

Subverting Reason, Thinking Futurity. Climate Change, Posthumanism and Bengali Science Fiction

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Postcolonial theory is skeptical of modernity for its imperialist incursions, reductionist rationality, stereotypical racism, and blind will to power. Conceived as objective, disinterested and truth-seeking, Western science ultimately turned out to be a tool of colonization and of world domination. Bengali science fiction writers during colonial times reappropriated the genre of science fiction to revert the gaze by dismantling the stereotypes that European science fiction perpetuated. J.C. Bose's short narrative anticipates not only the scientific concepts of surface tension and butterfly effect but also predates much of the concerns of the present theorists of climate change. Premendra Mitra's stories, written in the historical backdrop of the two World Wars, however, evade the nationalist-scientific bias and provide a global and larger humanistic dimension to Bengali science fiction.

A modern humanist that he is, Satyajit Ray holds the balance even between aesthetics and ethics, and thereby eschews the twin evils of nationalist propaganda and didacticism. The article seeks to explore how Bengali science fiction matured from the days of writing back to the empire to finally explore posthumanist and environmental issues and become transnational. Writing in the 1970s, Ray certainly anticipated the speed of technological advancement, the innovative programming techniques and adaptive capabilities in androids at the turn of the century which have provided them with a semblance of "understanding" or even "having an internal subjective existence – whether they have it or not", as Braidotti puts it.