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Electronic version

URL: <https://journals.openedition.org/ces/7408>

DOI: 10.4000/ces.7408

ISSN: 2534-6695

Publisher

SEPC (Société d'études des pays du Commonwealth)

Electronic reference

Kathie Birat and Mohale Mashigo, "Mohale Mashigo interviewed by Kathie Birat", *Commonwealth Essays and Studies* [Online], 43.2 | 2021, Online since 23 July 2021, connection on 02 February 2022.

URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/ces/7408> ; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/ces.7408>

This text was automatically generated on 2 février 2022.

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Kathie Birat and Mohale Mashigo

KB (Kathie Birat): In the author's note on page seven, at the beginning of the collection, you put the word intruders, how do you pronounce that? Why did you indicate the phonetic spelling?

MM (Mohale Mashigo): Sometimes when you're looking for a word, especially online, they give the phonetic spelling and they also give the pronunciation, I just wanted to add that, I wanted people to know this is how you pronounce it and this is what we're going to be talking about, it's what you're going to be reading about.

KB: I thought maybe putting the word there was a way of suggesting that the reader is an intruder, that if he wants to enter your world, he needs to understand how you pronounce the word.

MM: Every character in the book, everybody is an intruder on some kind of trope, you know, as the zombie trope, the mermaid, all of these fantastical tropes, they kind of intrude because people like them don't exist. For me that was the essence of it, to know that this is what's happening. In the author's note I also say who it's for, people who also feel like intruders in the world, people who are overlooked.

KB: What I would like to talk about first of all is the idea of speculative fiction. I read Mark Dery's interview¹ and also went on the internet and looked for information about Afrofuturism. I found a definition from Ingrid LaFleur, an art curator and Afrofuturist, who defined Afrofuturism as "a way of imagining possible futures through a black cultural lens."²

MM: I think that's very nice but Mark Dery's definition is what I was working from. I'm always very afraid of parroting things. Black culture is not a monolith; there is African American culture, there is South African culture, there is Nigerian culture; I'm talking about urban cultures. I'm always very iffy about Afrofuturism. I don't know, if I'm telling a story from the perspective of an African living in Africa, that is not Afrofuturism, whereas if I'm writing *Black Panther*, yes, that's Afrofuturism.³ I think Nnedi Okorafor⁴ said she prefers to be called an "African futurist." I'm never

very good with labels, even speculative fiction, because after all, isn't all fiction speculative by its nature?

KB: Speculation is a way of seeing. It seems to me that you are using speculative fiction as a lens, as a way of looking at things, but you're not really, completely into speculative fiction as a genre.

MM: I honestly wouldn't call myself a speculative fiction writer. But I always notice that when we appear in speculative fiction (I'm talking about Africans living in Africa) we do somehow come across as unremarkable. Dr. Who is not suddenly going to become some South African woman or man. All I wanted to say is that we are here and that we can exist in fantastical ways as well. All of the people in these stories in *Intruders* are people you might think are leading unremarkable lives, but the situations they are thrust into, sometimes against their will, make them go through something fantastical. I just wanted to say that we can exist as we *are* in speculative fiction.

KB: You also said in your introduction, "we actually live on this continent," which I also think makes a difference. What does it mean to live on the continent?

MM: I think in a lot of Afrofuturism people have fantasies of going back to the source, to the motherland. But we Africans, we're rooted in our cultures, we are affected by colonialism, but it's all happening where we're from, that means that even ideas of being fantastical are rooted in something that is a part of us already. If anybody should be telling science fiction or speculative fiction stories, it should be Africans. When I listen to some of our folktales, I say to myself, this is definitely spec fic; if anybody should be thriving in this genre it should be Africans because we're just, we're just naturals at all these supernatural stories, all these wild ideas about people flying, that's who we are.

KB: I would like to quote from an interview with Greg Tate, in which he said something that resembles what you just said, talking about science fiction. He says, "Science fiction parallels traditional mythology, which is full of cautionary tales."⁵

MM: Yes, one story, "BnB in Bloem," is actually based on an urban legend called Vera the ghost, and, in the urban legend, men who are driving at night pick up a beautiful young lady at the side of the road, and she suggests they go back to her place and of course they're intimate and when he wakes up he's in a cemetery, on her gravestone, and it's got her name and when she died; that's a cautionary tale, it's a little misogynistic if you ask me, that's a cautionary tale about "Don't pick up weird women at the side of the road, because presumably these men are cheating as well, they have a wife to go home to, a girlfriend to go home to."

KB: As a cautionary tale, doesn't it have to do with the way men treat women?

MM: Yes, and so beware how you treat a woman, right! After years of hearing the story that's how I began to interpret it, which is why I wrote that story "BnB in Bloem" where Vera is actually a collective rage from women who have been murdered and have had bad things happen to them.

KB: But there is actually a story about Vera, a story that circulates about Vera?

MM: Yes, I didn't make Vera up, I just sort of twisted the legend to reflect modern day South Africa. When I wrote *Intruders* I was struggling a lot with my country and I had lots of rage and so some of these stories are about me working through my rage with

my country and being a black woman in South Africa and in the global South and in the world.

KB: That's the kind of thing we think of when we think of postcolonial fiction. We think of that rage, but what gave you the idea of using the speculative lens?

MM: I have to be honest with you, I am a lover of comic books. I write comic books. There was a show a long time ago with Scott Bakula called *Quantum Leap*.⁶ He basically leaps into different people's bodies and tries to fix their problems. I've always been interested in fantastical things. I think I gained a little confidence once I started working in comics and I thought, hey man, I think I can do this. Maybe I just chose it because I was brave enough and I didn't want to be stuck in realism when I was dealing with the issues in South Africa.

KB: Ok, you didn't want to be stuck back there with Zola. But you also did not want to be stuck in magic realism, like Ben Okri.

MM: I love that paradox. It's fantasy when white people write it. When black and brown people write it, it's magic realism. So I also didn't want that. I wanted people to place a healthy distance between themselves and the issues I was dealing with. The many things that are happening in the stories are like smoke and mirrors, they're a distraction that keeps people from saying, oh, you're condemning me for being a bad man or condemning South Africa, the way it treats people with substance abuse problems. I found that speculative fiction enabled readers to establish a distance so that if in the beginning people would think, "Oh this woman is growing wings," once they got into the story they would say, "That was a story about sexual harassment, wasn't it?"

KB: I think that's interesting about distance. This is a problem I encounter a lot in postcolonial fiction and in talking about postcolonial fiction. Sometimes postcolonial criticism becomes very ideological. People are so concerned with the issues that it's necessary to remind them that we're talking about writers. But as for your writing, why did you choose to write short stories?

MM: These stories had been living in my mind for so long, some I had half-written. I was focusing on *The Yearning*⁷ and then I said to myself, I'm not ready to write another novel, and the ideas I had were so broad, it couldn't be a novel, a singular idea with one character or three characters who go through a journey; this was about different journeys, and it was different characters all in my mind and I knew that I wanted to use many tropes; I wanted to use these very commonly known tropes and characters and put otherwise unremarkable characters in these situations; so you know in zombie stories there's always one survivor who wasn't prepared and who is actually surviving accidentally, that's great. But where did that character get survival instincts like that? He doesn't watch zombie movies. Suddenly I want to know this character's back story. He's been in survival mode his whole life. He engages in some risky behaviour, he's ambitious but he knows he's never going to do the things he wants to do and he ends up working in a mortuary. And it's like death is around him all the time. Things are dying around him all the time; he's trying to revive his best friend's dream of being a chef, but he has been surrounded by death. He flirts a lot with death, when he engages in this risky behaviour which is trainsurfing, which is what a lot of young South Africans do. It's a kind of nihilism. It seems as if the whole country is falling apart, so why be a good person, why be good to yourself, when the country is not being good to you, it's not giving you the opportunities you need. You're living in a place that probably needs electricity, that probably needs tarred

roads and for me, that is the ultimate zombie story. So by the time things are falling apart, he's [Koketso] tuned into it. There's something about living on the edge, when things are about to go bad, you can feel it. He's the first person who notices the ghosts. There were all these characters and I wanted to see them through journeys that wouldn't necessarily work in the long form; otherwise this would have been ten different novels. I just wanted to capture them in a moment, as in a snapshot.

KB: How do you see the relationship between the short story and the novel?

MM: A novel is very involved but it also gives me a lot of time to let a story unfold, it's quite indulgent actually. A short story is challenging because you don't have a lot of time to explain how things work. And so every word matters. You can't waste words, you can't get carried away. And I really liked that because it's like snapshots, snapshots of fantastical Africans living in Africa in speculative fiction. I really enjoyed writing short stories because it challenged me as a writer; because there were times when I would say this is really a novella, bring it back, and I had to find new and interesting ways to describe things. So I throw you into a situation and I try to give as much information as possible and then I disappear so you can disappear into the story.

KB: Do you give a lot of thought to your first lines?

MM: You know, I really don't but it's something that's becoming a thing (laughter) because introductions are so important. I know, "My mother died seven times before she gave birth to me,"⁸ what's that mean? It's how you draw somebody in, you know if you invite someone over to your house for the first time and when they walk in all they see is a pile of clothes in one corner, they're going to think I don't know if I'm going to enjoy the meal in this filthy house, but then if you greet somebody and the house smells like beech and pine, then they think, OK, this person made an effort.

KB: One of the things that is often said about the short story is that it has the intensity of lyric poetry. I found that kind of intensity in this story ["Ghost Strain N"] and in the relationship between the two boys. The business about the colour, for instance, "Steven was the colour ever since they were kids."

MM: How far will you go for someone who adds colour to your life? I found that kind of intensity in this story, in particular, in the relationship between these two boys. I know they're living in a harsh world and maybe it's because I have a nephew that is nineteen and that I partially raised that I know that young boys live in a harsh world and they do harsh things, but they have a real softness between themselves, when they're with each other. There's a real kind of softness, a kind of love. They're nearly holding hands but then they see someone; unfortunately, toxic masculinity will say, "Go straight. This is not a love story." For me it is, it's a story of friendship. Love between friends.

KB: Most of these stories are centred around a strong relationship. And that relationship creates a kind of counterspace that makes survival possible. Does that seem like an appropriate way of talking about your stories?

MM: I don't know how we have survived in South Africa for this long, how we have survived through the obvious brokenness of who we are and then I thought of looking at the relationships we have, sometimes it's a family relationship, that counters all the ugliness, all of the zombie stuff, the ghost stuff. Love is really keeping us together.

KB: This comes through very clearly in the stories. I also liked the relationship between the sisters in those three stories called “untitled.”

MM: It’s always the youth that are making the sacrifices. When I think about the Soweto riots in 1976 in South Africa, it wasn’t people that stopped working and said, we are going to fight against these policies, it was the school children; there is a whole generation that was damaged by that and that has disappeared and I was wondering, why is it always young people that make the biggest sacrifices? And I thought of two sisters, who had very different circumstances even though they grew up in the same family and how somehow Kamo had survivor’s guilt, like, I got the good life, I got the good school, you go ahead and see what life is like, out there, on another planet. Maybe it will be better, and she’s willing to sacrifice herself for her sister, who spent her life sacrificing herself for her.

KB: That’s very interesting. These stories are about South Africa but they can also be understood in a broader context.

MM: I was very worried when I sent the stories to my publisher because *The Yearning* is very different from *Intruders* and I said to her, “Don’t freak out. This is very different” because I was going through a very different process and I guess I was also a different writer at that point. You’re only the writer the story needs at the end of writing it. And I thought, “This project is too ambitious, I don’t know if I’m ready,” but I just hunkered down and I said, “Let me do this.” Very different from *The Yearning* but I’m so glad I did it.

KB: In “Untitled ii” you mention the Bible and you give the Lord’s Prayer in Sesotho. Why does Kamo pack a Sesotho Bible in her sister’s bag?

MM: Because we grew up with super religious parents. My mom is super religious though I am not, I don’t think I’m religious at all. It is the prayers of our mothers sometimes that get us through the worst times and every family has a Bible, it’s probably the Bible where the names of the family members have been written so it’s a family tree almost and Kamo packed that so that Bonolo will know that wherever she is, she will always have a piece of home with her.

KB: I’d like to talk a little bit about the past also. Do you think speculative fiction is a way of reconsidering the past?

MM: Yes, definitely. Not only reconsidering the past but seeing how it shapes us as well. I do like this idea of time. For me there is no before or after. It’s all during. It’s just a bunch of “durings.” I don’t think of myself as someone in the past, I’m a person going through something. I do like to see how these “durings” influence the future. In “The Parlemono,” where I’m interested in how history is still right there, even if we don’t think about history’s place in the present. It’s right there, it’s like in the walls, it’s in our genes and I’m interested in how the past is sometimes overlooked. You are thinking about these prisoners of war, about how these Italians and Portuguese people moved to South Africa and how the South Africans treated them badly, in fact, they called the Portuguese “sea kaffirs” and how they had to invest in whiteness in order to be able to be seen as part of something. So they were always a little bit nicer to black people because they were being seen as “kaffirs.” I’m really interested in considering the history and how it shapes now and it shapes us. The history is sitting in the room with us even if we don’t know it is.

KB: In relation to the past, there was a remark that interested me from "Untitled ii." That remark really struck me, the idea of "finding another kind of people with a sense of history and irony." What do you mean by that?

MM: Whenever I watch movies about people being in space, I wonder why are there no black people in space? Does that mean they left us behind? What's the deal here? And I started thinking, who are all the people who have access to space, to travel, people like Elon Musk. And how much will change, once people are in space, because people's politics don't change just because you are not on Earth any more. I think it's ironic that people would run away from Earth only to replicate things they were participating in. Bonolo is saying that people are oblivious to the fact that they are re-enacting some kind of apartheid in space, some kind of very sexy slavery. So she says people have no sense of irony and she would just like to meet people who are like her and who say, what? Don't you see what's happening here? People with a sense of humour and a sense of history...

KB: There you said humour. In the book you said "irony."

MM: Yes, so you know, the people in the space ship she's in don't see the irony. New world, old traditions... that's not what makes a new world. A new world comes with new traditions and new ways of thinking. And Bonolo just wants to get away because now she's in South Africa in space.

KB: So once again, if you want to go into the future, you have to have understood the past, I think. I'm also going to ask you about the end of that story. When she finally gets there, and she gets out of the ship, she says, "but there are six people standing around with the same face as me" (136).

MM: Isn't that wonderful? She's going on a new adventure and we'll never know what it is, but she's really left the confines of South Africa in space. And whatever happens there, it's obvious it's not threatening.

KB: So the ending is to be seen as not threatening?

MM: For me anyway. I thought, ok, they're not attacking her. And it's like they're being empathetic, they're showing her face back to her.

KB: That's interesting. My reading would have been a little different, in the sense that I thought, maybe this means that going into space doesn't mean finding anything different, that you're simply going to be confronted with yourself again.

MM: Probably, but your "self" of different heights and different whatever. We just know that the next part of her journey belongs to her, so we should probably leave her alone at this point because she wanted to escape so badly. She's going on an adventure. In the end she's confronted with her face. Yes, it was her face, but her face at different heights, in different shapes, so maybe she's going to discover herself. For me it was very non-threatening, it was like, ah, OK, good luck Bonolo.

KB: I wasn't really sure how to read that. It seems to me that speculative fiction can sometimes suggest that there's no way of getting away from yourself. In other words, either everything is different or nothing is different.

MM: That's interesting. I always say, once the story is handed over to somebody else, it is somebody else's story. You come into a story with your life. We read a story with our past selves and our present selves and our experiences.

KB: How do you see your reading public? Do you imagine a reading public? Do you have a public in mind when you write, and in particular, do you think of a local public, a South African or African public, or a more distant public, or both?

MM: I have to be honest, I don't really write with anyone in mind. I write for myself and then I edit for the reader, to make things easier for them, to refine the ideas. That being said, a lot of my stories are by design very South African. I'm interested in the interior lives of people that have been overlooked. So I really write for myself and edit for readers. I have no idea who is going to pick up the book and connect with it.

KB: In reading *Intruders* I was able to see the relation with Africa but fill in the blanks. I think *The Yearning* is more specifically African. There were more things that I'm not familiar with, specific beliefs and rituals.

MM: You know I'm always interested in the specific because from the specific comes the universal. I remember reading Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* and it was so far away from everything I knew. I try as a reader to put myself in places I've never been to, in the shoes of people I would never meet. When I write I think, you're going to understand the emotions of the character, you're going to be stuck with the character and the things that colour the character's world and those things are South African because I do write from a South African perspective.

KB: Women seem to be very important in your stories. The narrator of "The High Heel Killer" says, "I birthed myself. It was bloody and painful, but now I'm standing on the roof of a city as something new." Do you think that women need to birth themselves and what does that mean to you?

MM: I don't think all women need to birth themselves, but this particular character was stuck. Can you imagine this plus size woman with wings flying around the city of Johannesburg over those big ugly buildings? She felt stuck in her body; she was also stuck in her relationship with her mom, she was stuck in a routine, she needed to rebirth herself. It was therapy killing that man and it gave her some kind of perspective. She was able to say, "I'm actually pretty angry. I don't care what you think my body looks like. I don't need your opinions on my body, I don't need to be sexually harassed at work." She was really angry and I do think sometimes when you reckon with your anger and you step into it, it is like a rebirth.

KB: Why did you choose to represent the transformation as a physical transformation, which is what you do also in "Manoka"?

MM: I think physical transformation is for me also a way to allow the characters to see themselves in a different way. It's one thing to say I think differently now because I feel different, but physical transformations are very graphic. I think the character stands and looks at herself in the mirror and this is the kind of person who would never look at herself in the mirror because she's been shamed for being a certain size and I do like the physical transformation. Becoming something that for other people is grotesque but for you is beautiful, because it's so unique to you.

KB: Does it have something to do with women's relationship to their bodies?

MM: Definitely. It's like Manoka basically decided she was dead from the waist down after she had this baby and then look what happens, she's transformed from the waist down because she's being told there's nothing wrong, you're ok, you're not a mistake, your baby's not a mistake and she undergoes a transformation in the place from which she had divorced herself.

KB: You talk about drawing from South African folklore and urban legends. Folklore is an important dimension of African American and Afro-Caribbean literature. How do you use folklore and how do you think folklore can help us imagine the future?

MM: A lot of folklore exists orally. I guess some people have tried to write it down. It was a way for me to say, here are our stories, and now they're in books and other people will read them. I think it's a way of saying that it doesn't just exist orally any more, you know women that turn into mermaids or whatever. We also have that, we have those kinds of stories and I just wanted them to exist in a fantasy book.

KB: You introduce folklore, but you also introduce a lot of other things, like references to B movies, and there are references to forms of modern culture also, a mixing of the modern with the traditional. It seems to me that this is important, particularly in the short stories, references to text messaging, people thinking about films, songs and so forth.

MM: I think people have this idea that a country can exist in a vacuum. I do find this a lot in Nigerian novels where it's almost as if Nigeria does not exist in the world and has no outside influences coming in and they don't have any inside influences going out, whereas I think for young South Africans they live right alongside the traditional, something they were raised with, but they also live in the modern world. It would have been disingenuous for me to paint characters that live in South Africa as if it were a vacuum.

KB: I think that mixing of the traditional and the modern works particularly well in the short story as a form, because of the concision, where it creates irony. There's also the question of language, types of language, more or less formal. The short story as a form tends to use a lot of dialogue, the way people speak, and it seems to me you make use of this, with all the humour and ambiguity that can be generated. A character will say "I'm not a monster," and you can hear this on several levels. It can be a trite remark, but sometimes in your stories it is to be taken literally. Or when someone says, "You're killing me..."

MM: Yes, and later in the story she will kill someone. I enjoy the way people talk and when I was at home sometimes I'd sit in a coffee shop and just listen to people. People reveal so much in dialogue. You also learn a lot about a person from the way they speak, the kind of language they use. I'm obsessed with dialogue. If I could, I would use more dialogue.

KB: You definitely have a gift for dialogue and language works well in the short stories because language is so evocative and so ambiguous. You just capture this right away. Some writers are very sensitive to sound, to rhythm. Others seem to have a strong visual sense. How would you situate yourself from this point of view?

MM: Probably somewhere in the middle, ever since I began working on comic books. To be honest I was never a visual writer. And then I was challenged; I was really challenged when I had to start working in comic books because your job is basically to tell the illustrator, listen, this is what I think it's going to look like, I just want you to be able to take these ideas and words and illustrate. That's really helped my writing, working in comics, now I'm half and half, I'm still visual but very sensitive to sound.

KB: In *The Yearning*, the brother, Simphewe is an artist. So here you're working more with the idea of imagining the future in visual terms.

MM: I really liked the idea that Simphewe seemed like a minor character, that's perhaps because he's always observing, and it's always the person who observes who is able to make the links, so I wanted to exaggerate that a little bit, to say not only is he able to see the links, but he is able to foreshadow some things for us.

KB: I feel a sense of humour in your stories. Do you think humour is an important part of imagining the future and do you think the world lacks a sense of humour?

MM: Yes, I definitely feel the world lacks a sense of humour. I'm able to get through life because I'm always looking for the humour in things, sometimes to my detriment. That's just how I am and I think the way that science has evolved in the world is heavily influenced by the people who are imagining what the future will be like. If more people had a sense of humour about the future, then I think these science dude bros wouldn't be so rigid, it would be a more diverse field.

KB: Maybe people don't associate African literature with humour?

MM: Yes, that's weird isn't it, because why wouldn't we have humour? But I must tell you, when I went through my reading of Nigerian literature, lots of it, I did feel that some of it was humourless.

KB: And why do you think this is?

MM: I don't know, but I think some writers take themselves very seriously, and it comes across in the writing, whereas I can be accused of many things, but taking myself seriously is not one of them. I'm just always playing, I'm always playing silly buggers, and I think maybe that comes across in my work. I have to be honest, I take my writing very seriously when I'm writing obviously. Because I want it to be the best story it can be, but me as a writer, no. I just, you know, I tell stories.

KB: You mention Alice Walker in the introduction to *The Yearning*. Do you have anything to say about Alice Walker, or about anyone else?

MM: Alice Walker was one of my moments of "ah, there's something." Before I read *The Colour Purple* I had never read books that described black women with such, I don't know how to describe it... but these women had layers, so many different layers. She took her time when she was creating these characters and I really respect how much time and care she gives to her woman characters. *The Colour Purple* was a moment for me, because I didn't know you could write women like that. And I really loved the journeys that these many different women took.

KB: Who are the other writers who are important to you or who have been in the past?

MM: Besides the ones I mentioned when I gave the talk, Zakes Mda and one of my favorite books of his is *The Madonna of Excelsior*. Zakes has such a wonderful way of just hearing about a story, something he hears on the news and he says, let me go to that little town and see what's happening. He only needs to go to a place once and he memorizes the place and the people and then builds extraordinary worlds and stories, so I have a lot of respect for Zakes Mda as a writer.

KB: Why did you apply for this residency in Nancy? How did you get the idea and why did you do it?

MM: My publisher actually forwarded an email and wanted to know if I was interested. I was thinking, I have all these jobs to do, I don't have time. Then when I looked at the prospects of actually finishing this novel I thought, this is a great idea, I've never been to France. I think I desperately needed to get away and focus on writing. In South Africa I think there are only two writers who earn money from writing, J.M. Coetzee and Deon Meyer,⁹ so I have a lot of jobs. And I thought, I can take this break and focus on writing, because it's difficult to be doing all these jobs and still have time for writing. And I also wanted to see how other people are

experiencing my work, I thought that would be interesting coming from people who are actually studying my work.

KB: These are strange times, you should have plenty of time to work.

MM: Well, I'm still doing my writing workshops, but they're going to be online.

KB: Do you teach also?

MM: In South Africa I work with little, little children and then I do writing workshops with high school students. The high school kids love the writing workshop because suddenly they say, well, I'm creative and I tell them, carry on writing the story and you are welcome to email me and we can talk about what else you want to write. So I have lots of high school students emailing me all the time. I'm loving the Ariel experience and working with students is one of my favourite parts of it.

NOTES

1. Mohale Mashigo quotes Mark Dery's article "Black to the future: Interviews with Samuel Delaney, Greg Tate, and Tricia Rose" (Mark Dery, ed., *Flame Wars: The Discourse of Cyberculture*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1994. 179–222) in her essay "Afrofuturism: Ayashis' Amateki," which serves as an introduction to the short story collection *Intruders*. Dery's article is an important reference for discussions of Afrofuturism, although not all writers agree with his definition.
2. She gives this definition in her Tedx talk "Visual Aesthetics of Afrofuturism": <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x7bCaSzk9Zc>.
3. Mohale Mashigo has participated in the writing of scenarios for several episodes of the audiobook *Black Panther: Sins of the King* for Marvel.
4. Nnedi Okorafor is a Nigerian-American author of science fiction and fantasy books for children and adults as well as comic books in the Black Panther series for Marvel. She has rejected the term Afrofuturism, preferring to call her works Africanfuturism or Africanjuism, a position that she explains on her blog: <http://nnedi.blogspot.com/2019/10/africanfuturism-defined.html>.
5. This remark appears in his interview with Mark Dery, in "Black to the Future" (208).
6. The science fiction television series *Quantum Leap*, starring Scott Bakula, was aired on NBC in the United States between 1989 and 1993.
7. Mohale Mashigo, *The Yearning* (Picador Africa, 2016).
8. This is the first line of Mashigo's novel *The Yearning*.
9. Deon Meyer is a South African writer of thrillers who writes in Afrikaans. His novel *Spoor* (English title *Trackers*) was made into a television series in South Africa.

ABSTRACTS

On October 30, 2020, the first day of the second Covid-19 lockdown, Mohale Mashigo and I had a conversation on Zoom focused mainly on her collection of short stories *Intruders*. Mohale Mashigo participated in the Ariel (*Auteur en résidence internationale en Lorraine*) programme at the University of Lorraine from October 1, 2020 to January 31, 2021. A presentation of the author and documents related to her residency in Nancy can be found on the Ariel website (<https://ariel.univ-lorraine.fr>).

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Keywords: Mohale Mashigo, South African short story, crisis, speculative fiction

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