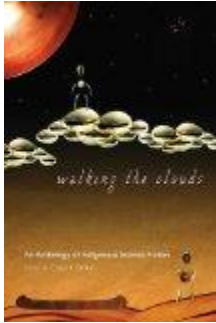


<http://www.fantasy-matters.com/2012/05/walking-clouds-review.html>

## Fantasy Matters

Wednesday, May 2, 2012

### Walking the Clouds: A Review



On the back of *Walking the Clouds: An Anthology of Indigenous Science Fiction* is a blurb by Charles de Lint that reads: "Don't read this because they're stories by Native American writers. Read them because they're damn good stories by damn good writers."

For starters, he's absolutely right. The writers collected together in this anthology, ranging from Leslie Marmon Silko and Gerald Vizenor to Stephen Graham Jones and Nalo Hopkinson, are amazing, and it's quite impressive to have their work all in the same place. And the stories themselves, which include stories of first contact, Native slipstream, and stories of the apocalypse, are equally impressive.

But for me--a scholar who is interested in theories of both Native literature and science fiction--the real wealth of this anthology lies in the context for the stories that is provided by the editor, Grace Dillon.

Not only does Dillon refer to key theoretical ideas of both Native literature and science fiction throughout the anthology, but she directly engages some of these theories with each other, gesturing toward the new ways of thinking that can be gained by such a move. Take, for example, her discussion of slipstream fiction in the introduction:

*"Native slipstream, a species of speculative fiction within the sf realm, infuses stories with time travel, alternate realities and multiverses, and alternative histories. As its name implies, Native slipstream views time as pasts, presents, and futures that flow together like currents in a navigable stream. It thus replicates nonlinear thinking about space-time. In other contexts, the term slipstream often becomes a catchall for speculative writing that defies neat categorization."*

Dillon then goes on to describe the differences between these formulations of slipstream literature and discusses the effect they have on the stories themselves.

She also provides context for each of the authors in the anthology, introducing each story with a

combination of biographical detail, commentary from the author, and literary analysis. Particularly for readers new to indigenous science fiction, these introductions are immensely helpful, not only providing a framework for how to interpret the following story, but also suggesting other authors and critics that might be of interest.

While the stories themselves are definitely fantastic, it is Dillon's work of bringing them together, contextualizing them, and putting them in conversation with each other that makes *Walking the Clouds* so unique, and, for those interested in either Native literature or science fiction, so valuable. Dillon thoughtfully provides both important historical concepts in each of these categories of literature as well as the ways in which these categories are evolving today. It's a comprehensive approach that makes this volume well worth adding to your collection.