

# *WisCon*<sup>25</sup> ♀

May 25-28, 2001  
Memorial Day weekend



**Souvenir Book**



# WisCon<sup>25</sup> +

Madison Wisconsin • May 25-28, 2001

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WisCon 25 Souvenir Book  
Editor Beth Plutchak

WisCon 25  
May 25-28, 2001  
The Concourse Hotel and Governor's Club  
Madison, WI

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"The Tiptree Award: a Personal History" © Karen Joy Fowler 1996. First appeared in the WisCon 20 Souvenir Book.

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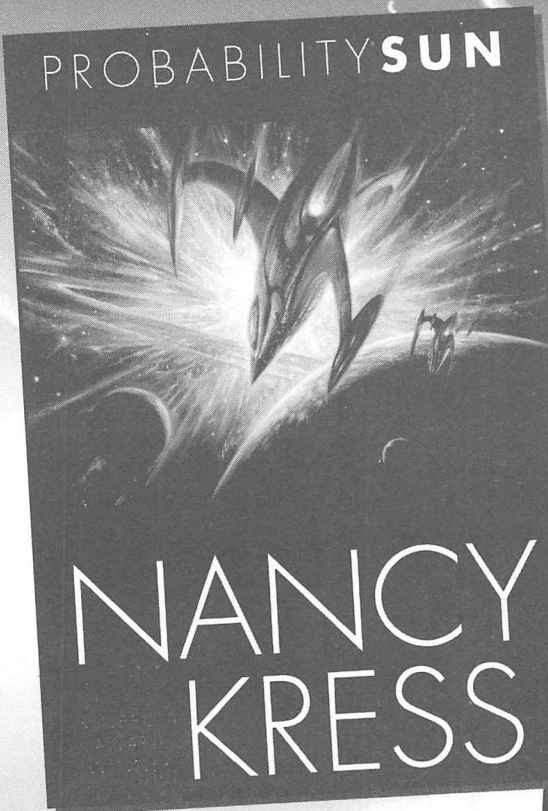
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# WisCon 25 Guest of Honor • Nancy Kress

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## An Appreciation

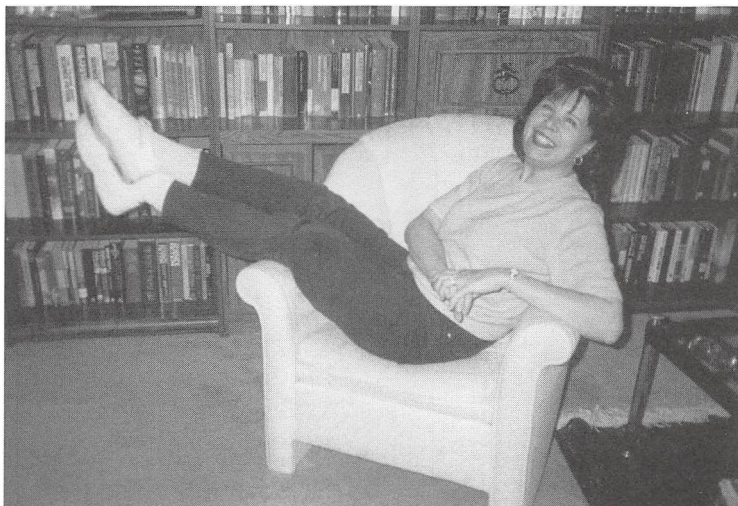
Karen Joy Fowler

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I met Nancy Kress just as she was winning her first Nebula. It was 1985, Oakland, I think, and I was attending the Nebulas for my very first time. For my very first time I was seeing what our most brilliant and influential science fiction writers looked like when they were all dressed up. But that's a story for a different place and time.

So I was introduced, probably by Shawna McCarthy though I don't remember, to an absolutely stunning, lethally charming, but somewhat preoccupied woman who was up for a Nebula later that night. I realized with some excitement that this was the author of "Out of All Them Bright Stars," a story that had gone straight to my heart and head and for which I had voted. When the first award was announced at the very first Nebulas I attended, it went to the very first author I had voted for. Such an auspicious beginning, me — so in sync. Me — with my fingers on the pulse of science fiction. Who could have guessed how seldom this would happen in the future? But that's a complaint for a different place and time.

Nancy got her first Nebula and I got the friend of a lifetime. I was the bigger winner that night. Although we met at the Nebula convention, we got to know each other over successive years at the Sycamore Hill writing workshop. We've laughed together, cried together, critiqued together, drunk together, and, most memorably, sung together. (That's what you get if you try to critique us — an evening of show tunes. Considerably off-key. Critics beware.) Those years have given me an insight into Nancy's writing processes as well as her friendship. I



had a front row seat when she began to turn increasingly to the fields of microbiology and genetics in her books. She researched meticulously, extrapolated carefully, and struggled to be taken seriously as a hard science fiction writer. She wrote the much acclaimed *Beggars* series, which now more than any other work, is used to define her. Another

Nebula, a Hugo. The struggle is over. *Beggars* is a trilogy anyone would be die to be defined by. Sophisticated in terms of science and politics, thrillingly plotted, and beautifully written. And hard as a diamond. No one now can deny her position as one of the most important, reliably rewarding, inventive and adventurous writers among us. She's a superstar in the Clarion line-up, a

writer people travel oceans to work with.

And such a professional. She does a valuable column and occasional book advising new writers, all the while continuing to model a productive, disciplined, careful career for them. Medical thrillers. Y.A.s. Yet another Nebula, another trilogy. Readers awards. Nancy writes a lot! There are multiple grounds for hating this woman. Lucky for her she's so adorable. In some ways, given her prom queen background and her lack of scientific training, she seems an unlikely person to have achieved so much in this field. In many other ways, she's just what we need. In her work, as in her personal life, she invariably shows her generous heart, her keen mind, and her good humor. She's an optimistic realist with a flair for the dramatic. You love her as much as I do. We just can't help ourselves.

## A Biography

Nancy Kress

---

Nancy Kress was born Nancy Anne Koningisor in Buffalo, New York, on January 20, 1948. She grew up in East Aurora, New York, a sleepy upstate town given to cows and apples, where she spent most of her childhood either reading or playing in the woods. She went to college at State University of

New York at Plattsburgh, earning a degree in elementary education, which she put to use for the next four years teaching the fourth grade. She liked this.

In 1973 she left teaching and moved to Rochester to marry Michael Joseph Kress, an

insurance agent. They had two sons, Kevin Michael Kress and Brian Stephen Kress, and divorced in 1984. It was while Nancy was pregnant with Brian that she started writing fiction. She had never planned on becoming a writer, but staying at home full-time with infants left her time to experiment. She was not good at embroidery or quilting, her previous choices, and so became a writer.

Her first story, the eminently forgettable "The Earth Dwellers," appeared in *Galaxy* in 1976. Her first novel, *The Prince Of Morning Bells*, appeared in 1981 from Pocket Books.

In 1984, Nancy went to work for Stanton & Hucko, an advertising agency that has since been bought by Young & Rubicam. She wrote corporate copy for the next six years, writing fiction part time, raising her children, and occasionally teaching at State University of New York at Brockport, where she had earned an M.S. in education (1977) and an M.A. in English (1979). In 1990 she went full-time as an SF writer. The first thing she wrote in this new status was the novella version of "Beggars In Spain."

Although she began by writing fantasy, Nancy currently writes science fiction, most usually about genetic engineering. She teaches regularly at summer conferences such as Clarion, and during the year at the Bethesda Writing Center in Bethesda, Maryland. In addition, she is the "Fiction" columnist for *Writer's Digest* magazine. She has won two Nebulas and a Hugo, and lost over a dozen more of these awards. Her work has been translated into Swedish, French, Italian, German, Spanish, Polish, Croatian, Lithuanian, Romanian, Japanese, and Russian, none of which she can read.

In January, 1998, Nancy was married for the third time, to science fiction writer Charles Sheffield. The couple lives in Silver Spring, Maryland, with Charles's daughters Rose and Toria. Breakfast-table conversation includes many discussions of current SF, since Charles and Nancy like entirely different authors and styles of writing. They will not be collaborating.

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compiled by Nancy Kress

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## WisCon 25 Guest of Honor • Élisabeth Vonarburg

### Appreciation

Sylvie Bérard

Writer, translator, essayist, editor and critic, Élisabeth Vonarburg is perhaps the most famous science fiction writer in Québec, and one of the most acclaimed in Canada. She has published more than fifteen books, many essays and reviews, and numerous short stories, all works for which she has received several awards (Aurora, Boréal, Rosny Aîné, etc.) and invitations to numerous science fiction conventions. Many of her texts have been translated in various languages and distributed in the USA and in England, as well as in countries such as Germany, Italy, Romania, and Japan. Joan Gordon's appreciation of *The Silent City* and *In the Mother's Land* may apply to Élisabeth's whole work: all "are significant contributions to the body of feminist sf, making equal partners of politics, style, and storytelling."



On Tuesday, 5 August 1947, Élisabeth Ferron-Wehrlin-Morché was born in Paris' sixteenth *arrondissement*. Her mother, Jeanne Morché, was born in Hanoï (Indo-China, former Vietnam) in 1913; at the time of giving birth to Élisabeth, she was running her own pharmacy in the Parisian suburbs. René Ferron-Wehrlin, Élisabeth's father, had been a colonel in the Engineers Corps; in 1947, at fifty years of age, he had already retired from the army. When Élisabeth was seven, the Ferron-Wehrlin family moved to Sergines, a small town South-East of Paris.

Élisabeth was a spoiled little child and a solitary teenager, intellectual but boisterous, always carrying a book and trying to go read it... in a tree. As she said herself, she was "born to life in 1947 (France), to reading in 1952 (myths, fairy tales, comics, adventure), to writing in 1958 (poetry) and to science-fiction in 1964 (at last!)." She had her first, real contact with fantastic and science fiction

at the age of sixteen through *Le Matin des magiciens* by Louis Pauwels and Jacques Bergier (1960; translated as *The Dawn of Magic*, 1974). In 1969, she obtained an Arts degree. She then began to amalgamate her personal interests and her scholarly work by submitting an MA thesis in modern French literature at the Université de Dijon on the evolution of a few literary themes in conjectural literatures—fantastic and science fiction.

In 1969, Élisabeth married Swiss-born Jean-Joël Vonarburg. This event has been of great importance in her life, not only because he was her literary accomplice until 1982, but because she would inherit a new home base and a nom de plume that remained with her after their official divorce in 1990. With a high school teacher diploma and an Agrégation de lettres modernes—i.e., the highest examination for teachers in France—in hand, she was more than prepared to become a lycée teacher of French. Nevertheless, in 1973, Jean-Joël had to move to Chicoutimi (Québec, Canada) in order to complete his military service; the adventurous Élisabeth decided she would follow him. She fell in love with the place—she definitely loves cold, snowy winters...

Almost immediately after arriving in her new hometown, Élisabeth was hired as a part-time instructor by local college and universities. She taught fantastic literature, science fiction, and creative writing. She took part in various symposia on education and published some essays on the teaching of literature and science fiction. In Chicoutimi, Élisabeth had also a brief, semi-professional career... as a singer. She took part in some festivals in the late seventies, and sang in night clubs and on the radio. In 1978, she even won the first prize in a local music festival! However, gradually—as she discovered the then emerging science fiction milieu in Quebec—education, and singing—though she sometimes sings at science fiction conventions—ceased to be a priority for her.

As early as 1974, she started working as a critic for a new science fiction magazine called *Requiem*—now known as *Solaris*—, for which she became literary editor in 1979. In 1976, Élisabeth also began working as a translator. Her first translation was Tanith Lee's *The Birthgrave* in 1976. She had kept on reading a lot of science fiction, francophone as



well as anglophone, and James Tiptree, Jr. was among her favorite authors—she admired the way she'd planned the famous hoax concerning her false male identity—so in 1979 she practically begged Denoël editor Élisabeth Gille to let her translate *Up the Walls of the World*. Throughout the years, she has been employed by various French and Québécois publishers and she had the opportunity to translate American and Canadian authors such as Anne McCaffrey, Marion Zimmer Bradley and Guy Gavriel Kay.

Though she had been writing for more than ten years, her first science fiction short story was published in 1976, the year she became a Canadian citizen—though she kept her French and Swiss citizenship. She then wrote in cooperation with Jean-Joël and together they penned *very* short stories. Élisabeth's first solo short story, "Marée haute," published in 1978, met a great literary fortune: it became the author's first fiction piece to be translated in English (as "High Tide"), not to mention translations in German, Swedish and Japanese, and a French edition.

*L'Oeil de la nuit*, a short story collection published in 1980, was Élisabeth's first book. The short story "L'Oeil de la nuit" from which it got its title had obtained the Prix Dagon in 1978; it would be contained in the last episode of the *Tyranaël* series. Most of the other short stories have since been translated in English. With this book, which obtained a local literary prize in 1981, Élisabeth imprinted her mark on a bubbling contemporary science fiction movement in Québec, and set the tone for her whole fictional world.

From July 1980 to June 1981, Élisabeth wrote *Le Silence de la cité*, released in 1981 in France. The book was well received and it obtained many science fiction awards. The novel has been translated by Jane Brierley: "I like the voice of my translator, Jane Brierley. What the American reader will get is some kind of third personality made up of Jane and I," commented Élisabeth. The book was published as *The Silent City*, both in Canada, Great Britain and the USA; in 1998, it was released in Germany. A new, revised edition was released in Québec by Alire in 1998.

Élisabeth and Jean-Joël split up while she was working on her second book, *Janus*, comprised of eight short stories. As with Élisabeth's first novel, *Janus* was published in France by Denoël in 1984. The author's mastery of thematic complexity, her lyricism as well as her storytelling skills, would earn her two literary awards, among which, the 1985 Grand Prix de la science fiction et du fantastique québécois.

During these years, Élisabeth was very active in the science fiction and literary milieu in Québec and Canada, working for *Solaris*, contributing to and editing special issues of literary journals and science fiction magazines, participating in a weekly literary program on a local radio station, and organizing and chairing science-fiction conventions and conferences. She chaired the first Boréal science fiction convention held in Chicoutimi in July 1979.

In 1982, she organized Boréal III; as she related in a special tribute to Judith Merril, she ingenuously invited this immense writer to the convention, "And she came. And we met, face to face. And that's it. Almost." Élisabeth usually says that Judith Merril's fiction and Judith Merril herself taught her that there could be female heroines.

During this period, she obtained several creative writing grants; she led and would lead many creative workshops, and she was also invited on a number of literary juries. In a very personal guide to creative writing that was first published in 1986, *Comment écrire des histoires: Guide de l'explorateur* (that could be translated as *How to Write Stories: The Explorer's Guide*), Élisabeth explained that she has no authority to teach creative writing, only the will to share her experience.

In the mid-eighties, Élisabeth went back to school. In 1987, she defended a Ph.D. dissertation at the Université Laval, which actually took the form of a creative, fictive dissertation in which an hypothetical female narrator studies... Élisabeth's work. Between 1988 and 1990, Élisabeth carried out post-doctoral research on the reproduction motif in women's science fiction; in a paper first published as "Birth and Rebirth in Space," she maintained that "Our society is a patriarchal one, where for men (*and* women), it requires less energy to identify with the Father's image/world than with the Mother's image/world. The male Self who tries to win the Mother back may be trying to have it all, to exist more (by having more...); the female Self may be trying merely to *exist*."

On 29 May 1989, Élisabeth's father died at the age of ninety-two. At that time her career as a writer was chugging along nicely. Between 1987 and 1991, her novels and short stories earned several science fiction awards, among which two Auroras for Best Science Fiction or Fantasy Book in French for *Histoire de la princesse et du dragon*, a fantasy story for young readers, and for *Ailleurs et au Japon*, a short story collection. In 1991, with *Chroniques du Pays des Mères*, the author explored yet another subgenre. Élisabeth had been preparing this book for a long time. She already had this story in mind in 1980, when she began writing *Silent City*. However, what might have remained a small episode in an eventual Mother's Land trilogy turned into a full-fledged novel, and her readers had to wait ten more years. With this feminist (almost) all-women ambiguous utopia (!) published simultaneously in Québec, in Canada (as *The Maerlande Chronicles*), and in the USA (as *In the Mother's Land*), the writer penetrated the North-American science fiction market as well as the mainstream market. Most critics praised the quality of the style and the accuracy of the feminization, both in the original version and in the translation. Between 1993 and 1996, it won or was shortlisted for many literary awards: Aurora Award, Grand Prix de la science fiction québécoise, Philip K. Dick Special Jury Award, James Tiptree, Jr. Award, etc. The book was also translated in German in 1997 and republished by Alire in 1999.

Then Québec/Amérique launched a new Québécois science fiction collection and editor Jean Pettigrew asked Élisabeth if she would initiate the collection. *Les Voyageurs malgré eux* was published in January 1994 as book number one of the "Sextant" collection. A year later, *Reluctant Voyagers*, the English translation, was released by Bantam Spectra, then in 1996 by Tesseract Books. In *The New York Review of Science Fiction*, Kathleen Ann Goonan maintained that *Reluctant Voyagers* "is not a book to hurry through. Although it is structured as a mystery, it is best not to be impatient for answers, for they come gradually, and often seem to contradict one another. . . . The book lives in its details, slowly; richly." The novel was shortlisted for the 1995 Philip K. Dick Award and won the 1996 Aurora Award.

In 1995, Élisabeth was short-listed for a French award in juvenile literature for her novel entitled *Les Contes de la chatte Rouge*, which Élisabeth likes to translate unofficially as... *Red Cat's Tale*. She, indeed, likes to play on words, to make good and bad puns, in French as well as in English. This book also betrays the author's love for cats (she presently shares her life with six healthy cats). The following year, Élisabeth published still another book of juvenile literature, *Contes de Tyranaël* which would be a finalist for yet another francophone literary prize. Even though it was produced for young readers, this collection of fictive legends introduced the mythological background of the forthcoming *Tyranaël* series.

For a long time, Élisabeth Vonarburg had been thinking about writing a tremendous science fiction saga with a planet as the main character. Thirty years later, her notebooks contained approximately two thousand rough pages of material. Jean Pettigrew founded his own publishing company,

Alire, so Élisabeth felt that she had better follow him: it would be convenient to release the whole story within a short period of time—an opportunity she might not have obtained from a big mainstream publisher. This time, Élisabeth did not get book number one, but she got numbers three, four, five, ten and twelve instead: *Tyranaël* comprised more than two thousand pages and was made up of five novels published between August 1996 and November 1997. The whole saga is rich and complex. Each novel has its own set of themes and autonomous plot. The series was part of top ten bestsellers' lists and each volume was abundantly reviewed and the books comprised in the series earned many literary awards. Élisabeth's mother died following the completion of the *Tyranaël* series, on 10 March 1998 at the age of eighty-five.

From 1997 to 2000, Élisabeth chaired her local professional writer's association in the Chicoutimi region; since 1999, she has also been president of SFSF Boréal. Her most recent award is the Prix du Conseil québécois de la Femme en littérature, a one-time literary prize given by the Québécois Council for Women's Affairs on its twentieth anniversary in 1998. In 2000, she published a collection of her most recent short stories, *Le Jeu des coquilles de nautilus*. *The Slow Engines of Time*, a collection of eight translated stories (half of them translated by the author) has been released this year by Tesseract Books. Élisabeth Vonarburg still works as a critic for the Québec science fiction periodical *Solaris*. And she is never idle! She says that four other young adults novels are in the works, as well as two short story collections and two novels for adults.

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Sylvie Bérard

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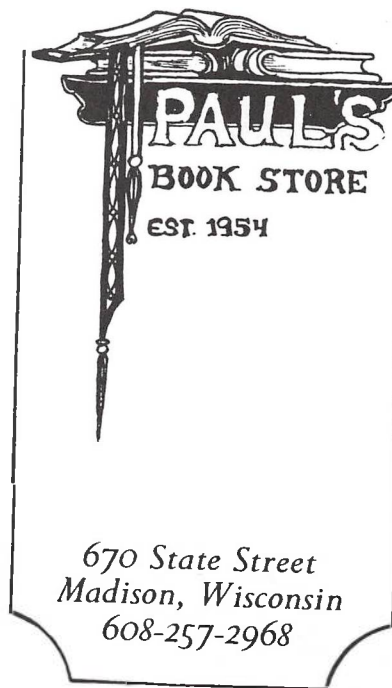
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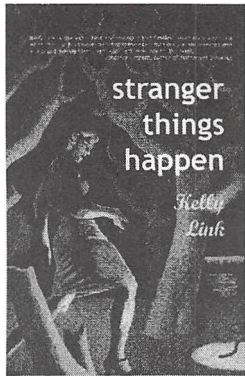
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- Finaliste Prix St-Exupéry Valeurs Jeunesse (France) (*Contes de la Chafte Rouge*), 1995
- Prix Boréal 1995 (Québec) catégorie essai et critique
- Finaliste du Philip K. Dick Award 1995 (*Reluctant Voyagers*)
- Nomination pour le Dublin International Award 1996 (*Chroniques du Pays des Mères*)
- Prix Aurora 1996, meilleur livre en français, (*Les Voyageurs malgré eux*)
- Grand Prix de la SF et du Fantastique québécois 1997 (*Tyranaël 1 & 2*, et "Le début du cercle")
- Prix Gala du Livre SLSJ 1997, catégorie fiction-roman (*Tyranaël 1, 2 et 3*)
- Prix Boréal 1997, catégorie roman (*Tyranaël 1, Les Rêves de la Mer*)
- Prix Boréal 1997, catégorie nouvelle, ("Le début du cercle")
- Babet d'or, Foire du Livre de Saint-Étienne, France, 1997, (*Tyranaël 1, 2 et 3*)
- Prix "Femme et littérature" du Conseil Québécois du Statut de la Femme, 1998



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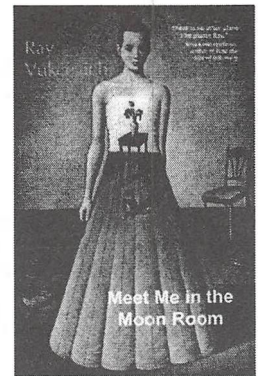
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Putnam 0-399-14750-0 \$24.95 May 2001



# Margin of Error

Nancy Kress

---

Paula came back in a blaze of glory, her Institute uniform with its pseudo-military medals crisp and bright, her spine straight as an engineered diamond-fiber rod. I heard her heels clicking on the sidewalk and I looked up from the bottom porch step, a child on my lap. Paula's face was genemod now, the blemishes gone, the skin fine-pored, the cheekbones chiseled under green eyes. But I would have known that face anywhere. No matter what she did to it.

"Karen?" Her voice held disbelief.

"Paula," I said.

"Karen?" This time I didn't answer. The child, my oldest, twisted in my arms to eye the visitor. The slight movement made the porch step creak.

It was the kind of neighborhood where women sat all morning on porches or stoops, watching children play on the sidewalk. Steps sagged; paint peeled; small front lawns were scraped bare by feet and tricycles and plastic wading pools. Women lived a few doors down from their mothers, both of them growing heavier every year. There were few men. The ones there were, didn't seem to stay long.

I said, "How did you find me?"

"It wasn't hard," Paula said, and I knew she didn't understand my smile. Of course it wasn't hard. I had never intended it should be. This was undoubtedly the first time in nearly five years that Paula had looked.

She lowered her perfect body gingerly onto the porch steps. My little girl, Lollie, gazed at her from my lap. Then Lollie opened her cupped hands and smiled. "See my frog, lady?"

"Very nice," Paula said. She was trying hard to hide her contempt, but I could see it. For the sad imprisoned frog, for Lollie's dirty face, for the worn yard, for the way I looked.

"Karen," Paula said, "I'm here because there's a problem. With the project. More specifically, with the initial formulas, we think. With portion of the nanoassembler code from five years ago, when you were...still with us."

"A problem," I repeated. Inside the house, a baby wailed. "Just a minute."

I set Lollie down and went inside. Lori cried in her crib. Her diaper reeked. I put a pacifier in her mouth and cradled her in my left arm. With the right arm I scooped Timmy from his crib. When he didn't wake, I jostled him a little. I carried both babies back to the porch, deposited Timmy in the portacrib, and sat down next to Paula.

"Lollie, go get me a diaper, honey. And wipes. You can carry your frog inside to get them."

Lollie went; she's a sweet-natured kid. Paula stared incredulously at the twins. I unwrapped Lori's diaper and Paula grimaced and slid farther away.

"Karen—are you listening to me? This is important!"

"I'm listening."

"The nanocomputer instructions are off, somehow. The major results check out, obviously—" Obviously. The media had spent five years exclaiming over the major results.

"—but there are some odd foldings in the proteins of the twelfth-generation nano-assemblers."

Twelfth generation. The nanocomputer attached to each assembler replicates itself every six months. That was one of the project's checks and balances on the margin of error. It had been five and a half years. Twelfth generation was about right.

"Also," Paula continued, and I heard the strain in her voice, "there are some unforeseen macro-level developments. We're not sure yet that they're tied to the nanocomputer protein folds. There might not be any connection. What we're trying to do now is cover all the variables."

"You must be working on fairly remote variables if you're reduced to asking me."

"Well, yes, we are. Karen, do you have to do that *now*?"

"Yes." I scraped the shit off Lori with one edge of the soiled diaper. Lollie danced out of the house with a clean one. She sat beside me, whispering to her frog.

Paula said, "What I need...what the project needs—"

I said, "Do you remember the summer we collected frogs? We were maybe eight and ten. You'd become fascinated reading about that experiment where they threw a frog in boiling water but it jumped out, and then they put a frog in cool water and gradually increased the temperature to boiling until the stupid frog just sat there and died. Remember?"

"Karen—"



"I collected sixteen frogs for you, and when I found out what you were going to do with them, I cried and tried to let them go. But you boiled eight of them anyway. The other eight were controls. I'll give you that—proper scientific method. To reduce the margin of error, you said."

"Karen—we were just kids..."

I put the clean diaper on Lori. "Not all kids behave like that. Lollie doesn't. But you wouldn't

know that, would you? Nobody in your set has children. You should have had a baby, Paula."



She barely hid her shudder. But, then, most of the people we knew felt the same way.

She said, "What the project needs is for you to come back and work on the same small area you did originally. Looking for something—anything—you might have missed in the protein-coded instructions to successive generations of nanoassemblers."

"No," I said.

"It's not really a matter of choice. The macrolevel problems—I'll be frank, Karen. It looks like a new form of cancer, one nobody's ever seen. Unregulated replication of some very weird cells."

"So take the cellular nanomachinery out." I crumpled the stinking diaper and set it out of the baby's reach. Closer to Paula.

"You know we can't do that! The project's irreversible!"

"Many things are irreversible," I said. Lori started to fuss. I picked her up, opened my blouse, and gave her the breast. She sucked greedily. Paula glanced away. She has had nanomachinery in her perfect body, making it perfect, for five years now. Her breasts will never look swollen, blue-veined, sagging.

"Karen, listen—"

"No—you listen," I said quietly. "Eight years ago you convinced Zweigler I was only a minor member of the research team. Included only because I was your sister. I've always wondered, by the way, how you did that—were you sleeping with him, too? Seven years ago you got me shunted off into the minor area of the project's effect on female gametes—which nobody cared about because it was already clear there was no way around sterility as a side effect. Nobody thought it was too high a price for a perfect, self-repairing body, did they? Except me."

Paula didn't answer. Lollie carried her frog to the wading pool and set it carefully in the water.

I said, "I didn't mind working on female gametes, even if it was a backwater, even if you got star billing. I was used to it, after all. As kids, you were always the cowboy; I got to be the horse. You were the astronaut, I was the alien you conquered. Remember? One Christmas you used up all the chemicals in your first chemistry set and then stole mine."

"I don't think trivial childhood incidents matter in—"

"Of course you don't. And I never minded. But I did mind when five years ago you made copies of all

my notes and presented them as yours, while I was so sick during my pregnancy with Lollie. You claimed my work. Stole it. Just like the chemistry set. And then you eased me off the project."

"What you did was so minor—"

"If it was so minor, why are you here asking for my help now? And why would you imagine for half a second I'd give it to you?"

She stared at me, calculating. I stared back coolly. Paula wasn't used to me cool, I could see that. I'd always been the excitable one. Excitable, flighty, unstable—that's what she'd told Zweigler. A security risk.

Timmy fussed in his portacrib. I stood up, still nursing Lori, and scooped him up with my free arm. Back on the steps, I juggled Timmy to lie across Lori on my lap, pulled back my blouse, and gave him the other breast. This time Paula didn't permit herself a grimace.

She said, "Karen, what I did was wrong. I know that now. But for the sake of the project, not for me, you have to—"

"You are the project. You have been from the first moment you grabbed the headlines away from Zweigler and the others who gave their life to that work. 'Lovely Young Scientist Injects Self With Perfect-Cell Drug!' 'No Sacrifice Too Great To Circumvent FDA Shortsightedness, Heroic Researcher Declares.'"

Paula said flatly, "You're jealous. You're obscure and I'm famous. You're a mess and I'm beautiful. You're—"

"A milch cow? While you're a brilliant researcher? Then solve your own research problems."

"This was your area—"

"Oh, Paula, they were *all* my areas. I did more of the basic research than you did, and you know it. But you knew how to position yourself with Zweigler, to present key findings at key moments, to cultivate the right connections...all that stuff you do so well. And, of course, I was still under the delusion we were partners. I just didn't realize it was a barracuda partnering a goldfish."

From the wading pool Lollie watched us with big eyes. "Mommy..."

"It's okay, honey. Mommy's not mad at you. Look, better catch your frog—he's hopping away."

She shrieked happily and dove for the frog. Paula said softly, "I had no idea you were so angry after all this time. You've changed, Karen."

"But I'm not angry. Not any more. And you never knew what I was like before. You never bothered to know."

"I knew you never wanted a scientific life. Not the way I did. You always wanted kids. Wanted...*this*." She waved her arm around the shabby yard. David left eighteen months ago. He sends money. It's never enough.

"I wanted a scientific establishment that would let me have both. And I wanted credit for my work. I wanted what was mine. How did you do it, Paula—end up with what was yours and what was mine, too?"

"Because you were distracted by babyshit and frogs!" Paula yelled, and for the first time I saw how scared she really was. Paula didn't make admissions like that. A tactical error. I watched her stab desperately for a way to regain the advantage. A way to seize the offensive.

I seized it first. "You should have left David alone. You already had Zweigler; you should have left me David. Our marriage was never the same after that."

She said, "I'm dying, Karen."

I turned my head from the nursing babies to look at her.

"It's true. My cellular machinery is running wild. Just in the last few months. The nano-assemblers are creating weird structures, destructive enzymes. For five years they replicated perfectly and now...For five years it all performed *exactly* as it was programmed to—"

I said, "It still is."

Paula sat very still. Lori had fallen asleep. I juggled her into the portacrib and nestled Timmy more comfortably on my lap. Lollie chased her frog around the wading pool. I squinted to see if Lollie's lips were blue; the weather was really too cool for her to be in the water very long.

Paula choked out, "You programmed the assembler machinery in the ovaries to—"

"Nobody much cares about women's ovaries. Only fourteen percent of college-educated women want to muck up their lives with kids. Recent survey result. Less than one percent margin of error."

"—you actually sabotaged...hundreds of women have been injected by now, maybe thousands—"

"Oh, there's a reverser enzyme," I said.

"Completely effective if you take it before the twelfth-generation replication. You're the only person that's been injected that long. I just discovered the reverser a few months ago, tinkering with my old notes for something to do in what your friends probably call my idle domestic prison. That's provable, incidentally. All my notes are computer-dated."

Paula whispered, "Scientists don't do this—"

"Too bad you wouldn't let me be one."

"Karen—"

"Don't you want to know what the reverser is, Paula? It's engineered from human chorionic gonadotropin. The pregnancy hormone. Too bad you never wanted a baby."

She went on staring at me. Lollie shrieked and splashed with her frog. Her lips were turning blue. I stood up, laid Timmy next to Lori in the portacrib, and buttoned my blouse.



"You made an experimental error twenty-five years ago," I said to Paula. "Too small a sample population. Sometimes a frog jumps out."

I went to lift my daughter from the wading pool.

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# The 2000 James Tiptree, Jr. Award

WisCon 25 • Madison • WI

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## Winner of the 2000 James Tiptree, Jr. Award • Molly Gloss

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### Molly Gloss • The Real Deal

Karen Joy Fowler



Molly Gloss has an ardent fan club in Davis California of which I count myself as president. Contenders for the position would include Stan Robinson and Sean Stewart, but I was reading her first and therefore appoint myself.. This

club is more remarkable than it might at first appear. The three of us Davisites rarely agree on books. It's not so hard to get two of the three of us, but three out of three is a rarer and noteworthy achievement.

Although I find Stan's taste often hard to predict, I was never more confident than when I told him to read *The Dazzle of Day*. Molly's novel is, to my mind, a perfect rendering of landscape and its impact on us. I've never read a book that more beautifully expressed a hunger for wildness and also for home. It won the Pen West award, as well as a Whiting Writer's Award and if another science-fiction book has ever been honored that way I'm not aware of it.

For all my great love of *The Dazzle of Day*, the book that more closely mirrors my own obsessions is this year's Tiptree winner, *Wild Life*. I find it an astonishing achievement – can't be much more explicit without spoilers, so I will just note that it adds to Molly's exquisite evocation of landscape and character a lovely sense of playfulness. And it's such an adventure! High pleasures of language and low pleasures of yarn-spinning all wrapped up in a single book.

The first time I read it I spent the next days thinking about the issues it raised of wilderness and women's place in it. Molly has said that part of the impetus for the book came from her decision to spend a night in the woods without a tent or a flashlight to see how that felt..

The second time I noticed much more strongly the themes of genre and the ways genre and feminism intersected. A perfect book for WisCon!

Molly knows about genre:

Her first novel was a children's fantasy entitled *Outside the Gates*.

Her most successful novel to date is a western, the absolutely wonderful *The Jump-off Creek*. *The Jump-off Creek* won the Oregon Book Award and was a finalist for the Pen-Faulkner. It has remained in print and been a steady seller since its first publication. But Molly has described in interviews how enthusiastic readers who'd come to hear her speak about her western would recoil from the news that she was now working on a science-fiction novel. And, despite its awards and reviews, *The Dazzle of Day* got less attention inside and outside the field than it deserved

I remember perfectly Stan's response when he put the book down and called me. "Molly Gloss is the real deal, isn't she?" he said. "The genuine article. Genius."

You bet. Just read the books.

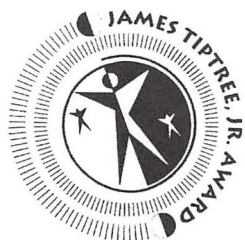
She's also a swell companion who has become a good friend. I couldn't be more delighted to have her joining us here at WisCon this year so that you can all meet her for yourselves.

### Molly Gloss

Jeanne Gomoll

---

For many years Georgie Schnobrich—Milwaukee fan and Cake Decorating Artist Extraordinaire—has decorated a cake in honor of the current Tiptree winner. Sometimes that cake has been sold at the Tiptree auction and sometimes it has been given to the winner as part of their award, as it was last year to Suzy McKee Charnas and will this year to Molly Gloss. Knowing that she must eventually convert the winning book's cover to buttercream art, Georgie has grown increasingly sensitive to the cover art of potential Tiptree-winning novels. In fact she guessed early in 2000 that Molly Gloss' *Wild Life* was a strong contender for the award and the



last time I heard from her, she was still staring in dismay at that book's cover. It will be difficult, if not impossible she says, to depict its artwork in buttercream.

Lucky for us all (and unlucky for poor Georgie), there are no guidelines distributed to Tiptree judges and no admonishment that they consider the "buttercream cover test" when they make their choice for the year's Tiptree winner. Lucky for us because *Wild Life* is such an excellent book and so deserves its acclaim. Never having met Molly Gloss, I am unable to relate any personal anecdotes or observations about her. Nevertheless, I feel as if I know a great deal about her from the three of her four novels I've read.

Some information is available in published interviews and articles about Molly Gloss: She lives in Portland, Oregon and is an instructor at Portland State University. She has a grown son whose name is Ben, and she lives with two pets—a Dalmatian named Buddy and a cat named Scout. Sadly, she was recently widowed. Her first novel, *Outside the Gates*, was published in 1986. The PEN/Faulkner Award lists Gloss as a finalist for her second novel, *The Jump-Off Creek*, which also went on to win the Oregon Book Award and the Pacific Northwest Booksellers Association award. Gloss received the Whiting Award for her third novel, *The Dazzle of Day*. Her latest novel, *Wild Life* has, of course, already won one award: The James Tiptree, Jr. Award.

Gloss' first novel, *Outside the Gates*, is a YA fantasy about a boy expelled from his community, who must struggle for survival in the wilderness. I haven't read this first novel yet and am still looking for it. (Would anyone care to lend me their copy, please?) But I have read *The Jump-Off Creek*. Gloss' second novel is a western whose protagonist—a woman homesteader in Oregon's Blue Mountains—must fight for survival against cold, hunger, wild animals, loneliness and her fellow pioneers. Gloss decided not to follow up this western with another in the same genre because she felt the market for westerns (except for those by Louis L'Amour) was drying up. Before she realized how successful *The Jump-Off Creek* would be, she had already begun writing a science fiction novel, believing that the SF market was a better bet than westerns. Nevertheless, there has been a growing interest in more realistic portrayals of 19th century life in the western frontier and *The Jump-Off Creek* certainly fits into the newer understanding of the reality of western communities. Perhaps that interest partially explains the success of *The Jump-Off Creek*. It is not, after all, a very familiar sort of western; shyness born of long isolation is one of the great hurdles for community in this novel. As Ursula Le Guin says, "There are cowboys in *The Jump-Off Creek*, and an Indians, but

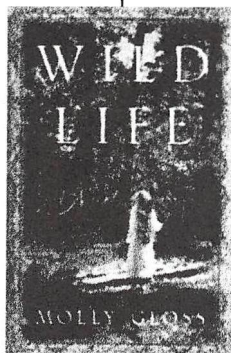
it's about as far from John Wayne country as it could be—a story of self-discovery, of difficult tenderesses—a lovely, honest book."

At first glance, *The Dazzle of Day* could hardly be more unlike *The Jump-Off Creek*. One is a western set in the 19th century; the other is set on a generation spaceship, *Dusty Miller*, bound for an unexplored planet, and is set a hundred years in the future. Communities in *The Jump-Off Creek* are knitted together by women who overcome isolation and shyness; the Quaker community in *The Dazzle of Day* binds everyone together in a sophisticated web of consensus and purpose. *Wild Life* also seems to be fundamentally different from each of these novels because of *Wild Life's* protagonist's concerns as a writer and artist. Actually, there are themes that connect and weave these three books together closely.

One of the things that most interested me about *Dazzle*, was the novel's point of view. It seemed very much like real life (and very unlike most science fiction) in that the people who lived in the *Dusty Miller* were far more concerned about their day-to-day lives than they were about the so-called "Big Events" of their world. A crisis among the sun sails, the question of whether or not to commit to landing on a planet, are some of the "Big Events" in this novel. These events would be the main plot elements of a classic SF novel and are comparable to such "Big Events" in our own world such as the ozone hole crisis, or the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. How many of us know the details of current events better than we do the details of our own private lives? Very few I'm sure, and yet this "familiar" point of view seems quite alien when used within an SF story.

Molly Gloss says that she drew Charlotte Bridger Drummond (the protagonist of *Wild Life*) from her collection of out-of-print novels written by women at the turn of the (20th) century. One of Charlotte's favorite authors is Jules Verne, so the kind of popular writing with which she supports her five sons is actually science fiction or fantasy. She writes in her journal about her struggles as a female genre writer and confesses that she'd rather be writing Literature, but art doesn't pay the bills. Her articulate journal entries, character studies, letters, essays on the creative process, story drafts, and humorous musings about single motherhood on a homestead and self-confident criticism of 19th century mores caused me add her to my list of fictional characters who I wish I could know as a friend.

According to an interview with Gloss, published by *Publisher's Weekly*, Gloss shares quite a few things in common with her character, Charlotte. "Ben was a colicky baby, and I was having postpartum blues and kept a desperate



journal,' she says. Eventually, 'it morphed into a place where I wrote little fictional anecdotes and scenes.' Working around her family's schedule, Gloss labored to master her craft. Although she had the support of Ed, her husband of more than 30 years who is now deceased, she felt very much outside the loop in terms of the Portland writing community."

*Wild Life's* plot thickens when a little girl gets lost in the woods near a Washington logging camp, and Charlotte leaves home to join the search party. But the eclectic format of the book leaves us uncertain as to whether this adventure is Charlotte's draft for a story or biography. One might initially think of these three books, *The Jump-Off Creek*, *The Dazzle of Day*, and *Wild Life* as very different in setting and theme, but common themes weave through all of Gloss' work. In fact she said in the *Publisher's Weekly* interview:

"Barry Lopez once said that he thought most writers only have a handful of questions they are always addressing in their work, and that resonated with me," says Gloss. "One of the questions I always seem to be holding in my hand is the question of the human response to wilderness. One of the other questions has to do with community. What is a community? And when you form a community, who are you excluding?" These are themes that are appropriately dealt with by both western fiction and science fiction. Gloss in fact has noted that, "You

can put people on unpopulated landscapes and give them pioneer-like situations – it just maybe wouldn't be on this planet."

In correspondence, Gloss claimed that she "hadn't been thinking of *Wild Life* as a science fiction novel. (Though I guess, in some circles, Big Foot would qualify; and there's all that stuff about The Future and Jules Verne; and come to think of it, some fantasy-like stuff about ghosts and about speaking the languages of birds)...."

In my mind, *Wild Life* is an elegant blending of both western and SF traditions: the world seen from the point of view of a western pioneer SF writer. That she is a woman and a genre writer, that the world defines her as an outsider because of her sex, and that all these things resonate directly with women genre writers today, makes this book an extraordinary accomplishment ... and a remarkably entertaining book to read and re-read.

As a member of the Tiptree Motherboard and also of WisCon's concom, I extend congratulations from both groups to Molly Gloss for winning the Tiptree Award for the year 2000, and welcome her to WisCon 25. I hope she enjoys her celebration, not to mention the beautiful cake that Georgie Schnobrich will undoubtedly create for her.

## The 2000 James Tiptree, Jr. Award

compiled by Ellen Klages with contributions from the Tiptree Jury

Non-attributed commentary harvested from correspondence between the judges.



### Wild Life

Molly Gloss, Simon & Schuster, 2000; [ISBN: 0-684-86798-2]

Charlotte Bridger Drummond, the heroine of this novel, is a free-thinking feminist who makes her living as a Jules-Vernesque fantasy writer. She lives both physically and symbolically on the fringes of society, in Western Oregon at the turn of the 20th century.

She rides a bicycle, smokes cigars, and dresses in men's clothes because they are comfortable. She is a staunch advocate for women's rights, with a sense of strength and humor that informs everything in her daily life and how she chooses to raise her five sons.

When she embarks on an adventure into the wilderness, a mission of mercy, she encounters danger at every turn. After a sexual assault by a logger, she becomes lost in the mountains in a terrifying storm, and is eventually rescued by a family of the legendary Sasquatch. She returns home with her outlook about everything profoundly

altered by her encounters with the creatures, whose social roles begin to seem much more "civilized" than those of the logging camp or even her hometown.

Gloss is a brilliant stylist. In this novel she encompasses exquisitely researched historical fiction, a compelling mystery story, a wilderness adventure, and a fantastic journey with a tribe of mythic creatures. She manages to pull off that risky literary feat with such skill that by the end the novel becomes a meditative musing on wildness and human nature, told by one of the most memorable heroines in recent memory.

#### Judges

Ellen Klages (chair)  
Lisa Goldstein  
Helen Merrick  
Jeff Smith

## 2000 Shortlist

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### "Fidelity: A Primer"

Michael Blumlein, *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*, 9/2000

---

This is a story about circumcision, a very gender-related issue. It is one of the rare stories that explores gender issues by examining male body issues, and the choices they involve.

### "A Diagram of Rapture"

James L. Cambias, *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*, 4/2000

---

A woman researching neurohormones discovers a brain chemical that naturally triggers sexual arousal. The resulting drug artificially does the same thing, affecting sexual interactions on a larger social scale, as well as changing relationships within the scientist's own family.

### The Danish Girl

David Ebershoff, Viking, 2000

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The fantasy elements in this novel are so slight as to be almost non-existent, but it was so compelling that the jury could not bear to leave it out. It is the story of Einar, a man in 1920s Denmark who turns himself into a woman, Lili, first through dress and mannerisms, then through lifestyle, and ultimately surgery. One of the most interesting aspects of the book is the portrayal of Greta, who is both Einar's wife and Lili's best friend, as she runs through a tremendous range of emotions when her husband and her life are transformed.

### Ash: A Secret History

Mary Gentle, Mary, Victor Gollancz, London, 2000

---

This enormous novel (published as an 1100-page book in the UK and as a four-volume work in the U.S.) is set in an alternate 15<sup>th</sup> century. Its main characters are Ash, a female mercenary, and Flora/Florian, a woman who dresses as a man in order to study medicine. It is a vividly realized portrait of two powerful and unusual women surviving in a time that is openly hostile to them.

### "Soma"

Camille Hernandez-Ramdwar, *Whispers from the Cotton Tree Root*, ed. by Nalo Hopkinson, Invisible Cities Press, 2000

---

This is a powerful story about fitting in, about body image, and about how physical appearance influences what others think about a woman's personality and sexuality.

### "The Glass Bottle Trick"

Nalo Hopkinson, *Whispers from the Cotton Tree Root*, ed. by Nalo Hopkinson, Invisible Cities Press, 2000

---

A seamless blend of fairy tale and Caribbean folklore, this chilling tale examines the roles of men and women in courtship, and how those roles change with marriage and pregnancy.

### Midnight Robber

Nalo Hopkinson, Warner Aspect, 2000

---

A rollicking Caribbean feminist tale about a little girl turned outlaw, it is a blend of action-adventure, science-fiction, allegory, and myth that offers a unique intersection of gender, race, and identity issues. While not overtly about gender, the ideas and concepts of gender are at its very heart.

### Perdido Street Station

China Miéville, Macmillan, London, 2000

---

An amazing read, a big epic wonder of a novel that constructs an urban fantasy world that is both Dickensian and futuristic. Its main themes are about inter-species relationships and what it is to be human, but there is a strong gender sub-theme that weaves its way through the city and the lives of its main characters.

### "Once on the Shores of the Stream Senegambia"

Pamela Mordecai, *Whispers from the Cotton Tree Root*, ed. by Nalo Hopkinson, Invisible Cities Press, 2000

---

A very scary story about colonization and gender. The author uses a future society to explore questions about what it means to be in a female body, and what the consequences are when a woman's choices about her body are not under her control.

### The Annuniciate

Severna Park. Eos, 2000

---

A fresh and interesting feminist take on the Garden of Eden myth, with new treatments of the familiar symbols of apple, gate, and garden.

### Sea as Mirror

Tess Williams. HarperCollins, Voyager, 2000

---

Set in an overpopulated, environmentally precarious not-so-distant future, this novel deals with the theme of inter-species communication, and a fascinating look at what it means to be "the other."

# Guest of the James Tiptree, Jr. Award Council

## Carol Emshwiller

Justine Larbalestier

Carol Emshwiller has written across such a variety of styles, in so many genres, and does something different with each new work that it's



become very hard to describe her writing. Other than to say that it's brilliant. Rich, funny. Incredibly funny. Wry. Sad. Angry but in a controlled beautiful way. I adore Carol Emshwiller's work. I adore Carol too.

She began writing in the late fifties, under difficult circumstances, those being that she was married with small children, and it was the fifties. She told me once about picking up her typewriter and sitting and writing inside her children's play pen while they played.

In the short story, "Autobiography," from the collection *Joy in Our Cause*, she writes, "Most of my life is spent not writing." She was in her late forties then. Most of her life now is spent writing: two complete novels as yet unpublished though everyone who's read them says they're wonderful. Many many short stories. I see her regularly in New York and she's always working on something new. She cancels lunch dates because she'd rather be writing. Sometimes those lunch dates are with me. When I read her work I forgive her, though it's a tough call: spending time with Carol or reading her new work?

Carol has written short stories ranging from straight up science fiction to experimental mainstream fiction. Novels too. *Carmen Dog* is one of

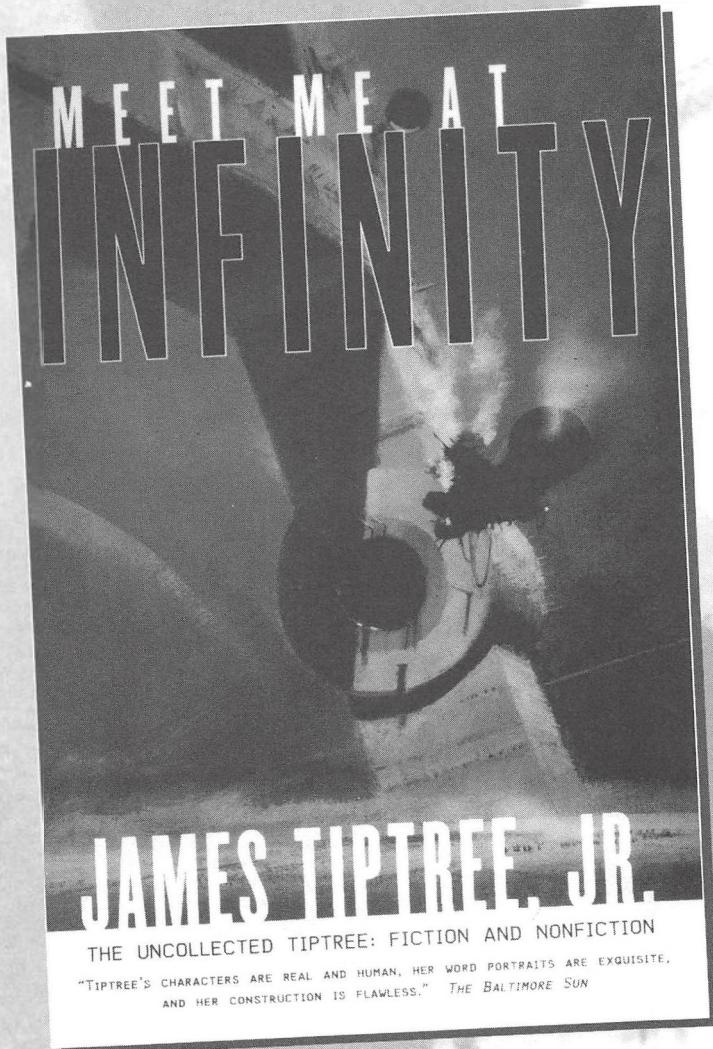
the funniest books I've ever read-women turn into dogs; dogs turn into women. She wrote two of the most moving westerns ever, *Ledoyt* and *Leaping Man Hill*. I cried almost all the way through *Ledoyt*. Reading them, like reading Molly Gloss' *The Jump Off Creek* made me think about the western in a whole other way. Read them-you'll see what I mean.

Carol was at the very first Milford Writers' Conference. After the conference, Judith Merrill wrote to a friend saying that for her there were two main highlights: seeing Fritz Leiber's revival and Carol Emshwiller getting going. That was 1956. I told Carol about the letter recently and she laughed and said, "Oh, I was so shy. I hardly said a word." Carol is one of the least self-aggrandizing people I know, one of the most talented. I loved her work long before I knew her; knowing her makes me love her work even more. Go to the huckster room, buy whatever there is there of hers. Go online, find more, buy it. You'll thank me.

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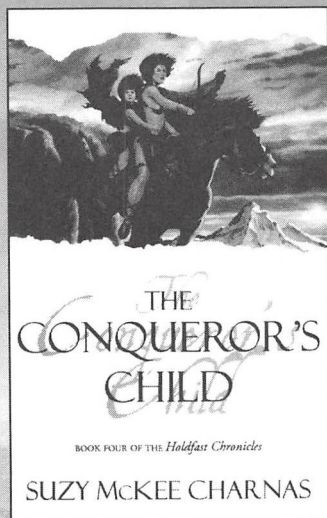
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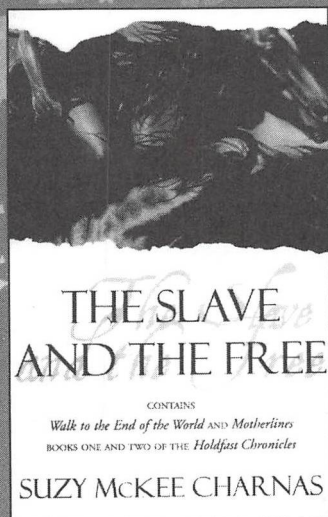
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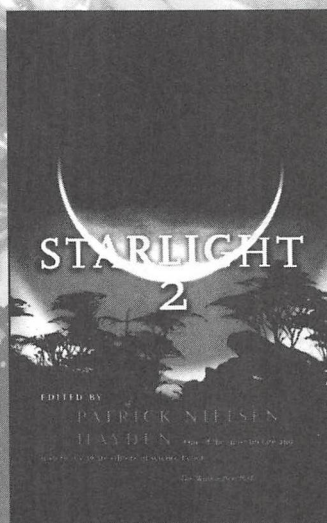


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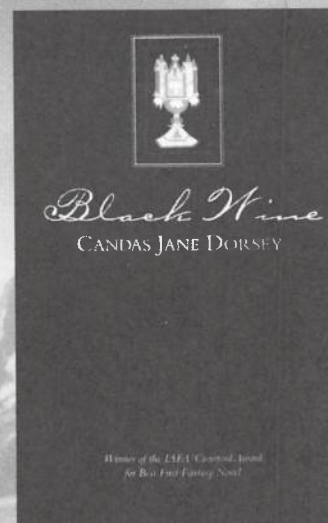


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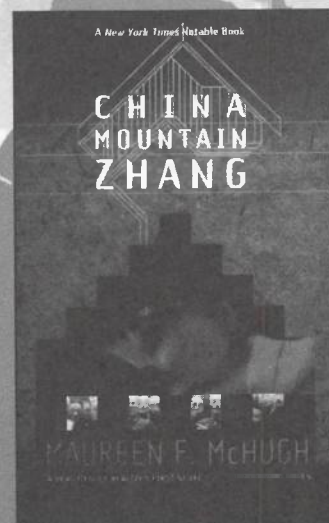
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# The James Tiptree, Jr. Award • Ten Years Old

The James Tiptree, Jr. Award is given to the work of science fiction or fantasy published in one year which best explores or expands gender roles.

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## The Founding Mothers

Karen Joy Fowler and Pat Murphy

## The Heroes

The people who made the bake sales, donated or purchased items at Tiptree auctions, published the anthology of Tiptree shortlisted short fiction (*Flying Cups and Saucers*), contributed to and produced the cookbooks, designed the t-shirts, sewed the quilt, donated unsolicited cash, attended the annual ceremonies, and otherwise contributed to the ongoing life and saga of the Tiptree organism. The energy and enthusiasm the award engenders is incontrovertible proof of just how hungry the science fiction community is for this award, and how ready everyone has been to make it happen and make it keep happening.

## The Process

Each year the Tiptree Motherboard appoints a panel of five judges to read and discuss among themselves the merits of gender-bending fiction published in the previous year. Anyone and everyone is invited to forward recommendations for novels and short fiction to the Tiptree Award. (Send email to: <tiptree@tiptree.org> or mail your recommendations to: 680 66th St., Oakland, CA 94609) Publishers are encouraged to alert the Tiptree Award about soon-to-be-published gender-bending fiction.

At the end of a year of reading and deliberation, the judges choose a winner who is invited to the Tiptree Award Ceremony to accept their award and prize money. Each year an award of \$1000 is presented to a winner, or shared among co-winners. Tiptree ceremonies have been held at several WisCon SF conventions in Madison, Wisconsin, as well as at Readercon in Massachusetts, at Potlatch in Oakland, California, at the International Conference of the Fantastic in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, and at Diversicon in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Although the judges choose not to release a list of nominees before the actual award, thus creating an artificial set of "losers," they do publish a "shortlist" (and sometimes a "longlist," as well) of fiction to which they wish to call readers' attention. Listed below is the list of winners through the past 10 years of the award and the "shortlist" for each year. Not included here are the "longlists" that were also published some years. Both short lists and long lists can be found on the Tiptree Award web page: [www.tiptree.org](http://www.tiptree.org).

*"One of the most exciting things about the first panel of judges for the Tiptree Award was the intensity, care, and concern with which the judges read, and wrote about what they read. Everyone aired real concerns, everyone listened to each other.*

*"The James Tiptree, Jr. Award was started by visionaries, supported by nourishment, and selected with passion, patience and respect for difference. Alice Sheldon would have a lot to be proud of."—Debbie Notkin, coordinator of the first Tiptree panel of judges, 1992*

### The 2001 James Tiptree, Jr. Award Diversicon • Boston MA

#### Judges

Joan Haran  
Suzy McKee Charnas  
Ama Patterson  
Peter Halasz  
Kathleen Goonan

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# The Tiptree Award: a Personal History

Karen Joy Fowler

---

I'm going to start this by telling a story that I think is true. A few years ago I was watching the Oscar cast when Geena Davis opened the show with a long speech about Hollywood and the year of the woman. (Remember the year of the woman! Were those good times, or what!)

Somewhere during this long speech, I think I remember, I'm pretty darn sure I heard Geena Davis saying that Hollywood had taught us how to be women. She rattled off a list of the various options Hollywood had created for us. Thanks to Hollywood, we could be sexy or smart or brassy or innocent and waiflike. And there were many, many more possibilities for us!, all illustrated with clips of Lillian Gish and Betty Davis and Joan Crawford and Mae West and, of course, the very sad Marilyn Monroe.

Does anyone else remember this? Because, to be perfectly honest, I was quite distracted the whole time by Geena Davis's neckline. It zigzagged about like the streak in the Bride of Frankenstein's hair. And so I was thinking, *The Bride of Frankenstein*, now there was a movie that really expanded our options, except for those times I was wondering if a breast was about to break free, and how should I interpret this, if one did—pro patriarchy or against! It was the sort of *décolletage* that functions through suspense and so with one thing and another, I missed some of the speech.

But I still think she said what I just said she said, and I've never been able to feel the same about Geena Davis again. I just loved her in *Thelma and Louise*, but I didn't even go see her pirate movie.

Now this idea that we learn our roles, that without help, we wouldn't even know how to be women, is really a very profound one, with broad epistemological implications. Geena Davis expanded on Rousseau and Feuerbach, right there on prime-time TV, and I would have been proud to see a woman do this, except for the neckline.

Just ask yourself, if we weren't taught to be women, what would we be? (Ask yourself this question even if you're a man, and don't cheat by changing the words.)

The Tiptree Award is supposed to honor people who try to answer that question—people who try to help us unlearn what television and the movies and books and comics and advertisements for automobiles and cigarettes have taught us. Because even though Hollywood has given us all those options, we desperately need to examine the old ones and imagine some new ones.

In creating the Tiptree Award, Pat Murphy and I expanded our personal behaviors geometrically. We are both the kind of women who like people to like us, but in establishing the Tiptree, we had, as an

acknowledged goal, trouble. We hoped to annoy. We thought we would dip a few pigtailed into the inkwell.

Why us? Think of the hubris involved! Pat and I handpick the jury every year, including the coveted token male slot. We make sweeping executive decisions and we make them in minutes, in brief phone calls. "What do you think!" we ask each other and, just like that, we lay down policy. Nothing either Pat or I has accomplished to date entitles us to any of this. Is this how women behave?

And then there's the money raising. Pat has a black belt and a science degree (what movie is that from!) and one day she calls me up and points out that, we start the Tiptree Award, and suddenly she is baking cookies and stitching quilt squares and trying to take tiny little stitches. I've been in PTAs and on Little League boards most of my adult life, but for Pat, this is the final frontier. And here's a Tiptree image I love: Jeanne Gomoll, computer wizard, seated at her terminal, writing a program to design the Tiptree quilt. Preceding Sandra Bullock in *The Net* by a good three years. (Does Bullock seem like a good name for a woman to you? just asking.)

But the best thing about the Tiptree Award is that it got a lot bigger than me and Pat. It did this really quickly. And all the things I like best about it now, are all the things that other people have added to it:

The fact that we publish the short list and the winner simultaneously so as not to transform the people honored on the short list into losers. We did this on Vonda McIntyre's insistence and it was one of the best ideas we were ever given;

Freddie Baer's t-shirts;

The quilt, the quilt, the quilt;

he cookies baked by Science Fiction Eye's Steve Brown and sold to the cyberpunks at Armadillocon;

The trophies, edible and un-, the artists who created them, and the artists who eat them.

Especially the photo montage of Ursula devouring hers;

The cookbooks;

The Loud Women and the auctions;

The Australian women and their cakestalls;

The juries' constant reinventing of the name-Tiptrites, Tiytristes, Tripteases, Triptitrus;

Susan Casper's rendition of "There is Nothing like a Dame," at ReaderCon. Susan was backed in this famous performance by the Tips;

The women of WisCon, who made it happen from the very beginning;

The books, the stories. Most especially the books and the stories.

## The Tiptree Award • The Stories

---

### The 1991 James Tiptree, Jr. Award WisCon 16 • Madison • WI

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#### Judges

Suzy McKee Charnas  
Sherry Coldsmith  
Bruce McAllister  
Vonda McIntyre  
Debbie Notkin (coordinator)

Non-attributed commentary harvested from correspondence among the judges.

#### A Woman of the Iron People

Eleanor Arnason, William Morrow, 1991

Four-square grumpy humor and effortless inventiveness. It explores the situation of a people much more obviously (if not more deeply) fixed in mammalian psycho-sexual wiring than we are (or

think we are). No easy answers, no question begging, just a clean, clever job.

That wonderful mix of 'sense of wonder' (alienness) and shock of recognition (humanity) which ... the very best science fiction has and which ... 'courage' in SF demands.

#### The White Queen

Gwyneth Jones, Gollancz, 1991

The real reason this book is so good is its moral complexity. You don't know whether to root for the heroes as they challenge the seemingly benevolent aliens or to pity the heroes for their xenophobia. Jones makes that decision as difficult for us as the decision to support the PLO or the IRA or the Mojahadeen (take your pick) is for people today. The book is infuriatingly and justifiably inconclusive; the characters are as confused as most of today's viewers are.

### The 1992 James Tiptree, Jr. Award WisCon 17 • Madison • WI

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#### Judges

Eleanor Arnason  
Gwyneth Jones  
John Kessel  
Michaela Roessner (coordinator)  
Pamela Sargent

Non-attributed commentary harvested from correspondence among the judges.

#### China Mountain Zhang

Maureen McHugh, Tor, 1992

Homosexuality is a useful device for a political novelist—a male homosexual is a public agent who does not stand to benefit, in the terms of his own futurity, from anything the state can do. Throughout this novel there's an understated, building tension between the loveless embrace of the 'caring' state and the unassuming humane behavior of Zhang the outsider. Deep in the heart of *China Mountain Zhang* there's a very old riff: the wild talent, the young male outsider who is smarter, faster, much better than the system that rejects him. McHugh has given this old, old story an elegant transformation.

A sympathetic and subtle portrayal of women and men in nontraditional roles.

Avoiding preachment without abandoning thought is hard. Characters must seem real without seeming doctrinaire; issues must arise out of the

story instead of being imposed on it. By this standard I'd say McHugh's *China Mountain Zhang* is the best political novel I've read in years, because for the most part it doesn't seem to be about politics at all.

Rigorous science fiction, set in a non-western culture. It's well written and the characters live and breathe. It's got it all.

#### 1992 Shortlist

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#### Venus Rising

Carol Emshwiller, Edgewood Press, 1992

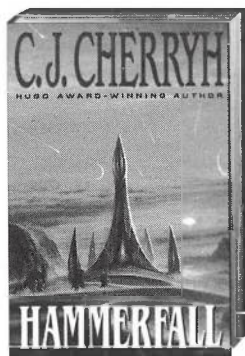
Liked the alien sense of Emshwiller's amphibious people. An explicitly feminist story which also has an underlying, rationalized yet subtle science-fictional rationale. I like the way *Venus Rising* can be read both metaphorically and as a 'pure' science fiction story.

#### "Grownups"

Ian MacLeod, *Asimov's*, 6/92

This taps into some basic male discomfort with what pregnancy does to women's bodies (although there is no pregnancy per se in the story), and also with adolescent fears about adulthood, the perception of growing up as a loss of vitality and identity.

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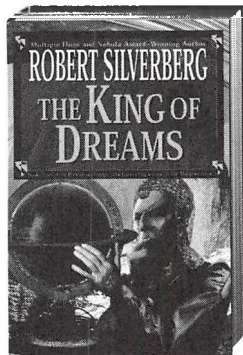
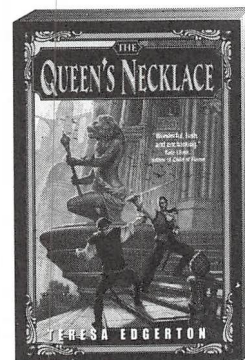
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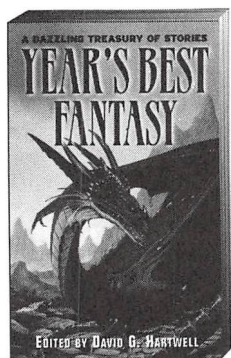
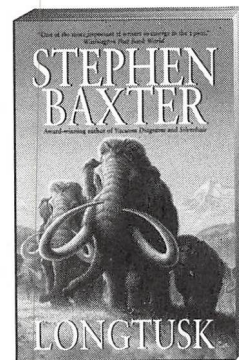
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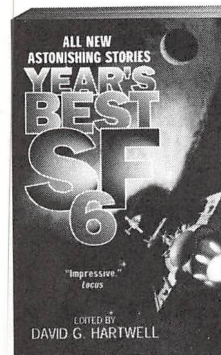
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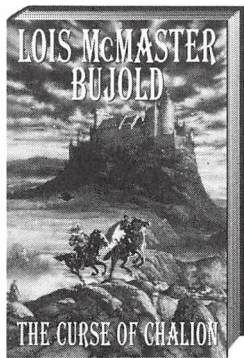
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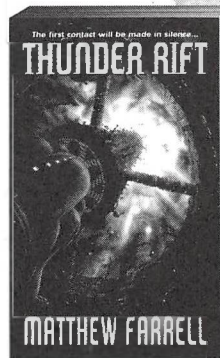
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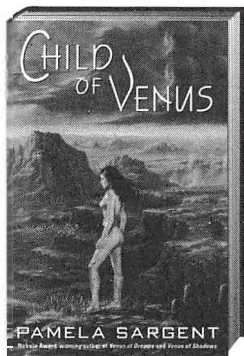
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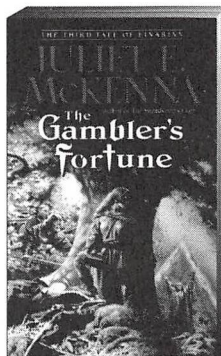
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## **Time, Like an Ever Rolling Stream**

Judith Moffett, St. Martin's Press, 1992

A good science fiction novel about incest or the threat or possibility thereof. Moffett also does a good job of showing the connection—for many conservative Christians—between religion, consumerism, disrespect for the planet and fear of different people.

Moffett's writing on gender issues, and on the future of humanity, is profoundly and insidiously pessimistic. Under the placid surface of *Time*, there's a truly terrible, and grimly justified, vision of the relationship between the sexes.

## **Red Mars**

Kim Stanley Robinson, Harper Collins, 1992

Liked this book's openly sexual interpretation of human power broking, and the way that sex-drive scabbling for dominance is shown as being destructive on every possible level.

If this novel isn't explicitly about gender roles, they certainly underlie and drive the characters and their interactions. This is rich, realistic, beautifully done science fiction with the kind of detail that makes one feel the writer has actually lived in the world he creates.

## **Correspondence**

Sue Thomas, The Women's Press, 1992

Thoughtful, philosophical, intelligent exploration of human/machine interfacing and transformations.

## **Lost Futures**

Lisa Tuttle, Grafton, 1992

This book is a multiverse riff, strongly reminiscent of *The Female Man* and *Woman on the Edge of Time*, but the device is used for a personal, not a political story. It's mildly yet pervasively eerie and disorienting.

## **In the Mother's Land**

Elisabeth Vonarburg, Bantam, 1992

Vonarburg's writing has a seriousness of purpose that much American science fiction, even some of the best, lacks; moral issues and intellectual debates are an important and exciting part of her work. Change may be necessary, but one has a sense, in this novel, of how problematic it is and how much pain it can cause. One of the delights of this novel is that the reader learns about the protagonist's world in much the way she does, first discovering her immediate environment and then, gradually, the world beyond it.

## **The 1993 James Tiptree, Jr. Award Readercon 7 • Worcester • MA**

### **Judges**

Steve Brown (SPB)  
Susan Casper (SC)  
Jeanne Gomoll (coordinator) (JG)  
Ursula K. Le Guin (UKL)  
Maureen F. McHugh (MFM)

Commentary was harvested from correspondence among the judges and attributed by the judges' initials.

## **Winner of the 1993 James Tiptree, Jr. Award**

### **Ammonite**

Nicola Griffith, Del Rey, 1993

Griffith details a civilization—several generations old—composed entirely of women. Her novel displays uncommon skill, a compelling narrative and a sure grasp of the complexity of civilization. While avoiding rhetoric, cant and stereotype, Griffith's politics run subtle and deep. [SPB]

A well-written first novel of a world on which there are no males, the men having been killed by a virus long ago. The story is told through the eyes of a woman who goes there to study the society that has evolved. This is the story of how people interact, and the evolution and adaptation of the protagonist to a world that is different from the one she's always known. Also a novel which postulates that a society composed of only women would not be

fundamentally different from one containing both genders. A real page-turner with beautifully well-drawn characters. [SC]

*Ammonite* is an interesting rite-of-passage novel in which the main character—Marghe—works out who she is and what she wants to do with her life. The culture of the planet Jeep—influenced by a virus fatal to most women and all men, that also facilitates genetic mixing and not-really-parthenogenic births—was fascinating and believable. This book is not based on “difference” gender philosophy (i.e., that women and men are basically psychologically different), and therefore, the women-only culture wasn't portrayed as a utopia for its lack of men. Greed and mindless violence exist in this culture as in ours. Its gender-bending message was that sexuality is only a minor part of human relationships. The characters all seem to take it for granted that sexual preference is an almost irrelevant aspect of understanding one another. In fact, the lack of men in this world is important only for the fact that because of it, Jeep is quarantined from the rest of the (mainly corrupt) Federation, until and if a vaccine is discovered. The human women on Jeep are never referred to as a lesbian community. They are simply a community of people, all of whom happen to be women. [JG]

A self-assured, unself-conscious, convincing depiction of a world without men, this is perhaps the strongest pure science fiction on the list—doing what only SF can do, and doing it with skill and brio. Is it a gender bender? It answers the question “When you



eliminate one gender, what's left?" (a whole world, is the answer). but a lot of books like Moby Dick, eliminate one gender, and yet nobody thinks anything about it. I believe Kate Clinton has the answer: "When women go off together it's called separatism. When men go off together it's called Congress." [UKL]

When plague wipes out all the men and many of the women of a contingent of marines, a planet is declared quarantined. Marghe is sent to study the "natives," women left from an earlier colonization attempt which was also infected. *Ammonite* could have been a didactic novel or a utopian fiction, but Griffith has made her world of women complex and full of people both good and bad. [MFM]

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### 1993 Shortlist

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#### Ring of Swords

Eleanor Arnason, Tor, 1993

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A novel about human interaction with a culture where cross-gender relations are forbidden, and even contact is kept to a minimum. A lovely book, though the violent male, non-violent female aspects were a tad heavy-handed. Also suffers slightly from a read-the-next-book-in-the-series sort of ending. [SC]

This novel is both a rousing page-turner and idea-turner. The aliens in this book might be the technically advanced version of the aliens from Arnason's Tiptree-winning novel, *Woman of the Iron People*. In both books, Arnason created an alien race whose social stability stems directly from the separation of male and female cultures. Both books are also based on the arguable premise that the male tendency toward violence differentiates gender. Given that premise, the culture and story that follows are fascinating. Both Hwarhath and Human culture must re-examine all their assumptions when the two races meet one another and begin negotiations to avoid war. [JG]

Both the narrators of this book use an understated, slightly self-mocking, casual tone which may lead the reader to take the story lightly. It is not a lightweight story. It is intellectually, emotionally, and ethically complex and powerful. A great deal of it is told by implication only, and so the moral solidity of the book and its symbolic and aesthetic effectiveness may pass a careless reader right by. The characters are mature, thoughtful, imperfect people, the settings are vivid, the drama is tense, and the science-fictional reinvention of gender roles is as successful as any I have ever read.

The only physical gender difference between human and Hwarhath is that alien women are a little larger than the men; but the cultural gender differences are immense and their implications fascinating, both as a device for questioning human prejudice and convention, and as the basis for a very good novel. The shadowy presence of a third species runs through it both unifying its ideas and always putting all assumptions back in question—a beautiful symbolic device. A beautiful book. [UKL]

A story of alien contact where the male of the species is considered too volatile to have at home. Arnason examines some of our assumptions of gender by creating an alien race whose assumptions are just enough different than ours to bring ours into high relief. (MFM)

#### The Robber Bride

Margaret Atwood, Bantam Books, 1993

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Two young girls, minor characters in *The Robber Bride*, demand that all storybook characters—good and evil—be read as female. So too does Atwood portray all the main characters of *The Robber Bride*—good and evil—as female. This fictional warping of gender role expectations forces an understanding that is ironically more complex than the so-called real world in which behavior and archetype are frequently divided into two sets, female and male. The hint of possibly supernatural motivations, give me the excuse to include this wonderful novel on the Tiptree shortlist. [JG]

Though in this book Atwood does not extrapolate from gender construction as she did in *Handmaid's Tale*, gender construction and the behavior and relationships forced on people by their gendered sexuality is always one of her central topics. In this case we have a major artist at the height of her powers telling a very grimm's fairytale about what a Bad Woman does to Good Men and Good Women. It is a splendid novel, and far and away the funniest book this jury got to read. (UKL)

#### In the Garden of Dead Cars

Sybil Claiborne, Cleis Press, 1993

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To me this is the most original book we read, and the most honest. The grim, repressive urban future seems familiar, conventional, but it grows less so as we read: its vivid, gritty reality is not borrowed, but discovered. What has happened to men, how women have adjusted to it, who the "carnals" are, all this complex matter is told with a mature and subtle simplicity, as the background to a strong love story and to the yet more powerful relationship of a daughter and a mother. [UKL]

#### "Motherhood"

L. Timmel Duchamp, in *Full Spectrum 4*, Bantam, 1993

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Considers the very interesting premise that human sexual dimorphism (e.g., gender) is a physiological accident that might be swept away by a virus. A young girl reconsiders her body, her self and her relationship with everyone around her when she catches this virus. [JG]

A nineteen year old girl ! discovers that her boyfriend has given her a virus that makes her something not human, maybe not female, and the government wants to keep her quarantined. This story could have been the story of a victim but Duchamp has made Pat, her nineteen-year-old, both nineteen and anything but a victim. [MFM]

## **“The Other Magpie”**

R. Garcia y Robertson, *Asimov's*, 4/1993

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Robertson has crafted a vivid portrait of a Native American society—the Sioux, at a time when the events of Little Big Horn are occurring just over the horizon. His main characters are two women, one enacting a warrior role and the other transvestite, that seem startlingly unlikely to our eyes. Robertson fearlessly avoids presenting his Sioux with politically correct Noble Savage stereotyping, giving us several thoughtless, cruel, even stupid examples, and ends up with a three dimensional picture of a fully human milieu. [SPB]

A vivid story about Indian Wars of the last century that explores gender in both its look at a young woman who takes on the role of warrior to assuage her brother's ghost, and her transvestite friend who has his eyes set on the white soldiers. [SC]

This story is interesting for its message that cultures based upon different understanding of humanity create dissonant communication when individuals from those cultures try to understand one another. Indians and Whites; women and men; White men and Indian women... [JG]

## **“Chemistry”**

James Patrick Kelly, *Asimov's*, 6/1993

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In Kelly's vivid story, all of the interactive negotiations that transpire between lovers have been reduced to chemical transactions. One might think that this love story would end up as interesting as the purchase of a used car, but ultimately it is love story and a touching one. [SPB]

A lovely story which makes the distinction between love and sexual attraction in a different way. A sweet love story and good science fiction. If gender-bending can be construed to mean the way men and women relate to each other sexually, as well as socially, this one nicely fills the bill. [SC]

A short story that starts by talking about love as if it were the interaction of chemicals and ends by making the interaction of chemicals a sweet and poignant story of love. [MFM]

## **Dancing Jack**

Laurie J. Marks, *DAW*, 1993

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Dancing Jack is a wonderful fantasy, with a very unusual portrayal of magic and powerful portrayals of three women characters—the heroes who rescue their post-plague world. This is a wasteland story: saved not by a fisher king or a single knight, but by the combined magics of a riverboat pilot, a farmer, and a toymaker. The land is infertile, crops are not growing, animals die; people have mostly given up. The magic with which these three women reclaim life for themselves and their land is the lesson that acceptance of pain brings the possibility of joy. It turns inside out the formula of the quest and the knight-hero with gender-bending insights. [JG]

I thoroughly enjoyed this very realistic fantasy, but found no genderbending in it: just a fine depiction of competent, independent women working, and a very satisfying, lesbian love-story. Fantasies about grown-ups are very rare; and this is one. [UKL]

## **“Some Strange Desire”**

Ian McDonald, in *The Best of Omni III*, Omni Publications International Ltd.

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McDonald has taken a well-worn fictional path, that of the non-human race that has always lived in parallel with us (usually responsible for the generation of vampire mythology), and reworked it into something new. His “vampires” have a sophisticated form of pheromonal communication and an ambiguous concept of gender. Their interaction with humans is compelling, and tragic. [SPB]

Aliens/changelings/an unrecognized third sex? McDonald doesn't quite say where these gender-shifting people come from, but they pay a high price for a desirability far beyond that of full-time women. Touching and well-written. [SC]

Any story that includes in its first sentence, “Mother says he can remember Grandmother taking him...” grabs my genderbending radar. It's a suspenseful story about aliens-among-us who change their gender at will from female to male to hermaphrodite, and who are subject to an awful AIDS-like disease. I liked it a lot. [JG]

## **Illicit Passage**

Alice Nunn, *Women's Redress Press*, 1992

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One of my favorite novels of recent years, *Illicit Passage* concerns the actual mechanics of a feminist revolution, a revolution from within. As the individuals in the asteroid mining town in Nunn's novel learn self-confidence, their lives change. And as the people organize, the social order changes. The establishment panics and looks for “the usual suspects”—the revolutionary agitators, the bomb-throwers, and entirely misses the secretaries, mothers, factory workers, and servants plotting radical change right under their noses. *Illicit Passage* is a novel of mistaken assumptions, misdirected expectations. In fact, we never actually hear the main character (Gillie) speak. We only learn about her from characters who dislike or are intensely jealous of her. That we end up liking her very much anyway, in spite of the strongly biased points of view of the other characters, only strengthens our admiration for her. [JG]

## **Coelestis**

Paul Park, *Harper Collins*, 1993

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This novel of an alien surgically transformed into a human woman who is gradually reverting-sloughing off one human attribute after another—and the confused human man who thought he was in love with her, is a dark and wrenching experience. Park explores the shadowy alleyways of the city of

gender and studies the age-old imperialist clash between rich and poor civilizations. [SPB]

To me this ambitious and complex book is ultimately a failure both as a novel and as an exploration of gender. The self-conscious tonelessness of the narrative voice imposes a real lack of affect. As gender exploration it is seriously handicapped by the fact that there are no women in it, except a girl who is fucked on page 46 and killed on page 49. The alien called "Katherine" is supposed to have been transformed into a female or a woman, but appears, to me, merely genderless from

beginning to end. The setting and mood is standard neo-Conrad-on-distant-planet. [UKL]

Simon, a human diplomat, falls in love with Katherine, a gifted pianist and more importantly, an alien who in 'her' natural state is not female. As a series of events deprive Katherine of the drugs that keep "her" human, she becomes less and less so. The book is written from multiple points of view and it becomes clear that while Simon continues to find human motivations in her actions, Katherine is more alien than he wants to know. [MFM]

## The 1994 James Tiptree, Jr. Award Potlatch 4 • Oakland • CA

### Judges

Brian Attebery [BA]  
Ellen Kushner [EK]  
Pat Murphy [PM]  
Susanna J. Sturgis (coordinator) [SJS]  
Lucy Sussex [LS]

Commentary was harvested from correspondence among the judges and attributed by the judges' initials.

### Winners Of The 1994 James Tiptree, Jr. Award

#### "The Matter of Seggri"

Ursula K. Le Guin, *Crank! #3*, 1994

"The Matter of Seggri" is a story that is bigger than it looks. Within its thirty-some pages the world of Seggri is discovered, explored, and altered. Half a dozen distinct and memorable storytelling voices give us comic misunderstandings, tragedies enacted and averted, histories recounted and dreams revealed, all within the frame of a convincingly strange society. Fourteen hundred years are distilled into a few key moments. One of the ways Le Guin has managed to pack so much into this tale is by making it a gateway—a mental hypertext—to a lot of other stories, including her own explorations of gender and society in *The Left Hand of Darkness* and *A Fisherman of the Inland Sea* as well as the thought experiments of other gender explorers like Joanna Russ, Eleanor Arnason, Sheri S. Tepper, and James Tiptree Jr. The world of Seggri invites comparison with Gethen and *Whileaway* and *Women's Country* without being an imitation or a simple answer to any of them, just as it invites comparison with aspects of our own world without being reducible to an allegory or a simple inversion of existing gender roles. Whereas *Larque on the Wing* uses the machinery of fantasy to get at the inner experience of gender, "The Matter of Seggri" uses science fiction to map out social implications. It asks how gender enters into institutions like schools and marriages and how it might do so differently. It asks how power and love and justice might be redistributed along gender lines, and what the effect might be on individual lives. It asks what stake society has in enforcing models of femininity and masculinity and what happens to those who fail to follow the template.

Most remarkably, Le Guin makes us care about the people we meet: First Observer Merriment and her never-seen partner Kaza Agad, young Ittu and his sister Po, even the fictional-within-a-fiction lovers Azak and Toddra and Zedr. In the few pages each gets on the scene, we recognize their uniqueness even as we learn the social patterns of which they are a part. They make *The Matter of Seggri* matter. [BA]

It could be a how-to manual on how to explore gender issues through the use of science fiction. [EK]

A short story perfect in its parts as a snowflake, or Chekhov's "Lady with a Little Dog." This is the first time the Tiptree has been awarded to a work of short fiction, and "Seggri" proves that explorations of gender can be as efficient pithy as lengthy. [LS]

This deals with gender issues in a way that only science fiction can: by creating a society that has different assumptions than ours, thus forcing us to examine our own. It makes stunning use of different viewpoints to give us an understanding of the society that we couldn't obtain any other way. Fascinating for its anthropological detail, "The Matter of Seggri" shows the emotional and societal consequences of a different social organization, and the consequences of changing or disrupting that organization. [PM]

Just when I was beginning to fear that no work of short fiction could stand up to the powerhouse novels contending for the Tiptree—along came "Seggri." On Seggri, women far outnumber the men, an imbalance that, notes one Hainish observer, "has produced a society in which, as far as I can tell, the men have all the privilege and the women have all the power." Men and boys over the age of 11 live in hierarchically organized "castles." They gain glory by competing in games, cheered on by the women; the women do all the productive and political work of the society, and the two genders meet only in the "fuckeries." The women may enjoy sex with men, but naturally they form their primary erotic and social bonds with other women. Both the society and the story are complex, covering several generations and told from various viewpoints. Though undeniably different from our own society, Seggri eerily echoes it, and like several of this year's shortlisted works—notably Arnason's "The Lovers" and Charnas's *The Furies*—the focus is on those who, by asking questions and/or not fitting in, become harbingers of change. [SJS]

## Larque on the Wing

Nancy Springer, Avonova, 1994

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When is a middle-aged woman not a middle-aged woman? When she's a ten-year-old girl and a young gay man. In Nancy Springer's *Larque on the Wing*, the main character unintentionally releases her grim and grubby child self as part of a mid-life crisis. Her young doppelganger leads her to a place called Popular Street, which is both gay ghetto and enchanted land. There she is transformed from frumpy Larque to handsome Lark, who was, it seems, always there inside. Lark can have the adventures Larque has denied herself: can explore the dangerous night world, wear cowboy boots, beat up homophobic thugs, act on erotic impulses (gay because Larque is attracted to men). As engaging as Larque (and her husband Hoot) may be, what sticks in the mind from the novel is Popular Street. Cheerfully sleazy and genuinely magical, Popular Street manifests unpredictably wherever the forces of order aren't paying attention. It is a place of desires and of truths, both of a sort that conventional society covers over. On Popular Street, features of homosexual subcultures—the lure of the forbidden and the secret, irreverence toward middle-class values, acknowledgment of the varieties of pleasure, a sense that gender identity is something that can be put together and tried on like a costume—become the basis for a powerful and transforming enchantment. What fantasy does best is to take the insides of things and express them as outsides. An ent is the inside of a tree, a beast is the inside of a prince (and vice versa). Nancy Springer has used this property of fantasy to get inside gender and sexuality. She shows that the inside of intolerance is fear, the inside of art is truth-telling, and the inside of a woman is a whole cast of characters of all ages and genders. [BA]

Playful and outrageous, this book taps into some of our less-admissible and more potent fantasies! [EK]

Gender is 90 percent of comedy, but seldom does the comedy step outside traditional sex roles. *Larque* is the exception, managing to be simultaneously challenging, disturbingly so at times, and hilarious. [LS]

Springer's novel considers the startling, funny, indescribable adventures of Larque, a middle-aged woman whose mid-life crisis takes on concrete form. A ten-year-old version of Larque (blinked into existence by Larque's own uncanny abilities) leads Larque into an exploration of her life and the compromises she made while growing up. Along the way, Larque is transformed into Lark, an adolescent boy, and works magic of many kinds. A rollicking, offbeat, thoughtful fable for our time. [PM]

*Larque on the Wing* was a front-runner from the day I read it, very early in the year. In this wittily, wildly original contemporary fantasy, Nancy Springer expands, explores, and bends more gender conventions than most authors recognize. Most notably, Larque emerges from a makeover session not with a new hairdo but with the body of a 20-

year-old gay man. And Springer restores scruffy, nose-wiping vitality to a useful concept turned tedious cliché: the "inner child." Then there's Larque's mother, Florence, who sees what she wants to see—with a vengeance. Larque does have a weak point or two. Larque's best female friend, Doris, is characterized mostly by her carrot addiction. More significant, and striking in a novel that draws explicit parallels between the Otherness of women and gay men, is the absence of lesbians, from both Popular Street and the ranks of Larque's inner selves. Lesbian characters, erotic love between women: these are still out on the gender-bending frontier. [SJS]

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## 1994 Shortlist

### "The Lovers"

Eleanor Arnason, *Asimov's*, 7/1994

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Arnason has explored this territory before but finds new insights this time around. The story concerns heterosexual love in a world that allows no such thing. The lovers convincingly embody gender choices that neither their society nor ours is quite prepared to sanction. [BA]

Like Arnason's other "hwarhath" stories, this poignant tale explores gender on several levels, like a mobile of mirrors that catches new reflections with each turning. Neither *Eyes-of-Crystal* nor *Eh Shawin* is a revolutionary, yet their love both grows from and profoundly challenges the deepest assumptions of their society. By incorporating comments about the "author" of the tale, and finally its evidently human translator/editor (who might well be Anna Perez of *Ring of Swords*), Arnason sketches a broader timescape of a culture in transition. I'm impressed! [SJS]

### The Furies

Suzy McKee Charnas, Tor, 1994

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Charnas follows up her groundbreaking novels about Free Fems and Riding Women with a dark and challenging story of revenge. The Free Fems have returned to Holdfast in order to tear it down. The question that is never resolved is whether they will be able to make a new life for themselves and the remaining men. Amid uncertainty, bitterness, and betrayal, the heroine of the earlier books struggles to keep the Free Fems from become what they have escaped from. [BA]

The 1994 jury was both blessed and cursed with an abundance of riches. This is a book that not only encourages but forces the reader to question assumptions about gender. It connects the words/ideas "women" and "power" and "violence" in a way few authors have ever cared or managed to. [EK]

This continuation of *Walk* and *Motherlines* is powerful, brooding, and extremely dark. Somebody commented that the two previous novels embodied key moments in the history of feminism; if that is so, then *The Furies* shows we live in interesting times (in the Chinese sense). It shows women turning on men,

then on themselves, but battles in the end towards a type of understanding, if not forgiveness. Very few novels indelibly impress upon the mind, and this is one of them. [LS]

Like its predecessors, *Walk to the End of the World* and *Motherlines*, *The Furies* explores the consequences, for both women and men, of a violently patriarchal society. Here at last the Riding Women, who have never been either slaves or slave owners, see the Free Fems in the latter's own context—which is to say that they really see the Free Fems for the first time. There are acts of excruciating violence in this book, men against women, women against men, women against women; such is the power of the writing that I couldn't look away. *The Furies* is one of the most important feminist novels I've ever read—why then did it place a shade behind the winners of this year's Tiptree Award? Because its brilliance lies not so much in exploring and expanding gender roles—here *The Furies* clearly builds on the earlier books—but in asking the unaskable questions about revolutionary change, and in imagining, and facing, the unimaginable answers. What shapes the relationship of liberator and liberated? Leader and led? What to do with the despised but indispensable former oppressor? Langston Hughes asked what happened to a dream deferred; Suzy McKee Charnas asks what happens to a dream on the verge of fulfillment. [SJS]

### **Cannon's Orb**

L. Warren Douglas, Del Rey, 1994

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Like *Genetic Soldier*, this novel hypothesizes that pheromones control large areas of human behavior that we think are rational.

Contact with an alien race has altered human pheromones, with the result that everything from sexual cycles to xenophobia is transformed. The book takes a wrong turn toward the end, but in the interim a lot of assumptions about gender and society are questioned. [BA]

The book begins in an interesting fashion—examining the biological roots of human behavior. But starting from there, the story went in a direction that reinforces our cultures biases in what I consider to be a totally wrong-headed fashion. According to my reading of *Canon's Orb*, the biological role of women is to control from behind the scenes by flattering and bolstering the ego of the man they have chosen as the alpha male. Women gain their power by supporting men. It sent chills up my spine—and I mean the wrong kind of chills. Because I had such a visceral reaction to the book, it did force me to examine my beliefs related to gender. [PM]

### **“Cocoon”**

Greg Egan, *Asimov's*, 5/1994

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A frightening, and all too credible account of what might happen if corporate R&D capitalism ever decides to really cash in on homophobia. A scientific thriller par excellence. [LS]

### **Amazon Story Bones**

Ellen Frye, *Spinsters Ink*, 1994

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The opening stories, revised myths from a feminist perspective, seem a little smug, and I don't believe traditional mythic figures ever talk quite so much. But when it gets to the central narrative, about the fall of Troy and its impact on the lives of Amazons and other women, the book is powerful and convincing. One of the most interesting touches is that the Amazons are never actually there—they're either anticipated, in the mythic sections, or sought, in the more naturalistic narrative. They're a possibility that changes the world, rather than an actuality that can be pushed into the margins. [BA]

Who says that history has to be written by the winners? A tantalizing, evocative account of some of the lesser-known losers of the Trojan war, and how their herstory might have been; at its best when rewriting Homer. [LS]

This book's Amazons are always off-stage. They are a promise and an inspiration. I like that. [PM]

A fine, not to mention rare, example of what can happen when feminism and fantasy marry. The myths that open the book read like a First Contact tale; familiar gods and heroes are seen through the bemused, benevolent, and often fatally naive eyes of the goddesses they displace. A generation or so after the fall of Troy, a young girl, Iphito, dreams of the near-legendary Amazons and listens to the stories of two old women, one an Amazon herself. This unconventionally structured novel both describes and embodies how storytelling can expand gender roles, especially by sparking the imagination of girls. [SJS]

### **North Wind**

Gwyneth Jones, Gollancz, 1994

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In this follow-up to the Tiptree-winning *White Queen*, Gwyneth Jones continues to redivide the gender pie in most interesting ways. There is a war going on between Men and Women—but the Men are not necessarily men. There are also aliens of undoubted sexuality but disputed gender. The narrative itself alternates between masculine and feminine pronouns for one of the main characters, depending on whose perceptions are being echoed. [BA]

A writer friend recently opined, apropos of *White Queen* that there is more in Gwyneth Jones' paragraphs than there is in most novels. *North Wind* is a worthy follow-up to her earlier Tiptree winner, dense with ideas to the extent of almost being too much of a good thing. A fascinating read. [LS]

### **“Eat Reecebread”**

Graham Joyce & Peter F. Hamilton, *Interzone*, 8/1994

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A study in demonizing the Other, in this case hermaphrodites. Even the sympathetic hero is implicated in their oppression, until the seemingly

innocuous Reecebread of the title solves the problem. [BA]

The narrator, an English police officer in the not-too-distant future who falls in love with a hermaphrodite, tries to steer a course between the violent hatred of his colleagues and what he perceives as the extremism of some hermaphrodites—with predictably tragic results. Like several other works considered by the 1994 jury, this draws elements of *Romeo and Juliet*, not to mention *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner?* and *The Crying Game*, into the service of defusing hostility to gender difference. [SJS]

### **“Forgiveness Day”**

Ursula K. Le Guin, *Asimovs*, 11/1994

Like “Young Woman in a Garden,” this novella explores the undermining of the assumptions about class, culture, and gender, dearly held by each protagonist, with immense compassion for both—and, by extension, all the rest of us. I loved the choice of “asset” to describe the slaves/bondspeople; it neatly extends the concept of unfreedom into the so-called free marketplace. [SJS]

### **A Fisherman of the Inland Sea**

Ursula K. Le Guin, Harper, 1994

The title story interacts intriguingly with “The Matter of Seggri.” The world of O could not be more different in its sexual arrangements from the strict separation of Seggri. A marriage on O requires two women and two men, each interacting sexually with two of the others—but not with the partner of the same moiety. That would be immoral. This is a story about having it both ways: not only heterosexual and homosexual but also living two different lives, thanks to the paradoxes of Churten physics. [BA]

Just about my favorite part of this collection was the Introduction, “On Not Reading Science Fiction,” in which, with her usual quiet panache, Le Guin nails the use and purpose and intent of science fiction for even the meanest intelligence to perceive. [EK]

Though I enjoyed all of the stories in this collection, I recommend it for the shortlist because of one story in particular: “Another Story.” Le Guin is second to none in imagining interesting cultures. The culture in “Another Story” has marriage customs that, quietly and matter-of-factly, stand our assumptions on their ear. [PM]

“Another Story, or A Fisherman of the Inland Sea,” the only 1994 story in this collection, “only” redefines family and provides a scenario whereby one really can, in certain circumstances, go home again. Clearly a shortlist contender in its own right, it’s ably amplified by its impressive company here. Read, or reread, “Newton’s Sleep,” in which what one doesn’t see refuses to go away”; “The Rock That Changed Things”; and especially “Dancing to Ganam.” Reality, said Lily Tomlin’s Trudy, is “nothing but a collective hunch;” Ursula Le Guin shows how it works. [SJS]

## **Temporary Agency**

Rachel Pollack, St. Martin’s, 1994

I liked about this book for its matter-of-fact use of demons and magic in an otherwise contemporary world. As for the book’s gender-bending credentials—Ellen, the main character, is a strong-minded, capable, heroic young woman (she’s a teenager at the start and an adult by the end), she ends up in a relationship with another woman; a group of transgender hackers assists her in her work. And (here’s the big one for me) in the end, Ellen and her lover, using limited resources and their wits, save the world. I’m always so happy when women save the world. [PM]

## **Unconquered Countries**

Geoff Ryman, St. Martin’s, 1994

There is virtually nothing Geoff Ryman writes that does not explore gender or sexuality; his hand is so steady on that wheel that he can steer the vessel off in completely other directions, and still have more to say on gender than do many stories that use it as their focal point. While other writers struggle with questions of, “Gosh, can women be strong and nontraditional, and men complex and conflicted, and how can I show it ...?” Ryman’s assumption is that they not only can be but already are; he begins there, and takes the work where he wants it to go. This collection is notable for his 1994 story “A Fall of Angels, or On the Possibility of Life under Extreme Conditions.” [EK]

I’d recommend this for the shortlist because “O Happy Day!,” one of the four novellas it includes, is a powerful examination of the consequences of gender and power and violence. In this world run by women, a group of gay men are the cleanup crew in a concentration camp where heterosexual men are exterminated. The story takes place in a concentration camp It’s a powerful and gripping story, one that I find impossible to ignore. [PM]

## **Trouble and Her Friends**

Melissa Scott, Tor, 1994

Wild grls invade the cyberpunk boys’ club. Trouble and her friends are virtual amazons, at home inside the virtual world and outside the law. The story includes a lot of weird hardware, an on-line cross-dressing seducer, and a genuine love story between prickly Trouble and independent Cerise. [BA]

Lesbian relationships in F/SF, still lamentably scarce, tend to take place either on the peripheries of the main story or in societies—like those of last year’s winner, *Ammonite*—where there are no men. Had Melissa Scott done no more than put Trouble and Cerise front and center in a near-future U.S., this novel would be worth celebrating. But Scott goes much further, exploring the challenges to and implications of unconventional relationships in a vivid social context. She uses the gender ambiguity of the virtual world to play an erotic joke on one of her protagonists, and to have fun with a U.S. mythos

that generally excludes women: the Wild Wild Western. Perhaps most important, she examines with compassion and insight the slow recovery of a partnership from desertion and betrayal. [SJS]

### **“Young Woman in a Garden”**

Delia Sherman, in *Xanadu 2*, Tor, 1994

Delia Sherman delicately undercuts assumptions about gender and art with this time fantasy about an artist, a lover, a model, and a scholar, none of whom are exactly the person one expects. [BA]

A lovely, haunting story that puts gender considerations in an intriguing historic perspective. [PM]

A young American graduate student finds more than a dissertation topic in this beautifully written story. True to its central imagery, the tale is about learning how to see what lies in plain sight, and here

the “what” has much to do with assumptions about gender and sexuality, not to mention the complex relationship of artist/scholar and subject. [SJS]

### **Genetic Soldier**

George Turner, Morrow, 1994

In the future Earth of this book, social roles are predestined by genes and enforced by pheromones. Some are mothers, some are soldiers. Turner combines social and biological extrapolation to produce a very strange world that is at the same time a mirror of our own. [BA]

The influence of pheromones on sex roles has been explored recently in SF, but seldom with the narrative edge of Turner. A fascinating exploration that rewrites the theme of star-crossed lovers most nastily and inventively. If anything, this is a metaphysical thriller, with gender ultimately transcended. [LS]

## **The 1995 James Tiptree, Jr. Award WisCon 19 • Madison • WI**

### Judges

Sara Lefanu (SLF)  
Richard Russo (RPR)  
Nancy Springer (NCS)

### **Winners Of The 1995 James Tiptree, Jr. Award**

#### **Waking the Moon**

Elizabeth Hand, HarperPrism, 1995

The struggle between women and men, between the female and the male principles, dramatized with intelligence and humor in a novel that spans the 1970s to the present day and marries a nineteenth-century high realism style to a modern gothic content. The author offers no solutions but raises questions both metaphysical and emotional, confronting issues of power, violence and sexuality. [SLF]

#### **The Memoirs of Elizabeth Frankenstein**

Theodore Roszak, Random House, 1995

A powerful book about, among other things, the sexual politics of science, and the relationship between gender and knowledge—how gender may affect ways of knowing, ways of approaching and doing science, and affect our world views. It posits that the domination of “male” ways of knowing and doing science, lacking an understanding of, and sympathy for, the Earth and Nature itself, have resulted in a world being ravaged and destroyed in the name of progress and science. And it does all this in the context of a variation on the book many believe marks the beginning of modern science fiction. You may not agree with everything in this book, but you will think about it for days and weeks after reading it. [RPR]

### **1995 Shortlist**

#### **“And Salome Danced”**

Kelley Eskridge, in *Little Deaths*, ed. Ellen Datlow, Millennium, 1994; Dell Abyss, 1995

Deserves a spotlight. A new and stellar treatment of an old metaphor—*theater as life*—this story is an exquisitely written exploration of the shuddering fascination that gender-limited people feel toward androgyny. This is also a tragedy imbued with a clear-eyed, chilly-hearted beauty worthy of the biblical Salome herself. A must-read. [NCS]

#### **Little Sisters of the Apocalypse**

Kit Reed, Black Ice Books, 1994

An intriguing short novel, finely written, and thought provoking. Will probably infuriate many, but will encourage debate about our assumptions about men and women, social roles, and the effects on women of life without men. [RPR]

#### **“Food Man,”**

Lisa Tuttle, *Crank! #4*, Fall 1994

A nicely finessed story about an eating disorder carried to the illogical extreme, gives food for thought (sorry) about body image. Who really “owns” the way we look—or try to look? Where is it written that women shall be thin? What are the sexual politics involved, the hidden connections between food and power—or empowerment? The ending was not unequivocally satisfying but the story explores some quirky gender issues and deserves to be recommended and read. A highly original story. [NCS]

## **The Armless Maiden and Other Stories for Childhood's Survivors**

Terri Windling, ed., Tor, 1995

This anthology includes stories and poems from writers known within and outside fantasy and science fiction, such as Louise Gluck, Jane Gardam, Emma Bull, Tappan King, Tanith Lee, Kristine Kathryn Rusch, Jane Yolen, and the editor herself, Terri Windling. They are of a strikingly high literary quality. Through retelling fairy tales and folk tales they explore the grim terrain of abused childhood, Tiptree territory of pain and cruelty. But while they explore the pain of children cruelly exploited, they also recount the stories of their growing up and the piecing together of their shattered selves into women and men capable of loving and being loved. A powerful, haunting collection. [SLF]

### **Special Award, Retro winners WisCon 19 • Madison • WI**

#### **Walk to the End of the World**

Suzy McKee Charnas, 1974

#### **Motherlines**

Suzy McKee Charnas, 1978

#### **The Left Hand of Darkness**

Ursula K. Le Guin, 1969

#### **We Who Are About to . . .**

Joanna Russ, 1975, 1976, 1977

#### **The Female Man**

### **The 1996 James Tiptree, Jr. Award ICFA 18 • Ft. Lauderdale • FL**

#### **Judges**

Karen Joy Fowler [KJF]

Richard Kadrey [RK]

Janet M. Lafler (coordinator) [JML]

Justine Larbalestier [JL]

Delia Sherman [DS]

Commentary was harvested from correspondence among the judges and attributed by the judges' initials.

#### **Winners Of The 1996 James Tiptree Jr. Award**

##### **"Mountain Ways"**

Ursula K. Le Guin, *Asimov's*, August 1996

This is a fuller and, for Tiptree purposes alone, more satisfying exploration of the marital customs on the planet O, set up in earlier Le Guin work. In some ways, the story suggests that every society's

Joanna Russ, 1975

#### **Retro Shortlist**

*The Handmaid's Tale*, Margaret Atwood

*The Wasp Factory*, Iain Banks

*Swastica Night*, Katherine Burdekin

*Wild Seed*, Octavia Butler

*Babel-17*, Samuel R. Delany

*Triton*, Samuel R. Delany

*Carmen Dog*, Carol Emshwiller

"When I Was Miss Dow", Sony Dorman Hess, reprinted in *Women of Wonder: The Classic Years*

*Watchtower*, Elizabeth Lynn

*Dreamsnake*, Vonda N. McIntyre

*Memoirs of a Spacewoman*, Naomi Mitchison

*Woman on the Edge of Time*, Marge Piercy

*The Two of Them*, Joanna Russ

*Women of Wonder, More Women of Wonder, New Women of Wonder*, anthologies edited by Pamela Sargent

*The Barbie Murders*, John Varley

*The Clewiston Test*, Kate Wilhelm

*Les Guérillères*, Monique Wittig, translated by David Le Vie

"The Heat Death of the Universe", Pamela Zoline, reprinted in *Women of Wonder: The Classic Years*

sexual norms and taboos are arbitrary and this is an interesting idea to bring back to our own world. In other ways, the marriages on O seem, as opposed to arbitrary, more rational and reasonable than our own simple twosomes. In the end, even on the world of O, it is the twosomes who finally dominate the story, and that, too, is interesting to think about. Le Guin never falls an inch short of brilliance. [KJF]

A lovely story and yet another of Le Guin's thorough and heartfelt explorations of new configurations of desire and belonging, both on a personal and a cultural level. [RK]

On rereading this story I was struck by its second paragraph, which says that mountain people "pride themselves on doing things the way they've always been done, but in fact they are a willful, stubborn lot who change the rules to suit themselves...." This story is partly about the gap between ideals and practice, and about the way that people make new traditions for themselves or change the old ones to fit their needs. The story takes place on the planet O (a place Le Guin has visited before), which has a system of marriage based on norms of bisexuality and polyfidelity. Le Guin portrays this



culture with depth and subtlety, so that the story's events and the characters' development have a naturalness and inevitability. She's also managed to create a story in which an act of cross-dressing has a whole different set of meanings than it would in our society. As usual, Le Guin's sense of place is impeccable. [JML]

A gentle, spare and beautiful story. Le Guin first introduced us to the marriage customs of O in "Another Story, or A Fisherman of the Inland Sea." In that story the system of marriage was another detail of an alien world in a story centred around a time paradox. In "Mountain Ways" the implications and potential tragedies of these four-person marriages are explicated in exquisite detail. Like all fine science fiction and fantasy, particularly that of Le Guin, there is a double process at work; the alien is rendered knowable and familiar, and the taboos and normalities of our own worlds start to seem as "unnatural" as those within the story. Raising questions like why is marriage between two, and not three, four or five? Why is heterosexual union privileged over homosexual? Why formalise sexual relations at all? The story grew with each new reading so that many months after my initial reading I still find myself thinking about it and wondering about the deliberately ambiguous ending. One of my biggest pleasures in reading Le Guin's work is its cumulative power and the way she takes up and reshapes elements of her vast invented universe so that you are forced to look at them in an entirely different way. [JL]

The emotional effect of "Mountain Ways" is strengthened by its being about characters and relationships as well as about sexuality and morality. I like the way complexity of desire overwhelms the relative simplicity of the characters and the fact that no matter how flexible a social system seems, human beings can find new ways of making themselves feel guilty and sinful. As always with Le Guin, the writing is crystalline and the background much more lively and present than the number of words used to convey it would seem to warrant. [DS]

## **The Sparrow**

Mary Doria Russell, Random House, 1996

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Loved this novel—great old-fashioned science fiction in some indefinable way, but with a modern sensibility. A very smart and passionate book. I was initially concerned that the sexual content was slight, but my enthusiasm finally swept these doubts away. Although never quite defined as such, the transformation of the protagonist takes place largely through sexual experience, from his initial celibacy, to the middle of the book with his longings, to his final climactic and terrifying journey offworld. [KJF]

A fine first contact novel and a subtle exploration of the choices people make in their lives, especially those concerning self-definition, which always includes sexuality and gender roles. [RK]

This novel haunted me for months; I kept thinking about it and mulling it over, and the more I did, the more I found to think about. The story

centers on the spiritual crisis of Emilio Sandoz, a Jesuit priest who has had his view of God (and, not incidentally, his masculinity and his sexuality) challenged by his experiences on the planet Rakhat. The story of this crisis is counterbalanced by the stories of other priests, each with his own accommodation to sexuality and celibacy. On a different level, in her portrayal of the inhabitants of Rakhat, Russell makes fascinating connections among the binary oppositions of male/female, person/animal, ruling class/laboring class, pushing these connections in new directions. To say more about this would be to give away spoilers—and this book is so suspenseful that it wouldn't be fair to do that. Suffice it to say that *The Sparrow* is rich and complex and provides a lot of food for thought about power, gender, sexuality, and the connection between body and spirit. [JML]

*The Sparrow* is one of most haunting evocations of first contact I have read in recent years—on this occasion the contact is between a Jesuit-led team of scientists and some of the inhabitants of the planet Rakhat. How does the novel explore and expand gender? Central to *The Sparrow* is the examination of the importance of sexuality to gender identity, specifically masculinity. Can you be celibate and still be a man? At the same time the understandings of human masculinity and femininity that dominate the thinking of the Jesuit landing party make little sense in the face of the entirely different gender models of the two alien races. I read this not unduly small book in one sitting. I could not put the book down even though this Australian judge was somewhat put out by an entirely unconvincing (though mercifully brief) attempt at characterizing a 'typical' Aussie bloke (pp. 122–123). [JL]

Profoundly moving and upsetting and very much about cultural constructions and difficult questions, including those of gender. Russell's subjects are faith, religion, the structure and purpose of the Catholic Church (or maybe just the Society of Jesus), and saintliness. There's a gay Father Superior and a woman who (although beautiful and petite) reads more male than many of the male characters. There is an alien race whose genders are ambiguous to humans, mostly because the females are larger than the males and the males raise the children. The center of the book is the hero's struggle to reconcile the fact that the aliens he had moved heaven and earth to study have abused him terribly, with God's Plan, celibacy, and his own macho upbringing. [DS]

## **1996 Shortlist**

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### **"The Silent Woman"**

Fred Chappell, from his novel *Farewell, I'm Bound to Leave You*; St. Martin's, 1996

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A wonderful exploration of "womanliness" which transforms the supposed passive virtue of silence into an almost magic strength. [JL]

At the end of the millennium, noise is king. Flying in the face of that, this is a story that dares to

explore the power and beauty of silence. And it does so beautifully, creating an exquisite object, like a literary Faberge egg. [RK]

### **“Beauty and the Opera, or The Phantom Beast”**

Suzy McKee Charnas, *Asimov's*, March 1996)

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In this gorgeous re-imagining of “The Phantom of the Opera,” Christine strikes a bargain with the Phantom and lives with him for five years. Much of the story has to do with the precarious balance of power between the two. Christine has a moral hold over the Phantom, but she doesn’t take it upon herself to absolve him, to reform him in any absolute sense, or to sacrifice herself to him. He remains a monster, and not always a sympathetic one. Their passion is based on this tension, and of course it’s one that can’t endure indefinitely, as Christine knows. The moral and psychological complexity of this story can’t be easily summarized. Think of it as an antidote to the fable of the evil man redeemed by the love of a good woman, but don’t stop there; it’s many other things as well. [JML]

A fascinating exploration of domesticity and power and literary roles. Even though she’s the heroine of a Romance, Christine is no fainting, yielding, pliable victim. She is a hard-headed business woman who knows how to negotiate with managers and directors and monsters, too. Erik, on the other hand, is governed completely by his passions. In most Romances, the heroine must teach the hero to feel and to express his feelings. In “Beauty,” it’s the other way around. [DS]

### **“Welcome, Kid, to the Real World**

L. Timmel Duchamp, *Tales of the Unanticipated*, Spring/Summer/Fall, 1996)

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Thematically perfect for the Tiptree. I admired its brains and awareness of its subject matter immensely. It’s a wonderfully imagined externalization of all the little decisions we make every day that add up to who we will be as adults. Only in Duchamp’s world, the decisions are entirely self-conscious and deliberate and revolve around the gender role you will carry, like a big digitally-crafted, chrome albatross around your neck for the rest of your life. [RK]

In this story, an apparent gender freedom (the ability to choose one’s gender at a certain age) is embedded within a rigid gender system. A pointed commentary on the problem of “choice” when none of the options is worth choosing. [JML]

### **A History Maker**

Alasdair Gray, Canongate Press, 1994; revised edition Harcourt Brace, 1996

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The flip side of Tepper’s Gate to Women’s Country. War is a rugby match to the death, and the world is run by wise old women. A very funny, pointed, extraordinary look at maleness. A marvelous book. [KJF]

In this “post-historical utopia,” which one of the characters describes as a “mild matriarchy,” women live in communal households and raise children, while most men live separately and pursue “manly” activities such as warfare. Sound familiar? That’s just the beginning. This is a funny, loony, and irreverent book, but it also has flashes of horror, despair, and lyricism, not to mention the best portrayal of warfare-as-sport that I’ve ever read. [JML]

### **“Five Fucks”**

Jonathan Lethem, in his collection *The Wall of the Sky, The Wall of the Eye*; Harcourt Brace, 1996

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A story of heterosexual love as a sick compulsion. In this sharp, funny, clever story the disease undoes the very fabric of time and space. Straight men and women are aliens locked into combat until the end of time. Literally. [JL]

The reductio ad absurdum of “can’t live with ‘em, can’t live without ‘em.” [DS]

### **Nadya**

Pat Murphy, Tor, 1996

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This is a book primarily about questions. As the protagonist comes of age at the opening of the western US, she begins to question everything in her world, including her identity and the settled life that she is expected to grow into. When she makes one crucial break with her past (avenging the killing of her parents), the questions deepen, encompassing everything, including her sexuality. What makes the book work is that the questions aren’t obvious and political in the soapbox sense, but grow out of the increasing natural awareness of a young woman moving into and finally rejecting the “civilized” world. [RK]

An exploration of (among other things) the borders between male and female, masculine and feminine. Nadya herself slides from man to woman as she slides from woman to wolf, redefining gender in the face of a society whose gender definitions are as unrelenting as they are arbitrary. The characters are persuasive, the background is colorful and beautifully researched, and there’s enough suspense and adventure to make it a convincing Western. A feminist Western. Well, that’s gender-bending, too. [DS]

### **Godmother Night**

Rachel Pollack, St. Martin’s, 1996

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I thought the use of fairy-tale elements, while fun, was a bit easy and undisciplined. (Picture me with my arms folded and a stern look on my face. Undisciplined use of fairy-tale elements! Capital crime.) But I loved the identification of the fairytale godmother with death. If death seemed to be a little more the topic than sex, there was plenty of sexual stuff going on. It was a great read, with many beautiful moments. A top contender. [KJF]

Pollack is interested in playing with types of fairy tale and contemporary society. In Pollack’s

universe, the only real sin seems to be too strict adherence to one traditional gender. What I liked (and found Tiptreesque) about this book was the androgyny of many of the characters (especially the dead and inhuman ones). If the Le Guin is an exploration of Things as They Might Be, *Godmother Night* is an exploration of Things as They're Getting to Be, with "gendered" behaviors like nurturing, passing judgment, avoiding intimacy, and wearing dresses seen more as a function of individual personality than of biological programming or social expectation. [DS]

### The Pillow Friend

Lisa Tuttle, *White Wolf*, 1996

Not all horror novels have monsters and not all monsters have scales and wings. This is a novel about the horror of daily existence, of desire for an impossible "perfect" union. Where longing makes the whole world gray and seemingly constructed of chalk. [RK]

I had a visceral reaction to this novel—I loved it and simultaneously found it extremely disturbing. It captures perfectly one of the main reasons that people (particularly women) stay in bad relationships, ignore warning signs, and pretend to enjoy bad sex—because they're stuck in their hopes and dreams from the beginning of the relationship, when they thought it was going to be the answer to all their desires. Thus, *The Pillow Friend* can be read as a story about the ways that both women and men are imprisoned by fantasies of romantic fulfillment; about the frustrated desire for perfect connection with another; and about the destructiveness of that desire. [JML]

### "And She Was the Word"

Tess Williams, *Eidolon*, Winter, 1996

This story derives its impact from its position among other feminist texts to do with naming and un-naming (including the Biblical one). A young

## The 1997 James Tiptree, Jr. Award Readercon 10 • Westborough • MA

### Judges

Terry Garey (chair) [TG]  
Liz Hand [EH]  
Nalo Hopkinson [NH]  
Jerry Kaufman [JK]  
James Patrick Kelly [JPK]

Commentary was harvested from correspondence among the judges and attributed by the judges' initials.

### Winners of the 1997 James Tiptree, Jr. Award

#### Black Wine

Candas Jane Dorsey, Tor, 1997

*Black Wine* is a slippery book, neither science fiction nor fantasy; instead it stakes out territory all its own. It is an intricate, fierce and lyrical

woman isolated on a remote planet creates her own words. A lovely variation on a favorite theme. [KJF]

This story is rich with echoes of earlier science fiction by women. Like Suzette Haden Elgin's fascinating *Native Tongue* trilogy, language is used to remake the world. However, this time it is one woman and her child who reinscribe the world in which they find themselves. The scenario of a young woman bringing up her child alone on a planet reminds me of Marion Zimmer Bradley's 1959 story "The Wind People" though in Williams' story the woman and her child reinvent their world rather than letting it invent them. [JL]

### Leaning Towards Infinity

Sue Woolfe, *Vintage*, 1996

This was one of my personal favorites among the books we read this year. Although it alludes to some fantastical mathematics, the fantasy content is minimal. It involves a family in which mathematical genius runs, unacknowledged and primarily untrained, through the female line. It deals with issues of women in (and out of) academia, of the appropriation of women's work, and offers a quick education in the female mathematical tradition, sparse, but there. But the heart is a three-generational mother and daughter story. Beautifully written, absolutely original. Sensational! [KJF]

I really loved this book. It's about a famous mathematician, Frances Montrose, and is her history from the 1950s when she was a child until the discovery of her genius in the late 1990s. The novel centres around two first person narratives. The first I is that of Frances' daughter, Hypatia Montrose, who is trying to come to terms with her extremely difficult relationship with her mother. The second is Frances' I. However, the stories of this I are told as imagined by Hypatia. It is one of the most dazzlingly beautiful negotiations of the lives and relations of mothers and daughters that I have ever read. [JL]

examination of gender and identity. Teeming with ideas made flesh, *Black Wine* gazes unflinching at the wonder and horror of humanity. [JPK]

In *Black Wine*, Candas Dorsey took on the whole question of gender, shook it out till it suited her, cut, stitched, and fitted till she came up with a wondrous garment I had never seen before. Then she showed me it was reversible and just as wondrous on the inside, which was now the outside. This is a book well worth reading and I hope lots and lots of people do. [TG]

### "Travels With The Snow Queen,"

Kelly Link, *Lady Churchill's Rosebud Wristlet*, Winter, volume 1, Issue 1

This is a story that puts its arm around the reader and leads him back to places he's been but hasn't really seen. A clever, often funny, conflation of deconstructed fairy tales with a modern relationship

going sour, it's about a young woman's journey through gender stereotypes to self-acceptance. Link makes us understand that, in this story, the traditional "happy ending" would be very silly indeed. [JPK]

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### 1997 Shortlist: short fiction

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#### "The Oracle Lips"

Storm Constantine, in *The Fortune Teller*, ed. Lawrence Schimel & Martin H. Greenberg, Daw Books, 1997.

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I liked the imagery, particularly the recurring and faintly threatening tube of red lipstick. The image of the unremarkable woman envying the glam one resonated. We've all been there in one way or the other. But at the end of the story, I'm not sure what I was supposed to have taken away from it. [NH]

"Oracle Lips" explores the idea that, just as the fashion and advertising industries tell us, makeup and accessories make the woman, and does so in the context of an original method of fortune-telling. [JK]

#### "Alice, Alfie, Ted and the Aliens"

Paul Di Filippo, *Interzone*, March 1997

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I found myself uncomfortable with the way DiFilippo diddles so many genre icons in this gonzo alternate history, attributing to them (and Alice Sheldon especially) outrageous histories and cartoonish behaviors. But I wonder whether the point here is that this is the harvest we reap in a field that churns out alternate history anthologies by the yard. I had the sense that he was aiming this story at the Tiptree jury. Nice shot, Paul! [JPK]

Like some of my fellow jurors, I got the impression that this story was aimed and fired deliberately at the Tiptree Award. It's abrasive and it's presumptuous—and it's well-written. I laughed out loud in parts. A bracing dissenting voice. It's not about gender, it's about our favorite writers who write about gender; a meta-fictional in-joke that skillfully parodies the writing styles of those authors. It lampoons the lives of very real people in ways that I found more cruel than pointed, and for that reason less effective as satire. [NH]

#### "The Apprenticeship of Isabetta di Pietro Cavazzi"

L. Timmel Duchamp, in *Asimov's*, September 1997

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One of the great pleasures of this novelette presented as excerpts from a diary is the effortless way in which Duchamp recreates the Italy of 1629. This historicity helps put over the story of a young woman coming to understand her supernatural powers in the wake of an unhappy love affair. Duchamp convinces me that if witches existed, this is what they'd be like. [JPK]

So, how d'you suppose women treated yeast infections in the days before Canesten? Seems quite reasonable that the infestation could get so extreme that it would turn a woman raving mad. I had a

sardonic giggle over this as one cause of women's 'shrewishness.' I can't speak for the historic accuracy of the story. I enjoyed it (in fact, I think I've enjoyed every story of Duchamp's that I've ever read), though I found the healer too all-knowing and Isabetta's conversion to wisdom and forgiveness a bit too pat. [NH]

#### "Balinese Dancer"

Gwyneth Jones, in *Asimov's*, September 1997

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"Balinese Dancer" is an elliptical look at the end of the world as we know it. As human sexual differentiation erodes in the background, a well-realized couple works through their marital tensions in the foreground. A gender apocalypse is hinted at in this subtle and disturbing story. [JPK]

The opening line of this story continues to take my breath away, as do some of the author's insights into human behavior. But ultimately the plot elements didn't quite gel for me and the news that humanity is beginning to evolve beyond gender seemed more like a plot device than the topic which the story wanted to explore. Nevertheless a very readable story. [NH]

#### "The Firebird's Nest"

Salman Rushdie, *New Yorker*, June 23 and 30, 1997

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Brilliant writing that pointedly references and critiques the practice of suttee and a system in which women are chattel. Good to read writing from within a particular culture, albeit from a privileged place in that culture. I wasn't keen on a subtext that seemed to pit the "primitive" East against the "enlightened" West, but that may be just my reading of it. I remain blown away by the craft and style. [NH]

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### 1997 Shortlist: Novels

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#### Kissing the Witch: Old Tales in New Skins

Emma Donoghue, HarperCollins, 1997

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Like Angela Carter and A.S. Byatt before her, Emma Donoghue puts a distaff spin on traditional fairy tales. But Donoghue doesn't deconstruct Perrault and the Brothers Grimm so much as she reconstructs them in a series of interlocking stories, letting the heroine of one tale grow into the villainess of the next, who then becomes the benign crone of the next, and so on. Her stories are ribald and often harsh in their assessments of male/female relations, and damning of the ways in which women—in fairy tales and real life—too often give in to what seems to be a preordained fate, rather than struggling for independence. Donoghue's tales also have a bracingly, and unapologetic, gynocentrism: in *her book*, it's the witch who gets the girl, not the prince. And *Kissing the Witch* makes a nice companion piece to Kelly Link's revisionist "Travels With The Snow Queen." [EH]

*Kissing the Witch* took my normal expectations of fairy tales, un-normal as they are, and shook them around again. The writing was beautiful. [TG]

## The Dazzle of Day

Molly Gloss, Tor, 1997

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The *Dazzle of Day* is a rigorous examination of a monoculture under mortal stress, as a rickety ship of Quaker colonists arrives at a planet that would seem to be inhospitable. Although not particularly flashy, this is a deep book. I was particularly taken by Gloss's bold narrative strategy in opening and especially in closing. She delivers what seems to me to be exactly the right ending without telling me anything of what I thought I wanted to know. [JPK]

## Signs of Life

John M. Harrison, St. Martin's Press, 1997

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A spare, beautifully written, utterly haunting novel about the human desire for transcendence, and its limits. In the ruins of contemporary Europe, a young woman who longs to fly mutilates herself in a doomed effort to become more birdlike. A tormented con man endures the knowledge that the single moment of sexual and spiritual transcendence he experienced in his youth has destroyed his life. And the man who loves them both can do nothing to save them, or himself. There's no false sense of redemption here, only the protagonist's final realization that our struggle for meaning—however futile—may be all we have, and the only thing worth living (or dying) for. [EH]

## Sacrifice of Fools

Ian McDonald, Victor Gonzallencz, 1996

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I was sorry to have finished *Sacrifice Of Fools* because it is such a great read. I like how McDonald has bent to police procedural to his devious ends. The familiarity of the mystery tropes helps us navigate through the strangeness of his alien Shians. I found the characters—human and Shian—complex and wonderfully unpredictable. I loved the way this book deals with the clash of cultures, so that its imaginary surface reflects and refracts real world flash points. And most of all, I like what this book is saying about the diversity and perversity of the human sexual response, especially in its often withering portrayal of the male id. [JPK]

Ian McDonald's *Sacrifice of Fools* is a rough, scary book that looks at gender from a blue collar futuristic point of view. If genderless aliens were to visit earth, this is exactly what might happen, right on the streets, right in your face. It should be read. [TG]

## The Moon and the Sun

Vonda N. McIntyre, Pocket Books, 1997

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I read *The Sun and the Moon* with a delicious sense that I had just stepped off the alternate world platform and caught a train to another time and place. The two female protagonists are creatures misplaced out of their elements in ways not of their own choosing. McIntyre explores the meanings of alien and gender in a way I've not seen it done before. This is a sensual book rich in detail that kept me intrigued through the end. [TG]

## Cereus Blooms at Night

Shani Mootoo, Press Gang Publishers, 1996

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*Cereus Blooms at Night* offers superb characterizations of people we never see in the genre, each with stories we would have never thought to tell. Even though not particularly fantastic, *Cereus* is magical. [JPK]

My highest priority is this novel by Canadian Shani Mootoo. A Caribbean-based exploration of queerness, gender and preference written defiantly from within, given that in some Caribbean countries, being openly queer can invite societally condoned bashing. This novel is a radical act. It's well-written and compelling. The invented tropical island of Lantanacamara is an evocative, faintly unreal setting that is clearly meant to echo aspects of Trinidad. A gay male nurse with a fondness for women's clothing is the buffoon of his community, until he's given the care of an old mad woman who may or may not have committed a horrible crime. A love story in which neither gender nor sexual preference are absolute. The SF content of *Cereus Blooms at Night* is nebulous, but it is in every way a book most worth reading. [NH]

## Waking Beauty

Paul Witcover, HarperPrism, 1997

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*Waking Beauty* is like a poke in the soul with a sharp stick, which is one reason why I'll never forget it. In terms of ingenious world-building, I don't think I've read anything better this year. *Waking Beauty* has a labyrinthine plot, but it certainly comes together enough to satisfy this reader. Its obsessions are its own; they made me feel exceedingly icky without making me feel exploited. As to whether it's misogynist, of course the Hierarchate is misogynist, in the same way that the state of *The Handmaid's Tale* is misogynist. But so what? The author's intentions are always between the lines in dystopian novels. [JPK]

**Judges**

Kate Schaefer (chair) [KS]  
Ray Davis [RD]  
Lisa Tuttle [LT]  
Sylvia Kelso [SK]  
Candas Dorsey [CJD]

Commentary was harvested from correspondence among the judges and attributed by the judges' initials.

**Jurors' introductory comments**

Candas Jane Dorsey

Reflecting on the "meaning" of "expressing gender issues" in the award guidelines has been an interesting challenge. As others on this jury and in the wide world, have said in many ways, gender seems to be what people are pointing to when they use the term. In general, I think it is a social construct, but I still have a lot to learn about why, then, some people so strongly feel they have an innate gender instead of simply a set of equipment issued without palimpsests of gender pre-written on them. Because I seem to have such personal trouble foregrounding gender as an interpersonal datum, I like to think I can transcend gender, but at the same time I am the product of a very specific and powerful social process that has shaped me, not just in intellectual ways, but in mandating such intimate matters as what clothes I find sexy on what kinds of bodies. Still, it has always been such a struggle for me to learn the "rules" of gender discourse, from the status-quo rules about the presence or absence of men and women in social, sexual and intellectual discourse to the nouvelle proprietries of the hardcore theorists in the revolution against mono/hetero/sexism. The best I can manage as I go about my life is to confront my contradictions willingly, and be honest. In the jury process—schooling myself to read for content that I often do not foreground, a change in reading habits that was remarked upon by more than one jury member—I read for honesty, both intellectual and emotional, and for a willingness to step beyond the boundaries of what we think we know to a new and revolutionary image or landscape.

The most powerful statement that I made during the judging process was when I articulated that it's not enough to posit alien biology nor to imagine a different culture based on that biology—nor, I'd add, is it enough to tell a dystopian tale about how bad things are, nor use a cute premise to add interesting background, nor to posit future gender wars, biological mutations, genetic tampering, utopias—if that's as far as the story or novel goes. The first condition of a Tiptreeable text for me is to show beings at the edge of change, transformation, challenge—on the boundary of

questions. The second condition, equally as important, is that their story be told with surpassing excellence.

As I was reading, I also assumed that whether or not gender was the main theme of a book, if it made a significant step in how it handled gender or if it did something gender-bending in narrative or character, I considered it eligible. But I came to realise also that alternative orientations are very much in the public awareness now (if I were cynical, I'd say "Trendy!" but we read many good and even some brilliant stories which deserve better than a flippanant dismissal)—and that makes, and none too soon I think, the presence of diverse characters and relationships part of the normal range of possibilities when constructing fiction in the present day. Therefore I came to believe that they are—and should be, I think—background, not foreground, and therefore the presence of a gender-bending element was not the only thing which would move a story into eligibility for the final list.

(It also struck me as I read so many stories from *Asimov's* that Tiptree juries could give commendations to venues which consistently published Tiptreeable work (or, more formally, "work which includes sex, gender, orientation, and social structures of family and relationship as important subjects of speculation"). and that certainly, on the evidence, *Asimov's* would deserve such a commendation.)

As I developed my reading criteria, I realized that each year, as more and more works are eligible, we see a growth in the way that gender is considered one of the core issues a speculative writer must consider: whether that be to take issues of sex and gender into consideration in creating a culture, foreground social processes around sex and gender or simply include as part of the texture and fabric of a story about something else altogether. It strikes me that as gender itself begins to disappear or to be transparent, this award could gradually phase out—and that this is a consummation devoutly to be wished. The Tiptree Award is about the cutting edge of treatment of gender issues. If there were no issues because gender had ceased to be such a consuming preoccupation among people, then the Tiptree Award would vanish too. These musings make an obvious connection with the story I place at the top of my short list, "Congenital Agenesis of Gender Ideation," by Raphael Carter (in *Starlight 2*).

Among many lyrically written and powerful stories and books considered this year, this was one of the few that moved me into new territory. For a moment, I could glimpse the end of gender—and glimpse at the same moment the impossibility of living in that country ("...then I awoke and found me here on the cold hillside...") [CJD]

In our comments on individual works jurors often remark that a work is about something other than gender. As I've re-read these comments, it strikes me that the tone may come across as a complaint that writers are not addressing gender directly. We do have this complaint, but it's a complaint peculiar to being a juror for this particular prize, rather than a substantive complaint which will carry over into our general reading. Many writers address gender indirectly, use it as a metaphor for some other concern, or treat it as something resolved; as a reader, I am interested in how well they use it for whatever purpose their art requires. As a juror, I am instructed to look for gender expansion or exploration, and when those don't occur in a piece of fiction about which I'm really excited, I'm disappointed. Another good work I can't suggest as a prize-winner, I think, and turn to the next work on the pile. I look forward to returning to my normal reading mode, in which my concern with my own enjoyment will be greater than my concern with the fiction's focus.

There is certainly still plenty of science fiction and fantasy which ignores gender concerns altogether. Because of the nature of the Tiptree award, very little fiction of this sort was sent to the jurors. There is also plenty of science fiction and fantasy which does not ignore gender concerns, but incorporates them as extremely minor elements as a matter of course while concentrating on other stuff. Two stories of this sort I'd like to mention were Michael Swanwick's "The Very Pulse of the Machine," a great piece of first-contact science fiction with no gender exploration and no leftover 50's assumptions, and Bruce Sterling's "Taklamakan," a story in which a person of neuter gender is a major character. Sterling only explores the implications of a neuter person for about two sentences, long enough to establish that the idea is there, and then goes on to the rest of the story.

Candas mentions the number of stories we considered which were published in *Asimov's*; I'd also like to point out that we received more novels from Avon than from any other publisher, and that all of the novels we received from Avon were pertinent to the award's concerns. We greatly appreciate the generosity of all the publishers, without which we'd be hard-pressed to get through all this reading. I also appreciate the resources of my local public library, which buys a lot more new and obscure fiction than I had ever suspected.

This whole process has led me to conclude that I don't know what the hell gender is; the more I look at it, the more it doesn't seem to be there. It has something to do with sex, something to do with genitals and what people do with them and with whom they do those things, something to do with reproduction, and something to do with what people do to earn a living and how they dress while they do it, and something to do with how people look at themselves and how others look at them, but it's something else, too. Damned if I know what it is, but I do know when a story is about it. [KS]

## Winner of the 1998 James Tiptree, Jr., Award

### "Congenital Agenesis of Gender Ideation"

Raphael Carter, *Starlight 2*, edited by Patrick Nielsen Hayden, Tor Books, 1998

Funny, well-researched, as focused on gender as anything could be, and very likely even the truth. Hard SF at its best. [RD]

Excellent. Really does twist and exercise the mind and emotions—oddly for such a form, emotions are fully engaged—and the reader emerges with a new way of seeing gender. [CJD]

This story does the science/social sciences discourse Real Well—walks the walk and talks the talk down to the referencing. There is NO doubt it is more definitely about gender as opposed to biological sex than anything else so far. There is no doubt I love that last line. It's the detonator that blows the entire very prettily constructed deconstruction of "gender constructs" clear into the air. "He's a twelve. I know he's a twelve. How do I know he's a man?"

At the same time, the story has a couple of problems, and one of them is right in there. If "he" is NOT a man, how come you can, with such confidence, say "he?" Gender is what gives you the undisputed pronoun, "he" or "she"—so if "he" is a twelve—how come there's doubt that he's a man?

Again, the twins' differentiation of types within the overall gender binary—"woman not yet to menopause," "man with atrophied sex organs"—are all based on biological variations—subtle, fascinating, eye-opening so long as you regard gender as biologically based, and certainly does things with the idea of the bare binary pair—and this schema does allow for hermaphrodites, yes. But what does it do with performed gender identities? How would the twins categorize a drag queen or a butch lesbian in full regalia? It seems to me that although this story comes closest to overt deconstruction, even it has not completely mastered the intersection in "gender" between culture, performance, and biology.

That said, this is the closest to an overt and outright exploration of gender that I've seen so far, and for that it deserves the winner's vote. [SK]

On the political journey to understand gender, I had reached the point of thinking that gender is all external to the person; but external and manifested by the person whose gender it is. I read this story as saying that it's external and manifested by the person who is reading the gender, and what's more, either there are actually no genders, or there are many, many genders. The idea that there are as many as two, or only two, is completely dismissible. By the end of the story, the idea that gender can be known by the person reading the gender has grown questionable, and along with it the means of knowing gender.

Gender perception or lack of it is not related to sexual desire in "Congenital Agenesis," which makes me like the story all the better.

A complaint I've often had this year is that fiction ostensibly about gender turns out to be about freedom/slavery, or children, or race. The idea of The Other is so slippery, and so useful, allowing any Other to stand in for any other Other. In "Congenital Agenesis" Carter looks gender straight in the face, and gender is the thing that blinks. [KS]

### 1998 Shortlist

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The following list consists of works the jurors felt were in some way exceptional, taking into account both writing and content. The list does not reflect complete jury consensus on any work except the winner.

#### "The Gauze Banner"

Eleanor Arnason, in *More Amazing Stories*, edited by Kim Mohan, Tor Books, 1998

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This Goddess-as-horny-trickster story was genuinely funny, and, instead of seeming simply referential, the slightly distorted echoes of familiar myths and fairy tales simulate the holographic quality ("all stories can be deduced from this story") that many humorous folk tales have. Arnason's "lying myth" frame story builds in forgiveness for any tone-wavering between anthropologist-reported folk tale and art fairy tale, and makes explicit the tension between the supposed center of the story (the gauze banner) and the storyteller's emphasis on hermaphroditism and moral relativism. [RD]

A strong story. I am not sure that it had something NEW to say about gender, or just did more ringing the changes...but I liked very much the Goddess who was whatever s/he pleased. I liked the mythology, it had the right ring to it. Arnason is a wonderful writer with a rigorous expectation that the reader will journey far, even during a short piece like this. This particular journey was both improving and a lot of fun. [CJD]

#### Parable of the Talents

Octavia Butler, Seven Stories Press, 1998

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A middle-of-a-trilogy which I suspect I like all the more for its pruned ambitions. Three pivotal years in the early career of the young African-American female founder of a new religion are presented, including persecution, betrayal, and loss of family, with little in the way of SF gee-whizzery or supernatural imagery; even the religion's bible is bare-bones and abstract. As with McHugh's *Mission Child*, the restraint pays off in credibility and emotional power, even though the on-again off-again (but mostly off) use of genre possibilities can be frustrating. Gender exploration angle: the conflict between the role (and rewards) of a prophet and the roles (and rewards) of wife and mother. [RD]

A powerful book, immensely passionate and well-realized, but like other brilliant works that we read, in the end gender issues took second place to other discussions. Other awards, yes; the Tiptree, unfortunately not. The portrait of the miscommunication between family members is enough to break your heart, even without the

external oppression by the fundamentalist thugs. [CJD]

#### "Story of Your Life"

Ted Chiang, in *Starlight 2*, edited by Patrick Nielsen Hayden, Tor Books, 1998

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A great science fiction story about free will—but free will is what it explores, not gender. Instead, traditional gender assumptions are taken for granted to make the author's job easier: The protagonist must not take action. That's easier for the reader to accept if she's female. But there must be no doubt that the protagonist wants to take action. Thus, the legendarily powerful love of mother for child is brought into play. The story deserves an award, but not the Tiptree. [RD]

This is the best SF story I have read this year. On the one side, brilliant handling of speech analysis discourse, grasp of physics, and exploration of ideas of non-linear time and its consequences. On the other, an equally striking ease with what might be called The Mother Tongue—the voice of a mother talking to or of her child was never out of tune, from its most loving to its most exasperated.

Add to this some of the most determinedly unorthodox aliens I've met in a long time, and a firm grasp of what a "performative" in language really means; add to that, a restrained elegiac tone that underlines the final tragedy/irony of the story, the fact that, given its premises, free will is a matter of choice—but not as we understand it in linear concepts of time—and I can't think of much else I'd want in a piece of SF. Not a Tiptree winner, because it is not concerned to explore the concepts of gender—but the head spins when you wonder what might have happened if it did. [SK]

Explores motherhood in an interesting way, though its focus is on the nature of time (or perhaps a nature of time) as expressed through grammar. May be the best single story I've read this year; my choice for the novella Hugo, but not the Tiptree. [KS]

#### Singling out the Couples

Stella Duffy, Sceptre, 1998

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Couple resentment is often felt but seldom so delighted in, and, after some suspenseful flirtations with warmth, Duffy stands loyally by the forces of nastiness. The most harmless fantasy-life stereotypes become real-life monsters, efficiently raising some interesting points about escape and control fantasies in general. The Aphrodite-as-Kali theme is handled here with unusual lack of misogyny, and the book convincingly associates couple-envy and the desire for coupling with other non-gendered emotions, rather than tying it to gender-based character clichés. [RD]

Excellent wicked, very nihilistic—I was depressed all evening after I read it—but I liked its relentless social critique. Nobody got to be the good guy. Do you ever wonder how a writer can live inside a distasteful book long enough to write it? I don't mean a *bad* book, but one like this that is brilliantly distasteful—or like Delany's Triton. I wondered, after



I read the ending, how hard it would be to live in Duffy's head...or for Duffy to live in the head of this book from start to finish. (Which came first, the chicken or the egg?) I think the Bouncing Baby Both was one of the spots where it perhaps broke new ground on gender, but in the end, the gender issues took second place to other effects. [CJD]

It's bitter, witty, cruel, and thorough in exploring certain fantasy aspects of gender. [KS]

Wonderfully written, stinging, zingy modern fairy tale combining recognizably real life in contemporary London with a dark, archetypal fantasy world. The main character is a heartless princess who sets out to break up three happy couples, wooing away from their beloved in turn a heterosexual man, a gay man, and a married woman. I thought this looked at gender in a different way—not as roles within society, not as an attempt to redefine those roles or break them down or get rid of them, but rather it considered “Male” and “Female” as markers of incompleteness, needing to be made whole by finding a partner (not necessarily of the “opposite” sex, either, since the gay couple was just as socially rewarded as the married and engaged heterosexuals) and being validated only within a partnership. I also liked the way the princess was represented—she's not breaking up couples for the usual “female” reasons of a loneliness or revenge on a rival—and I liked the fantasy of the ungendered, perfect “bouncing Baby Both.” [LT]

### **Black Glass**

Karen Joy Fowler, Henry Holt and Company, 1998

It's too bad that “The Travails,” which found first publication in *Black Glass*, is ineligible for the Tiptree. Sardonic, funny, and heart-lacerating enough to give Jonathan Swift a run for his money, this is the best lives-of-wives story I've ever read. [RD]

Karen Joy Fowler's book is ineligible but really wonderful—beautifully written, allusive, provocative stories. If it hadn't been written by a Founding Mother of this award, I would want to give the award to this beautiful book, or split the award with Raphael Carter. [CJD]

### **The Ice People**

Maggie Gee, Richard Cohen Books, 1998

A fascinating portrait of a person and a future. The notably nasty and effective evocation of the Good-Overseer man in a broken Europe reminded me of *Triton* in a peculiar way... I found it chilling (pun intended). Rather than taking him as expressing some opinion of the author, I thought the white middle-class het Ice People narrator was a rhetorical device (like in *Triton*) and thus meant to be detestable, and it was one of the things I admired the author for. I personally have never been able to stay inside the head of a character that annoying long enough to write a short story let alone a whole book. Gives me the creeps all over and I have to

change points of view. The rhetorical effect of such a character is powerful and nasty. [CJD]

The ideas are interesting, but it seemed to me that she was positing a future for the sake of rhetoric, without having compelling enough rhetoric or entertaining enough fiction or high-quality enough prose to make me excuse her for it. [KS]

### **Halfway Human**

Carolyn Ives Gilman, Avon Eos, 1998

I was pleased to see an SF writer working with something like the Greek form of slavery, in which slaves were spoken about as if they had biologically-determined traits even though many of them began life as unenslaved Greeks. I also liked the “you're in or out” decision based on arbitrary test results, and the very believable way the novel conflates slave labor and child labor. Since both of those overlap to a confusing (and, I think, stabilizing) extent with sexism and sexual exploitation, it also raises interesting thoughts about gendered society. But (as far as I could see, anyway) it didn't investigate those thoughts so much as report them. [RD]

I enjoyed this book, and upon first reading placed it on the short list without reservation, but I did wonder about the happy ending: it seemed a bit slick, after all that complexity earlier. There were times when the book seemed a bit of a tract, but the story carried me along enough that I didn't mind. Not so much about gender, however, as about child abuse, slavery and prostitution. [CJD]

The conflicts seemed to me to be about child abuse and slavery rather than about gender—to make the book actually be about gender, I'd need to see more response to the sexless gender from the population of “normal” humans. It read more like a traditional positing of the Other as alien and then using the Other to work out displaced emotions concerning sexual child abuse and enslaving “primitive” races. This is a traditional use of science fiction, a way safely to examine things that are too scary to look at directly, but what it does to the thing looked at directly—in this case, gender—is render it invisible, since it's being used as a stand-in for something else.

With all that, it's a thoughtful book. Gilman does try to confront what it would be like if there were another gender, an asexual gender, to take away the burden of child-rearing; and what if all familial relations were abolished, and what if there were a Platonic Republic? Her answer is yet another unfair society, as it must be; Plato's Republic is an unpleasant place, and all journeys toward it are dehumanizing (vide Cambodia). [KS]

I found this a good, old-fashioned read which reminded me of why I like SF in the first place. I loved the passion and intelligence here brought to bear on a serious subject—that of the creation and perpetuation of an hereditary underclass. In this book, the class is a neuter sex, supposed to be childlike and unintelligent, which is abused and exploited in the name of “protection” and whose existence allows adults to avoid both sexual discrimination and undesirable tasks. Although this

is how women have been “made” and treated in the past (and still are—consider forced prostitution, coerced marriage and breeding), for most readers this will probably seem to be more about issues of slavery and the abuse of children than cutting-edge gender issues. [LT]

### **Flesh And Gold**

Phyllis Gottlieb, Tor Books, 1998

A good book for another award. I loved it for itself, and enjoyed the last pages particularly, but didn't feel it made as much comment on gender as many on this short list, so had to agree it had limited eligibility. [CJD]

Another well-written book addressing concerns of slavery, freedom, and sentience rather than gender. [KS]

### **Brown Girl In The Ring**

Nalo Hopkinson, Warner Aspect, 1998

An excellent book and I hope it wins other awards, but it doesn't say as much about gender as about other areas of human emotion: parenthood, community, power, creating the divine, etc. [CJD]

### **“La Cenerentola”**

Gwyneth Jones, Interzone, October 1998

Immediately climbed onto my shortlist, just below “Lovestory” and for some of the same reasons of skill, emotion and subtlety. Evoked many questions and explorations of gender/ parenthood/ ownership. A strange and somewhat haunting mixture of genres. Hard to comment without breaking the fragile, intense mood it generates. [CJD]

Lovely, powerful, absolutely brilliant story set in the near future. In part a reworking of “Cinderella” (that's the title), in part a warning about possible spiritual consequences of being able to reform the world (and the people in it) closer to the heart's desire, at first glance it might not seem to be about gender. There are no men in the story; all the important characters are women, and even little Cinders' chief object of desire, her “prince,” is her mother; the narrator is partner in a lesbian marriage (presented matter-of-factly), and no one's sexuality or gender is presented as an “issue.” The focus of the story is parenting and reproduction, and on the fantasies children have about their parents, and which adults have about their children (real and potential). I say “Parenting” rather than “mothering” because despite all the characters being women, the issues apply to both men and women. In the world of the story the creation of children has been divorced from nature and chance alike and become (for the wealthy) a matter of completely personal free choice, thanks to cloning, gene-splicing and other techniques enabling them to create “perfect” children whether as lifestyle accessories or out of love for their partners or whatever. Reproduction and the consequent need for mothers and fathers clearly demarked has been the most consistent reason for

forcing people into one of only two genders. Removing the link between sex and reproduction will inevitably change perceptions of gender—and this story begins to explore that area, way out on the frontier in Tiptree territory. [LT]

### **“Lovestory”**

James Patrick Kelly, *Asimov's*, June 1998

Le Guin's “Unchosen Love” is like a folktale; this is like a Douglas Sirk movie. Splitting Mother's role from Wife's role is a natural way to run a three-sex story, and the story is sharply constructed to bring out the edges of the ensuing family structure in the shortest possible space. A wonderfully moving piece: my favorite work by Kelly. [RD]

I wrote “a contenda!” when I read it. It was the first thing I read that went Beyond in a way I found significant and moving. I wrote: “Yes! Brilliant moment of change and its effects!” I read it as a tragedy demonstrating—without preaching—that people are prevented by rigid gender roles from 1) pursuit of individual goals and self-expression 2) even being able to communicate about differences from rigid role norms 3) being able to avoid hurting others in relationship when rigid roles collide with individual desires 4) respecting others. The Mam is respected more by the mother who leaves than by the father who “protects” her from discussions and then is unable to see her response for what it is. I was moved very strongly by the depth of the miscommunication and pain between them as a result of rigid social norms. I had the same hit off it as I got from Henry Riesel's “The Broken Globe,” a classic story about the conflict between the flat-earth view of an old-world religious fundamentalist and his young son being educated in scientific things (son eventually becomes cosmologist). In that story, the end, when the old man gestures to the prairie horizon and says “See? She is flat, and she does not move!” is one of my favorite moments in literature. The heart of the story is not the triad combo (indeed, everything we've seen has been done before, in a way) nor the individual roles, but the tragedy that comes of applying those roles like cookie-cutters to people's lives. The fact that the story never gets didactic, stays right in the realm of feeling, makes it all the more powerful. You can see that all these likeable people are trapped, and are teaching their children to trap themselves in turn—and there are, as always, sanctions for those who dare step out. It is not that she was the mother that was the problem—the story could have been told from the mother's POV with the father going, though that would have had a different loading of reader preconceptions—it is that anyone went, and learned that there was a different way—and even more, dared then to come back and say so.

In discussion with other judges, who might have seen the mother as the butt of the societal disapproval, I realized that I thought that all the characters in “Lovestory” were in a predicament. It wasn't just uppity mother, obdurate nanny, well-meaning father with ideological loading for our time. I thought the ideological loading was “everybody who

subscribes to gender roles suffers one way or another." As for the "Kit Reed housewife" Mam, that was one of the things I found very neat—that content was there without rubbing it in. It gave me the creeps without ever the author having to say "look how awful this is," like Reed does, and so I thought Kelly did a better job of warning about the dangers of these rigid social practices than Reed did (which is saying quite a bit!) Look at the way the father condescends to the Mam because the Mam is only a Mam, can't think, etc., and how surprising to the father when the Mam has a rebellion, and how little he understands anything the Mam does or says, and how relieved he is at the end when order is restored. And remember, "all these happy smells made Valun a little ill." Valun respects the Mam more than Silmien does.

What I liked was that they were all blind, misguided, tyrannical (each in their way), understandable (each in their way), stubborn, struggling and so on. All of them were acting from the pressures that their contact with a different system, and the knowledge that comes with it, was putting on their own social system. What systems theory in therapy tells us is that there is often an "identified patient" who acts out the stress, dysfunction or pain of the whole family. The mother acted for them all, and they were all equally responsible and suffered equal consequences. That's why I liked the story so much, because it didn't set up the Good Female Rebel Crushed by The System as represented by the Hidebound Father and the Earthmother Nanny. Instead, it just presented a bunch of people in the throes of love, change and pain. That to me is what makes for a powerful piece of art which conveys a complex message, rather than just stands as an artful polemic: "Lovestory" is definitely the former rather than the latter. [CJD]

A wonderful example of how depicting an alien way of being "normal" can make our own "normal" society look weird. The three-way marriage comes across as cozy, inevitable and tragic; when you learn that it is not inevitable, the scariness of the modern human condition, with technology releasing us from all the inevitables which confronted our ancestors, comes sweeping through like a cold wind, lonely, terrifying and exhilarating. With "La Cenerentola" and "Congenital Agenesis of Gender Ideation", "Lovestory" makes up a triptych that everyone interested in the human condition in what may be a genderless or multigendered future really must read, and among the very best the SF field had to offer in 1998. [LT]

### **"Unchosen Love"**

Ursula K. Le Guin, in *More Amazing Stories*, edited by Kim Mohan, Tor Books, 1998

Le Guin takes a gothic romantic plot and uses some gender-relation-shifting to replace the more tragic or less believable endings we'd expect with what would seem to be a fairly conventional happy ending in the story's culture. Fun as a romance, and very believable as an implied defense of the

"rightness" of the culture the romance was purportedly written for. [RD]

Very moving, and of course with her usual openness and creativity in what is a relationship—and her beautiful writing. But this is one year I don't think she's gonna get the chocolate... Another award, by all means, and the sooner the better, but not this one, this year. [CJD]

### **Dragon's Winter**

Elizabeth A. Lynn, Ace/Berkley, 1998

I enjoyed reading the book but felt that in the years since Lynn was out on the frontier with the phenomenal authorial courage represented by her trilogy and *The Sardonyx Net*, others have followed her into that territory and built settlements around her, so that now she sits firmly in the centre of a certain kind of intelligent, emotional, beautifully-written fantasy. This book has some of her familiar tropes, and I am immensely glad she is writing again, but I wish the *Tiptree* had existed at the time of her earlier books, because this one has been crowded down the list by a couple of others. [CJD]

### **Mission Child**

Maureen F. McHugh, Avon Eos, 1998

At first, I was disappointed by the familiarity of the characters and set-up, but as McHugh stuck to her initial concept, I gained real affection for the book, and the cross-gender cosmopolitan "citizen of the world" that's finally delivered seemed an honestly earned reward for the author's restraint. My only stumbling block was the overkill of the book's genre. Why was this science fiction instead of a mainstream novel about a refugee from a Third World country? [RD]

A beautiful book but there's an odd condensation at the end which moves gender and family to the side and saving the world in. I fully support saving the world, and I consider this an amazing piece of work with the courage to be harsh and uncompromising, but others made more direct comments on gender, and so in the end I moved it down in the ranking order. I hope it wins some other award though... [CJD]

*Mission Child* went right onto my short list, despite or perhaps because of being about work rather than about gender, and I always find work (as opposed to adventure) as the subject of science fiction fascinating. McHugh's subject is always work, just as Cecelia Holland's subject is always power. Work: what work men do, what work women do, what clothes they may wear while they do that work, what clothes they must wear while they do that work, and what difference dropping those requirements can make to an individual. Hmm. As I think about it, her subject wasn't work, at least as she probably saw it: her subject was the disruption experienced by a society at the entrance into it of a technologically different society, but since she portrayed that subject through the medium of a the life of a member of the more primitive society and

since life consists of getting food, shelter, and clothing, it was about work. [KS]

### **“The Hetairai Turncoat”**

Karl-Rene Moore, in *Wired Hard 2*, edited by Cecelia Tan, Circling Press, 1997

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The notion that a run-of-the-mill gay porn hero (buffed, blond, and Bondaged&Disciplined) would so quickly and joyfully turn into a soft blob who loves soft blobs really did hold some shock value for me. It may not be the cleverest, widest-ranging, or most moving fiction that I read this year, but it's genuinely speculative sex writing which manages to distinguish “man” from “manly” and “woman” from “squishy.” [RD]

I must say that the ongoing fondness for “The Hetairai Turncoat” baffles me. I find it an undistinguished piece of gay porn with a strong streak of the misogyny that sometimes accompanies such porn, and with repetition of common themes. I don't believe it has anything new to say about male gender whether queer or not. I would have strenuously opposed putting it anywhere near the short list, but some of the elegant readings of it, which I find far more creative than the piece itself, do seem to deserve the light of day. [CJD]

One of the few contenders to deal specifically with masculinity rather than feminine or general gender constructions. A sometimes delicately ironic look at constructions of masculinity through the overlaid conventions of gay erotica and science fiction—first contacts, sex with aliens, transformation by aliens—but not heterosexual sex, and not orthodox transformations. But it was the further intersection between images of hegemonic masculinity—hard, impervious, muscular—with general Western attitudes to weight and obesity, that interrogated and even deconstructed the party lines in straight OR gay masculine gender constructions. If this did not open new visions on gender, it offered a striking critique of at least one gender orthodoxy. [SK]

### **“Accelerated Grimace”**

Rebecca Ore, *Fantasy and Science Fiction*, February 1998

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Creepy, deliciously nasty, reminded me of Kit Reed. Good work but not Tiptreeable. [CJD]

Why I like “Accelerated Grimace” so much: a great deal of it is Ore's tone, which is flat and as affectless as it can be while expressing despair. The narrator suffers from the deadly sin of anomie, not one of your more popular deadly sins. This story explores the extreme of traditional gender roles in which the woman gives up everything to support the man emotionally, everything, even in her core, so that the man sees himself as the center of the universe. The woman believes that she sees herself as the center of her universe, as any healthy person should, and is worried by a new technology which will allow her husband-the-artist to see what she really thinks, so he can use it as material for his art. He is not disappointed to discover that she sees

herself as his future widow, because as a widow she is defined in relation to him, not in relation to herself; she is devastated to realize that this is true.

No, this is not at all a new idea. It's the same old ugly idea we've seen over and over again, baldly displayed and labeled as ugly, with the unpleasant thrill of recognition that says, no matter how ugly this is, no matter how many times it has been exposed and named, it's still here. It's still a truth about men and women, and as long as it is a truth, it needs to be said. It is the story which reminds me most of Tiptree—of her own bleak stories, often devoid of hope—of any we've read this year. It is an uncomfortable story.

I like the way it explores art (the work of making stuff that one has to make, because one has to make it even though it isn't useful) and Art (the cult of personality around people who have to make stuff and who, for some reason, have found other people who want to look at the stuff). [KS]

### **Ghost Country**

Sara Paretsky, Delacorte Press, 1998

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The novel's Ishtar figure is a portrait of a deity that could have been influenced by *Sarah Canary's* portrait of the alien: allowing for the gap in writerly skill, there's a similar feeling of inevitable rightness about the unknowability of the character. It's a conception worthy of (dare I say it?) Emshwiller. Sexuality and the Big Woman Figure (the nourishment/threat/sensuality of mama's breasts are Starr's most obsessible/accessible aspect) are at the heart of Paretsky's goddess F/X, and if only for managing that without ruffling my bristles in any of the usual ways, I'd have to say that Paretsky has expanded my understanding of gender. [RD]

A beautifully angry book, the Goddess manifest out of female rage, and worthy of the shortlist for its passion, but doesn't push the envelope far enough. [CJD]

I was expecting this to be dismissible, and I was astonished to find it the most compelling read of the year except for *Singling out the Couples*. Despite thinking that none of the characters were likable and that some of them were clichés, I had to keep turning the pages. Paretsky's portrayal of Ishtar is as a flawed, silent, healing deity, reflecting the inner natures of the book's characters back at them, making them more wholly what they already are, sometimes to their benefit, sometimes to their peril. [KS]

### **Hand of Prophecy**

Severna Park, Avon Eos, 1998

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For sheer pleasure, my favorite of the many slave novels we considered. Unlike Mary Doria Russell, Severna Park remembers that the gladiator scenes of “Spartacus” were more interesting than the speeches. Writers often seem to think that every battle is between the “good” and the “bad”; *Hand of Prophecy* efficiently pushes the need for the oppressed to operate together while different oppressors fight over them. *Hand of Prophecy* is

pulpish in some ways, and one of them is the attraction built biologically into the protagonist. But, oh, did I appreciate Park's pointing out that biology is not necessarily destiny; that just as the Heinlein hero refuses to obey his fear, it's possible for a human being (even a female!) to refuse to obey powerful romantic cravings without that refusal being construed as some sort of craven defeat. [RD]

Notable for its energy and strong statements but in the end it is more about slavery and power than gender, so others crowded it out. [CJD]

### **Weird Women, Wired Women**

Kit Reed, Wesleyan University Press, 1998

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The scary aspects of protofeminism can't be brought out much more directly than in 1974's "Songs of War," a "womanist" SF story energetically dedicated to the proposition that things cannot change. Gutsy, funny, nasty, timid, prescient, and insulting, "Songs of War" is a knockout piece with a knockout-drop hangover. Insofar as "exploration" includes notes like "here there be monsters," it's a gender-exploring story powerful enough to gather the collection around it, even though the collection is actually weighted towards middle class American mother-daughter conflicts. [RD]

I found this book almost unbearable to read, not because it was bad but quite the opposite, rather because it was such a relentless indictment of a certain era of social prejudices that reading one story after another in chronological order was like watching a torture session, hearing scream after scream. If we are to reward works which comment on gender in any fashion, then a work which makes so obvious the horror and waste of the "traditional" (that is to say nineteen-fifties-and-sixties middle-class American) role of women (and children) is a strong contender. I realise it is an interpretation of the guidelines that has not so far been considered, but few other works I've seen this year were as disturbing nor as (coldly, I admit) passionate. [CJD]

A significant body of work, including stories from 1958 through 1997, relentlessly focused on women, mainly on women as mothers and daughters. It's difficult to read straight through; a good short story packs a wallop, and few of us stand up well to wallop after wallop. [KS]

### **"Bride of Bigfoot"**

Kit Reed, in *Weird Women, Wired Women*, Wesleyan University Press, 1998

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One of the few playful stories from a collection more notable for its sustained foregrounding of women's struggles and suffering under the cultural demands of gender: especially, it feels, in the '40s and '50s. "Bigfoot" begins with an interesting but not unusual reverse on the "woman-kidnapped-by-alien" theme, a longtime source of nightmare to such women's owners, and hence, like the you'll-be-raped-outside scenario, used to make them stay where it is "safe." In this case home turns out unsafe. The second, now fairly common twist, is that the kidnap victim turns out not to be a victim. The final but not

so common twist turns the submerged terror behind the cautionary tale back on its instigator. "What if she \*liked\* being kidnapped"—which of course implies, Because I wasn't as good sex as the kidnapper—becomes an ironic and ultimately thoroughly erosive query about the instigator's own sexuality, and with it established and orthodox gender roles: What if I, the bereft husband, should like being kidnapped too? A glimpse too brief to merit the award itself, but in its momentary vision quite as unsettling. [SK]

### **"Whiptaii"**

Robert Reed, *Asimov's*, October 1998

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Interesting but not quite "Lovestory"—a hard shove at it though. [CJD]

### **"The Eye of God"**

Mary Rosenblum, *Asimov's*, March 1998

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Yes, gender is central, and there is one shift of perception, and the irony that goes with it, but I don't think it is going to beat out some of my favourites, though I found it memorable. [CJD]

### **The Children Star**

Joan Slonczewski, Tor Books, 1998

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Does a beautiful job of "disappearing" gender, and is a strong and moving book, but it does not speak directly to Tiptree concerns and others which do crowded ahead of it on the short list. [CJD]

Gender really doesn't seem to be an issue for any of the sentient races in this book, and Slonczewski pulls this off as background. Deep enough background that I didn't notice it until I realized that she had portrayed two of the most powerful beings in her universe as lesbian lovers, and no one comments on this, not at their introduction, not later, not ever. The word "lesbian" doesn't appear in the book.

This is what I want to see in society, and don't ever expect to see in any of our lifetimes. I like seeing it in fiction, and I honor Slonczewski for doing it so successfully. Because it's done in deep background, gender is not explored nor expanded: it's resolved. The issues in the book are not gender issues, but issues of freedom, slavery, and sentience: extremely interesting issues, but not Tiptree-award concerns. [KS]

### **"The House of Expectations"**

Martha Soukup, in *Starlight 2*, edited by Patrick Nielsen Hayden, Tor Books, 1998

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A rare, possibly unique, critical and sympathetic look at The Liberal Heterosexual State of Things in which feminist tenets, "guy stuff," sex workers, and the emotional needs of romance all supposedly coexist without conflict or confusion. A brilliantly observed story with a long overdue twist on the male-becomes-female surprise ending. [RD]

An excellent story qua story, which I liked reading it, and it does the satire of romantic

expectations from lovers and from joy-houses very prettily, but the ending just did not carry enough impact. It was *House of Sleep* over in small so far as I was concerned, and with less interest in the ambiguity, because in *Sleep* at least the reaction to the change of sex is left open to the imagination.

Elegant but not quite there for me. [SK]

### Mockingbird

Sean Stewart, Ace, 1998

Another reader-vs.-juror conflict, since I immediately began pressing this book on friends while remaining reluctant to push it for the award. The well-observed down-to-earth humor of the narrator's problems is a wonderful relief from the usual wild-assed ideas of conflict: her seduction-cum-firing scene alone makes the novel worth reading. The "exotic" elements seem like parts of life rather than easy marks of "coolness" or "authenticity"; for example, how many genre writers would not end up demonizing Carlos and his Muertomobile? And the embedded Little Lost Girl tales were creepy enough to be excerpted into horror anthologies. But the finishing flourish of the last two pages knocked this Tiptree juror out of the book and onto the author photo: this is a nice guy generalizing in a sentimental way about women. [RD]

I loved the book. I don't think it significantly speaks to gender but it is a wonderful piece of work. The protagonist certainly has to deal with some gender roles—but what I like in Sean's work is the human approach to relationships in general, the idea of the centrality of everyday life as the battleground of all important human events, and his willingness to speak the language of emotion. [CJD]

### Playing God

Sarah Zettel, Warner Aspect, 1998

The pleasures of this novel are in its expositional structure and its big SF ideas. Zettel's aliens aren't evil barbarians set on conquest of humanity; they're more realistically set on elimination of each other. The various intrigues and betrayals among peoples ring much truer (cloudier, more vicious) than the politics of the other SF I've read this year. As for gender exploration—let's try to ignore the human side of the story, since that boiled down to "Men and women can be friends as long as they're well-educated and usually separated" and

"Gender parity is achievable in a childless heterosexual professional setting." But I loved the alien family structures: that menopause variation, the believability of the unconventional ties Zettel draws between warring, motherhood, and kinship, and the SF-ization of sitcoms' comic bumbling father figure. [RD]

While it was good reading, it didn't really go anywhere new for me. It wasn't about human gender but about getting used to aliens who had different genders, and putting them in the forefront narratively at times, which did not seem to be all that new a concept. Some of the micromanagement of the story was pleasing and interesting, but I also had some difficulties with it. [CJD]

Some rather wooden and rather politically correct human characters only highlight the fascination of Zettel's aliens, a female-centred species whose internecine conflicts and the culture consequent on their inhuman biology were both believable and intriguing. The most interesting questions raised by this book were biological at base, and came from a parallel with humanity, and a recollection of Elaine Morgan's hypothesis, that menopause was evolved to keep old females' wisdom as a human resource, rather than have them expend their biological resources in dangerous births. The obvious twist in the Dedelphi story is the gender switch at menopause and the charmingly ironic reversal, both of all those patriarchal SF stories where aliens mutate into deadly female forms, and of all those old quips about brainless women. Because Dedelphi men are the post-menopausal form of Dedelphi women, and they have literally lost their minds. But the less obvious twist is the question that arises in parallel with Morgan's hypothesis: is the violence that plagues this society due to the absence of "old" women? Could this book function as a parable or investigation of women's post-menopausal possibilities, a fictional version of Germaine Greer's *The Change*? There is no clear indication of such a purpose. Nevertheless, the potential it invokes make a shortlisting no more than its due. [SK]

The aliens in this book were among the most fascinating, and fully-realized, I've encountered for some time, and I loved the very different take on gender the alien society offered. [LT]

### The 1999 James Tiptree, Jr. Award Diversicon 7 • Minneapolis • MN

#### Judges

Bill Clemente [BC]  
L. Timmel Duchamp [LTD]  
Kelly Link [KL]  
Diane Martin (chair) [DM]

Commentary was harvested from correspondence among the judges and attributed by the judges' initials.

### Winner of the 1999 James Tiptree, Jr. Award

#### The Conqueror's Child

Suzy McKee Charnas, Tor Books, 1999; ISBN: 0312857195

With this remarkable conclusion to the Alldera Cycle, Charnas brings to fruition the complex and compelling issues raised—and at the heart of feminist concerns for the past couple decades—in the previous novels, providing the cycle an inspiring

and satisfying conclusion. With respect to the specific issues the Tiptree award acknowledges, this narrative also stands on its own and questions with acute vision human relationships in the context of gender, power, and history. While concluding on a hopeful note, the narrative refuses to sidestep the minefield of conflict women and especially men (who must work to overcome the consequences of what centuries of artificial gender differences have inculcated in society, resulting in unnatural distinctions that uphold male domination) must negotiate to understand and confront gender-based inequalities that inform society. [BC]

Demanding, rich, compelling, intelligent. This outstanding exploration of gender vastly expands our understanding of how gender works in significant areas of human experience and puts one of the major problems of political equality on the map in a way that has simply not been done before. In Charnas's post-liberation Holdfast, we see that for society to become politically inclusive, not only do men have to cease to be masters, but also their conception of what a socially normative man is must change. This is science fiction as political laboratory at its finest. [LTD]

A wonderful, wonderful, complex book. One of the great pleasures of being on the jury this year was the opportunity (excuse) to reread and think about all of Charnas's Holdfast Chronicles, and then to concentrate on this book in particular. There's a lot in it: the current society of the Holdfast is in flux. The past is exclusionary: religion, relationships, history and storytelling (the men's books and the Riding Women's self-songs) all split along gender lines. The future must include both sexes: the women of the Holdfast will give birth to sons as well as daughters. I take away three images: the abandoned open Grasslands, the dark, claustrophobic structure of the Endpath, and the memorial of stones that Sorrel builds for the male child, Veree, in the shape of a Riding Woman's tent, attempting to build a future which will include both male and female. [KL]

While *The Conqueror's Child* rides on the shoulders of the previous three books in the Holdfast Series, it's also a monumental work all by itself. It explores gender, power, and personal as well as social change. Far and away the best gender-bending novel I've read this past year — maybe in the past 20 or 30 years. Strong, thoughtful, relevant, and beautifully written. [DM]

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## 1999 Short List

### If I Told You Once

Judy Budnitz, Picador USA /St. Martin's, 1999;  
ISBN: 0312202857

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A thoughtful and rich chronicle of women and children through a number of generations, beginning in the Old World and crossing to the New, the novel recalls *The Painted Bird's* landscape though with less dreadful consequences as the women involved confront old battles in new territory. [BC]

Strikingly imaginative magic realism, subtle and complicated, often Angela Carteresque, that tells the story of several generations of women in a family that moves from the Old World to the New, focusing on "the pattern repeating. An endless procession of women following a single set of footprints in the snow." [LTD]

A novel about mothers and daughters, and sisters and brothers. The New World, like the Old World, is full of magic and strangeness, wolves, unobtainable heart's desires and curses. The narrative which begins in Ilana's voice, breaks into smaller and smaller pieces, spoken by her daughter and so on: the end shows us how the Ilana, the mother contains all of their stories within her own story, like an egg. [KL]

More showing than telling, the gender exploration is not overt, but it flows throughout the whole book, telling the story of a family of strong women. [DM]

### "In the Second Person"

Sally Caves, *Terra Incognita*, Winter 1999/2000

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A love story literally in the second person, about she, he and IT (Identity Transfer) in which minds, bodies, brain, and gender become inextricably tangled and changed. The details are telling— simultaneously claustrophobic and liberating. [KL]

An illuminating gender-bending story that illustrates how significantly the body mediates consciousness (something that should be obvious to everyone, since the brain is a biological organ, but as the film *Being John Malkovitch* demonstrates, is not). [LTD]

Very much in the spirit of the Tiptree award. The writing is not always the smoothest, but the exploration of gender is most thorough, taking a clear and broad look at sex and gender roles. [DM]

### "Pinkland"

Graham Joyce, *Crossing the Border*, ed. Lisa Tuttle; Indigo, 1998

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A story about the flesh-mind disjunct of cyberspace that does not write off the flesh as something to be escaped and denigrated, in which the in-the-flesh gender identities of the two Internet lovers, the obsessive focus for most of the narrative, turn out to be far less important than other differences that open between them when they meet off-line. [LTD]

Most of this story has the texture of a dream, in which two lovers settle down and construct a house and a life online together, and then one day decide to meet. A series of meetings ensue online and then finally, in a bar, face to face. Layers of identity and gender have been assumed and peeled away and turned upside down and finally cast off. At the end, the physical world has taken on a nightmarish, unreal fixed quality— fluid, abandoned Pinkland was Paradise. [KL]

Uses the Internet as a venue to explore gender, sex, and communication. Unsettling, this story

twists and turns in a series of switchbacks until you hardly know what is “real.” [DM]

### **The Woman with the Flying Head and Other Stories [collection]**

Kurahashi Yumiko, translated by Atsuko Sakaki, M.E.Sharpe, 1997; ISBN: 0765601583

Offering a remarkable array of perspectives, sometimes provocative at others humorous, the collection moves in many and always satisfying directions. [BC]

A collection of strange and powerful stories that use Noh dramas and masks to explore how subjectivity operates through the ordinary, conventional, and sometimes extreme roles (all of which are, of course, gendered) that people assume in their relationships, roles depicted as aspects of the individual that shift according to circumstance. [LTD]

A series of stories in which: a sister and brother achieve space travel by climbing between an alien’s legs and into its vagina; faces are put on like masks, cats behave like women and vice versa; women’s heads fly chastely to their lovers, while their bodies remain vulnerable, at home in bed. The borders between sexes, the commonplace and otherworldly, human and animal, taboo and familiar (familial) are trafficked and transgressed. [KL]

A continuing metaphor of masks links these stories, as does a skillful ordering by the translator. Male/female, mortal/supernatural, parents/children, animals/humans, things are not always what they seem. [DM]

### **“5001 Nights”**

Penelope Lively, *The Five Thousand and One Nights* (European Short Stories, No. 4; 1997, Fjord Press, c/o Partners West; ISBN: 0940242737

A delightful and delicious tale exploring the gendered character of literary conventions and gendered (and competitive) ways in which men and women read and write fiction. [LTD]

Satisfying in so many ways: the bloodthirsty Sultan has been “tamed by narrative,” and this is the “happy ever after” math. Marriage has a structure, Lively suggests, like fiction, and Scheherazade has moved on from genies to Mansfield Park and the strange tale of *Mrs. Dalloway*. In self-defense, the Sultan becomes a storyteller too: Westerns, SF, Hemingway. In the end, we’ve circled back to the old good stories about fishermen and genies, and the children have climbed up onto the bed to listen. [KL]

A retelling of *The Arabian Nights* with keenly described and hilarious gender role-reversal. [DM]

### **The Iron Bridge**

David Morse, Harcourt Brace, 1998; ISBN: 0151002592

An interesting historical science fiction novel, this story examines the ambivalent consequences of progress and history’s powerful, complex sweep, providing insights into the gender suppression behind magnificent yet potentially destructive creations [BC]

Offers unusually fine insight into the nature of historical change, showing gender’s work and functions, using the future/past confrontation to illuminate not only gender’s differences, but how gender works as a part of the whole functioning of the social fabric. [LTD]

In which a woman travels backwards, into the past, to save the world from its future. The iron bridge, the thing that links the two places, past and future, (which she has come back to bring down before it is even built) is beautifully described, and seems to take on gender as it is drawn, considered, constructed. Persons, historical artifacts, society, history itself seem to be unexpectedly gendered. [KL]

This is “big picture” gender exploration, showing the intertwined effect of history, culture, and gender. A woman is sent back in time to change history. We see how she makes a difference, though not in the way she intended, and how doing so changes her as well as history. [DM]

### **“Sexual Dimorphism”**

Kim Stanley Robinson, *Asimov’s*, June 1999

This well developed hard-science fiction tale offers a disturbing slant on the scientific method; the narrator’s warped perspective demonstrates the power of persuasion to undermine analysis and to perpetuate myths concerning the biologically determined basis for gender differences. [BC]

A brilliant and subtle demonstration of how the theory Charnas delineates in *The Conqueror’s Child* would work in practice, in which the author uses hard SF protocols to show how a reactionary, essentialist ideological agenda that naturalizes gender produces bad science. [LTD]

Personal loss, character, and desire inform a man’s scientific research. As his own life falls away, he begins to find in his work hints of explanations, clues for the puzzle of personal disasters. Unable to find a pattern for his own life, he looks harder for elusive patterns in the junk DNA of dolphins, and as is often the case, finds what he was looking for. He devises a sort of evolutionary take on *Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus* and in the end, gives himself over to the sea, the desired, female, alien element. [KL]

Polished, troubling, the gender stuff is so subtle it’s hard to see at first; it sneaks up on you. The real gender exploration comes out in the differences between the protagonist and the narrator. [DM]



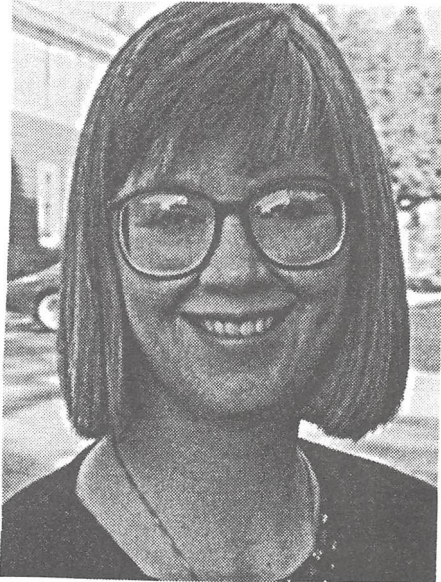
# In Memoriam

WisCon mourns the passing of our own.

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## Karen Axness • 1950-1996

Jeanne Gomoll



The feminist community, Tiptree supporters, and the Madison, Wisconsin community all mourn the loss of Karen Axness, who died of cancer on August 11, 1996.

Karen Axness was a great friend and supporter of the Tiptree Award. Her love of books and book-selling inspired many friends and customers at Madison's feminist bookstore, A Room of One's Own, where she worked as the assistant manager. Karen recommended fiction to Tiptree panels and to ROOO customers from her own extensive reading. She created, and each year participated, in one of the best-loved WisCon panels, "Women Writers You May Never Have Heard Of." Many WisCon attendees go to this panel every year without fail, taking their notebooks with them and jotting down the books recommended by the panelists. Karen participated on this event for the last time mere months before her death.

She is missed by many.

As a memorial to Karen and her love of feminist science fiction and fantasy, her colleagues and friends thought that a most appropriate way to remember her would be to set up a fund to support the authors she admired. In 1996, when this fund raising effort began, it was decided that money raised would be used as part of the Tiptree prize, the next time the award ceremony returned to Madison. This is the year. Donations to the Tiptree Award in honor of Karen Axness will be make up part of the \$1000 prize given to Molly Gloss for her novel, *Wild Life*. Karen, I think, would have loved this book.

## Sheila Bostick (1935-2001)

Debbie Notkin

Sheila Bostick was a regular volunteer in the art show and the treasurer for the Tiptree Award, despite failing health over the last few years. Her son Alan is also a regular WisCon attendee. Her first love was adventure science fiction, whether or not it was feminist, but she was more than happy to get involved with the feminist SF cabal on all sorts of levels. Sheila's ready smile made the art show a pleasure to walk into, and her willingness to help out in all kinds of ways was a delight to everyone around her.

## Jenna Felice (1976-2001)

Debbie Notkin

Jenna Felice was an editor at Tor Books. Her biggest role in WisCon was to help host the Tor party and to facilitate a writers' workshop group last year. Jenna was a comparatively new WisCon face, but her commitment to the convention was strong and growing. Aside from her role at Tor, she was also associate editor at Century, a literary science fiction short story magazine. Jenna's energy and vibrancy could lift the entire convention's mood.

A quiet time will be set aside in the writers' respite room for people who wish to share memories of Sheila and Jenna. Please check your pocket program for details.

# Secret Feminist Cabal, Order of the Space Babe

The following people have given their time, energy and ideas to the Tiptree Award over the past 10 years and they all deserve the thanks and a round of applause for their contributions. In support of the award, the people listed below have judged the Tiptree Award, published the anthology *Flying Cups and Saucers*, published cookbooks, run auctions, designed t-shirts, worked on the Tiptree quilt, built the Tiptree web site, and volunteered their time and work in many other ways. They are all officially inducted into the Secret Feminist Cabal, Order of the Space Babe. (If you think you should also be inducted, but we forgot you, please let a member of the Tiptree Motherboard know.) Thank you!

Arnason, Eleanor  
 Attebery, Brian  
 Babich, Karen  
 Baer, Freddie  
 Becker, Tom  
 Benton, Tracy  
 Berry, John D.  
 Bostick, Sheila (deceased)  
 Brown, Steve  
 Casper, Susan  
 Charnas, Suzy McKee  
 Clemente, Bill  
 Coldsmith, Sherry  
 Custis, Scott  
 Davis, Ray  
 Dorsey, Candace Jane  
 Duchamp, L. Timmel  
 Dudley, Betty Rose  
 Fowler, Karen Joy  
 Garey, Terry

Gilligan, Barb  
 Goldstein, Lisa  
 Gomoll, Jeanne  
 Griffith, Nicola  
 Gunn, Eileen  
 Hand, Elizabeth  
 Hario, Pat  
 Harris, Gwen  
 Harris, Harlie  
 Hawkins, Jane  
 Hopkinson, Nalo  
 Hudson, Jim  
 Humphries, Bill  
 Humphries, Julie  
 Jones, Gwyneth  
 Kadrey, Richard  
 Kaufman, Jerry  
 Kelly, James Patrick  
 Kelso, Sylvia  
 Kessel, John

Ketter, Greg  
 Kiefer, Hope  
 Klages, Ellen  
 Krisor, Elk  
 Kushner, Ellen  
 Laffer, Janet M.  
 Larbaestier, Justine  
 Le Guin, Ursula K.  
 Lefanu, Sarah  
 Link, Kelly  
 Martin, Diane B.  
 Martin, Diane M.  
 McAllister, Bruce  
 McHugh, Maureen F.  
 McIntyre, Vonda N.  
 Merrick, Helen  
 Murphy, Pat  
 Nash, Kathi  
 Notkin, Debbie  
 Parsons, Spike

Pasechnik, Steve  
 Roessner, Michaela  
 Root, Carrie  
 Russo, Richard  
 Sargent, Pamela  
 Schaefer, Kate  
 Sherman, Delia  
 Simone, Donna  
 Smith, Jeff  
 Spiess, Laura (deceased)  
 Springer, Nancy  
 Squires, Carol  
 Sturgis, Susanna J.  
 Sussex, Lucy  
 Torkildson, Sandy  
 Tuttle, Lisa



## WANTED: TIPTREE TREASURER

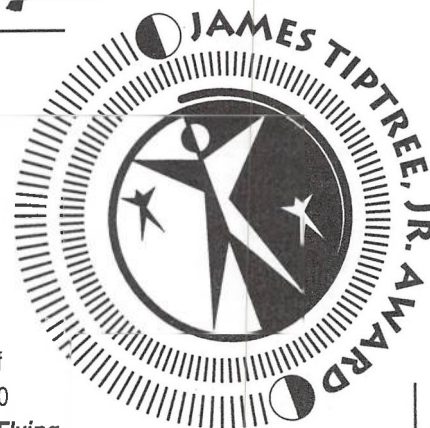
The James Tiptree, Jr. Award is looking for a volunteer treasurer. The Tiptree Award bank account is with the Bank of America, with branches in California, Nevada, and Seattle (at least). The account can be moved for the treasurer's convenience. Duties include: keeping records of income from auctions, sales and donations; issuing checks for Tiptree awards and expenses; filing of annual income tax report; and the production of an annual report. The Tiptree treasurer would report to the Tiptree Motherboard. If you think you might be interested, please contact Debbie Notkin, 680 66th St., Oakland, CA 94609, or email her at: [kith@slip.net](mailto:kith@slip.net).

Since its inception, the **Tiptree Award** has been an award with an attitude. As a political statement, as a means of involving people at the grassroots level, as an excuse to eat cookies, and as an attempt to strike the proper ironic note, the award was financed initially through **bake sales**. Over the past ten years, bake sales have been held at science fiction conventions across the United States, as well as in England and Australia.

Fund-raising efforts have also included several publications: **two cookbooks** feature recipes and anecdotes by science fiction writers and fans. *The Bakery Men Don't See* is a collection of recipes for baked goods, and *Her Smoke Rose Up From Supper* is a collection of main dish recipes; both are available from the James Tiptree Jr. Literary Award Council for \$10 each (plus \$1 postage in North America; \$3 postage outside North America). The anthology, *Flying Cups and Saucers: Gender Explorations in Science Fiction and Fantasy*, edited by Debbie Notkin and the Secret Feminist Cabal, includes short fiction listed on Tiptree judges' shortlists for the first five years of the Award. The anthology is formally out of print, but a few remaining copies of the trade paperback edition can still be purchased from the James Tiptree Jr. Literary Award Council. The hardback edition is sold out.

Other fund-raising efforts have included the phenomenally successful and entertaining **auctions** run by Ellen Klages, the sale of **t-shirts** created by science fiction collage artist and silk screener Freddie Baer, and the sale of **Space Babe tattoos** designed by Jeanne Gomoll.

If you read or write anything that you think should be considered for the award, please send your **recommendations** to the James Tiptree Jr. Literary Award Council at the email or street address below.



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For more information on the Tiptree Award, or to purchase a Tiptree publication, contact:

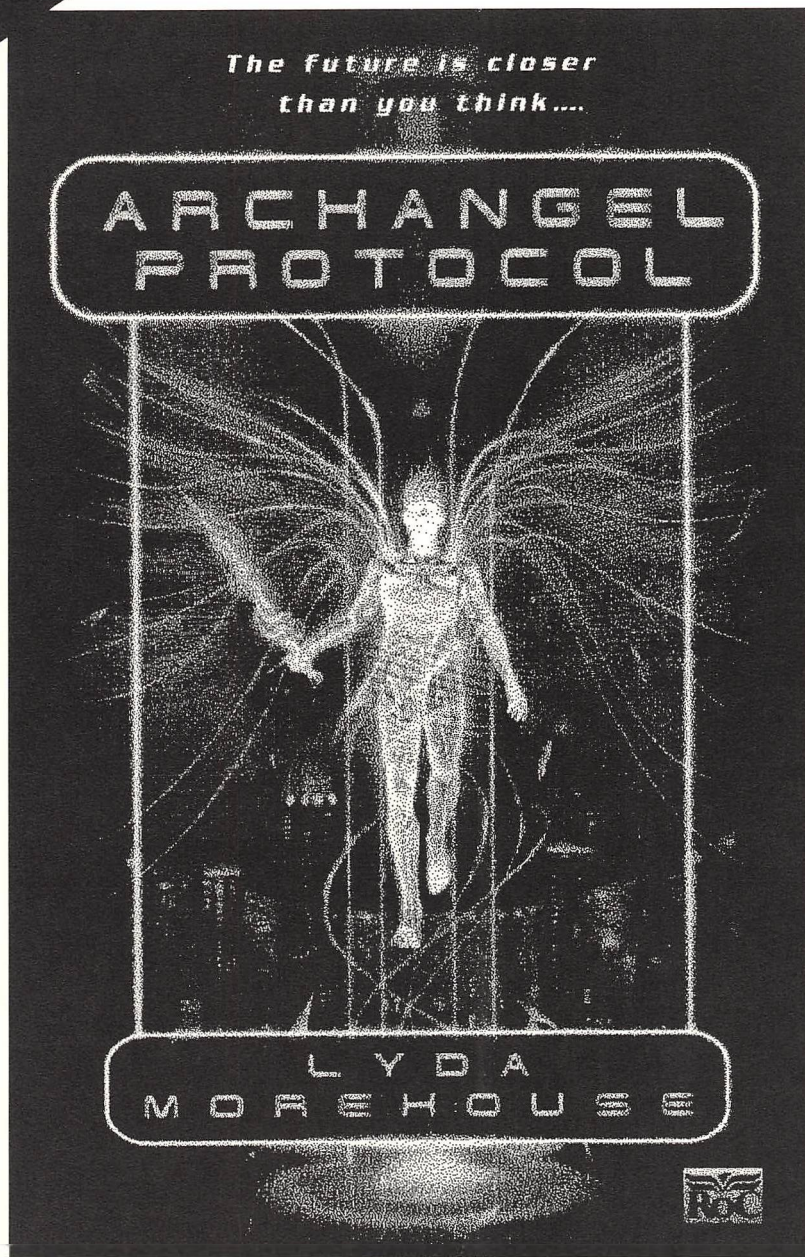
**The James Tiptree Jr. Literary Award Council**  
 680 66th St., Oakland, CA 94609  
[tiptree@tiptree.org](mailto:tiptree@tiptree.org)  
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