



## CYBERPUNK: MALAYSIA

*Zen Cho (Editor) , Angeline Woon , Anna Tan , Sharmilla Ganesan , Terence Toh , Rafil Elyas , Ted Mahsun , William Tham Wai Liang , more... Kris Williamson , Adiwijaya Iskandar , Ai-May Chin , Tina Isaacs , Tariq Kamal , Zedeck Siew , Sek Han Foo ...less*

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Cyberpunk as you've never seen it before...

Science fiction is all about outrageous ideas. Nice

Malay girls breaking the rules. Censorship. Brain drain.

Moral policing. Migrant exploitation. All the stuff of fiction, obviously.

But these 14 short stories take it one step further. The nice Malay girls are cyborgs. The spambots are people. The brains have drained into cyberspace, and the censorship is inside your head.

Welcome to Cyberpunk: Malaysia.

### CYBERPUNK: MALAYSIA Details

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Zen Cho (Editor) , Angeline Woon , Anna Tan , Sharmilla Ganesan , Terence Toh , Rafil Elyas ,  
Author : Ted Mahsun , William Tham Wai Liang , more... Kris Williamson , Adiwijaya Iskandar , Ai-May  
Chin , Tina Isaacs , Tariq Kamal , Zedeck Siew , Sek Han Foo ...less

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## From Reader Review CYBERPUNK: MALAYSIA for online ebook

### Krayfish1 says

The stories are all solid and set in interesting future Malaysias.

"Attack of the Spambots" -- about advertisers taking things too far -- stood out.

I liked the main characters and premise of "What the Andromaid Reads at Night" but the ending seemed abrupt.

"The Wall that Wasn't a Wall" is dark, as is "October 11"

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### Kam-Hung Soh says

Many of stories require some development (it's not interesting to read some scene setting and a conclusion).

The more memorable stories question or satirise the conventions of Malaysian society, such as whether an android who self-identifies as a woman still needs to wear a tudung (head scarf) over her motile nano-tech hair and zombie humans spamming people with advertising.

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### Zara says

Not going to lie... I wasn't expecting much but I was impressed by this bunch of stories. Always great to read speculative fiction set in a place I am familiar with, especially when it incorporates our very special culture.

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### Fadzlishah Johanabas says

Like many other Malaysian Science Fiction fans, I was excited by the very thought of this anthology, which is the first--to my knowledge--Malaysian English Science Fiction anthology.

I love the cover: plain foil that doubles as a murky mirror. Perhaps it's a nod to *Mirrorshades*, a Cyberpunk anthology published in 1986. The digital edition covers are pretty, too.

Sadly, that's about the only positive thing I can say about this anthology, other than a few amazing stories that I'll mention in a bit. Most of the stories aren't even Science Fiction, much less Cyberpunk. They're merely General Fiction with robots and plasma guns thrown in so that they can pass off as SF. As a genre writer, this pisses me off. How can we expect Malaysian SF to be taken seriously?

Well, on with my review of each story in the anthology.

#### "Underneath Her Tudung"

At its essence, this is a story about a young woman who is accepting her new existence as a cyborg.

However, the storytelling is an absolute mess. It's a Manglish fest, but the mangled English felt...forced, as if used for its effect. The story meanders and doesn't have any focus at all. I'm not sure if using this story as

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the opening piece is a good idea. It definitely sets the book as Malaysian, though, both for its terrible Manglish, and for its unfocused storytelling.

#### "Codes"

It's a story about a girl using a fake identity to bypass the restrictions set on Muslims. That ends in something completely off tangent and didactic. Another typical Malaysian storytelling, and forgettable.

#### "Personal"

I'm frustrated with this one. The writing is good and engaging, but the story doesn't go anywhere. It's about a woman's fear of Personal Device theft—in other words, one's entire digital signature is stolen. While the story goes on and on about that fear, as well as world building, it feels as though the real story is in the rushed and summarized ending scene.

#### "Attack of the Spambots"

A case of abused exclamation marks and misplaced colons. But. I can definitely see this one as an over-acted B-grade movie in SyFy, and it's a good thing. Sort of. The ending could have been expanded more, but overall, it's a fun read—provided one doesn't overanalyze things.

#### "One Hundred Years: Machine"

The first piece in this anthology that actually reads like Science Fiction. The way it's told, written as a dissertation abstract, is also interesting and well-chosen. While most Cyberpunk stories are told from an underdog's perspective, this one is told from the Man's view. I like this one.

#### "What the Andromaid Reads at Night"

This story is told in a detached third person narration in line with the tradition of fables and folktales. It's an example of plot-driven stories where characterization is secondary. It's good that the writer doesn't employ the Pinocchio trope. The andromaid doesn't pretend to be human; it's a robot discovering the wonders of Islam in a radically secular nation. It is, however, reminiscent of Chappie, especially with the identity/memory transfer.

#### "Kakak"

Take an Indonesian maid's dilemma in newspapers and dramas, and you'll get exactly the same story. This is nowhere near Science Fiction, much less Cyberpunk. I don't know what this story is doing in this anthology.

"The Wall that wasn't a Wall"

No robots or wearable/personalized technology in this piece, which is a breath of fresh air. Set in a dystopian future where some people are no better off than animals, it's a decent read. However, the world building falls flat.

"The Twins"

THIS SHOULD HAVE BEEEN THE OPENING PIECE! Robots possessed by spirits? Yes! Tasteful garnishing of Manglish? Yes! Amazing storytelling? Yes! I love this story. If there is only one story I can recommend out of this anthology, "The Twins" is it. I look forward to reading more from the author.

"October 11"

I got bored reading this. The story is incomplete; it feels as though there should be a continuation after the reveal at the end of the story for it to have a complete arc.

"Undercover in Tanah Firdaus"

Almost two pages of backstory, which sets the world to something like Final Fantasy VII with its platform-city where the privileged enjoy luxuries and sunlight, while the undercity (slums) is in perpetual shadow. The story starts off slow, with plenty of acronyms and expositions and clunky world building, but it picks up when Inspector Moktar submits his holographic reports. I love this different format of storytelling, and how instead of the usual slum-is-bad-and-the-upper-society-needs-to-be-overtaken trope (think Elysium and In Time), this story shows the opposite. Despite the exposition at the beginning, this is a good and solid piece, one that doesn't deserve to be buried in the middle of the anthology.

"Unusual Suspects"

Finally, a story in this anthology that reads like actual Science Fiction with a hard SF bent! I enjoyed the story...until the final scene, with its forced Manglish, because that's how Malays talk, apparently, as opposed to the Caucasian protagonist. Ruined my reading experience. Gah!

"The White Mask"

The author has delivered another brilliant story. Take smart paint and graffiti artists who are anti-establishment, and we get an awesome Cyberpunk story right here. No robots are needed. I love how the story is told in fragmented streams of consciousness. Another solid piece.

"Extracts From DMZine #13 (January 2115)"

I feel like this “story” is smarter than I am. Interesting choice of formatting, but the articles appear disjointed & so unrelated that I think I’m missing something here. Worth a reread later.

What I do notice in this anthology is that...I didn't detect any glaring typos. It is, however, severely underwhelming, and a disappointing read for an SFF fan. It's especially disappointing when Manglish is used for effect instead of effective communication, and good stories are buried in the middle of the anthology, in danger of not being read should people stop reading after the first few stories. Then again, these are my personal thoughts, and I do hope that others will love the entire book.

After all, I do fervently hope that this will be the first Malaysian-English SF anthology, and not the only one.

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### **Anna Tan says**

I don't know if it's fair to rate a book that I have a story in, but well, I guess I'm rating all the stories in the book other than mine. =) Anyway, as much as I was hoping that I would fall desperately in love with Cyberpunk: Malaysia, I didn't. I liked it well enough. It's pretty decent. But it's not *gripping*. But as far as debut Malaysian Sci-Fi goes, it's a good offering. So that's 3.5 stars from me!

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There is a quote (I think) which says something about writers reflecting the state of their country through their stories. I think Cyberpunk: Malaysia does that. In imagining the near future, the writers in this anthology give vent to their worries about religion and religious control, the greed of our politicians, the growing racial divide, the growing economic divide, the burgeoning anger of the populace, the treatment of foreign workers and the polarizing effect of knowledge or the lack thereof.

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#### **Likes:**

*Attack of the spambots* - Terence Toh  
*What the andromaid reads at night* - Ted Mahsun  
*The wall that wasn't a wall* - Kris Williamson  
*The twins* - Adiwijaya Iskandar  
*October 11* - Chin Ai-May  
*Undercover in Tanah Firdaus* - Tina Isaacs  
*Unusual suspects* - Tariq Kamal  
*The White Mask* - Zedeck Siew

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### **Terri says**

I wondered while reading this whether cyberpunk can ever be hopeful? There was one optimistic story in this collection but otherwise it was all pretty grim. I guess it's the nature of the genre, but maybe it's time for cyberpunk which looks at the ways technology can enhance people's lives rather than plunging everyone into an immediate dystopia. There were some interesting ideas here, but also some stuff that felt dated and

repetitive.

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### **Fadillah says**

Is it cyberpunk? Some of it are close enough. Is it engaging and thrilling? I'd say majority of the featured stories indeed good. I am surprised to see the low rating by some of few readers but based on their review, i get why they gave such rating. It really is the matter of individual's preferences. I picked up this book because i just finished watching Black Mirror Netflix series last month. I don't expect it to be amazing and mind boggling like the TV show but yeah, this book has a few moments that brought me back to the certain black mirror's scenes. The first 2 stories didn't grip me at all. I decided to move on to the 3rd story and i decided if it's still lacking, I wanted to give up reading this book. Fortunately, the 3rd story managed to lure me back in. Overall, I'm rating this as 4 out 5 stars . People may not enjoy it as much as i did but i glad i bought this on Google playbook.

Here's my favorite list of stories :

1. Personal by Sharmilla Ganesan
2. Attack of the spambots by Terrence Toh
3. What the andromaidns read at night by Ted Mahsun
4. Kakak by William Tham Wai Liang
5. October 11 by Chin Ai May
- 6.The White Mask by Zedeck Siew
7. Extracts from DMZINE by Foo Sek Han

The rest of the stories didn't sit well with me. I didn't despise them but i didnt enjoy them either.

Sidenote: I couldn't help but notice how "Tanah Firdaus" resembles the concept of High Rise (both book and movie) but I could be wrong though.

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### **William Tham says**

Disclaimer: I got featured in this collection

So while cyberpunk isn't really my thing, I did enjoy quite a few stories in the collection-my particular favourite was Foo Sek Han's 'Extracts from DMZine': funny, dystopian, tragic, irreverent while remaining poignant in a strange way. It was a pretty good read overall.

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### **Firdaus Abu Bakar says**

i am not impressed with "hey-we-can-see-the-future" type of stories in this collection but if i am destined live long enough, it would be great to have a grab of DMZINE #13 (JANUARY 2115).

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### **Chelsea Mcgill says**

I must admit that before picking up this book I hadn't read anything marketed as "cyberpunk." I requested this book because I wanted to read some Malaysian science fiction. From this collection, I got the feeling that "cyberpunk" isn't my favorite sub-genre of SFF. That being said, I did enjoy this collection of short stories set in Malaysia of the future (or alternative present?). A majority made me think, like good speculative fiction should.

There were two (related) things that made this collection difficult for me. First was that the authors tended to assume that the reader knew certain things about Kuala Lumpur or about Malaysian society. My knowledge of Malaysian society is scanty at best, so sometimes I had trouble understanding the references. A bit more description would have been helpful to smooth this out. (Since SFF usually creates an alternative reality, this is an important part of genre storytelling that sometimes felt missing in this anthology. When reading speculative fiction, I shouldn't have to know any background except what the author gives me - which wasn't the case for several of these stories.)

Second, and related to the first, is that in several stories some of the most important lines are spoken in what I assume is Malay. At least, I guess that they're the most important lines. Having no background in the language, I was again left at a loss trying to figure out what they could possibly be saying. I think that this is partially because of Fixi Novo's publishing manifesto:\

1. We believe that omputih/gwailoh-speak is a Malaysian language.
5. We will not use italics for non-American/ non-English terms. This is because those words are not foreign to a Malaysian audience.... italics are a form of apology.

While I understand these sentiments (and I applaud the publisher for saying in no uncertain terms that Malaysian words are not inferior to English ones!), it makes it difficult for a non-Malaysian reader to understand. Perhaps footnotes or endnotes explaining what the words mean would help? Or, since this is a speculative fiction book, the authors could have used the genre's techniques for introducing words from completely new languages. In other words, I totally understand why these Malaysian terms were used, but as a non-Malaysian reader I want to understand the stories too!

Read the rest of the review, including my thoughts on each story, on my blog:  
<http://thegloballycurious.blogspot.co...>

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## Grace says

To be fair, Cyber is not a particular genre of interest- difficult to digest towards the end. Abstracts of a post modernistic Malaysia and creative- weird futuristic concepts somewhat made my eyelids heavy and mouth a perpetual "O" shape... Of course literary/ writing skills are pretty good... Just not enough to make it a mouth watering page turner. There are other better Fixi short story books on one shelf I would happily reread. Not this one.

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## declis says

The cover of the book is really pretty and special, I've never seen it before. I'm not sure about some short stories, most of them were strange and I didn't understand them. But 3 or 4 were really good. It's a nice collection of cyberpunk short stories, respect for the work.

## Just A. Bean says

Overall I enjoyed this collection. I will admit that a lot of the geographical references went over my head, but the cultural and political issues were fairly well laid out over the book.

As with any collection, the content varied, and I didn't finish some stories usually due to being unrelentingly grim, but most had a balance between dystopia and fight against oppression. The themes of personhood, surveillance and state oppression were pretty strongly represented, but many of the stories were humorous and some were hopeful.

It did make me curious about the definition of Cyberpunk, especially the punk part of that, and how that has evolved over the last thirty years or so.

(I got a copy of this book via goodreads giveaway in exchange for an honest review. Then I lost the book so it's pretty horrifically late.)

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## Anis Suhaila says

Cyberpunk was quite hard to finish as I'm not a fan of science-fiction/dystopian and there were just so many scientific terms (I know I should take the initiative to google).

But I really loved the short stories which still highlighted the human nature, the human stories rather than focusing too much on the science of it all.

My favourites were Sharmilla Ganesan's Personal for exaggerating the horror truth of our attachment to our devices and Ted Mahsun's What The Andromaid Reads at Night for showing us the possibility of a relationship between a robot and a human. Tina Isaac's Undercover In Tanah Firdaus reminds me a little bit of the Avatar film.

There were a few hits and missed which what you would expect from an anthology.

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## Margaret says

The good (fun, humorous and experimental):

The Andromaid Reads At Night  
Attack of the Spambots  
Extracts from DMzine  
The White Mask

I am trying to sound positive but the other stories are not great. Some are like knock offs of recent science fiction films (especially parts of Undercover In Tanah Firdaus which may be better as a movie, because it read like a screenplay written by a teenager in a few hours and then cramped into a short story). Stories like Kakak, Codes and Personal treat maid abuse, identity theft and fakery as something very futuristic when its

all already happening now, as if the writers did little research.

Normally Fixi delivers solid story collections but this one was not one of them.

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