IN & OZ is a novel of art, love, auto mechanics, and two places: the actualities of the here and now and the desire for somewhere better. Five men and women - an auto designer, photographer, musical composer, poet/sculptor and mechanic - find themselves drawn together when they begin to suspect that the thing lacking in their lives might be discovered in the other place. Against the tension between idiosyncratic art and mass-marketed taste, each works to bridge the gulf between IN & OZ by using the medium of their trades: light and darkness; sound and silence. IN & OZ is a story as old as the Tower of Babel and as new as global markets: the story of people trying to reach beyond the limits of language and remake the world, or at least their selves. In IN & OZ, Steve Tomasula writes as though the English language were his own invention. Im far from certain hes wrong about this. But if we could still imagine a surrounding in which destiny lay within creatures and stones, or recognized the unconfinements of words, we might know fiction as he does. Next to being wholly new, IN & OZ is the best there is. --R.M. Berry, author of Leonardsos Horse: A Novel and The Dictionary of Modern Anguish: Fictions With IN & OZ, Tomasula crafts a fiercely intelligent and uncompromising parable on what has become of us. --Alex Shakar, author of The Savage Girl and City in Love: The New York Metamorphoses

My Personal Review:
I'm not sure In and Oz is speculative fiction, but I don't know what else it could be. It's fantastical allegory, taking place in an imaginary land consisting of two distinct locations: Oz, the gleaming city where the beautiful and successful live, and In, the home of industry and labor. Characters are named by function, hence we get Mechanic, Designer, Poet/Sculptor, Photographer, and Composer. Each of the characters is similar to the others in that they all desire something more. Only they don't know what that more is. And neither did I. But I think that's an accurate reflection of modern life. Most of us, I think, desire `more', but more what? Money? Purpose? Happiness? Understanding? Love? If given the opportunity to ask, what would we ask for? We are all seeking something, but what are we seeking? It's these questions and more that Tomasula's characters struggle with. Don't look for easy answers though, no snippets of motorcycle Zen wisdom. The quest is in the asking, not the achieving. 'More' is not a destination; 'More' is a journey. Musician composes without sound, seeking to be unconstrained by the limits of human hearing and the confining structure of orchestrated music. Photographer's camera holds no film. Mechanic no longer repairs - he instead seeks to make obvious the
mysterious workings of automobiles so that those who drive them will no longer take them for granted. Designer sits in her office with windows all around, staring down at the splendor of Oz seeking inspiration and wondering why she feels so lost. Poet/Sculptor's media is dirt, because that's where everything comes from and to where everything eventually returns. These archetypical characters move through an exaggerated version of our own modern society, where our peculiarities, obsessions, and foibles are have come to be accepted as normal, just as Americans accept over 10,000 gun-related deaths a year as 'normal' instead of as the tragedy it is. It's obvious Tomasula doesn't hold modern society in much regard, though his observations are tinged with an irony and sadness that led me to believe he feels we are squandering our efforts on the less important things in life. He makes a variety of interesting observations. In the scene below, Mechanic is standing the mansion/museum of the founders of the car building factory. Mechanic's house is under a bridge, near the end. When cars break down on the bridge, they coast to the bottom and that was how his father got his start repairing cars. But Mechanic has more to say on it: (...)"There were other portraits of inheritance: an unbroken lineage from the painting of a long-bearded founding father, all the way up to a studio photo of a smiling, great-great-great-CEO-grandson, posing with his movie star wife as if the more money earned, the more attractive the people making it became. There was no other Art. And looking at this art history, Mechanic saw how if his parents had not lived under a bridge, neither he nor his father would have been a mechanic. Had his parents lived under a bridge that crossed water instead of a river of chemicals that sometimes caught fire, he might have grown up a fisherman. And it astounded him to think that something so central to his being could be so arbitrary - Could it be the same for whole cities? Whole nations?"

Designer ponders: The whole book if full of such thought provoking passages that casued me to nod my head; not necessarily new to many of us, but concisely shaped and precise in delivery. If traditional story telling is your bag, this probably won't satisfy you. But if you wander through life, sometimes feeling a vague sense of dissatisfaction and an occasional pang of disgust at the course our society moves along, I think you'll like this quite a bit.

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