

THE OTHER SIDE OF HISTORY, THE OTHER
SIDE OF FICTION: FORM AND GENRE IN
SUSSHU FOSTER'S *ATOMIK AZTEX*

BARACK OBAMA WAS ELECTED president of the United States with only 39 percent of the white electorate voting for him. What are we to make of this astonishing fact? One possibility I would like to propose is that the United States has entered not so much a postrace era, but something perhaps even more startling: a postwhite era, by which I mean white politicians can no longer afford to underestimate the voting power of the people of color in the United States. How did that happen? When did it happen in the case of Obama's second election? What caused the change? Some of those questions were the hot topics of debates between pundits, commentators, and election experts of all sorts. Still, some answers are already intriguingly obvious. Right at the top of explanations are the ones that we have been debating in the United States for almost the entirety of the twentieth century and now well into the second decade of the twenty-first century: the ways in which race, ethnicity, gender, and labor, particularly the ethnicity of labor, could affect the outcome of a presidential election in the United States.

In the days immediately following the election, Dorian Warren, a professor of international and public affairs at Columbia University, proposed that "people of color delivered the election, and more accurately, people of color in combination of several constituencies." Warren asked: Since a smaller percentage of independent voters voted for Obama in 2012 than in 2008 (45 percent and 52 percent, respectively), where did the votes come from? Warren lists several key factors:

1. Nonwhite voters (a major factor in the victory, since only 39 percent white voters voted for Obama)
2. African American voters (98 percent voted for Obama; the Republican strategy of voter and voting suppression backfired)

3. Latinos (75 percent voted for Obama)
4. Women (55 percent voted for Obama, maintaining their 2008 level)
5. Labor and union voters (65 percent voted for Obama, including white men, but predominantly the new demographic of women in the labor unions)
6. Revenge of the nerds and Big Data (Nate Silver predicted this outcome completely correctly); triumph of empirical evidence over punditry.¹

If there is anything to be learned about Obama's election to a second term in 2012, certainly it is that the idea of what it means to be a racialized person in the United States is in flux today. Numerous events and incidents in the years immediately following the 2012 election have served to underscore the fact that being in a postrace period does not mean the end of racism. Instead, it may well refer to a new stage in the continuing historical drama of American debates on racial justice, racial politics, and what W. E. B. Du Bois famously termed "the color line."

Fascination with the changing demography and topography of race is not unknown in literature and literary studies, of course. But its expressions in the twenty-first century have taken an unusual turn. As an instance of this fascination with the shifts in American racialization, I wish to offer the instance of Sesshu Foster's 2005 novel, *Atomik Aztex*.² In an introductory note to an excerpt from *Atomik Aztex* published in the *Amerasia Journal*, Sesshu Foster had this to say about the novel: "*Atomic Aztex* reconceives Los Angeles as the Aztec underworld and Land of the Dead, where unquiet spirits victimized by History are presumed to speak. An Aztec warrior speaks from the other side of life about some other side of History. From a limbo of genocidal amnesia and official forgetting. Even the dead have their complaints—especially the dead."³

Like many ethnic writers, Sesshu Foster is concerned with history, memory, and their relationship to a better future. This concern arises from the conviction that in the struggle for social justice, the enemy is so implacably determined to deny you justice, freedom, and dignity that no one and nothing is safe from the possibility of complete historical annihilation and "genocidal amnesia." In "Theses on the Philosophy of History" Walter Benjamin had famously stated as much.⁴ For this reason alone, *Atomik Aztex* fits within the grand tradition of social protest fiction by US ethnic writers. But at the same time it may also be the wildest example of that mode that one could imagine, as it takes on, in formal and thematic ways, the issues of the racial imaginary. Foster's novel, though it may be an odd example, is far from the only example one could cite.

In addition to Foster, a host of other writers are exploring a post-postmodern, post-civil rights moment in American racial formations. I refer to writers such as the Latinos Yxta Maya Murray, Salvador Plascencia, Junot Díaz, Marta Acosta; the African Americans Percival Everett, Colson Whitehead, Dexter Palmer, and Darieck Scott; the Asian Americans Larissa Lai and Charles Yu; and the Native American Sherman Alexie. A case can also be made for including in this cohort Michael Chabon, Gary Shteyngart, and Jonathan Safran Foer's recalibrations of Jewish and Yiddish ethnicity.⁵

Foster's weird novel is part fantasy; part hallucinatory Global South realism; part muckraking novel; part historical novel; part chronicle in the tradition of the *crónicas de Indias*, the Spanish narratives of the discovery and conquest of the Americas; part history of the Aztec (Nahua, Mexica) pre-Columbian world; part Los Angeles cartoon noir; and wholly science fiction alternative and counterfactual history. For these reasons, *Atomik Aztex* elegantly illustrates the modes of speculative realism and historical fantasy that I have been considering in my current work on speculative realism and historical fantasy in contemporary ethnic fiction.

Features of a New Aesthetic

My hypothesis about these works is that they are not inconsequentially similar. On the contrary, they represent a distinctive turn in the history of contemporary ethnic and general fiction. These novels share at least these four distinctive features.

1. *Speculative realism is a mode in critical dialogue with the aesthetics of postmodernism.* The shared generational history among writers of the post-civil rights era leads to a dialogical relationship between postmodernism and us ethnic literature. Rather than seeing the rise of postmodernism and ethnic literature in the postwar era as two distinct and unrelated phenomena, viewing both within the domain of a shared aesthetic matrix allows us to see how postmodern and ethnic fiction were shaped by the same institutional histories and practices of creativity.⁶

Seeing postmodern and ethnic writers within a dialogic context allows us to raise questions such as: Why have minority writers, with few exceptions, found postmodernism such an inhospitable domain for their representations of contemporary social conditions? Díaz's *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*, Plascencia's *The People of Paper*, and Everett's *Erasure* are exemplary instances of this dialogic, critical relation between contemporary ethnic fiction and postmodern metafiction.

2. *Speculative realism draws on the history of genres and mixes generic*

forms. These authors share a second feature that, like the first one, reflects a historical dimension, but in a different context—namely, that of genre history and the mixing of generic forms. The turn within ethnic narrative that I am describing here parallels a development that occurred at the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth. In the midst of the revival of romance from the mid-eighteenth century to the early nineteenth, writers like Walter Scott and James Fenimore Cooper invented a new narrative form as a reaction against neoclassical, antiromantic strains of fiction, in favor of the sublime, the imaginary, and gothic strains of magic, enchantment, and wonder.

The mixed generic modes that we see appearing in numerous contemporary narratives mirror this historical phenomenon, but with a curious twist. Now the mixing of genres includes not just the canonic paradigms of classical, neoclassical, romantic, realist, and modernist origin, but also the outcast, low-brow, vernacular, not to say kitschy varieties of what has come to be known as genre fiction, including the fantasy, science fiction, gothic, noir, and erotic speculative writings of the postwar era. And they do so to focus on one theme: the curious status of race at the beginning of the twenty-first century. There are numerous possible instances of this feature of contemporary ethnic fiction. For example, Scott's *Hex* and Chabon's *Yiddish Policemen's Union* mix historical fiction and science fiction alternative history; Alexie's *Flight* and Lai's *Salt Fish Girl* blend myth and fantasy with elements of the traditional bildungsroman; and Acosta hilariously blends feminist bildungsroman with Chicano vampire stories in novels such as *Happy Hour at Casa Dracula*. All of these raise as formal and thematic concerns the very nature of genre, especially as it relates to matters of racial identity. I will return to this issue momentarily, but for now note that this second feature concerns the oxymoronic blending of history and the speculative genres.

3. *Speculative realism is invested in the real while working in the mode of historical fantasy.* The third feature concerns the topos and form of realism and the real in literary production, literary studies, and philosophy, but in the revised form of what I am calling here speculative realism, a hybrid of the fictional modes of the speculative genres, naturalism, social realism, surrealism, magical realism, "dirty" realism, post-positive realism, and metaphysical realism. That is why I find myself fascinated by the weird realism emerging from the group of contemporary philosophers that includes Alain Badiou, Ray Brassier, Quentin Meillassoux, and Graham Harman.⁷ Prominent in the writings of Junot Díaz, speculative realism is a form that is also pervasive in Murray's *The Conquest*, Whitehead's *John Henry Days* and *Zone One*, Yu's *How to Live*

Safely in a Science Fictional Universe, and Shteyngart's *Super Sad True Love Story*.

4. *Speculative realism explores the thematics of race, seeking a new racial imaginary in twenty-first-century America.* Here we enter the fraught territory of the fascination with and anxiety over the term "postrace." How? Why? For this generation of writers, born for the most part in the 1960s and 1970s, the heroic era of the struggle for civil rights is not a personal memory but a matter of social history. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, changing relationships between race and social justice, race and identity, and race and history now require American writers of color to invent a new imaginary for thinking about the nature of a just society and the role of race in its construction. While all of the authors I have referred to emphasize this specific aspect of the aesthetic I am describing, Foster's and Murray's novels, like Díaz's works, Everett's novels (including especially *Erasure*), and Whitehead's works do so with the particular aim of reconfiguring the thematics of race.

I wish to account for these four aspects common to the writings of contemporary ethnic writers and the defining aesthetic that results from a new racial imaginary that is being forged around us. As a generational cohort, these authors share these characteristics, I repeat, not as a merely contingent and random assemblage of features common to a vaguely defined spirit of the age, but as matters that go to the heart of their aesthetic projects and their concern with a new racial imaginary.

Form and Genre in Atomik Aztex

The two central concerns of *Atomik Aztex* are a reconceptualization of the way that race affects the formations of history and the reshaping of the form of the novel in order to represent that reconceptualization.

The formal characteristics of the novel give us the strongest clues as to how to read it. These characteristics include the muckraking tradition and form; *crónicas de Indias* and the history of conquest; the Mesoamerican calendrical narrative form, especially concerning fate and time in Mexican cosmology; the realist historical novel, in its depiction of the Battle of Leningrad and the conquest of Mexico; and science fiction, counterfactual worlds, and alternative and virtual history.

Foster begins by situating his narrative in an alternate universe where Aztecs have conquered the European invaders, launching into the world their own culture of totemic powers and blood sacrifices. In this separate reality the protagonist (Zenzontli, "Keeper of the House of Darkness") has

hallucinations, nightmares, and doomsday visions of another horrific world, where things are run apocalyptically by Europeans, and where consumerism reigns supreme—that is, a world that looks and feels a lot like our own. Simultaneously, in a surreal alternative present, Aztecs armed with automatic weapons and ancient totemic powers conquer and colonize 1940s Europe, while ghosts of the twentieth century's world wars emerge from the Farmer John Meatpacking Plant (an actual abattoir in contemporary Los Angeles) to haunt the present.

The first and perhaps most obvious of the forms and traditions that shape *Atomik Aztex* is the muckraking novel. A muckraker investigates and reports on a host of social issues, broadly including crime and corruption and often involving elected officials, political leaders, and influential members of business and industry. The term is associated with a number of important writers who emerged in the 1890s through the 1930s, a period roughly concurrent with the Progressive Era in the United States. These writers focused on issues having to do with social justice broadly and early versions of environmental justice, in particular.

Atomik Aztex follows this pattern closely enough that it's impossible to ignore it as a precursor model in theme (protest fiction) and form (social realism). Moreover, the muckraking focus of the realist segments of Foster's novel draw on scenes from the actual Farmer John Meatpacking Plant located in the town of Vernon, California, a pig slaughterhouse and abattoir that has been in that location since 1931. Probably the most striking visual feature of the actual plant is the huge mural on the external walls of the compound.

The mural depicts idyllic cartoon landscapes of fields, trees, corn crops, barns and other farm buildings, and of course, lots of pigs, big and small, engaged in a variety of activities. Some of the pigs are happy and carefree, lying in the grass, playing in the mud or with each other, piloting airplanes, sleeping in hammocks, and interacting with everyone from a buxom hillbilly girl to a boy who is fishing. This is the "Farmer John pork packing plant . . . with a wraparound porky pig mural you can see when you drive by" that Zenzontli mentions early in the book (AA 44) and again later (AA 169 and 179).

According to Anthony Lovett and Matt Maranian, the abattoir, "located in the exquisitely dismal industrial area of Vernon, . . . is one of the last slaughterhouses in a region that once teemed with factories that turned mammals into meat."⁸ *Atomik Aztex* focuses on a different kind of muck to rake. Here the topic is not socialism as a necessary response to unbridled capitalism. Instead, the issue is the way that, even in an alternative history, the grand, soggy compendium of untold stories, erasures, disappearances,

and genocides that constitutes the archive of current events and contemporary daily history constitutes a different kind of reality, requiring a different realism to capture its bizarre perversity and absurdity.

Crónicas de Indias: History of Conquest of Tenochtitlán

In addition to the muckraking form, another narrative of history drives *Atomik Aztex*—the advent of modernity in the Americas with the conquest of the Aztec and other pre-Columbian Mesoamerican empires. On a world historical level, the history of the conquest of Mexico served as a model for European-native relations for centuries after the fall of Tenochtitlán. The lesson it taught was that Europeans would triumph over natives, however formidable the apparent odds, because of cultural superiority that manifested itself visibly in equipment but resided much more powerfully in mental and moral qualities.⁹

As counterpoint to the Spanish version of the result of warfare between Indians and Europeans in America in the early sixteenth century, *Atomik Aztex* offers a different representation of the rules of war as experienced on the Russian front in the winter of 1942.¹⁰

Calendrical Narrative: Fate, Time in Mexican Cosmology

More importantly, the Aztec scenes and the entire temporal structure of the novel depict Mexican Indian notions of fate and time.¹¹ Other novels, most notably, Leslie Marmon Silko's *Almanac of the Dead* and Karen Tei Yamashita's *Tropic of Orange*, have conceptualized preconquest Mesoamerican time as multidimensional and eternally recurrent.¹² Here Foster uses indigenous Mesoamerican calendrical systems of temporality to show how time, and history, could work otherwise.

Think of a calendar that keeps track only of every Christmas or Thanksgiving Day or some other holiday, clustering them together as a separate unit of reckoning. Contrast this marking of time passing to one that keeps track of the flow of time between these exceptional moments by emphasizing only the sequential flow of days, weeks, and months. Now combine these two circular and linear trajectories. Within this doubled calendric count, any one day is thus essentially linked to at least two sign systems: the sequential days of a year cycle and the recurring cycle of ritual days, both of which contained within a repeating fifty-two year pattern.

The important part of this for my discussion of Foster's novel is that any particular event can be understood as unfolding in a dynamic process modeled by some past situation.¹³ The essential character of the controlling time is manifested in subtle ways, largely masked from human eyes. In human experience, outcomes remained contingent until manifested.¹⁴

This is the temporal pattern that Foster is alluding to in this novel when Zenzontli cautions his fellow warriors that “what’s happening here should be news to no one. Probably you’ve all gone thru similar experiences in multiple past lives” (AA 101). The historical doubling in Zenzontli's narrative comes with the additional complication that the temporality of his life unfolds in at least two geospatial worlds: an alternate one in which Chicanos or Aztecs have colonized Europe, and the familiar one of contemporary late capitalism and “stupefying consumerism” (AA 89), which dulls time into a sequence of linear causality.

The Battle of Stalingrad and the Conquest of Mexico

As if this wasn't confusing enough, there is yet one more narrative model to contend with in *Atomik Aztex*. In addition to the muckraking novel and the multiply compounded narrative based on Mesoamerican chronology, there is also the narrative model of the battle memoir and realist historical novel. *Atomik Aztex* uses the form of the great Russian novels about the Battle of Stalingrad—in particular, Vasily Grossman's superb novel, the Russian masterpiece you have probably never heard of, *Life and Fate*.¹⁵ Itself a retelling in twentieth-century form of Tolstoy's nineteenth-century masterpiece *War and Peace*, Grossman's novel, surprisingly little known in this country, is typical of this war novel genre. Both Grossman and Foster follow the stories of a large cast of characters at the time of the Battle of Stalingrad, between July 1942 and February 1943. *Atomik Aztex* is an exact parallel of Grossman's novel, in particular in its narration of the massive bloodletting on both sides in the attacks and counterattacks at the “Red Oktober Traktor Factory” (detailed in AA 90–103). The long desperate siege on the banks of the Volga River provides the backdrop against which Foster's allegorical Chicano, Latino, or Aztec characters try to discern meaning in their lives.

Science Fiction, Counterfactual Worlds, and Alternative and Virtual Histories

There is one last model of narrative form: science fiction itself, particularly in the mode of counterfactual worlds and alternative and virtual histories. While science fiction typically deals with a future waiting to happen just beyond this or that shift in history, after an imagined cataclysm or impending world-destroying apocalypse unleashes another universe waiting to be born, alternative histories—or “allohistory”¹⁶—take us in other directions.¹⁷ *Atomik Aztex* works within this mode of allohistory: “Rather than a tightly bound cause-and-effect process linking a given present (all aspects of which supposedly constitute a single *total* world) with a single future world, history [now] becomes a variety of paths that disperse into disjunct alternatives.”¹⁸ With these alternative realities come alternative values.

Reading *Atomik Aztex: The Applied Aztek Sciences of the Human Heart*

So, given all this, what makes *Atomik Aztex* not simply postmodern metafiction?¹⁹ If a case can be made for *Atomik Aztex* being distinctive, it must be related to the nature of the racial discourses of the novel and the ways that those discourses are represented: through an urban metro-Spanglish, metropolitan, Chicano *caló*, spoken by all of the characters—that is, in the modified form of what we might call multicultural science fiction speculative realism. This discursive feature suggests the disturbance of ethno- and racial centrism that is one feature of the fiction I am highlighting here. It represents the attempted achievement of a perspective from which one's own racial or ethnic culture is only one of a number of possible positions, no one of which acquires unproblematic ascendancy or transcendence. In fact, *Atomik Aztek* represents this failed transcendence in how it mocks, parodies, criticizes, and denaturalizes the cultural norms of both mainstream postmodern metafiction and ethnic fiction having to do with the dystopian mid-twentieth century and the *fin de siècle*.

The double-edged effect of this feature of Foster's novel is to render the exotic—a contemporary world ruled by Aztec social, political, and aesthetic ideologies—as a means of undermining the self-assurance of the superiority of any possible subaltern utopias. In the end, the difference between the imperialism of European coloniality and conquest, the racism of national socialism, the ruthless tyranny of Stalinism, the unchecked predation of modern mass consumer capitalism, and the pre-Columbian “applied Aztek Sciences of the Human Heart” (AA 5) remain undifferentiated.

Given this concern with allohistories and different futures, it is not surprising that in considering the relationships between history, memory, and the future, Benjamin can serve as a final touchstone. In “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” he points to just the conjuncture of past, present, and future of which Foster writes by referring to a 1920 painting by Paul Klee:

A Klee painting named “Angelus Novus” shows an angel looking as though he is about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating. His eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing in from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such a violence that the angel can no longer close them. The storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress.²⁰

In *Atomik Aztex*, angels of history are figured by the “novus” and the “novum,” the awakening of the dead by the catastrophes of history and “progress.” These “unquiet spirits” speak from “the other side of life about the some other side of History.” They utter their complaints from the depths of what Foster refers to as “a limbo of genocidal amnesia and official forgetting.” From each of these perspectives, history is what still lies before us, to be salvaged from the catastrophe of progress.²¹

This attention to the narrative possibilities of realism as a concern of ethnic fiction in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, in my opinion, amounts to a radical reevaluation of the trajectory of the development of narrative form. In returning to the real in its heterogeneous forms, ethnic realism acquires a different quality than the one literary history has assigned it over the past forty years. Instead of a timeline that takes us from naïve realism to plodding social realism, triumphant modernism, and demystified parodic postmodernism, something else results: when placed within a horizon that includes naturalism, realism, social realism, surrealism, magical realism, post-positive realism, and perhaps speculative realism, realism emerges as the substratum of narrative that has never been entirely superseded in the history of narrative forms. The aesthetic and political implications of this revision of literary history are immense and yet to be fully explored.

Notes

1. Dorian Warren, “Boxing Out: Race, Walmart, and the Politics of Market Regulation from Below,” talk at the Research Institute of the Center for Comparative Studies in Race and Ethnicity, Stanford University, November 8, 2012. See also “Changing Face of America Helps Assure Obama Victory,” Pew Research Center, November 7, 2012, people-press.org/2012/11/07/changing-face-of-america-helps-assure-obama-victory, accessed April 29, 2015.

2. Sesshu Foster, *Atomik Aztex* (San Francisco: City Lights, 2005). Quotes in the text from this work will be cited as “AA.”

3. Sesshu Foster, “Prefatory Note to *Atomik Aztex*,” *Amerasia Journal* 27, no. 2 (2001): 1.

4. Walter Benjamin, “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Henry Zohn (New York: Schocken, 1968), 253–64.

5. See Yxta Maya Murray, *The Conquest: A Novel* (New York: Rayo, 2002); Salvador Plascencia, *The People of Paper* (San Francisco: McSweeney's, 2005); Junot Díaz, *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* (New York: Riverhead, 2007); Marta Acosta, *Happy Hour at Casa Dracula* (New York: Pocket Star, 2006); Percival L. Everett, *Erasure: A Novel* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 2001); Colson Whitehead, *The*

Intuitionist (New York: Anchor, 1999), *John Henry Days: A Novel* (New York: Doubleday, 2001), and *Zone One* (New York: Doubleday, 2011); Dexter Palmer, *The Dream of Perpetual Motion: A Novel* (New York: St. Martin's, 2010); Darieck Scott, *Hex: A Novel of Love Spells* (New York: Carroll and Graf, 2007); Larissa Lai, *Salt Fish Girl* (Toronto: Thomas Allen, 2002); Charles Yu, *How to Live Safely in a Science Fictional Universe* (New York: Pantheon, 2010); Sherman Alexie, *Flight: A Novel* (New York: Black Cat, 2007); Michael Chabon, *Yiddish Policemen's Union* (New York: Harper, 2007); Gary Shteyngart, *Super Sad True Love Story* (New York: Random House, 2011); Jonathan Safran Foer, *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2005).

6. In his characterization of the post-1945 era of fiction writing in the United States as one shaped in significant ways by the rise of creative writing programs, Mark McGurl argues for a necessary critical realignment of the relationship between postmodern fiction and the so-called ethnic, minority American fiction. See Mark McGurl, *The Program Era: Postwar Fiction and the Rise of Creative Writing* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009).

7. See Ray Brassier, Iain Hamilton Grant, Graham Harman, Quentin Meillassoux, "Speculative Realism: A One-day Workshop," *Collapse* 3 (November 2007): 307-449.

8. Anthony Lovett and Matt Maranian, *L.A. Bizarro: The All-New Insider's Guide to the Obscure, the Absurd, and the Perverse in Los Angeles*, 2nd ed. (San Francisco: Chronicle, 2009, 282). "Appreciating the Art at Farmer John's Slaughterhouse" <http://labizarro.com/2010/08/23/farmer-johns/>.

9. Inga Clendinnen, "'Fierce and Unnatural Cruelty': Cortés and the Conquest of Mexico," *Representations* 3 (winter 1991): 65.

10. *Ibid.*, 78.

11. *Ibid.*, 84.

12. Leslie Marmon Silko, *The Almanac of the Dead* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1991); Karen Tei Yamashita, *Tropic of Orange* (Minneapolis, MN: Coffee House, 1997).

13. Clendinnen, "'Fierce and Unnatural Cruelty,'" 85.

14. *Ibid.*

15. Vasily Grossman, *Life and Fate: A Novel*, trans. Robert Chandler. (New York: Harper and Row, 1985).

16. Istvan Csicsery-Ronay, *The Seven Beauties of Science Fiction* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2008), 102.

17. *Ibid.*, 77-78.

18. *Ibid.*, 94.

19. *Atomik Aztex* falls within the tradition of novels that retell the history of the conquest of Mexico, but with a difference. See Orson Scott Card, *Pastwatch: The Redemption of Christopher Columbus* (New York: TOR, 1996); Murray, *The Conquest*; Christopher Evans, *Aztec Century* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1993).

20. Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," 257-58.

21. Foster, "Prefatory Note to *Atomik Aztex*," 1.