective) books, submitted it to a couple of places in 2017, got rejections and forgot about it. Then when the editor of an anthology asked me for a story, I remembered that I had written this one and submitted it. It was finally published in English in The Best Asian Speculative Fiction in 2018 and received the Editor's Choice Award.” (The Hindu).

Anantya Tantrist, is a feisty foul-mouthed occult detective solving crimes in a Delhi where all manner of fantastic creatures co-exist with regular people. As of now there are three Anantya Tantrist novels — The Cult of Chaos (2015), The Matsya Curse (2017) and The Rakta Queen (2018).

The Daughter That Bleeds will be republished in a new anthology this year on South Asian women's voices on violence against women which have works from people like Deepti Naval, Kamala Das, and Aruna Chakravarti. *The Daughter That Bleeds* tells of a post-apocalyptic India where very few women can menstruate and so have children. On women's reproductive health in speculative fiction, Shweta says, “Speculative fiction is about exploring future alternatives and how new technology, new possibilities change the fabric of our society and how we perceive gender. That is the reason that SF writers have, and continue to explore societal, cultural, biological consequences of new reproduction technologies. The explorations could range from new roles for women around reproduction as in Margaret Atwood's work, inter-species reproduction as in the works of Octavia E Butler, or even gender fluidity and politics around it as we see in Ursula Le Guin's novels.” Shweta does not, however, feel women's reproductive health has become a trope. Shweta Taneja's latest works takes a dig at patriarchy and gender inequality, Indian fantasy and science fiction novels that contain a masala version of Indian mythology.

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