

Genre Infrastructure as Speculative Method in Latin America

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THE TRIP IS RELATIVELY SIMPLE for São Paulo's standards. Take the subway to one of the last stations in the north zone of the megalopolis, then use an app to hail a car for the last section. On that day in April 2022, all went well, until the car dropped me off at a location that obviously wasn't right. I had to call the informant, Afrofuturist writer and editor Israel Neto, for some help; he had been through it before (Neto). A few instructions and then the driver headed in the right direction. Neto later explained the issue. The app would neither pick up nor drop off any passengers at his address. It turns out that Neto was suffering from a cutting-edge form of racism: an algorithmic one. The app considered his street too dangerous, but gave no warning. It just went where it was considered safer. But Neto is unfazed¹ and will keep countering this by using another cutting-edge technology blending aesthetics, collective mobilization, and political intent. It inspires him to publish speculative fiction (SF) books and give talks at public schools, where he tries to seed a love for reading and writing through a new form of prefigurative politics that is both aesthetic and collectivity-forming.

“How are we to reinvent politics?” asked Rancière in 1992, as the West seemed to emerge victorious from the Cold War’s binarism of capitalism versus socialism (“Politics, Identification, and Subjectivization” 64). The question only grows stronger amid the growing confluence of ecological, political, and economic crises, and the world’s inability to tackle these without sacrificing profit, entire territories, and populations. Looking at on-the-ground shifts using SF as both method and framework may provide some answers. This article expands research on the social role of genre and communities of practice by adding layers of knowledge about the self-organization and political intent of SF in Latin America. Taking particular focus on how SF readers and writers get political about their aesthetic work, it proposes the concept of genre infrastructure to explain the intersection of activism and genre work, not just as part of SF, but as a socially regenerative collectivity.

Before delineating more clearly what genre infrastructure is, the connection between today’s futurisms as collective rallying cries and CoFuturism as a typological tool to understand them should be clarified. Modernity’s political movements, or “isms,” have long become vectors of group identification and analytical categories: Marxism, communism, fascism, futurism, liberalism, to name a few. Isms have been theorized as “future-oriented concepts on which modern political ideologies were built as movements” since the nineteenth century (Kurunmäki and Marjanen 256). They often sought to shape political discourse through speculative thinking applied to the proposition of new models of social organization, like the Communist Manifesto: it speculated how history would unfold according to Karl Marx’s science-based extrapolation of historical materialism. Conceptual historian Reinhart Koselleck cites the shift from “republic” to “republicanism” in Kant’s philosophy as a prime example of this process, since it sought to both anticipate and influence future historical movements (Kurunmäki and Marjanen

259). In this sense, Afrofuturism, Indigenous Futurism, Andean Futurism, Latinxfuturism, and other contemporary futurisms operate as umbrella terms for mobilization in ways akin to how SF genres become focal points for communities of practice. Their kinship with different futurism movements of the early 20th century comes from the speculative and aesthetic role of art in the formation of political propositions. These movements seek to make conceptions of history and temporality more complex while claiming representation in mass culture. However, even though they might appropriate SF tropes, they are not just seeking cognitive estrangement but “cognitive reconstruction” through the liberation of futurity and resulting re-opening of possibilities (Chattopadhyay, “Manifestos of Futurisms” 20).

Rasheedah Phillips points out that “in our space-time mapping of the future [...] rarely do we take account of where the future is, who has access to it, its plurality, and whether we are all accelerating at the same rate and pace into that future” (10). Moreover, Joel Burges and Amy J. Elias question whether “temporality itself might be something that always eludes complete co-optation by capital, something on a different categorical or ontological level leading to multiple fractures and sites of resistance” (12). The temporal problematization of CoFuturisms fuses both notions as it proposes coevalness to address such fractures, arguing that different cultures are equally important and can co-exist in a space of multiple and entangled temporalities (Chattopadhyay, “The Pandemic That Was Always Here” 439, “Fremtidstenkning” 173). More importantly, CoFuturisms have become an off-the-shelf political and aesthetic subjectivity that is easy to appropriate, as the growing clout of Afrofuturism clearly shows (cf. Womack, Imarisha, and Anderson). Indigenous futurists, for their part, call attention to unaddressed legacies of the past such as colonialism and cultural erasure while highlighting the dual role of science and technology in both enforcing colonialism and

opening emancipatory possibilities (Dillon 36). Latinxfuturists, meanwhile, enforce notions of diversity that do not involve hybridization or assimilation but peaceful co-existence where different elements can still retain their integrity (Silva 14).

CoFuturism was itself conceived as an umbrella term to interpret these movements that hack into the infrastructures keeping SF Eurocentric by raising the density of temporal and spatial conceptions to question who occupies the space of colonization, dispossession, and inequality, as well as the imagined space of a common identity and of narrativization (see cofutures.org and biblio.cofutures.org for further information). Their practices take advantage of the collectivity-inducing properties of genre by working in the present to enact their imagined futurities. The development of this toolkit and corresponding collective efforts are some of the most visible signs of CoFuturism. And in the case of Latin American SF, this entanglement of political intent and genre work can be called genre infrastructure.

Genre Infrastructure as Agency

Communities are built by their members and their practices, as Camae Ayeda explains regarding efforts to fight gentrification in Philadelphia and keep alive the memory of important places for the community that were being turned into luxury apartments:

In Black Quantum Futurism, we understand that this kind of knowledge is powerful as a means of skill-sharing and engaging collective ideas. We embrace practical and everyday realities. Developing innovative ways to address seemingly ordinary issues is important to us, so we host DIY time travel and housing futures workshops. While exploring alternate temporalities and social constructs, we learn to navigate this one. We trust that our hunger for

knowledge of self can be satisfied within our own communities—that we can learn valuable information from our neighbors by sharing stories and memories. (Phillips 7)

BQF activists appropriate such SF concepts as time travel, futures, string theory, and Afrofuturism for community resistance. Taking their cue, I argue for an inverse movement: that looking at political-aesthetic social movements through the lens of genre rules can help to understand how SF builds commonality. The fantastic has long nurtured and maintained very cohesive communities of readers and writers (Rieder 29, Cheng 52, Wolfe 189, Merrill 50). As early as 1888, Edward Bellamy's best-seller *Looking Backwards 2000-1887* inspired a national network of clubs dedicated to trying to materialize his socialist ideas (Garrett). Further, discussions about genre not only are an important part of SF scholarship but of rhetoric and composition studies, as well (Miller 151, Bawarshi 69, Auken 1). Researchers are increasingly interested in how genre can be used to enact social change (Auken et al. 17). Indeed, the social and cultural relationships that put genres in a position to blur boundaries by existing in an open-ended "unstable relation" are what makes them so powerful for collective organization (Frow 23). Searching for a measure of foresight in a market where popularity (and consequently profits) is often a speculative investment, cultural industries also pay close attention to how people engage with genres.

Rooted in arguments for the potentially redemptive power of consumer culture, the initial waves of fandom studies in the 1980s and 1990s sought to rescue its type of participatory culture from the pathological position argued by early critics (Gray et al. 3-7). Among several fandom traits, they identified a strong support for creating and sharing with others through the affordances of mass-market culture. In their most recent wave, fandom studies have begun exploring the potentialities of this process by scrutinizing

how communities were using mass cultural systems to become activists, in a process Shresthova et al. have called “civic imagination.” One of the questions they raise is how to bridge the gap between civic imagination and the real world; they suggest looking at other case studies and the ways their different parts could work together to become a model of social change (Shresthova et al. 26). This article argues that genre infrastructure can do that by intervening in the way SF and its practices are socially constructed.

When John Rieder proposed in 2017 that SF is part of the mass cultural genre system, he was calling attention to how it is firmly embedded in the system but also reacts to it. Rieder borrowed the concept of boundary objects from science and technology studies to explain the dynamics of negotiated meaning at play (29). For Rieder, the boundary work of SF communities has similarities to how science is negotiated and accepted by society. These boundary objects (or processes) are plastic enough to adapt to local needs and constraints of the several parties employing them, yet robust enough to maintain a common identity across sites (Bowker and Star 16). In this sense, markets, boundary objects, classification systems, records, archives, and the people operating them form the invisible infrastructure of the SF genre. In her later work, Star further emphasizes people’s agency in the process by showing how their interventions often left a “trace or record of activities” (387) in these often-invisible systems, whose existence is only realized once something happens to them, for instance when they break down (382). So, when a book is named part of an Afrofuturist genre and catalogued as such in international databases, it establishes itself in the infrastructure that both reinforces and proves its existence. These actions are performed by countless members of a community until they gain enough traction by drawing more and more practitioners, readers, sellers, editors, bookstores. One example of this nodal effect in genre infrastructure is the Sistah Scifi bookstore in Oakland, California, which describes itself “as a cauldron of all

things Afrofuturism” (<https://sistahscifi.com/>). In Ecuador, different manifestations of SF find themselves subcategorized in a Quito bookstore (science fiction, dystopian, gothic novels—see image 1²). SF itself has long developed that infrastructural effect even as it continues expanding and colonizing other narrative genres (Wolfe 34).

The genre infrastructure argument takes that intersecting process of boundary-setting, classification, and market practices to an intentional level: if power and market structures are keeping SF Anglocentric, constituting an infrastructure, the activist work of Latin American writers and readers throws a wrench into that space and makes it coeval by operating as a genre infrastructure in the pliable yet solid space where people, archives, and practices meet. In this shared space of contestation and collective engagement, maintaining and cultivating it is often up to a care economy of community work. One example of genre infrastructure and its care economy is the recent emergence of a SF subgenre in Brazil called “sertãopunk,” inspired by the culture of the northeast region of the country whilst reacting against its essentialized role in the national imagination (Diniz et al.). Sertãopunk’s proponents work both at the level of political discourse and genre intervention, staking their claims on a new subgenre through manifestos and online activism (Brock 16). Through their genre genesis, these efforts turn into residual categories of a common classification system (the genre) which themselves can become new vectors of collectivity (Bowker and Star 95). In this sense, genre genesis and genre infrastructure are part of the same agential process of infrastructural intervention, with the former being a way of looking at how individual acts can become collective by problematizing the interplay between spontaneity and intent in genres and movements, i.e. whether they can achieve enough critical mass to become their own genre.

Therefore, to intervene in the genre becomes an act of creation itself in a context where SF communities are acutely aware of its

potential and hidden politics, as Saldívar argued about North American novelists in the 2010s (4). In the genre politics of Latin American SF, meta-creations and genre interventions become important markers in the hierarchy of creativity, affective investment, and community status. The self-professed creators of Sertãopunk were so forceful that the community worried about touching the term and being accused of stealing their idea or misappropriating it (Brock 13). But works with its characteristics keep appearing, such as Ian Fraser's novel *Olho de Dendê* [Palm Oil Eye], which is clearly Sertãopunk. This demonstrates another characteristic of the twin processes of genre genesis and infrastructure: that the same impulse to stake claims also constrains the malleability of the creation. One can allege to have created something, but once it moves to the collective it is out of their control. This reveals a tension between market concerns and formations of taste, but also how political interventions in a genre can garner notoriety to its practitioners as a form of world building (creations which beget creations) and political performativity.

The circulation and reception of genre books can be a stereotypical way of looking at the process because they exist within an existing framework of publishers, databases, shops, editors, writers, and readers. When editors and writers title a book "Ecofuturism," for instance, it might call upon a different genre to affirm itself, while still applying in lower case on the same cover the label "science fiction." Readers recognize certain tropes as science-fictional: astronauts, spaceships, robots. Thus, the notion of Ecofuturism is expressed by an astronaut suspended amid a tropical forest (image 2) but with the "sci-fi short stories" [historias de ciencia ficción] subtitle in smaller type. All these elements from fandom and genre infrastructure are present in the SF communities I researched in Latin America. The next section discusses case studies of how these communities work with SF by building an ecology of communities that enact change through their practices.

A Different Boom

For six months in 2022, I conducted fieldwork with SF communities in Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, Ecuador, Mexico, and Peru. Five more interviews took place in the United States and Spain in 2023. From a total of 100 interviews with writers, activists, editors, and fans, I found a general sense of coming of age for the genre in the region. The interviews were helpful both as an ethnographic tool and to measure the pulse of SF in the region, since publications are often not catalogued as such, making granular data difficult to obtain (Ares 565). UNESCO is working to consolidate the ISBN system in Latin America, but the effort has so far only encompassed Colombia and does not categorize according to literary genre (Cruz Quintana 171). Nevertheless, supported by decades of anthologizing and fandom work from its communities, Latin American SF shows signs that it is breaking through the hierarchical marginalization it had been relegated to by a literary culture that privileged realism (cf. López-Pellisa 15, 19). “It’s booming,” says Leonardo Espinoza Benavides, an SF writer and board member of the Chilean Association of Science Fiction and Fantastic Literature (ALCIFF). “Something is happening right now. Colombia is doing amazing SF. Argentina is doing a lot of SF. We are finally discovering Brazilian SF,” Benavides adds.

Thus, as new publishers take on the genre with access to a much broader vocabulary, including rediscovered and emerging local traditions, they also regenerate its genre infrastructure. The informants reported that SF has achieved more respect in the region’s academia and publishing market in the last twenty years. This generation is also the first to be able to read widely and easily works from the region’s other countries and different SF traditions in the world (Pérez). An important driver behind the shift is that

since the 1990s it is also becoming a mode of choice for ambitious young writers (Páz Soldan), which is both a symptom of and driving force for the dissolution of market and academic hierarchies between high and low culture (Ares, “Algunas” 560, 571). “Yes, I do believe that we can speak of a boom, not necessarily an editorial one, but a boom in the literary sense, in which, if we start to analyze the books that are published in Argentine literature, the books that do well [...] I think we can see that most of them have speculative elements in one way or another,” says Martín Felipe Castagnet, an Argentine SF writer and researcher.

The horizontalization of cultural and visual repertoires in the digital era, alongside accompanying decline in the marginal cost of telecommunication and computing, arguably also fuel the mainstreaming process. Fandom conventions, which epitomize the mobilization potential of mass culture and its effects on the world, have also become interventional spaces in Latin American genre infrastructure. In Brazil, genre fiction read and distributed outside traditional publishing has made an impact to such an extent that mainstream award-granting institutions such as the Jabuti Prize have been forced in the last two years to create an uncomfortable new category to address it: entertainment literature (Mai 168). For the first time, Brazilian SF writers were swept from their niches in the country and competed for a mainstream literary prize.

Brazilian Afrofuturism, for example, has expanded on previous work from local activists by adopting what Isiah Lavender III deems the “networked consciousness” of a Diaspora and transnational aesthetic (7). More than a science-fictional genre, this CoFuturism has become a political-aesthetic subjectivity mobilizing people to enact in the present the future they want, in a new form of prefigurative politics that is made more powerful by the global scope of SF culture. The work of Israel Neto in São Paulo through *Editora Kitembo Edições Literárias do Futuro* [Kitembo Literary Editions of the Future, a publishing house] exemplifies how

individual agents operate within the genre infrastructure work to enact change. Kitembo only publishes Afrofuturist or Afro-centric books, taking its activism to local schools where it promotes talks and workshops to generate its audience and new writers. By explicitly naming its books Afrofuturist, it separates itself from SF as a genre, pulled by the popularity of Afrofuturism. Kitembo's books name Afrofuturism as the main topic in international cataloguing information systems (image 3), configuring an intervention into the physical infrastructure of how literature is archived.

The government of the Brazilian city of Salvador joined other stakeholders on November 18 and 19 of 2022 to finance and promote an Afrofuturist festival (image 4) with the stated goal of discussing technological solutions for economic reparations to descendants of enslaved peoples in Brazil.³ Along with a separate event named the Afro-Punk Music Festival, it combined to form a large celebration in the month when Brazil honors Black Awareness Day (November 20, 2022). While focused more on entrepreneurship, coding, startups, and technology, the Afrofuturist festival, now in its fifth edition, succeeds in applying what had been only a political-aesthetic subjectivity into the real world of discussions on building businesses and including Black citizens in cutting-edge technology. Its motto is, “for an economic emancipation” [por uma abolição econômica]. In addition to the city government, sponsors included the Support Service for Micro and Small Enterprises (SEBRAE), a social development agency funded by business taxes, and Vale do Dendê, an NGO fostering tech innovation and entrepreneurship among at-risk communities.

Another instance of genre infrastructure working for social change through focused fandom activism is Perifacon (Costa). The annual comic-book and nerd culture convention (also supported by the local government) seeks to build a space where residents of *periferia* [periphery]—a Brazilian term for low-income

neighborhoods on the outskirts of wealthier areas—can express themselves and connect with artists and other fans of contemporary mass culture who have a specific political inclination, which is socially progressive and situated within the class struggles of Brazil. If conventions are the space where fandom builds affective alliances by both exercising its consumer choices and performing its preferences (through cosplay), working as an infrastructure of genre negotiation and performativity, then the work of Perifacon's activists is to shape this space in ways that are political, by emphasizing the ethics ("from the periphery") of the community-building work. It has even more sponsors than the Salvador event, ranging from NGOs to the likes of Netflix and Warner Bros Discovery. Its second annual edition on July 30, 2023, saw over 13,000 people gathering at a cultural center in the impoverished East Zone of São Paulo.

Mexiconas also exemplifies how genre work becomes entangled with political intent: the group was created by SF writers and editors Gabriela Damián Miravete, Libia Brenda, Ilana Vargas, and Andrea Chapela in August 2020 to address the absence of SF women writers from Mexico (Chapela et al.). Brenda explains that its founders felt women lacked representation in genre conventions even though they had been increasingly publishing. The project became a vessel through which editors such as Brenda's ODO Ediciones, practitioners, and readers can build community. Because of that, their efforts gain a dimension that goes beyond mere genre work; they are also intervening in the infrastructures of a deeply misogynistic society notorious for widespread femicide, where, Chapela says, "I don't know if I'll be back home safely every time I leave." By working with SF, they make it much more than just SF. ODO Ediciones is even trying to create a new commercial model for SF publication that is non-profit and seeks to build community by holding workshops and offering subscriptions, innovating the genre infrastructure itself.

Their work dovetails with that of La Ventana del Sur, a group dedicated to promoting women writers of SF in Chile by holding periodic workshops and publishing anthologies (López-Pellisa 19). Soledad Cortés, one of its leaders, says there are around 40 women involved in the project, which is intended as a nurturing space where members can discuss issues as varied as domestic violence, sexual harassment, unequal pay, work-life balance, and queerness, and to address them through SF writing. “La Ventana del Sur fights so that the genre is not looked at as: ‘ah, you're talking about little ships, you're talking about fairies, cute mushrooms’, no, we are doing something stronger, we are showing something more,” Cortés explains.

Chile is a special case of genre intervention given the nature of its book publishing industry, which in the past avoided labelling works as SF while calling attention to their speculative elements on the back cover. The market also became dominated by multinational publishers in the wake of neoliberal reforms and political repression of intellectuals in the 1970s and 1980s. But a new array of publishers and editors is emerging with books that are explicitly labeled SF, with the usual imagery that makes them easily identifiable as such (image 5). Small publishers such as Sietch Ediciones, led by Michel Deb and operating out of the Limache district of Valparaíso, take advantage of desktop publishing and social media as a dissemination tool, and of online stores, to facilitate circulation. ALCIFF, meanwhile, is taking community building in the country to a higher level with local chapters, its first conference (on November 25 to 27, 2022), and politically inclined thematic groups such as one dedicated to LGBTQ+ writers. In partnership with Tríada Ediciones, in November it published an anthology of Latin America SF, *LATINOAMÉRICÆEDITADA: No disponible en su region* [Editedlatinamerica: Not available in your region], under another innovative model: publishers from each country are free to print their own editions of the book. “ALCIFF

has this particular way of working, which I think is the key to its success,” says Benavides, explaining that the organization works in a decentralized way by supporting the individual efforts of its 150 members but avoiding too much interference. Chilean SF writer Soledad Véliz says these efforts are making SF a more inclusive space for women and queer writers: “Now there are presentations, special conversations, fanzines, specifically about identity politics, which have allowed certain groups to perhaps become much more interested in writing in that genre and at the same time be much more visible in their work.”

Colombia faces a similar publishing dilemma as Chile, with a market dominated by multinational publishers. The stranglehold of magical realism as both market category and genre classification also creates tensions. Ediciones Vestígio, headed by Latin American SF scholar and anthologist Rodrigo Bastidas Pérez, and by editor Diego Cepeda, is addressing the issue through high-quality editing work and by championing brilliant new authors such as Luis Carlos Barragán of *El Gusano* [The Worm]. It thus establishes Colombian SF as a vibrant space of literary experimentation and evolution that blurs market and genre boundaries and does not let itself be pigeonholed by market considerations such as how to best sell the country’s literature to a foreign audience, as happened with magical realism. SF has a lot to do with that freedom, since it represents a transnational culture which is universally recognized and appropriated. Noting the exhaustion of realism as a literary mode, Pérez argues that the rise of SF in Latin America over the last 20 years follows the emergence of new epistemic, academic, ideological, and political viewpoints, “which made these other visions of reality emerge as legitimate possibilities of literature.” It is not about a boom but the unveiling of a vibrant production that had been driven underground by market and academic categories, he adds (Pérez).

Cuban writers also are self-organizing with workshops dedicated to fostering new writers, both free (Taller Espacio Aberto) and paid (Encrucijada, run by award-winning SF writer Elaine Vilar Madruga) as well as a dedicated prize, named after Cuban genre literature pioneer Oscar Hurtado. The prize, which started as an offshoot of an older SF workshop founded by Daína Chaviano and others, has been running since 2009 and helped usher in a new generation of SF writers in the island nation. Some of its best-known authors, including Yoss and Erick J. Mota, remain unpublished in the country due to the political nature of their writing. Nevertheless, young people from science backgrounds still see the genre as a way of reopening their future, given the lack of research opportunities on the resource-starved island, as stated by writer David Francisco in August 2022 (Francisco). It also has a fandom community in the thousands, with about 100 of them meeting on August 27, 2022, to celebrate 40 years of the release in Cuba of Japanese anime *Voltes V* (“Pasión Por Voltus v Perdura En Cuba”). The event at the Belgian cultural center in Old Havana featured the original actors who did the dubbing work and Cuban creators who were inspired by the film. A giant paperboard statue of the *Voltes V* mecha saluted the participants, who showcased self-made apparel and toys inspired by the series. Participants reflected on the pivotal role of in-person meetings for the community before the internet (now more readily available on the island) made it easier to learn about the latest developments (Morales, Fundora).

Argentina, like Mexico, stands out in the continent due to its powerful publishing industry and broadly recognized large number of readers. The work of Laura Ponce is one example, fostering debate and publishing of SF works which have a political component (women’s rights or environmental concerns). Ponce is both a writer and publisher of Ediciones Ayarmanot, and has built a track record of participation in international events showcasing Latin American SF. She acts as an important node of the genre

infrastructure not only by promoting SF as a dedicated community but also by triggering more political discussions on women's and environmental issues. Sitting at a Buenos Aires park on a hot afternoon in February 2022, Ponce describes her first encounter with SF fandom in Argentina and the community around pioneering online magazine *Axxón* as "very impactful and very transformative for me." The magazine has been circulating since 1989 and, until transitioning to the internet in the late 1990s, was distributed through floppy disks. "Suddenly you can go to a bar and meet all these people who like the same thing, who start recommending books to you, who start recommending movies, who tell you, 'ah, don't you? Do you have it? Take it.' That's what transformed me. It was really what connected me to my vocation" (Ponce).

Andean futurism is particularly interesting because of its spatial component and multifaceted and leaderless emergence, which mirrors that of Brazilian Afrofuturism. Various participants are working from a very specific construct that is multispecies and multitemporal. The Andes region can fit all timescales, from human lifespans to long durations of geological time. As one of the cradles of civilization, the Andes has its ecological and cultural formations entangled with crops, peoples, and species. Andean futurists thus enforce the coevalness of its cultures, the complexity of the world (encapsulated through their own political and ecological struggles), and the compossibility of imagining other futures. The movement emerges from many fronts and has precursors in José Mariatégui's Marxist-inflected, highly situated indigenism of the 1920s. It has examples from art (Poma), science fiction, comic books (Thomas), fandom, and animations (Kwasek). The Andean nation of Ecuador, like others cited here, has also been going through a process of growing acceptance of SF as a serious genre, according to SF scholar Iván Rodrigo Mendizábal.

In Peru, the writers' collective Qhipa Pacha, which takes its name from the Quechua word for the many possibilities of the future, specifically calls for recovering the cultural memory of the region and imagining Peruvian Andean and Amazonian futurism "beyond the influences of speculative fiction of cultures other than ours" (Qhipa Pacha). First read at the Boskone 59 convention in Boston in 2022⁴ by founding member César Santivañez, the manifesto argues for coevalness, as it defends "both progress and tradition and acknowledges scientific and technological dissemination by means of Peruvian Andean and Amazonian fiction" (Qhipa Pacha). The collective's first publication is the short-story anthology *Llaqtamasi* [*Compatriot* in Quechua], edited by César Santivañez, published by Peru's Editorial Pandemonium in 2021. One of the most representative writers of this anthology is Daniel Salvo, whose short story "The First Peruvian in Space" provides a fine example of Andean futurism's anti-essentialization goal. Its plot involves a Peruvian called Anatolio Pomahuanca who refuses to let the density of the past be forgotten. Instead of basking in the tokenism of being chosen to represent his people in the spaceship, he pushes back against its White captain and his belief in the "harmonic conviviality between Whites and Natives as a result of centuries of history that had erased past wounds" ("The First" 63). Anatolio knows he is a cog in the infrastructure of power that wants to keep his people waiting for the "right time" to have real power while keeping up the appearances of coevalness. Another story, "Quipucamayoc" ["Quipu-authority" in Quechua], published the same year in a different anthology, proposes coevalness through the machinations of a young man from a traditional nation conquered by the Incas who is trained to use a quipu, the knotted strings used as recording device by several cultures in the Andes to keep track of population, harvest, and taxation numbers. The young man, however, uses the quipus to sabotage the Inca empire by inserting a "virus" or a series of wrong figures in the recording

(“Quipucamayoc” 229). The story reinforces coevalness by emphasizing the technological side of the quipus and the protagonist’s clever way of resisting Incan domination.

Iván Prado Sejas, a Bolivian writer and academic based in Cochabamba, points out that British anthropologist Alison Spedding published in 2004 what is considered a landmark work of Andean SF, *De cuando en cuando Saturnina; una historia oral del futuro* [*Saturnina from Time to Time: an Oral History of the Future*]. He says that Spedding “practically marks the beginning of a form of science fiction where Indigenous peoples [of Bolivia] appear very strongly” (Sejas). She did so by breaking with the literary tradition of the country by adopting the vernacular of peasants and their mixing of Aymará and Spanish, creating an opening for other authors to follow.

Speaking at her home in a barrio of La Paz, framed by the view of Mount Illimani, Spedding cuts a striking figure as the tall European dressed in the Cholita style of Aymará peasants, sharing coca leaves with me and arguing for coevalness by stating that “we’re all indigenous of some place” (Spedding). Like Salvo, Spedding refuses to essentialize the Bolivian people or simplify their struggles, and enacts coevalness by representing a future Bolivia as liable to the vicissitudes of power as any other nation-state. Through a series of “reports from the future,” or highly satirical oral histories not unlike the testimonies she gathered during her studies of coca growers, the novel depicts a future nation of Aymarás that succeeded Bolivia and went on to conquer Peru (Alfaro 347). The book’s cover itself is an interventionist gesture of genre infrastructure: the second edition sought to include both space and local elements such as the Andes mountains, the Uyuni salt flat, and a spaceship (image 6); the third edition, meanwhile, blends Saturn’s rings with an Aymará fabric on which sits a small pile of coca leaves (image 7).

The Play of the Hinge and the Speculative Method

The broader process implied in this article is not new. Militant workers in 1840s Europe sought to emancipate themselves through reading and writing the high literature that was becoming increasingly cheap and available at the time (Rancière, “Dissensus” 116). Indeed, readers and writers in 19th-century France fashioned a new working-class intelligentsia through the “eager search for book knowledge” that was “vital to the intellectual emancipation on which political action was based” (Lyons 43-44). The real novelty here is that genre infrastructure is part of a transnational process of CoFuturism, even as the vicissitudes of Latin American structures make it unique to the regional context. As Ares identifies, since the mid-twentieth century the SF genre in Latin America has inverted the circulation logic seen in the North American and European markets, becoming more driven by writers and fandom because the market was not particularly interested in it (“Prólogo” xi). A visit to Perifacon in São Paulo proves how much this has changed as major market players strive to be part of a fandom event specifically geared toward low-income consumers. The reality was different in the 1990s as collectives in the same impoverished neighborhoods sought to do aesthetic work as a form of political participation when the imposition of neoliberal policies further stressed already frayed communities (D’Andrea 161).

However, as D’Andrea aptly summarizes,⁵ “the problem is not just the struggle to tell a story. The main issue is to make history” (265). So, if “politics is an activity of reconfiguration of that which is given in the sensible” (Panagia 115)— in other words, what is available to senses and to reasoning—the world is sensed but can also be affected by actions in response to what is sensed. Considering that SF communities are being activist about their aesthetic practices, deepening the understanding of how these communities form and operate presents many opportunities for

finding ways to mobilize large numbers of people at both the micro and macro levels. If these CoFuturisms can be SF but are not limited to it, and they at the very least engage in some form of speculative thinking directed at political goals, genre genesis and genre infrastructure show that imagining and enacting the future are two sides of the same coin. These communities merge the widely disseminated visual and narrative repertoires of SF with social and political networks to mobilize collectivities and enact change. Because of the way cognition is a socially distributed process (Hutchins xiv, 364), CoFuturisms operate as political-aesthetic subjectivity intervening not only in the technoculture of SF but the failure to conceive different presents and futures.

For social psychologists, utopias can drive the formation, maintenance, and transformation of culture “as a critical part of humanity’s effort to collectively self-regulate our construction of society” (Kashima and Fernando 102). Jean-Luc Nancy, himself a disbeliever in the contemporary possibilities of utopia as a shared mode of imagination, nevertheless recognizes its pliability as the “play of a hinge that cannot be welded because it must undertake the sharing/partitioning and revival of meaning” (10). The hinge’s pliability is key as a liminal space, or a border. Borders are places which set limits but also where separated bodies touch, opening transgressive and dialogic possibilities. Genre infrastructures and genre genesis live and prosper in these “borderlands” of SF (Määttä 109), hence their mobilization potential for the formation of political-aesthetic communities. Looking at the new ways in which writers and activists are getting political with SF or speculative thinking, it becomes clear that intersecting trends are leading to the reinvigorated emergence of a new kind of political imagination called CoFuturism. And between this reinvigorated utopia and the possibilities created by transformative cultural practices lies the negotiated framework of genre infrastructure as a speculative method.

As Ernst Bloch argues, “the most tragic form of loss isn’t the loss of security. It is the loss of the capacity to imagine that things could be different” (Mauch 18). One imagines the world and its objects to both materialize them and maintain their materiality—nations are both imagined and performed by their citizens; futures are both imagined and enacted through present actions. SF can help by its simultaneous move of challenging and bridging the gaps between imagination and reality. But enacting imagination needs action; as Roberto Mangabeira Unger teaches through his theory of negative capability and false necessity, individuals can transcend the duality of compliance or rebellion by finding ways to empower themselves once they realize that the world does not necessarily need to be the way it is (279-282). The genre infrastructure affords this agency.

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Notes

1. Reported by Neto in an interview on 14 April 2022. A similar experience of being refused service by delivery workers and taxi drivers at her Philadelphia housing complex was reported by Black Quantum Futurism activist Camae Ayewa (Phillips 3). This is one of many examples of the systemic nature of racism and, when compared with Neto’s case, of its transnationality.
2. Henceforth, this and all other images cited in this paper can be found at <https://genreinfra.cofutures.org/>
3. The logos of the Salvador City Government, SEBRAE, Municipal Secretariat of Culture and Tourism, and of corporate sponsors are visible on the left side of image 7.

4. Their manifesto was first read at the 59th Boskone Convention between 18 and 20 February 2022, according to Rüsche and Tynjälä. The act is an example of North-South critical dialogue since it uses genre infrastructure as a speculative method to invert the usual transnational flow of SF products.
5. My translation. In the original, D'Andrea played with the homonymous nature of the word "história" in Portuguese, which means both a story and history.

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