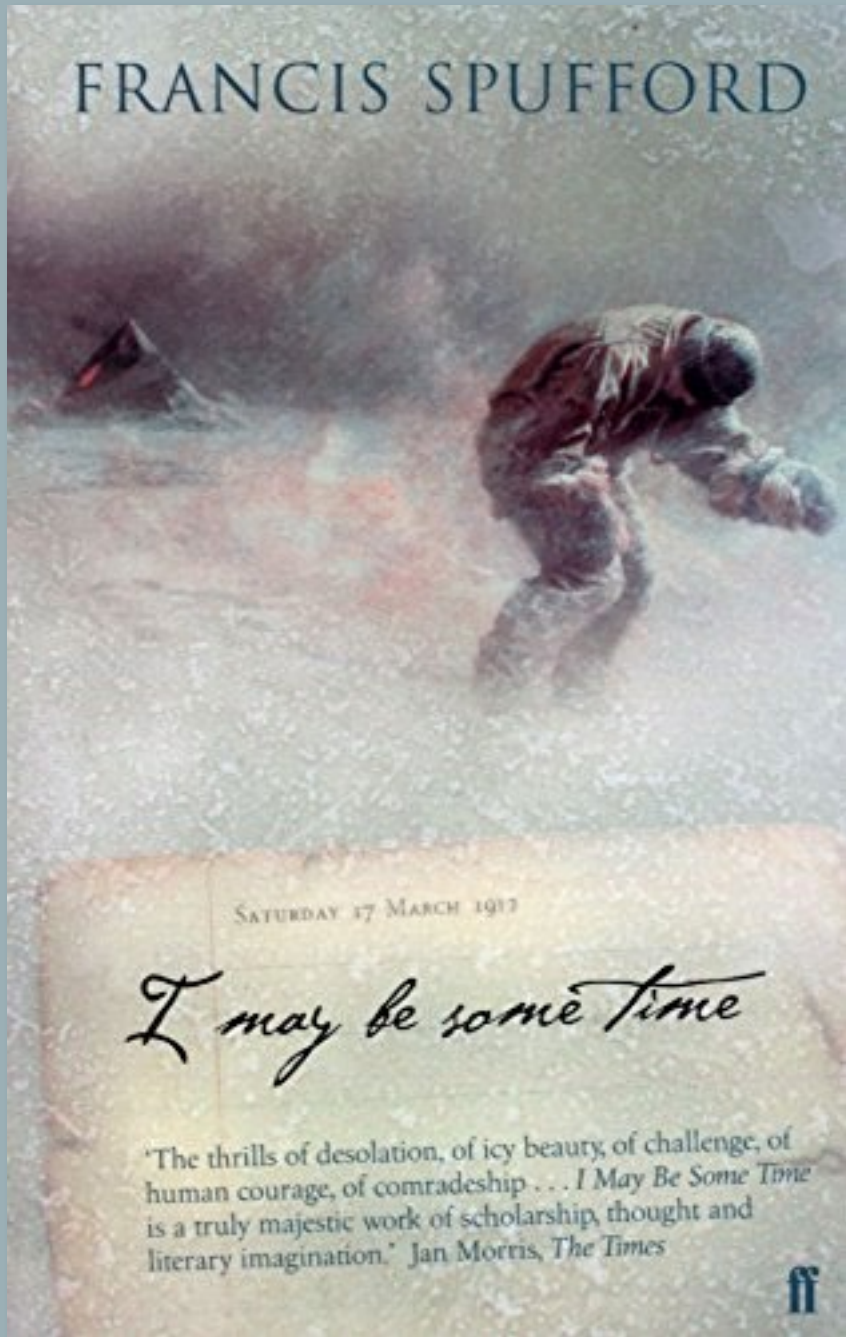


ICE IN THE SOUTHERN IMAGINATION

Dr Sophy Kohler

SCAR 2022, 5 August 2022



‘[P]olar history, as it is usually written, is technical history. It recounts a sequence of expeditions. There is a degree of variety in the chosen starting point ... but a great constancy of focus and emphasis thereafter. ...

But there is a second kind of polar history, largely uncharted; an intangible history of assumptions, responses to landscape, cultural fascinations, aesthetic attraction to the cold regions.’

– From Francis Spufford, *I May Be Some Time*



Photo of Sossusvlei, Namibia © FRASHO



‘The warming temperatures, melting glaciers and rising sea-levels of the twenty-first century have brought home the connectedness of ice to all parts of the world.

In particular, the polar regions, long thought of in the Anglophone imagination as remote, isolated places, are increasingly recognized as intimately linked, through climate, currents and sea level, to more temperate locations.’

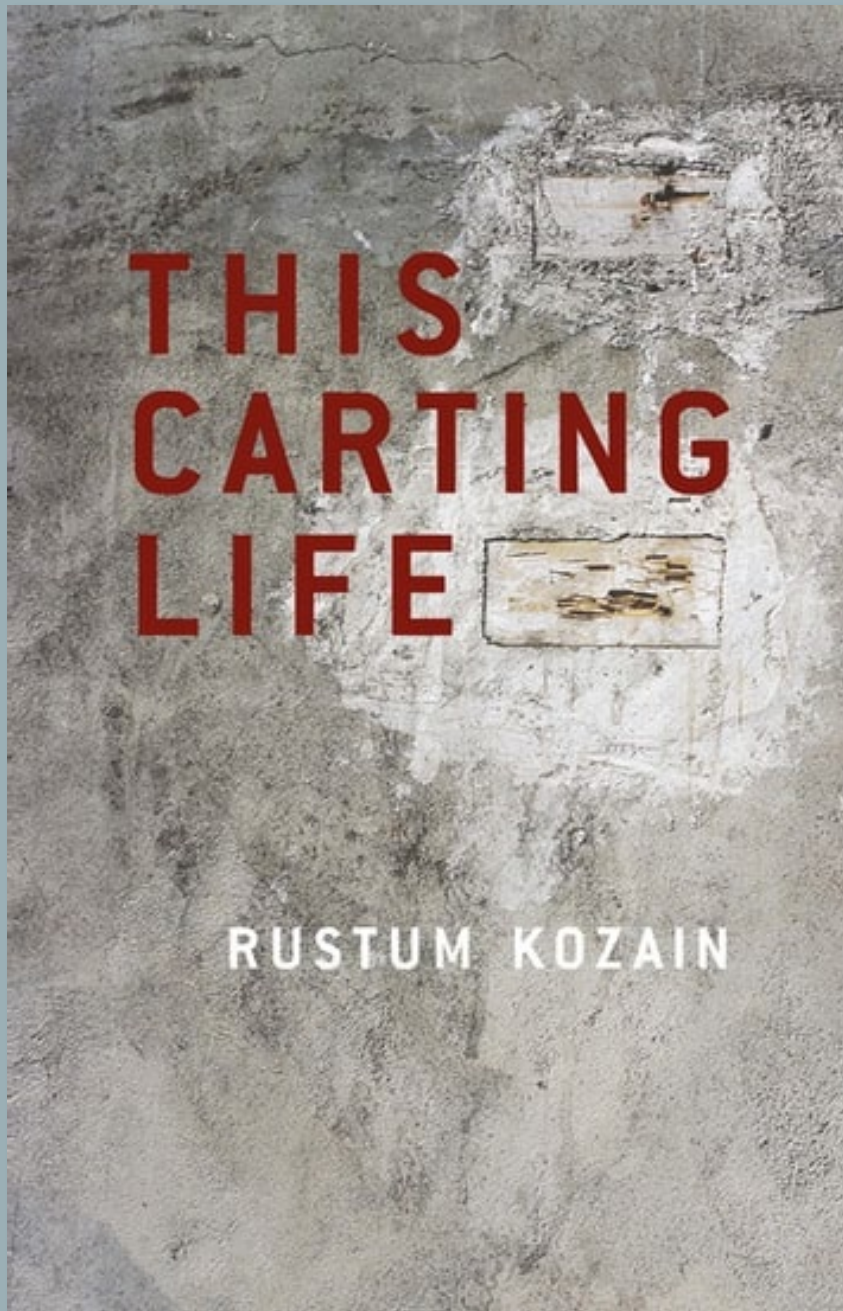
– *From Philpott et al., Performing Ice*

‘The fate of ice as a sign of the fate of our societies invites new readings and interpretations of ice that can be provided by the social, cultural and historical sciences – the humanities.’

– *From Sverker Sörlin, ‘Cryo-History’*

Photo of Ross Ice Shelf © Martin Wearing / PA





Crows rise against the falling flakes.
Underfoot, fresh snow crunches like flak
in black-and-white films with battleships.

Learning to walk the ice comes slow
like permanent revolutions
in their cold glut of time,

but I know I am walking home
through second snow
with Osip Mandelstam.

– *From 'Walking home with Mandelstam'*



Photo © Fine Art Images/Heritage Images/Getty Images

But most intense, **fragile** –
is its bulging blueness:
half-formed ice, that fills
the river, lulling, sleepless...

– *From 'Like a belated gift'*

*

And with exhilaration breach
the **fragile, undeveloped ice**
The **tender ice** that shrouds my soul —
Maturing in the silent whole.

– *From 'The refrain of your steps'*



Winner of the Ingrid Jonker Prize and the
Olive Schreiner Prize for *This Carting Life*

groundwork

**RUSTUM
KOZAIN**

I know your loneliness,
know its flame

like angry poinsettia
in your city's cold rain,

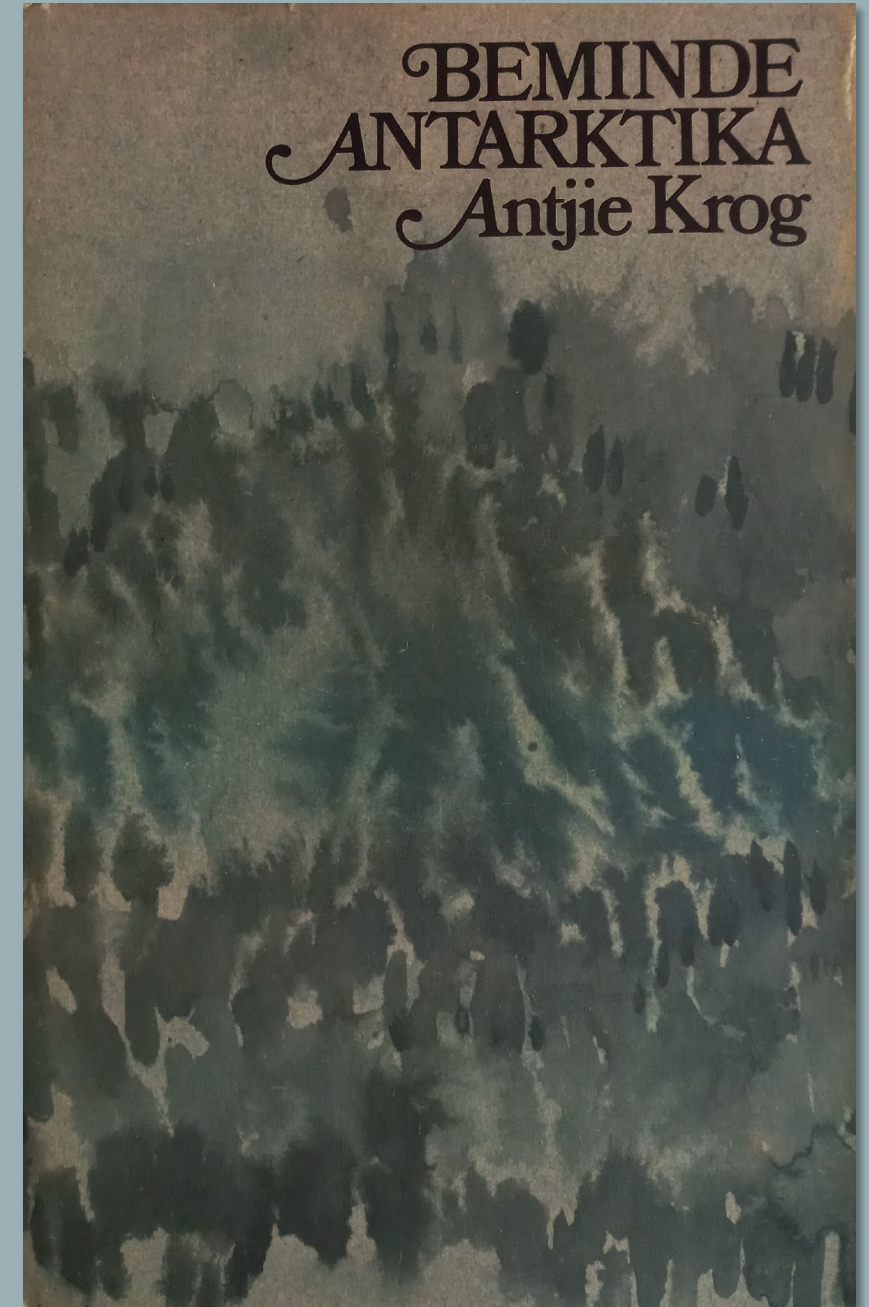
your winter, **the ice**
of the hardening heart

freed from print, softening back into
dream.

– *From 'The Reader'*

how much sun
how much blood
how much love must I ultimately bring
for **your igloo heart** to melt?

– *From* ‘untranslated telex’

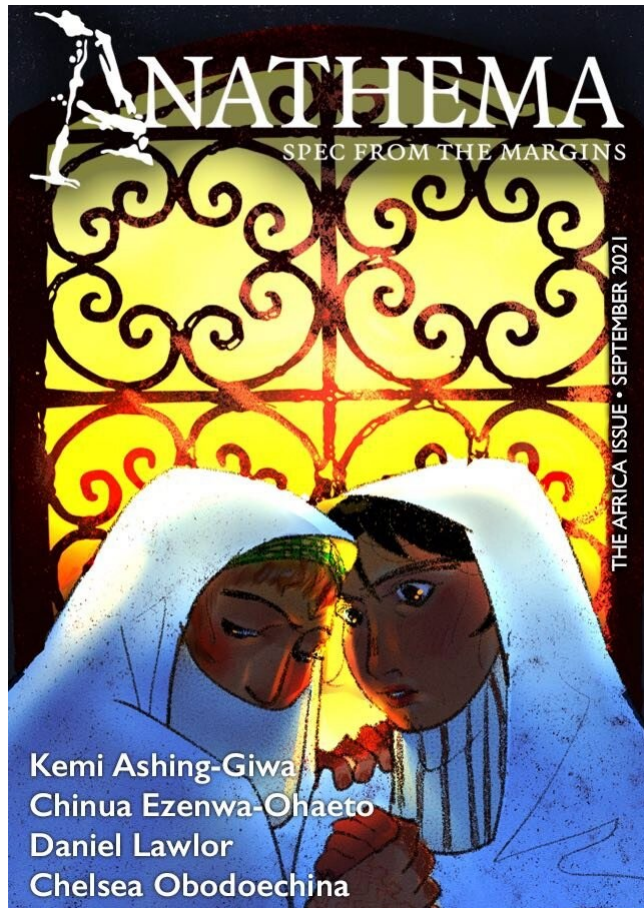


‘Because of their tendency to shift, crack, fragment and overturn noisily and unexpectedly, icescapes have long been described in the language of liveliness.’

– *From Philpott et al., Performing Ice*

‘I could at times think of all Antarctica as ... a slow-brained sentient being bent on making a man part of itself: ... sprawled gigantically over nearly six million square miles, immovably gripping the southern cap of the earth – deceptively solid and lifeless but actually full of movement and change, with a low amoebic vitality ... some it conquered, grafting them indivisibly to its body ...’

– Morton Moyes qtd. in Leane, *Antarctica in Fiction*

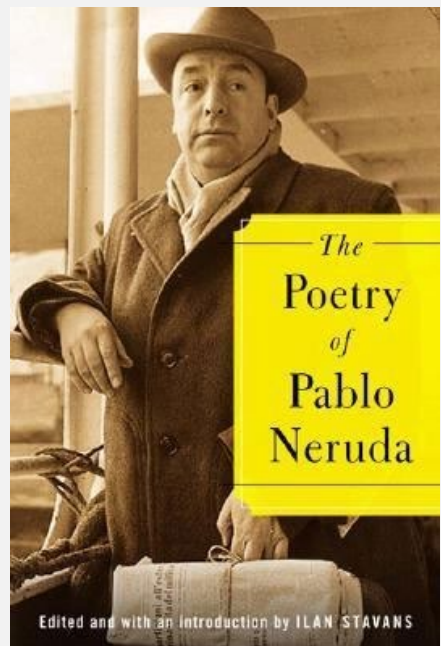
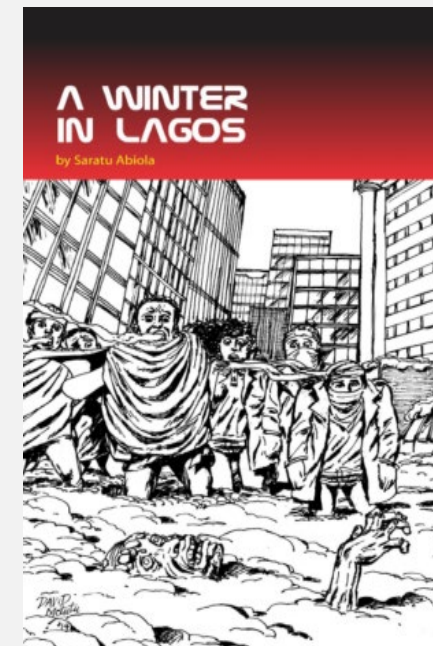
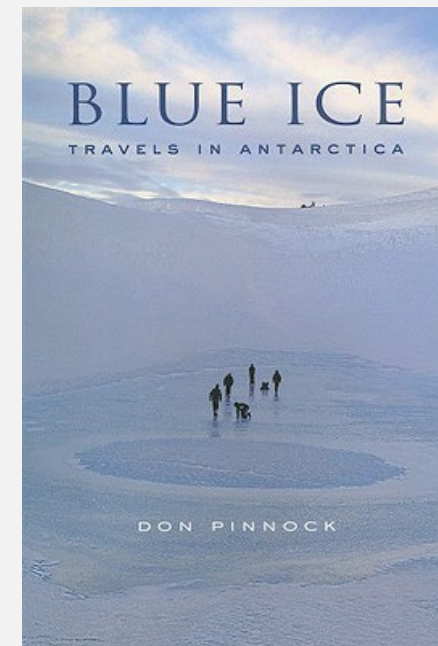
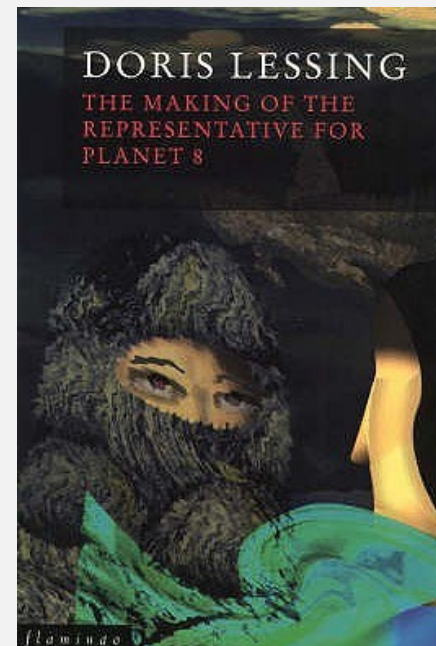
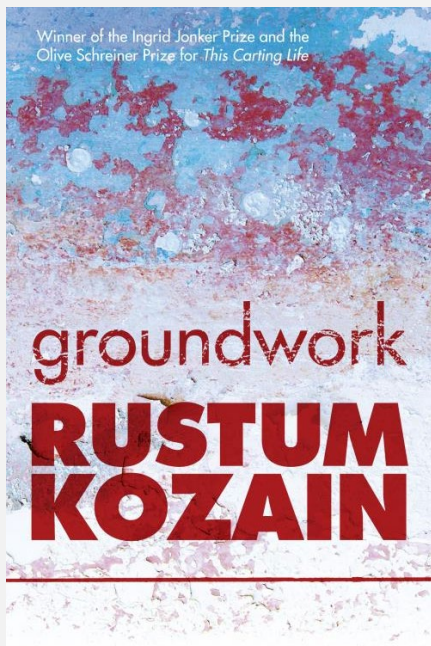
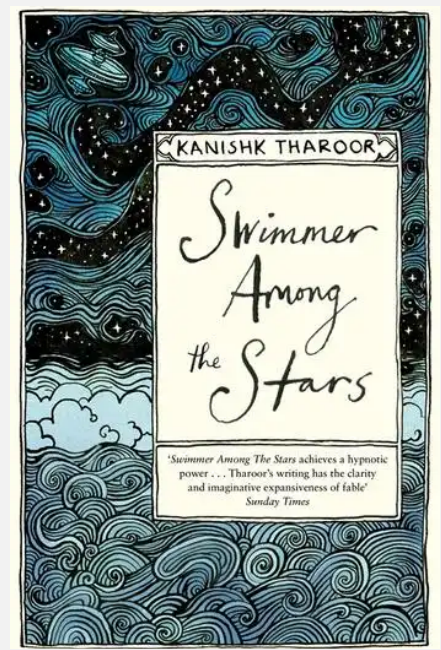
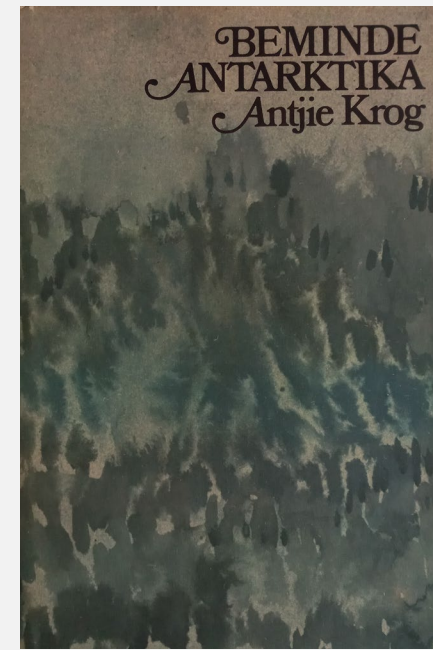
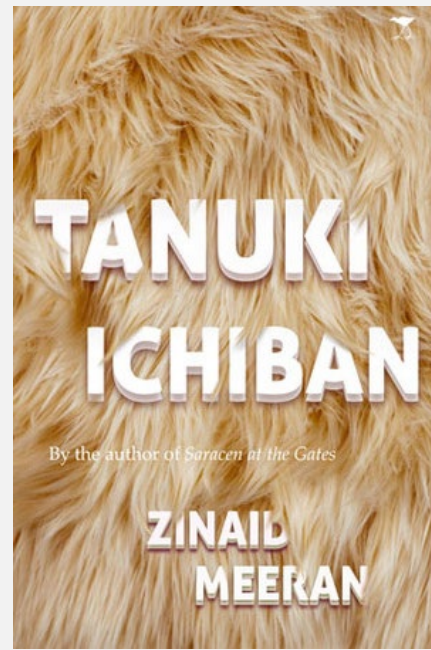
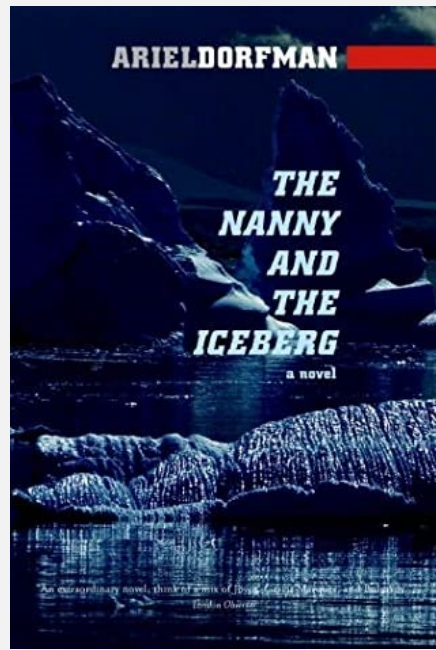
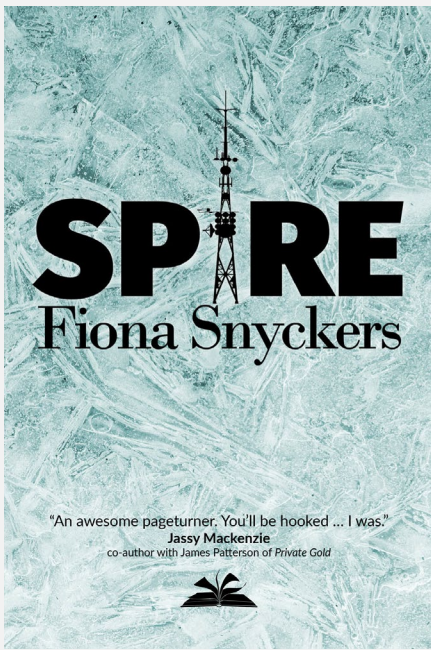


KEMI ASHING-GIWA, *PAPER SUNS*

‘The twelfth largest of the Slithering Metropolises, the icegod Mejila was nothing like Medogun, the icegod Ayo lived upon. Having recently reached the peak of its power, young Mejila was as massive and inexorable as a glacier. Ten miles long, its metre-long scales shimmered in the wan glow of morning. Iridescent tessellations of light spun over the ice field as it moved.’



Photo of Antarctic ice floes © NASA/Nathan Kurz



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