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Time travel: Teaching Australian history through speculative fiction

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Abstract

Farah Mendlesohn, in speaking to the Children's Literature Association Conference - Imagined Futures (2017), made the following observation: "Science fiction is a fiction whose raison d'etre is the idea that human beings can fix the world" (para. 1). For writers retelling a colonisation narrative such as Australia's recent history, this point has significant resonance. The rhetoric around colonisation is, after all, describing an attempt, however parochial or misguided, to "fix" the world. Many speculative novels explore the idea of colonisation, particularly of other planets following the destruction or invasion of Earth. Many of these also base their ideas on the ways in which colonisations have occurred in the past with new scenarios and characters to either teach us a lesson about the ills and foibles of the past – or show us a way forward for the future.

When Mark Salber Phillips (2003) suggested that history could be written as a type of combinational genre, with traditional empirical elements and fictional, literary elements working together to create temporal distance between the reader and the events, he saw this as a way of forcing us to look more broadly at the meanings of history, rather than focusing on a singular event. Using his claim that history cannot be understood as a singular form, but rather as "a cluster of overlapping and competing genres" (p. 218) that press the reader to a new degree of involvement in a story, it can be argued that an understanding of Australian history and its people is enhanced by the experience of reading Australian speculative histories.

> *For decades historians have taught history as an explicit and 'true' common ground, but the fabric of this is unravelling*

At first glance, speculative texts have little in common with historical ones. One represents what *has* happened, one attempts to predict what might take place. And yet, the speculative allows an exploration of the potential that historical writing does not. It is moldable and predictive in a way that can allow the writer to create a new vision of the past. A strong focus in the history curriculum, as historiography becomes of greater significance and the subjectivity of experience both past and present continues to grow, is leading students to a personal understanding of the abstract nature even of history. For decades historians have taught history as an explicit and 'true' common ground, but the fabric of this is unravelling as teachers approach classrooms in which diverse cultural histories form the basis of student understanding.

As an example, Mirandi Riwoe's *The Fish Girl* offers a speculative take on female oppression and trade in the Pacific Islands – a potentially powerful adjunct to the study of Australian history often taught in Year 9 (Riwoe, 2017). Texts like this can be valuable in opening conversation around contemporary issues so that students can meaningfully connect with past lives and cultures. Following this, their awareness of actual historical events can be easily contextualised by research and enhanced through discussion of their unique post-modern lens, and can be further deepened through dialogue or writing on the ways that context can offer re-imagining of past events. Even excerpts from these texts can offer an empathetic reading of history that adds an additional layer to historical inquiry and creates opportunities to view history as a dialectic between the past and present.

Teaching speculative texts also offers

opportunities for cross-curriculum learning. *Tracker*, the Miles Franklin winning take on the life of a 'visionary' Aboriginal tracker by Alexis Wright (2017) lends itself to reading aloud, and could be powerfully incorporated into the Year 11 Reading to Write English module and connect well to the Year 11 topic 'Ancient Australia' which requires a focus on "representations of ancient Australia" (Ancient History Syllabus 2019-2021). This topic encourages a focus on values and versions of the ancient past, and using this potent text encourages an understanding of the value of language to historical storytelling.

The power of Socratic teaching in History is not to be underestimated. Offering students selected episodes, clips and excerpts from fiction within an inquiry-based framework that allows students to explore these texts with the goal of answering important historical questions like "to what extent is our understanding of history subjective?", or "can we evaluate the significance of the speculative lens in representing the past?" can increase engagement and encourage students to view sources as interpretive lenses into the past. Speculative fiction can also offer a powerful extension for gifted students whose capabilities may be developed through challenge and variety.

Two valuable examples of these speculative histories are Clare G. Coleman's *Terra Nullius* (2017) and Terry Pratchett's The Last Continent (1998). Both are atypical engagements with Australian history that examine influences on Australian cultural behaviour and evolution through re-imagined interactions with the nation's history, environment and mythologies. Janice Liedl (2015) asserts that when a history is presented speculatively, "the differences it presents can be strong enough to suggestively reshape the audience's understanding of the past" (p. 289). She suggests that the very nature of science-fiction adds a "what if?" component to storytelling that forces the reader to rethink what is already known and to wonder if, indeed, there are other ways to view the past. Building on this assertion, it can be seen through engagement with these texts that the alien setting of speculative fiction makes it possible for the student of history to engage with historical thought in a new way, extramural to the usual and culturally defined notions of that history.

Terra Mater: Reclaiming colonisation in Claire G. Coleman's Terra Nullius, 2017

Claire G. Coleman's *Terra Nullius* (2017) is a work of speculative fiction that interrogates the history of colonial Australia in a futuristic context where an alien species—The Settlers, seeking moisture, have invaded, defeated and colonised Australia, subjugating the inhabitants and treating them as little more than another troublesome part of an already difficult landscape. The novel reveals the power of speculative fiction to critique political and historical moments and takes a strong political stance on the 1788 invasion of Australia by the British and the subsequent dispossession, mistreatment and genocide of Indigenous owners of the land.

Terra Nullius seems upon first reading to be such subtle speculation that it takes time before the reader can even tell when the story is taking place. It isn't now. But is it then? Or is it soon? And while we do speculate on some parts of the story, others are far more familiar—a coloniser, an oppressed, misunderstood and despised native people. It is her history as a Noongar woman rewritten as something new, and it is this newness, this speculative history, that jars the reader into rethinking their engagement with the past. The novel reads like an account, perhaps fictive, perhaps not, of Australia's colonial history some time post-1788. It is only later that it becomes clear, incrementally, that this is not a story from a past they are familiar with, but from a future that echoes it; a karmic cycle of the coloniser and colonised that opens up a new vision of both our past and our future.

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The story begins with a young man, called a "Native", escaping a mission run by nuns who are both charitable and unsympathetic, harsh and yet benevolent. He is trying to find his home and family while hunted by everyone from the local militia to his own people. The story moves from the personal to the broader world of the colony, an environment that feels dissonant in its systematic order and lack of chaos. It is not an entirely foreign world, however: the rhetoric becomes disturbingly familiar with the Natives described by their colonists as "possessed of the intelligence they needed to survive without us" (Coleman, 2017, p. 25) but not the intelligence to face the changes brought about by the colonisers themselves. For that, the forced and assisted assimilation was "the only chance they have to survive and one day be useful to society"(p. 25). The words are eerily reminiscent of the 1937 Aboriginal Welfare policy (Commonwealth of Australia, 1937) as it claims that the destiny of the natives of aboriginal descent "lies in their ultimate absorption" (p. 2 & p. 21) into the white community (see The Assimilation Years, Johnston, 1991; Australian Human Rights Commission, n.d.). When Sister Bagra wearily declares that "we educate them so they can have a place in society, a place as lowly as they deserve" (Coleman, 2017, p. 52), it is the natural assumption of any reader with a knowledge of Australian modern history that this nun

is speaking of Indigenous Australians, post-British colonisation.

Each chapter of Terra Nullius begins with an epigraph: a quote from a fictional text, an engagement with "primary source material" that gives the novel a historic feel, as though it connects to some concrete, unmoving truth:

> *"We must continue to attempt to educate the savages. We must try, although they will never truly be our equals."* *Sister Bagra (p. 69).*

> *"Natives, you can't live with them, killing them creates too much paperwork."*
> *Captain Black, Colonial Trooper (p. 34).*

The nomenclature is familiar: 'Sister', 'Captain', 'Trooper'. The reader readily connects those labels with the Catholic nuns who ran Indigenous Missions in Australia as early as 1883 and the troops who arrived with the first convicts in 1788 to maintain control of the colonised territories (Lydon, 2010, p. 8). It feels like truth. Coleman (2017) then forces her readers off-balance when they begin to suspect that this 'historical fiction' is, in fact, 'speculative' fiction and readings of the text have to be re-evaluated. The 'Settler Empire' we have assumed is the British, is not (p. 177). It is something new, something alien: the 'greyfella'. This revelation demands a new engagement with the text, as with the history it reflects. At the same time, the familiarity is jarring. The race politics that bleed through the quoted documents are hauntingly close to home. There are appeals to preserve the tendency of humanity "to produce Art" (p. 198) for example or suggestions that every species deserves freedom of movement (p. 259).

> *Coleman shifts all Australians to the same side, making them siblings against a common foe*

The race rhetoric is also familiar. Sergeant Rohan laments how difficult it is to track Jacky because there was "little difference in features from Native to Native" (p. 53) and nobody could remember seeing him. The United Graziers provide a complaint letter stating that "Every (Native) man, woman and child is either involved either directly or as accessories to crime"(p. 55). The clinical organisation of the colonists is reminiscent of the Australian government of the 1960s as they move the Natives around like chess pieces. Coleman's interplay between the familiar and the unfamiliar is a sharp engagement with Australia's modern history, forcing the reader to be both colonisers and colonised, perpetrator and victim. The discomfort in this duality demands a new perspective outside of the culturally defined notions of that history. Matt Hills (2009) calls this 'decentering history' and suggests that it destabilises "ontological perspectives to compel readers to perceive their world in new and more critical ways" (p. 441).

Terra Nullius does just this – decenters the traditional historical record of Australia's colonisation and forces its players into new roles and a re-imagined understanding of those roles. Coleman's re-imagining of history might be subtle, but the shift in perspective for her readers is not. The 2018 Stella Prize, for which the novel was nominated, released a judge's report which described Coleman's shift into the speculative as a device used to "grant what initially appears to be a straightforward if slightly allegorised story of colonial oppression, dehumanisation and resistance, an additional scourging layer of dramatic irony" (The Stella Prize, 2018, para 6.).

Coleman (cited in Sullivan, 2017) says of her choice of genre,

> *Speculative fiction is one of the most powerful political tools in fiction. It's a genre in which there's great scope for Aboriginal literature. A lot of speculative fiction is written with a firm eye on the past and to use speculative fiction is often to be able to sneak politics into places people don't expect to see it. You can create a world that says what can't otherwise be said and surprise readers by showing them that they understand something they didn't think they understood. (para. 13)*

In *Terra Nullius*, Coleman shifts all Australians to the same side, making them siblings against a common foe, rather than reinforcing the Indigenous and immigrant divide that usually occurs around discussion of colonisation. From this new perspective, as 'one' people, the view of the invaders takes a new shape and a different comprehension of old stories can be made. She uses familiar words and yet, they read divergently:

> *Maybe the aliens, the Settlers, were right – maybe they were harmless. They had done nothing to prove otherwise, had not fought, had not taken back land, had not even killed a noticeable number of Settlers once the first flush of invasion was over. What they were not, was subjugated; they remembered, they kept the stories alive, they knew what humans were and one day could be.* *(Coleman, 2017, p. 125)*

The quote feels as though it references something familiar – a traditional discussion of Australian Aboriginal peoples and their response to the invasion of their land. However, with the reader's knowledge that this text places all Australians, both indigenous and migrant, on the same side, that of "harmless" human subjugated by alien Settler, there is a new reading to be made of the traditional rhetoric, one that will feel particularly discordant to those used to being in the position of power as dominant, a colonizing race.

In *Terra Nullius*, Coleman has created an Australia where oppression has taught us something we have failed to otherwise learn about humanity,

race and oppression itself: that the side upon which one finds oneself is arbitrary and subject to change and that colonial power is ephemeral, connected not to race, but to physical domination. And while the novel's shifting timeline might be subtle, other elements are not, leaning more towards overt didacticism. For example, the presentation of colonists includes characters, such as Sister Bagra, who do not consider the Natives to be people at all, wasting no time learning their language. Coleman presents Bagra, the Devil, the troopers and other colonisers as so enmeshed in their opinions of the Natives that they lack any other identity. It is an unsettling insight into the mind of the coloniser—aloof, elite, and disconnected from empathy.

Of course, the readings of this novel will be very different for an indigenous and non-indigenous reader, and it is unlikely that the re-visioning of colonisation will be as jarring for a reader who has lived it already. Indigenous reviewer Alison Whittaker (2017) wrote that she felt "locked out of the surprise, revulsion and immersion" (para. 13) that the earlier chapters offer a non-indigenous reader because "the parallels, sparse and ambiguous as they were, ran simply too close to the truth to be speculative" (para. 13) to her. This reaction provokes the question: is Coleman's intent to bring non-indigenous Australians a fresh understanding of the historical and modern indigenous experience? The last paragraph of the novel would suggest that this is true.

> *There is nothing in their behaviour that humans are incapable of: we have invaded cultures more peaceful than us, we have murdered and enslaved. There is nothing in their hearts and minds that does not exist in the hearts and minds of the human species.*
>
> *(Coleman, 2017, p. 290)*

In fact, Coleman (cited in Sullivan, 2017) has claimed the book to be her way of sharing with "the average Australian, who doesn't necessarily understand the Aboriginal perspective on the invasion" (par. 15) a story that allows them to understand the history and current world of Indigenous Australians. "The entire purpose of writing Terra Nullius was to provoke empathy in people who had none (para. 15). However, Coleman also sees the book as a personal catharsis,

> *Terra Nullius came straight from inside my head, which means that every bit of emotion and politics and experience in it that is always there. I was able to vent all the pain. Aboriginal people live in a dystopia every day. The problem is that the world we live in, people don't understand that.* *(Sullivan, para. 14)*

The way in which Coleman connects her story and her characters to the land provides valuable insight for any student of history. It insists that the land is its own character, an echo of the "non-player character" of the old role-playing games, 'chaotic neutral' in its interactions with the humans and creatures who try to survive it. There is, in *Terra Nullius* a further insistence that the land cannot be owned or tamed. The title of the book itself is a phrase of Latin origin that means 'no one's earth'. While these words have accumulated meaning for an Australian (it was first used by James Cook during his 1770 voyage around the coast of Australia, despite recording the presence of hundreds of indigenous inhabitants), it has an added meaning for the characters of Coleman's book and it is clear that she believes the land cannot ever be owned or even clearly understood (Ogleby, 2018). She says of her geographic depictions,

> *I've deliberately taken an impressionistic view of landscapes and places because I was feeling unsettled at the time and I wanted to make it unsettling for the reader as well. The feeling of travel, of not knowing where you are, of landscapes constantly changing. I think that disoriented sense of time and place was important, because a lot of Aboriginal people have felt very displaced and disjointed, and have a history of feeling like refugees in their own country. (Coleman, cited in Sullivan 2017, para. 6)*

Terror Incognita: The Unknown & the Outsider in Terry Pratchett's The Last Continent, 1998

A very different re-imagining of Australia's colonial history is Terry Pratchett's book *The Last Continent* (Pratchett, 1998). To begin with, it is not written by an Australian writer and thus has the perspective of 'outsider' and 'other'. Its value lies in Pratchett's concern with connection to land and environment as a force for evolution. *The Last Continent* (TLC) is the twenty-second book in Pratchett's Discworld series and, as with the other books in the series, is a political and historical satire set in the fantasy of the flat *Discworld* as it is carried through space on the backs of four giant elephants who ride the great A'tuin (a space turtle). The premise, a nod to both ancient Indian and Chinese beliefs in the World Turtle, sets up the reader for a ride where nothing is predictable, and yet much of the content is derived from scientific truth and human belief. Pratchett's books take advantage of this paradox, at once convincing readers they are in a world of complete fiction and then incisively satirising the history and events of both the past and present. As he makes very clear at the outset of the novel, the Discworld is itself a world, but it is also "a mirror of worlds" (p. i).

The story of *TLC* involves recurring character Rincewind, a cowardly, inept and universally disliked failure of a wizard being transported to the continent of XXXX due to a magical mistake by the Unseen University wizards. There is very little doubt that this is a satire of Australia's colonial history and culture. Pratchett references Australia in his front-

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page quote, “This is not…about Australia. No, it’s about somewhere entirely different, which happens to be, here and there, a bit… Australian. Still…no worries, right?”(p. i) The back-cover blurb describes the last continent as hot and very dry, a place where ‘practically everything that’s not poisonous is venomous. But it’s the best bloody place in the world, all right?’

The references continue throughout the book, some subtle, but most the antithesis: vegemite, thongs, cork-hats, Waltzing Matilda, Crocodile Dundee and even Mad Max. There is a sense in Pratchett’s work that this is parody as much as it is satire that, as Amanda Cockrell (2006) suggests, “borrow anything usable” (para. 26) from the cultures he invades fantastically. It is a type of colonisation of his host, allowing him both the parochial tones of the British colonialist and the undertone of the harsh critic. The humour is such that the reader is caught by surprise by the jarring disquisition. Rincewind is slapstick in his foolishness. Another character is an Orang-utan with a virus that keeps turning him into a variety of inanimate objects, and then there is Scrappy the talking kangaroo whose sole mission is to bring back the “wet” after the long drought. Crockrell describes it well when she says that “we don’t notice the serious stuff that he is talking about until it is at our throats” (p. 5).

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Pratchett’s handling of Australia’s history is irreverent but not disrespectful. Nothing is sacred, but neither is it without value. His representations of indigenous Ecksians are an example of this. He doesn’t shy away from mentioning the ‘natives’, but is not telling a ‘native story’. When Rincewind does encounter native Ecksians, he views them with respect and a sense of awe for the way in which they are at one with such a dangerous environment. “People here were good with spears because if you didn’t get efficient at hitting things that moved fast, you had to eat the things that moved slowly”(Pratchett, 1998, p. 58). They use the geography and flora, both seen as treacherous by Rincewind, to their advantage, as seen by their boomerangs. He notes that “you could laugh at the idea of wooden weapons until you saw the kind of wood that grew here”(p. 58). When Rincewind finally connects with Scrappy the kangaroo he discovers the truth of Fourecks: that there is always enough of what you need if you accept the land as it is, not as you compare it to your own place. Pratchett reminds the reader repeatedly that the only real geographic disconnection the alien has in Fourecks is the one they bring with them.

The story he tells is the one that is his to tell: that of an outsider attempting to survive a terrain and society that is at once trying to kill him and casually tell him not to worry about anything. In TLC Pratchett describes Fourecks as a place evolved solely around its harsh environment, where everything is difficult, including basic survival. It is a place of deadly creatures and excessive heat that seems to either drive people to insanity, drink or a lackadaisical and improbable casualness. The phrase ‘no worries’ appears sixty-two times in the novel, a repetition that cements the Ecksian attitude that nothing bad can happen because they are already living the worst of it. Within a land so difficult worries are few – water, food and not being killed by a jellyfish (or a spider, or a drop bear or indeed another spider). This simplicity of belief allows Ecksians a casualness about everything else. When Rincewind is told by the academics of Bugarup University to go to Hell, he is quick to suggest that the only way an Ecksian would know the difference between their own land and Hell would be that ‘the beer’s warmer’ (p. 349).

Hume and Drury (2013) describe Pratchett as offering a world that extends past humanity and into a deeper, more varied magical community (p. xiv). They suggest that Pratchett’s invocation of a new layer of magic over a recognisable world allows us a far broader set of interactions with our world experience (p. xv). We see ourselves in a different other, in a new way, without the usual view of the world to distort this reflection. In *TLC*, the Australian reader sees Australia. They see the usual stories and stereotypes, and yet they see them through the filter of a thick layer of magic – wizards, magical beasts, gods and dwarves. The need for defensive nationalism, something Australians have inherited from the convict era, is diminished and even nullified. The view of Australia is at once mired in magical humour and exposed in a new and unfiltered way. *TLC* shows an Australia where its inhabitants create their identity around the earth, the sun and the heat in between. The exaggerated nature of the elements and the reactions of the local inhabitants to those elements actually allows the reader a new reading of Australia – as a place forged meteorologically, rather than merely socially.

The novel’s secondary plotline is an exploration of the interplay between creation and evolutionary beliefs with a god as the centre point of the story, a relatively confused god trying to figure out the mechanics of creation. Whilst dealing with his limited control over his own creations and his lack of self-belief: “To tell you the truth, I’m something of an atheist” (p. 161), the god is also attempting to understand his own work – the epitome of which is, ironically, the cockroach (another unfortunate Australian icon). This idea that creation and evolution are a muddled and interactive set of theories is reinforced by the inhabitants of Fourecks who

have been both created by the harsh landscape and evolved through their interactions with it. They are purely a product of, and a response to, their environment.

It is an interesting distillation of Australian heritage that avoids the usual discussions and unpacking of colonial heritage and allows for a different viewing of the development of our culture. The question asked by the novel is an interesting one – to what extent are Australians a product of their difficult and often dangerous physical environment? To what extent are they the people they are because of this, as opposed to traditional notions of a convict and colonist engagement? The Eksians are a people of extreme pragmatism; optimists yes, affable to a fault and yet, to a certain extent hamstrung by their own beliefs that some things are just not worth worrying about enough to change. As the Bugarup University so eloquently puts it in their motto, 'NULLUS ANXIETAS' (p. 344).

Pratchett is not one to tread familiar turf in a familiar way – his Discworld novels allow the reader to see something they know and perhaps love, and then he pulls the carpet from beneath that understanding, presenting it in an unexpected way. He gives the reader what he calls 'signposts' about "what human beings have done, practised and believed in the last ten thousand years" (Pratchett, 1998, p. 160). Then he changes the story, re-versions it and rewrites it and, as John Stephens (1997) suggests, "if readers want to know 'what really happened' they must pay close attention and then draw inferences and make connections" (p. 30). Australian history is most often presented in terms of its colonial constructs, with only an occasional mention of the geography and usually in terms of its 'tyranny of distance' from England.

Pratchett's insistence that Ecksians are *who* they are because of *where* they are, is an interesting perspective for students of history. Australian historian Manning Clarke (1997) dedicates a great deal of the first few chapters of his *History of Australia* to the geography of the new colony and the ways in which the British struggled to adapt and survive. He notes that on January 20, 1788 when the first fleet of convicts laid anchor in Botany Bay, waiting to go ashore, they looked in vain for the meadows that Cook had described and saw instead only sandy, useless soil. They were watched by local Australians who shouted at them, incredibly unwelcoming and unhappy to see the arrival of the ships (p. 7). The weather was unlike anything they had ever felt – Sydney in January was hot and humid. They were given tents to live in and these seemed to soak up and magnify the heat.

In an attempt to build cooler dwellings, the colonists decided to cut down trees for wood. The trees were so hard that their axes blunted and broke. The sandy mud wouldn't set into cement. The same thing happened when they tried to grow small gardens. The ground was so hard that the spades and picks were destroyed and the seeds refused to grow (p. 13). Everything about the place, while it looked reasonably hospitable on the surface, conspired to kill them. The same could be said of the locals. The British government had honestly believed the Aboriginal Australians would welcome them and their 'civilised' ways and immediately and gratefully integrate. This did not happen. The Aboriginals were disgusted by the invaders, wished them gone and while they initially seemed to be "waiting them out", eventually turned to violence, stealing the white men's tools and food and eventually murdering several of them and mutilating the bodies (p. 14). Their inability to find comfortable shelter, safety or a food source meant that the colonists were miserable, sick and constantly at odds with their physical environment.

Clark (1997) describes periods in the early history of Australia as an interaction between man and an "ancient barbaric continent that was taking another revenge against the men who wantonly robbed it of its wealth" (p. 382). The colonists found themselves in a country where, during the heat of summer (heats they had never experienced or believed possible back in England), the grasslands would spontaneously combust causing raging bushfires that would leave the towns terrified and drowning in the smoke and the stench of burning goats, sheep and cattle. Drought was so prevalent and so harsh that streams would regularly dry up, the earth would crack open and herds of sheep, finally established, would die from lack of water and feed. There were stories circulating during the late 1880s of men killing themselves rather than facing death from thirst (p. 382). This is not the sort of land that could ever be tamed, and so the Australian colonists were themselves shaped by the land. It was the only way to survive.

Australians of the present regularly face fire, flood, drought and heatwaves and while none of these weather events is easy or desirable, there is no longer surprise associated with the notion that the land may kill them. This is who Australians have become – a people engaged in a tense understanding of the power and danger of their own environment. Weather is something of a national obsession – the highest trending words on Australian Twitter accounts are words associated with our meteorological forecast: hot, climate, summer and sunset being some of the most popular (Brown, 2015). It would seem Pratchett's speculative

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take on Australian history has connected with a deep social conditioning – we are, and have always been a people at odds with our physical environment and our national psyche has been thus shaped.

Texts such as *The Last Continent* and *Terra Nullius*, while not a historical source, are valuable additions to the study of Australian history. The works provide a fresh experience of colonisation and the cultural mythologies of Australia rather than a retelling. An immersive re-imagining of history that is at once both familiar and alien. This dislocation of the familiar can, as Leidl (2015) describes, suggestively reshape the audience's understanding of the past, making it possible to find new understandings, a sense of empathy and a fresh interpretation of history, something that will be of immense value to students of Australian history. Speculative histories reframe and reimagine history allowing readers and students of history to ask new and experimental questions and to examine unique perspectives and are a valuable adjunct to traditional historical texts in the teaching of history. TEACH

> *"dislocation of the familiar can … reshape the audience's understanding of the past, … to find new understandings, a sense of empathy and a fresh … history"*

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