



## METAtropolis: The Dawn of Uncivilization

*John Scalzi (Editor, Narrator) , Jay Lake (Contributor) , Tobias S. Buckell (Contributor) , Elizabeth Bear (Contributor) , Karl Schroeder (Contributor) , Michael Hogan (Narrator) , Scott Brick (Narrator) , Kandyse McClure (Narrator) , more... Alessandro Juliani (Narrator) , Stefan Rudnick (Narrator) ...less*

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Five original tales set in a shared urban future--from some of the hottest young writers in modern SF

More than an anthology, *Metatropolis* is the brainchild of five of science fiction's hottest writers--Elizabeth Bear, Tobias Buckell, Jay Lake, Karl Schroeder, and project editor John Scalzi---who combined their talents to build a new urban future, and then wrote their own stories in this collectively-constructed world. The results are individual glimpses of a shared vision, and a reading experience unlike any you've had before.

A strange man comes to an even stranger encampment...a bouncer becomes the linchpin of an unexpected urban movement...a courier on the run has to decide who to trust in a dangerous city...a slacker in a "zero-footprint" town gets a most unusual new job...and a weapons investigator uses his skills to discover a metropolis hidden right in front of his eyes.

Welcome to the future of cities. Welcome to *Metatropolis*.

Contents:

Introduction (METAtropolis) - essay by John Scalzi

In the Forests of the Night - novella by Jay Lake

Stochasti-city - novella by Tobias S. Buckell

The Red in the Sky Is Our Blood - novelette by Elizabeth Bear

Utere Nihil Non Extra Quiritationem Suis - novella by John Scalzi

To Hie from Far Cilenia - novella by Karl Schroeder

## METAtropolis: The Dawn of Uncivilization Details

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# From Reader Review METAtropolis: The Dawn of Uncivilization for online ebook

## Wendy says

METAtropolis is a collection of short stories by several science fiction authors who decided that, rather than simply doing a collection of stories based on a specific theme, they would create a world together, and write stories within that world. I really liked this concept, as well as the fact that three of the audiobook narrators are actors from *Battlestar Galactica*, one of my favourite television shows.

John Scalzi is the editor of the book and introduces each story. He also wrote the only short story within the book that I truly enjoyed. His story, wonderfully narrated by Alessandro Juliani, employed Scalzi's usual sense of humour and, as he explains, fills the gap in the METAtropolis left by the other authors because it is a story about people who actually live reasonably happily within the major cities. The story somewhat addresses something that really bothered me when I started reading this. I realized that I couldn't recall any depiction of humanity's future that doesn't feature a dystopia where our flaws and hubris have destroyed everything, or a utopia that is too inhuman to be true and must be destroyed. METAtropolis made me realize just how little we think of humanity and our future.

METAtropolis is a typical world where the less fortunate and the disillusioned live outside the gated communities of the rich, thinking up ways to bring anarchy to the lives of the better off. There is no shortage of lecturing the reader in various ways over how human nature has led to this current state of affairs and, outside of Scalzi's story, we get to be privy to the greed and desperation of not-quite starving people who seek to survive and to balance the scales through overzealous protests.

As I said, I only found Scalzi's entry to be interesting, with memorable characters and events. As his story takes place within the same world, he didn't neglect the anarchists in his account, but he did turn their beliefs upside down a bit by not merely making them the downtrodden who must obviously be good in comparison to the rich people who must obviously be bad because of their blissful ignorance.

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## Stefan says

Metatropolis is an interesting book, to say the least: in addition to being a "shared world" anthology, featuring stories from five authors working in the same "collectively-constructed" future setting, it's also (as far as I know) unique in that it was released first as an audio book (reviewed below by Kat) and only subsequently as a traditional "paper" book, first as a limited edition by Subterranean Press, and now in a shiny new edition by Tor.

The concept of the book's shared world is equally interesting: due to environmental change and political upheaval, the idea of national government has been superseded by something akin to city states, often self-governed or in partnership with other cities across the world, while outside the city walls the situation may be more similar to what you'd find in a post-apocalyptic novel. Each of the five stories collected in

Metatropolis explores the concept of what such a city or society might be like in interesting, different and (mostly) successful ways.

If you're not sold yet, the list of authors reads like a veritable All Star team of current, interesting SFF authors: Jay Lake, Tobias Buckell, Elizabeth Bear, Karl Schroeder and John Scalzi, who also served as editor for the entire project.

"In the Forests of the Night" by Jay Lake opens Metatropolis with a powerful story about a mysterious and charismatic stranger arriving in Cascadiopolis — a hidden city situated in the Cascades area that stretches from Portland up to Vancouver. As the first story in the anthology, it unfortunately bears the burden of having to include some world-building information, which is (more or less gracefully) handled by including extracts from economics and sociology texts that draw up the anthology's shared world future in a few quick strokes. Passing over those necessary info dumps, you'll find a beautiful story, effectively displaying a number of different perspectives, written in gorgeous, dense prose that just begs to be reread. The story lays on the William Blake a bit too thickly — the main character's name Tygre is one thing, but naming part of the city Symmetry was a bit much for me. Still, filled with characters that have the raw power of archetypes, this is nothing short of an excellent story. (Four stars.)

Tobias Buckell's entry, with the groan-inducing title "Stochasti-City", switches us over to a drastically changed Detroit, and to Reginald, an ex-military bar bouncer who becomes involved in a unique urban rebellion. The story has a not-quite-here-yet future realism that reminded me of Cory Doctorow, with several elements that seem as if they could be happening today — but not quite. I enjoyed Reginald's story of gradual personal awakening, the more subtly handled world-building touches, and especially the sense of real social change occurring in the story. (Three stars.)

Next up is Elizabeth Bear's "The Red in the Sky is our Blood," the gripping story of Cadence Grange and her not-quite-stepdaughter Furuza. It describes another unique social experiment, cleverly hinted at in Tobias Buckell's story, and also refers back to the Cascades setting of "In the Forests of the Night," which pulls the entire anthology so far into a coherent whole and helps its fictional world become more real. This story also contains the most beautiful prose in the entire anthology (which is saying a lot, given that it also features Jay Lake). Just read this gem of a sentence: "Cadie could picture the conversation like intersecting fingers, locked at the base but pointing in incompatible directions, pushing against one another." (Four stars.)

John Scalzi's story "Utere Nihil Non Extra Quiritationem Suis" (which, I believe, is Latin for "Look, I'm smart and know impressive quotes") just didn't work for me. Its protagonist Benjamin has the smarmy, sarcastic sense of humor of almost every character in the author's novels, and the plot, involving a slacker forced into gross manual labor, somehow manages to be improbable at first and predictable towards the end. It also involves large amounts of pig excrement. There are some interesting looks at people living in a city-based society, contrasted effectively with life outside in the wilderness, but aside from this, I could have done without it. Still, if you generally enjoy John Scalzi's style and sense of humor, you will probably like this story too. (One star.)

Thankfully, Karl Schroeder's "To Hie from Far Cilenia" closes out Metatropolis with a sizzling mind-bender of a story about technology-enhanced "virtual" levels of society that overlay — and influence — everyday reality. The ending rattles a bit, but there are enough stunning ideas (cyranoids!) to make "To Hie from Far Cilenia" a story that's almost impossible to summarize, but also one you're guaranteed to remember for a long time. (Four stars.)

Taken all together, Metatropolis is a unique and mostly high quality collection of connected stories by some

of today's most exciting authors. On one level, the anthology has an important and relevant message about the state of our present society and the direction we're heading in. On another, it's just a great read with some truly memorable stories. Check it out.

(This review was also published at the Fantasy Literature website: [www.fantasyliterature.com](http://www.fantasyliterature.com) --- come check us out!)

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## **Victor Carson says**

I am not a frequent reader of futuristic fiction but a cooperative venture of five authors, writing five separate stories, linked by a shared vision of the future of several major cities, induced me to read *METAtropolis*. Also, I was looking for an audio-book to balance my other, Kindle-based, reading, and I recognized several of the professional narrators engaged for this project. Some of the five stories appealed to me very much, others not quite as much. All were thought-provoking while still being entertaining literature. Following the example of several other reviewers, I will offer a few comments about each of the stories.

*In the Forests of the Night* by Jay Lake: I liked the setting in the Cascade Mountains, the description of the city, Cascediopolis, established by people who think they can live in the wilds, use technology, and develop new environmental technology that will benefit them and other similar eco-friendly groups across the country. The hostility of the remnants of the U.S. central government and the greed of the remaining capitalistic society is chilling. The main characters, a hero named Tygre Tygre, and a hired assassin grabbed my attention.

*Stochasti-City* by Tobias Buckell: This story features a small-time bouncer in a bar in central Detroit, several miles from his home in an abandoned house in the Detroit suburbs – a very difficult commute in the largely post-internal combustion engine age. The skyscrapers of the city are vacant but guarded by private security to keep people from repurposing them for center-city habitation. How this person becomes involved with a bicycle-mounted flying squad intent on capturing one of the highest buildings is well written. The concept of “twerking” (not the dance fad) to farm-out tasks to a large group via text messaging is also well conceived.

*The Red in the Sky is Our Blood* by Elizabeth Bear: This story features less of the meta-city of Detroit than it does of the main character's personal problem, as the ex-wife of a Russian mobster. Her escape from meta-Detroit to a cooperative in a former suburban office complex is interesting.

*Utere Nihil non Extra Quiritationem Suis* by John Scalzi: This story has the most humor. The main character is a post-high school slacker in New St. Louis, who gets a dirty job because he must work or leave the city for the “wilds.” How he manages to be something of a hero is fun reading. The stress between the new self-sufficient city and its surrounding wild areas is something to think about, as well.

*To Hi from Far Celinea* by Karl Schroeder: This story reminded me, a bit, of *Reamde*, a novel by Neal Stephenson. The meta-city, in this case, exists largely in cyber-space, except that the fantasy is projected on the landscape you occupy in the solid world. Your reality is changed by wearing a type of Google-glasses which project additional characters, settings, clothing, decoration, etc. The fantasy goes two levels deeper, however, *It 2* and *It 3*, which seem to pose a threat to the “real” world, partially by their levels of secrecy and hidden spaces. This story was the most imaginative of the five although fairly hard to follow, for a fantasy neophyte.

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## **Karlo says**

Occasionally you get lucky and a book you read causes you to positively thrum with energy; you may even look at things differently when you put the book down. I'm not saying world or life changing, but perhaps a momentary wobble in perspective or thinking. It left me with a lopsided smirk/grin and itchy arms. This book did that for me; but it kinda snuck/sneaked up on me.

Lake starts it off, and I was pleasantly surprised by his story. I didn't quite get if he was doing a run-and-gun Merc-style story or something Techno-nomadic. He messed me up for a while in his use of names (I actually processed two versions of the story in parallel; one with humans, one with animals [echoes of Simak's City running in my mind:]). The image of a town that is functionally a forest; not Robin Hood or Swiss Family Robinson, but really with low to zero footprint was a radical concept. By the time it finished, I ended up with a religious/spiritual residue. Lake's use of cooking and food in a few scene's was very evocative. This was my favourite story.

Buckell's story was more grounded in more familiar tropes; a little cyberpunk filtered through a recessionary US lens; a little anarchistic feel somewhere between Hakim Bey's TAZ and Doctorow's Little Brother. I really didn't see the Caribbean influence I expect from him, which was interesting. Watching HBO's Hung (guilty, guilty) also provided additional context for a city in decline. The re-purposed buildings were nicely handled, and the manner in which the protests were coordinated and staged was very new to me. Wonderful.

Bear's story; complementary as it was to Buckell, had a wonderful cadence to it's story. The manner in which she leads us and the POV character through the rondel of the story was throughly engaging, allowing me to focus my wonder on the world Bear revealed.

Scalzi's story was the easiest to digest, with his voice most like that of a Heinlein juvenile. I found it easy to follow, and the plot was the easiest to predict. It was my least favourite story, but that might be to due to my having reached a saturation point with regards to his style.

Schroeder; my neighbourhood author (he lives about 10 mins from me) leaves me with more questions than answers. I, like the characters, feel that I've been led to a boundary of understanding that I cannot cross. I appreciate that he makes me question my concepts / structures by the end of his story, and also reminds me that sometimes in every model of perception, some things are dangerous.

Great job folks!

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## **Kat Hooper says**

ORIGINALLY POSTED AT Fantasy Literature.

METAtropolis: It's not a utopia. It's just maybe something that sucks a little less

It's the end of the world as we know it, and it turns out that all those eco-freaks were right all along. We humans destroyed the planet and now we've got to live with the mess we've made. Many world governments, including the U.S., have been essentially dismantled and large, mostly independent and self-governing city-states have taken their place.

Under the direction of John Scalzi, the story authors — Jay Lake, Tobias Buckell, Elizabeth Bear, Karl Schroeder, and Scalzi himself — got together to map out their new post-apocalyptic world and their goals for METAtropolis. (Scalzi gives insight into some of this during the introductions to each story in the audiobook version.) Thus, though the stories are set in different locales and use different characters, the history and rules are the same, and they sometimes even reference each other. This sounds like a terrific idea, and indeed the focus on collaboration is evident. I liked that some concepts, such as “turking”, are introduced and explained in one story, then used again in a later one.

So what about the stories?

“In the Forests of the Night” by Jay Lake: After the collapse of the United States government, The Cascadian Independence Project is finally thriving and is populated by Silicon Valley techies who are more interested in being green than in venture capitalism. They live in holes in the ground, develop new technologies, and just want to be left alone to live together cooperatively. Their lives are disrupted when a messiah figure shows up.

I love Jay Lake's style — character-driven, detailed, lush — and I enjoyed the setting of Cascadia — the swath of rich forest land in the Pacific Northwest. But this story didn't hold together for me. The inclusion of the messiah figure was confusing and had no relation to the rest of the stories. Also, since a lot of this new world's background (e.g., oil crunch, resource drain, etc.) was provided in this story, there's quite a lot of exposition (about how we humans have destroyed the world) to suffer through. This got old pretty quickly because the green anti-capitalism messages were just too heavy-handed. However, the audio production of this story was excellent and Michael Hogan is a terrific reader.

Tobias Buckell's story, “Stochasti-City,” set in Detroit, was much better. At least there was a coherent story and an interesting main character here. Reginald is just looking out for himself, but when he takes a risky high-paying turking job, he gets involved with some anti-automobile eco-terrorists. I enjoyed this character and some of the ideas that Buckell presents, though all of the anti-whatever themes were starting to grate. Again, another nice reading, this one by Scott Brick.

Elizabeth Bear's “The Red in the Sky is Our Blood” is also set in Detroit and complements Buckell's story. I think this story was supposed to be hopeful, as it imagined a way that like-minded people might live and work together for their common good, but I just found it bleak and depressing. In Elizabeth Bear's character's own words: “It's not a utopia. It's just maybe something that sucks a little less.” This story was read by Kandyse McClure who does a good job.

John Scalzi tells a light-hearted story that, for the first time in this collection, was entertaining in its own right. That is, its plot and characters weren't over-shadowed by the message. Benjy, who lives in New St. Louis, has waited until the last minute to get his job and is in danger of being exiled. The city government assigns jobs, but because Benjy is a slacker and didn't do so well on his aptitude tests, he gets stuck doing the worst job in the city. The reader, Alessandro Guilian, had Benjy down perfectly and “Utere Nihil Non Extra Quiritationem Suis” was very funny. I laughed aloud often and finally felt like I wasn't wasting my time with METAtropolis.



Stefan Rudnicki, who I completely adore, read Karl Schroeder's "To Hie from Far Celenia," but that's not the only reason I liked it. Here we learn that people of post-apocalyptic Earth are starting to deal with life by retreating into virtual worlds that have their own economies and constantly shifting world maps. Some people do this for fun (perhaps they never got over the steampunk fad and they still want to wear paisley and pocket watches, for example) and some do it for other reasons... I enjoyed the world-building in this story and it stretched my brain more than the previous tales did. Also, the future evolution we experience in this story is the one that seems most likely to me, and there were a few ideas that truly fascinated me, such as the autistic Cyranoid.

All in all, I loved the premise of METAtropolis, the authors did a great job with their collaboration, and the production, by Brilliance Audio, was excellent. However, I only truly enjoyed half of the collection because, until John Scalzi's story, I just got tired of reading about climate change, zero footprint, carbon load, globalization, resource drains, big-capital, etc. These anti-everything messages aren't new and interesting ideas anymore, and they were just too heavy-handed for greedy humans like me.

ORIGINALLY POSTED AT Fantasy Literature.

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### **Kiri says**

This book was conceived as a joint project between five authors, in which they co-created the world in which their stories would be set, but then took their stories in very different directions. They're all concerned with the evolution of cities and breakdown of our current capitalistic, consumption-based economy. Not quite post-apocalyptic, nevertheless some of the stories have a distinct survivalist feel to them, and they are all creative and thought-provoking.

I liked how the stories wound back and forth and borrowed terms and references from each other, although it felt somewhat artificial and jarring each time this bit of familiarity popped up, because the individual writing styles of the authors were so different. But "turking" (no one in the stories can remember where this came from -- amusing) and vertical farms (cool idea) were both fun to encounter and re-encounter.

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### **Hollowspine says**

METAtropolis is a collection of short stories all taking place in the same shifting world. A future that in some ways seems all too plausible, our planet ravaged by our destructive culture, rampant poverty, mansions and skyscrapers left empty, but guarded and corporations struggle against green revolutions.

The audio version had a lot of talent, actors from Battlestar Galatica read each story. That said it takes a bit more than being an actor to do good voice work. So, the readers were a bit hit and miss for me.

The stories themselves were hit and miss as well. It's especially unfortunate when the first story in the collection has me rolling my eyes, because that sets the tone for the rest of them, as Scalzi himself pointed out in his introduction. In the Forests of the Night, by Jay Lake, was a tidy bit of Gary Stu action. Tygre Tygre (yes that's how it's spelled, not Tyger, Lake even writes that in so as you don't mistake just how cool this character is) is a what you'd get if a pulp hero like Doc Savage had a kid with Neo from the Matrix. He's silent, aloof, Godlike and ridiculous. If you asked me what that story was about, well, I can only shrug. There

are so many senseless scenes and lines that seemed only to say, "I'm so cool your knees are jelly. Oh, and I don't care." Also, ladies keep your hands off, because Tygre's a mans-man and if you touch him he'll snap your wrist. For what reason? Just because he can, I guess?

The story was so sexist I wanted to puke. Not only did Tygre's pheromones reduce even mighty Bashar to a quivering fool, the only two people to escape his influence only did so out of womanly irrationality and jealousy and in the end, weren't allowed to do anything to Tygre, he could only be taken out by a fellow man.

The only thing I enjoyed about that particular story was the reader, Michael Hogan, I only wish his wonderful voice could have been reading a story good enough to equal it.

Other than that the stories were all a bit lackluster and there's not much to say for them. They neither annoyed me as much as *In the Forests of the Night*, which seems to have taken up most of this review, neither were they so great that they deserve much mention.

To be quick now, the second story *Stochasti-City* by Bucknell and narrated by Scott Brick was interesting and a much appreciated break from the blah-blah of Lake's story. The story was delivered in clear terms, though there was some mystery to it, the characters were interesting and well developed (quite a change there) and the story was fun to listen to and well narrated by Brick. Probably my favorite of the book. Though, that said the protest scenes don't hold a candle to Cory Doctorow's.

Third up is another eye-roller. Narrated Kandyse McClure, who...wasn't my favorite reader, put odd emphasis in odd places and over all wasn't the greatest. The story *The Red in the Sky is Our Blood*," by Elizabeth Bear had another rather unbelievable protagonist. Bear tries hard to connect the stories in the collection and in doing so neglects her own story. Why was any of the action taking place? Not sure. How does a California girl 'get married to the Russian Mob'? I'm not sure how and I'm not sure why it matters? Wouldn't it be more plausible for her to be married to a Mexican drug cartel? Also, why would only one shooter meet them at that door in the end? Oh, that's easy, because it's convenient to the story line, not because it makes sense. Which is this story in a nutshell. The reason driving the plot of this story is a bit ridiculous, and the characters follow suit.

Fourth, another story that tries to redeem this collection of mediocrity. *Utere Nihil non Extra Quiritationem Suis*, by John Scalzi and read by Alessandro Juliani. I enjoyed this story of ne're do well Benji Washington who slacks off in school and ends up as a pig farmer in the zero foot print city of New Saint Louis. All the details, the mentions of other parts and stories in the world of this collection, were well done and worked together to create a tight story that included mystery, intrigue humor and most notably a very realistic and believable story line and characters. I enjoyed listening to Juliani's narration, though I didn't think he sounded much like he came from that area of the country.

In fact, most of the readers sounded like they were Canadian to me, no matter where the characters lived or were supposed to come from. So, I looked them up. All of the readers, save two, were Canadian. Scott Brick, who read the no Irish *Stochasti-City* is American and Stefan Rudnicki was born in Poland.

Which brings us, finally, to the last story, read by Rudnicki, who did very fine accents, unsurprising for a professional Audie award winning actor. I enjoyed this story as well, it was perhaps the most interesting interpretation of this shared world, taking place both in the physical world, but also taking place in a (real) 'meta' world (and the only story to do so). I was invested in the characters and solving the crime along with the characters. It was a bit dizzying to follow them through these world's within worlds, but well worth it.

All the stories together well, the good ones can't really counter-balance the long, cumbersome and poorly executed ones in this collection so I probably won't seek out the next volume.

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## **Bradley says**

I haven't read many anthologies based on a relatively fully-fleshed concept decided on at the start, but I really thought the coherency of the stories made this a solid examination of future cities couched in a number of very solid and interesting tales from these various artists. We've got the bio-revolutions, MMORPG economies and espionage, and even a little bit of ethical examinations. It is very much in tune with the modern speculations in speculative fiction and is lovely to behold. I've really got a sweet tooth for the sub-genre, thanks to *Windup Girl*, *Reamde*, *Rule 34*, a lot of Greg Bear's stuff, to name a few. This is only in audiobook format and has many of the great names reading each short story. Very good production, including most of the cast of *ST:TNG* for you fanboys out there.

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## **Rae says**

I've observed that the way of anthologies seems to be that you win some and you lose some, and *METAtropolis* adheres to that view. In this unique anthology, all the stories are written in the same, post-oil world, where either you're green, you're stupid, or you're dead. Although all of the stories are connected via world, they have such a range of qualities that I feel that it is only really fair to review each independently of the others.

*In the Forests of the Night* by Jay Lake was certainly the weakest story of the anthology for me, which was unfortunate seeing as it was the longest as well as the first. Basically, a stranger by the name of Tyger Tyger (no joke) enters the secretive tree-hugger city of Cascadia by night, makes a lot of friends, sings a bit, fights, makes out with a few people, and - well, I won't spoil the ending of this story. The pacing just felt too slow, which is especially bad seeing as this was an audiobook, and I had trouble getting emotionally tied in with any of the characters, least of all Tyger Tyger. After just over two hours, I wasn't sure if I wanted to keep listening to this audiobook, but since I'd spent a credit on it at Audible, figured I should probably see how the next short story went.

*Stochasti-City* by Tobias Buckell was a large improvement over *In the Forest of the Night* and far better paced. As someone from bike-loving Fort Collins, Colorado, I found a particular delight in the idea that cyclists were the key to shutting down car-riddled Detroit and starting something novel there, right under the authorities noses. This story had a hint of steampunk, a dash of distopia, and a whopping serving of brilliant-character. The narrator was a marked improvement over *Night's* and overall was more pleasant to listen to. By the time I'd finished this story, I was ready to forgive the previous story's weaknesses and continue on.

*The Red in the Sky is Our Blood* by Sci-fi superpower Elizabeth Bear was probably the most emotional story in the bunch, and it expanded more into the disfunc society of Detroit of the future. The protagonist Katy is not only running from her Russian Mafia husband, but she is also searching for her ~~daughter~~ step-daughter among a whole bunch of other unfortunate things that she gets involved in. Katy is a character after feminist's hearts: smart, witty, and in need of no man to make her way and survive in the harsh reality that she lives in. Right on.

*Utere Nihil non Extra Quiritationem Suis* by John Scalzi was the first story in the bunch that made me laugh, I mean, REALLY made me laugh. It gives us another view of life inside a city, this time New St. Louis, and if had to live in either New Detroit or New St. Louis, sign me up for New St. Louis! This story is extremely well written with a good bit of humor interspersed between the view of politics and life in the future, and a protagonist that I *really* enjoyed. I know that I've been hanging out with tv-tropers for too long, because I couldn't help notice the Chekov's Guns that were cleverly placed in the beginning all going off at the end!

The final story *To Hi from Far Celinea* by Karl Schroeder was my absolute favorite story of the entire anthology. STEAMPUNK AUGMENTED REALITY!!! That is all I have to say. If you pick up this book for anything, pick it up for this story.

Overall, *METAtropolis* was a pretty good book, with only the first short story dragging my rating down from 4 stars.

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## **Milton Marshall says**

I got this collection of stories as promotional gift from Audible. Since it was free, I went into it interested in the premise of authors cooperating in building a future world centered around meta-cities, but not really expecting much from it. I was pleasantly surprised for the most part.

I will try to keep this review spoiler free.

The first story, really had a couple of interesting characters, but really played out more like a crude storyboard for a much longer novel. Many of the images I got from the reading were convoluted. In fact this and the last story are why I did not leave a four star rating. I honestly couldn't make it through the entirety of the last story. It was creepy and held promise but was also very slow, which didn't work for me with the subject matter it dealt with.

The middle three story lines were great. I thoroughly enjoyed both stories dealing with the ruins of Detroit. But I have to say that John Scalzi's story was the best in my opinion. I found the account in his story regarding why the protagonist, a typical late teen slacker in a futuristic setting, has a pig in his wedding party very humorous.

I also enjoyed hearing about the collaborative process between the works of fiction. This proved more entertaining than the first and second story to me. There are several areas that did take away from the enjoyment of the readings. The social commentary throughout this science fiction work was very heavy handed. It does make sense, for the setting that they chose, but I could also see where this could come off as almost propaganda worthy for the more conservative leaning listener and turn them off this story.

I personally feel that their jabs at government, big business, and the green movement are pretty accurate, even if they utilized a sledgehammer instead of a scalpel in that social commentary.

Metatropolis was entertaining enough for me to recommend to anyone who is looking for some light science fiction listening on their commute back and forth to work. It will keep you occupied for a day or two.

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## Scott Templeman says

I couldn't really stomach the first and third writers (ironically the one labeled the "up and coming" one of the bunch), as they smugly injected their personal political philosophy in a relentless fashion into an apocalyptic world where such seemed needless, distracting, and blatantly self-satisfying. My favorite story was easily the 4th (the pig farming, written by the editor last), although the last was the most original and intriguing (truly demonstrating how technology would change cultures in ways we can't currently comprehend, while the other stories will likely prove to be as most SciFi is: a continuation of current beliefs, opinions, and trends (many of which will prove laughably short sighted in less than a decade). I do believe this project would have been better served with a less philosophically homogeneous bunch if for no other reason than to reign in the more obnoxious authors while offering more realistic projections. A post-apocalyptic world where smug yuppies rule supreme is much scarier for some than zombies or bandits ever could be, but the entire piece is surprisingly cohesive and (at times) thought provoking. I will certainly check out the other works of the 4th and 5th authors.

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## Cale says

This is a thought-provoking collection of short stories revolving around a shared future-world. The stories don't overlap much; nor do the primary factors in the stories, but that just means it manages to blow one's mind in a multitude of different ways.

There are 5 stories in the book; one (Scalzi's) is very fun, but not particularly futuristic. Two were serious mental trips into technologies that don't feel like they're as far away as the stories intimate, and their primary technologies (real-life mechanical Turk work for an underemployed society, and an ARG virtual world that has physical world implications) were fascinating explorations of the concepts. And enjoyable stories to boot.

The other two stories didn't work very well for me; one was exploring a sociological future and just kind of fell flat. The other was focused on an eco-extreme lifestyle and just didn't work at all for me.

But the three stories that I liked I really liked. The ideas as well as the stories are fascinating glimpses, and although the overall world is rather dystopian, these pieces seemed near-future and intriguing.

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## LaShawn says

I got this audiobook a few years ago when it was free on Audible to introduce this series. I've just gotten around to listening to it.

The first two stories are the most intensely boring stories I have ever forced myself to finish. I fell asleep listening to both.

The third starts off ok and then goes absolutely nowhere.

I didn't finish the fifth, as it was boring and I was fed up.

Story number four, by John Scalzi, was the only thing that was worth reading in this collection. It actually made me want to know more about the world that the five authors had created. It was interesting and funny, well paced, and had likeable characters. I give it four stars.

That story is the only thing that made me consider continuing this series. Unfortunately, Scalzi doesn't write any more stories in the other books, so nope. I will not be continuing.

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### **Cory Hughart says**

Interesting to read about a "post-apocalyptic" future that isn't all negative. The focus on green communities seemed a bit forced at first, but I began to understand it as a reaction to whatever brought the world-as-we-know-it down. The only critique I have, which is more of a regret, is that, like so many other short stories, many of these feel like chopped-off segments of a longer story. Most of these end abruptly without any proper resolution; some even seem to cut out large chunks of the narrative in order to appease the length-limits.

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### **Charles Owen says**

This is a set of five stories meant to share a common theme of future cities. Of the stories, only the Scalzi story is very good. The rest are ponderous and preachy. I was often quite bored. The book reads like a political manifesto about how evil corporations are and how great it would be if everyone just shared everything.

Many have commented on the poor quality of the stories, but I've not seen many comments about the bad science in the book and many other ideas that are just not very sound. Much of the book is based on various forms of indoor farming, sometimes underground, but mainly in skyscrapers. Vertical farming has been proposed as an idea, but in general it does not work. The power requirements for a skyscraper to have farming on every floor are way too much for the solar panels they mount on the sides, which would also tend to block the direct sunlight they would need. Somehow this simple idea is ignored.

Two of the stories take place in Detroit. Have they been to Detroit? Wind power has a lot of potential, but much of the year a solar plant would be useless in Michigan due to the weather. They also want to make Detroit a car-free city, by making everyone use bicycles. Have they tried to ride a bike in the winter? They claim one of the authors is from the Detroit area. I don't believe it.

There is the idea of skyscrapers in Detroit that are abandoned. Nobody knows who owns them and nobody can buy or use them because they would have to pay decades of back taxes and such. The real owners can't even use them themselves because they would have to pay all of those back taxes. Oh, how they could help the people if they would just let them move in. But, the owners have hired a private security company to guard them. How many things are wrong with this idea? If you don't pay taxes, eventually the property is seized. The city will know who owns them, for sure. Fundamentally, one of the stories is based on the idea of stealing such a building. Now, how is that supposed to be a good thing?

I don't know what to make of the first story, where a messiah arrives, accomplishes nothing, and the city is destroyed by the military because they keep releasing technology they invent into the public domain? What nonsense! The last story assumed that as long as you had good VR glasses, you could live your life in a shipping container and be as happy as a peach.

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