

We Are In The Future: A Reflection

by Harriet Hurley

The Future.

Whose Future?

My Future.

Our Future.

Who Is Determining The
Future?

Who Is Representing Me In Space?

Who Is Representing You In Space?

We Are In Space.

Who Is Determining Our Space Future?

I Go To Space Every Night.
Everyday

I Don't Need A Rocket To Go To Space.

We are In Space.

Our Astro-Future.

It doesn't feel like we're in the future.

The Great Powers.

The E m p i r e s! That are so interested in their future,
still fighting their way into Ou(r)ter Space

...Not much has changed.

...But much has changed.

Let's not just stomp on the Moon, let's roll on it!

And don't forget to mine it!

Every last sticky piece of regolith.

I prefer my Moon unmined.

My Moon?!

Well, it has to be someone's...
That's how this works...

We haven't worked it out yet.
But we will do so peacefully.
Amongst us well-meaning nations.

We will declare who the Moon belongs to!

And the Moon belongs to no one!

And I will take this piece just right here....

And so my Future,

your Future,
our Future,
determined by someone we don't even know.

There was no vote to not mine the Moon.

So we mine on

Mine the Body in which we exist

Mine the Body that allows us to exist

Digging deep

And deeper

Every last sticky piece of regolith.

Space, the place of possibilities. Yet with all the possibilities we seem to be rewriting the same Story for Space as we have for Earth.

-- When I say we, I don't mean you or me, I mean those who are involved.

Those that have the means to send rockets wherever they like.
And that *we* may be complicit in.

Maybe it is *you*,

regardless it is an *us* issue --

A story centred around domination, extraction and accumulation.

Great foundations of The Empire.

The Empire.

The Empire that has violently taken Land

exploited the Land

Dispossessed and exploited the Peoples of their Land...

...The great colonial

Empire

The great colonial rule

A rule that we know is savage,
destructive
violent in its very nature.

Benefiting those in power
and those who think they benefit from this system
do not.

We are shackled
To the chains of this colonial capitalist system.

We have been convinced to trade money for air,
money for peace,
money for care.

Every last sticky piece of regolith.

Maybe it should not be so surprising that there is a drive to mine the Moon,
and colonise Mars.

We have been reminded throughout time, throughout cultures

'As Above, As below'

'Sky reflects Land, Land Reflects Sky'.

We are not so far from Space.

We Are In Space

How we relate to space is a reflection of how we relate to Earth
the Land
the Water
the Animals
our Neighbours
our Pets
our Families
Ourselves.

Mining the moon will not stop the mining of Earth
we will just end up mining both.

Mining the Earth to get us to the Moon

to mine the Moon to keep us off Earth

Only to look back

To see that Pale Blue Dot

A moment to realise

We needed to Care For Earth

To Care For Space.

We *need* to Care For Earth

To Care For Space.

But whose Space is it?

Whose future is it?

whose

Future

?

My journey into the space sector began in São José dos Campos, Brazil. When I was younger, I had thought—or perhaps assumed—that the possibility of working in space had passed. Like many others, I had a passion for space and astronomy from a young age. And also like many, this passion eventually seemed to fade. I attempted to study astronomy alongside my degree in social sciences and anthropology. I say "attempted" because I did not pursue astronomy beyond two years of my bachelor's degree. In hindsight, I realise that much of my interest dissipated due to the lack of political, social, and cultural discourse within the discipline.

Now, as an emerging Space Anthropologist, I have discovered that there is not only the possibility but also the necessity for the intersection of social sciences and space. More broadly, there is a crucial need for interdisciplinary engagement within the space sector.

In 2023, I had the opportunity of being the Space Humanities Teaching Associate for the International Space University's (ISU) Space Studies Program (SSP) held in São José dos Campos. This transformative experience gave me invaluable insight into the space sector and fostered many cherished connections with incredible people from around the world.

Among the many insights SSP brought to light, one of the most significant was the importance of Space Humanities within space education. This is not to say that I believe other disciplines such as science, engineering, and law are any less important. However, the Space Humanities department seems to be under constant pressure to legitimise itself, as it is often perceived as frivolous. Yet, it is the only department truly dedicated to understanding our relationship to space and asking the critical questions: Why are we going to space? Under what conditions are we going to space? In whose interests are we going to space?

Interrogating such questions has always been important, as modern conceptions of space exploration have been shaped by the militarised project of the space race. Space has continued to be tightly bound to the military-industrial complex. In understanding this, it is essential to interrogate the social conditions, structures, and means through which space exploration and practices take place. Whose voices and stories are being told and heard when it comes to how we operate in space?

Although many people involved in and contributing to the international space sector are expansionist in their thinking and inspired by the possibilities of space, their vision and relationship with space have become narrow and limited. The concept of "space exploration" has become bound to Western ideas of terrestrial colonisation. Space has been marked as the new and final frontier for human power and the ongoing existence of capitalism through extractive accumulation. This is evident in the very sentiment of "colonise Mars" and the pursuit of mining the Moon. Both these rhetorics not only evoke but are inseparable from the core of the Western imperialist empire, which has intentionally sought to remove Indigenous peoples, claim, extract, and profit from their lands. The word "colonise," often used when talking about space exploration, is a reminder that the stories and voices from those who have been colonised are largely excluded from the development of international space travel.

When we not only draw upon but embrace and invoke the arts in our exploration of space, we are invited to explore our own positions and the narratives that shape how we relate to space. Through the arts and social analysis offered by the humanities, we are called to examine the intersections and intersectionalities that omit certain voices from space. We are compelled to ask the question: Who is deciding our future in space? Whose future is being determined in space?

In an industry dominated by engineers, scientists, and business people—an industry that decides for the majority of the world what humanity's presence in space looks like—it is vital that empathy is ensured and questions of ethics are not only asked but are rightfully answered. We are on the brink of the next major phase of human presence in space, and to ensure that it truly benefits and has the consent of all, we must understand what has led us here, where we want to go, and whose voices are present in these questions—and also in the answers.