

WisCon

The Gathering  of the Feminist SF Community

Madison Wisconsin • May 24-27, 2002

Welcome!

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WisCon 26 Souvenir Book
Editor Beth Plutchak

WisCon 26
May 24-27, 2002
The Concourse Hotel and Governor's Club
Madison, WI

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Report to the Men's Club and Other Stories

What if the world ended on your birthday—and no one came? What if your grandmother was a superhero? What if the orphan you were raising was a top-secret weapon, looked like Godzilla, and loved singing nursery rhymes? What if poet laureates fought to the death, in stadiums? Emshwiller's previous books (*Joy in Our Cause*, *Carmen Dog*, *Ledoyt*, and others) have won her a devoted cult following. Her short fiction is about women and men, monsters, obsessions, art, and falling in love. She writes witty, humane, endearingly odd stories that play with all the genres and conventions you can put a name to—science fiction, Western, romance, postmodern, tabloid, literary—and some that haven't even been invented yet.

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Emshwiller knows more about men and mortality and love and loss and writing and life than anybody on the planet! Dazzling, dangerous, devastating writer! Wow! Wow! Wow! — Connie Willis (*Passage*)

Carol Emshwiller's stories are wonder-filled, necessary, and beautifully crafted. It's a high pleasure indeed to see this new collection. — Samuel R. Delany (*Dhalgren*)

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Doing well at the corner store:

—Kelly Link, *Stranger Things Happen*: a Salon Book of the Year, includes the Nebula Award-winning "Louise's Ghost"

—Ray Vukcevich, *Meet Me in the Moon Room*: nominated for the Philip K. Dick Award

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WisCon 26 Guest of Honor • Nalo Hopkinson

An Appreciation

Ellen Klages

Nalo Hopkinson is a writer.

A fiction writer.

A speculative fiction writer.

A feminist speculative fiction writer.

A Canadian feminist speculative fiction writer.

A Caribbean-Canadian feminist speculative fiction writer.

A black Caribbean-Canadian feminist speculative fiction writer.

An award-winning black Caribbean-Canadian feminist speculative fiction writer.

You could use up your lifetime supply of adjectives just trying to describe her in one sentence. She is the intersection of so many subcultures that the Venn diagram labeled "Nalo" would be a mandala.

Her ancestry is African, East Indian, Aboriginal, Jewish, Scottish, and English. She is a woman of color (a sort of cinnamon-chocolate) and a woman of size (larger than a breadbox). She has short dreadlocks the color of a cherry slushie. She wears fabulous hats.

Like many science fiction writers, she was born to alien parents. Hers lived on tropical islands. Jamaica. Trinidad. It was warm there, and mangoes and bananas and other succulent fruits grew wild. When she was sixteen, her family moved to Toronto, Canada. (That large country a few miles north of Madison.) It was cold there, and apples and maple syrup came from farms. But she has lived there ever since.

She writes fiction that is about magic and power, fiction about impossible things that happen anyway. She writes about folklore and technology, history and revelry. Her prose is lyrical, passionate, and astonishing.

How did the mandala of Nalo come to be? Her father was a Guyanese poet and a playwright, her mother a Jamaican library technician, and so she grew up in a culture of words and books. She was, like most of us, an insatiable reader.

She graduated from college with a degree in Russian and French, and then did the usual round of liberals-arts odd jobs: t-shirt vendor, aerobics instructor, library clerk, cog in a government bureaucracy. It's all material.

Nine years ago, she read about a class Judy Merrill was teaching in Toronto. It was a writing class, and required a submission story.



Nalo had never written any fiction, but "cobbled together an unfinished six pages of something about a shy young woman who has visions and is trying to hide that fact from people around her."

The class didn't happen, for lack of enough registration, but out of the group of would-be students came a writing group, and out of the six cobbled pages came 10,000 words that were trying to be a novel. Ack! Now what?

Nalo went to Clarion in 1995, where she wrote six stories in six weeks, and was under the tutelage of Joe Haldeman, Nancy Kress, Tim Powers, Pat Murphy, Karen Fowler, and Chip Delany. They encouraged her to keep writing. (And she does a wicked imitation of Founding Mother Fowler. Really.)

When she got home, she sent the 10,000 words off to the Warner-Aspect First Novel Contest, then waited for the polite rejection letter. Ooops. They wanted to see the whole novel. No drafts. By the end of January, two months away. Ack! Ack!

Nalo is a fast writer when she is under deadline. That winter she wrote. And wrote and

wrote and wrote. And threw away and scrapped and revised. And wrote. She finished *Brown Girl in the Ring* the day before the contest closed. Whew. "I printed it out, sent it off, and went to bed," she says.

Six months later, Betsy Mitchell called to tell her it had won. It came out in 1998. The next year it was short-listed for both the Tiptree and Philip K. Dick Awards. The year, after that, it won the Locus Award for Best First Novel, and Nalo won the Campbell Award for Best New Writer.

Oh, and the New York Public Library recommended it in their "Books for the Teen Age," which both tickled and baffled Nalo.

Ain't a bad start, nuh?

And Nalo did not suffer from second-novel syndrome. (Maybe that's because she actually wrote *Midnight Robber* first?) It came out in 2000, and was shortlisted for the Tiptree, Nebula, Hugo, P.K. Dick, and Sunburst Awards. It was a *New York Times* Notable Book of the Year. And the first anthology she edited, a gathering of Caribbean fabulist fiction, *Whispers from the Cotton Tree Root*, was short-listed for the World Fantasy Award in 2001. Three of the stories from that volume made the Tiptree shortlist, too.

But she's really nice in person. (Do remember to curtsy and call her Miss Hopkinson. Don't touch her hair.)

Nalo's prose voice is unique and unmistakable. In some of her stories and in *Midnight Robber* she writes in a creole, a hybrid language, an emulsion of cultures (primarily Jamaican and Trinidadian). When I first picked up *Midnight Robber* I found it difficult to read, the rhythms and words and syntax alien to my midwestern, corn-fed ears. But it only took about five pages for me to be entranced. Nalo's prose, written in a language called Hopkinson, is seductive, delicious, and edgy, like a ripe mango with a splash of ice-cold gin.

I was drawn into the language, and the story, so deeply that when I closed the book and went out into the world, everyone's speech sounded flat and dull. I walked into my local coffee place and had to stop myself from asking, as I ordered my latte, "Ain't you got low-fat, nuh? I go drink this just so." I nearly got into trouble, talking to my sister on the phone, calling my niece she pickney.

It took me days to recover.

And if her voice on paper is remarkable, wait until you hear her read a story aloud. If I ever have a sentient house computer, I may call it Granny Nanny, but I will program it to read me bedtime stories in Nalo Hopkinson's voice.

You love her as much as I do. We just can't help ourselves.

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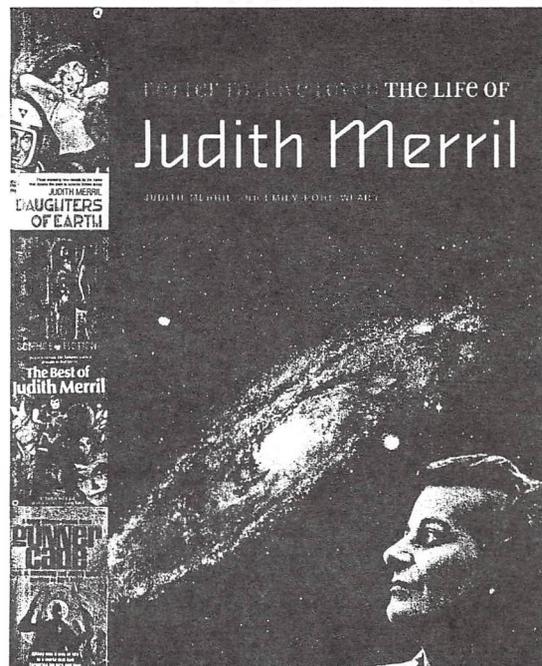
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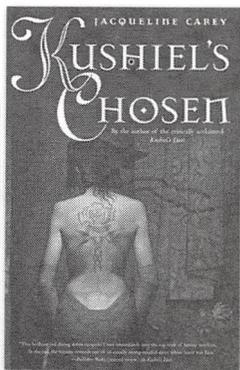
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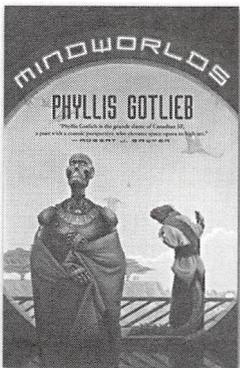


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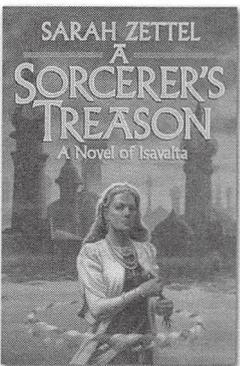


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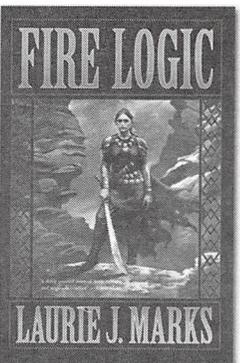


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WisCon 26 Guest of Honor • Nina Kiriki Hoffman

Magic Revisited

Kristine Kathryn Rusch

Earlier this year, Nina Kiriki Hoffman asked me to write her bio for WisCon. She's asked me to do this twice before, but this third time is special to me because WisCon is a special convention for me.

WisCon is the very first convention I ever attended—more than twenty years ago now. And I went to a number as a fan before I moved away from Madison <sob> and became a professional in the sf field.

For years, I've told Nina about WisCon—about how friendly the folks are, about the wonderful city (and such a wonderful time of year! May (my favorite)! unlike the February WisCons of my memory), and about the revolutionary programming. I was able to tell Nina about WisCon.

And now I get to tell you all about her.

Let me start with the essay I wrote when she was a special guest at the 1996

World Horror Convention, titled—

Hoffman Magic

Listen closely and you can hear the magic: a turn of a phrase, a slightly skewed perspective, a laugh while others frown.

Hoffman-magic.

It fills her fiction, and glimmers of it appear in her presence.

For example:

Nina Kiriki Hoffman introduced tattoos and wigs to World Fantasy Con. Because of Nina, photographs of very serious editors wearing inappropriate wigs found their way into the very serious newsmagazines of the science fiction and fantasy field. Because of Nina, three happily married men blushed profusely as they helped one beautiful fantasy

writer place a tattoo at the base of her spine. Because of Nina, the convention was fun.

Fun is an essential element to Hoffman-magic. Her stories shine with it. Even the serious stories, like "Home For Christmas," have an innate sense of fun. Who but Nina would have kitchen utensils dance? Who but Nina would make inanimate objects not only talk, but have opinions? Who but Nina would make the world sing?

Sometimes Hoffman-magic isn't subtle. When most writers give readings, the readings are extremely serious. The writer sits on the podium, taps his manuscript on the wood, and begins, in a stentorian voice, to emote.

Nina will sing.

Or, on one memorable occasion, giggle.

I didn't attend that reading. It happened at a Norwescon, and I was at the dinner afterwards where the attendees regaled me with the tale. Nina read probably her most famous story,

"Savage Breasts," to a roomful of fans.

("Savage Breasts," for those of you who have never been — ah, well — exposed, is the story of a woman whose breasts develop a mind of their own. They wiggle at inappropriate times. They even punch cigar smokers in elevators.) Nina didn't make it through her first paragraph ("I was only a lonely leftover on the table of Life. No one seemed interested in sampling me.") without starting to giggle. After that, she couldn't complete a sentence without snorting, chuckling or guffawing.

Her audience laughed with her.

And talked about the event for *years* afterwards as the most fun reading they had ever attended.

I don't know if the magic of this event is clear to many of you. If you've ever gone to a reading where the writer has been anything but



serious, if you've ever been to a place where the writer has shown inordinate appreciation for her own work, then you have seen the Uncomfortable Audience. The Uncomfortable Audience shifts. The Uncomfortable Audience takes a bathroom break and never returns. The Uncomfortable Audience vows never to listen to that author read again.

Hoffman-magic prevents such things from happening. Nina, when she laughs at her own work, laughs at it like a little kid who is telling a particularly funny joke. Nina shares the fun.

So why is Nina Kiriki Hoffman, all around wonderful person and writer of funtastic fiction a special guest at the World Horror Convention?

Because Nina Kiriki Hoffman has a dark side. And the fact that you've seen it is all my fault.

You see, when Nina finishes a story that she proclaims "really icky," she tells me about it. And I say, "Give it to me." Sometimes I buy the story. Sometimes I urge her to mail it elsewhere. But Nina's inclination with her "really icky" stories is to bury them in a drawer. I ask her to bring them into the light.

(To be truthful and fair, it is not all my fault that you've seen Nina's dark side. It is only partly my fault. She writes the stories. And she now knows to mail them. [Although I suspect that she sometimes fails to tell me about the "really, really icky" stories.] Other editors ask her for them. And sometimes she even writes "icky" stories to order.)

What makes a story "icky"? Ah, too much truth, and too much compassion. It's the compassion that makes them painful. "Dumpster Diving," the story about a woman who finds a puppy in a dumpster is a prime example. The creature isn't really a puppy. Sometimes it is a baby. A human baby. And the woman puts the tiny puppy/baby in a drawer — not because she's cruel, not because she hates it, not even because she's trying to hurt it. She puts it in a drawer because that's the only way she knows how to care for something precious.

Icky, yes, but so full of compassion that only the hard-hearted will remain untouched.

Somehow Nina manages to view the darkest corners of the human heart, and understand them. And, despite that understanding, she can still laugh and sing and be joyful, almost childlike in her approach to the world.

Hoffman-magic.

You'll be in its presence all weekend.

Enjoy.

A lot has changed since 1996. I no longer edit, so I can't snatch short stories out of Nina's hands. I no longer live in Eugene, Oregon, so I don't always see everything she writes.

But I am one of Nina's first readers on her novels—from her marvelous "first" novel *A Thread that Binds the Bones* (and I say "first" because I read a lot of other still unpublished novels before I read *Thread*) to the upcoming *A Fistful of Sky* (which is, I have to tell you, one of the best things she's ever done [and that's saying something amazing]). And we spend as much time together as we can, although we often do so the way that family does—at birthdays and holidays, and strange odd drop-in visits.

And at conventions. She's still up to her old tricks at conventions. Since 1996, Nina's convinced every major sf professional to be photographed on a bear rug. At one World Fantasy Con, she gave out teeny tiny plastic rats (or mice or hamsters, depending on your point of view). It soon became clear when Nina had been in a room before me; there were tiny plastic rats (or mice or hamsters) littering the tables.

That's what Nina does. She lives bits of magic where-ever she goes. That part of Nina has not changed—and I doubt it ever will.

So, folks, do me a favor. Since I can't be at WisCon this year (I have a previous commitment or I would be), show my buddy Nina why Madison is a great town. Take her to the Union Terrace and have her feed the ducks (but don't do it at twilight—I don't want to hear her complain about the mosquitoes). Give her a bratwurst (but no beer. She's not the beer type). Take her shopping on State Street, and drive her around the lakes. Maybe even take her into the Capitol so that she can give some poor unsuspecting state legislator whatever cool thing she's brought to WisCon (even if it is a rat [or a mouse or a hamster]).

Show her the best time you possibly can. Because I know she'll do that for you.

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Nina Kiriki Hoffman

Gene Knudsen Hoffman (Mom)

Nina Kiriki is my magical, mystery child. She is the sixth of my seven children – born on the first day of Spring, the 20th of March, 1955. I had her name ready for her. She was named Nina, for a Danish gypsy friend who shared our lives during troubled times. Her other name is Kiriki, which means “little doll” in Japanese. A favorite aunt bore this name. Yes, on the first day of Spring, Nina Kiriki entered my life -- and I was glad.

I was awake when they laid her in my arms – this tiny, exquisite little person with a crown of dark hair – perfect little person, perfect little soul, entrusted to me and her father. And, by accident, he entered the birth-room just as they gave her to me. (Fathers weren't permitted in birth rooms in those days.) And, I could tell him, after three boys, she was a *girl!*

In due time her eyes turned green. She and her older brother were the only green-eyed ones in my flock of blue-eyed blondes plus her red-haired older sister Valley. Kiriki, as we called her then, was curious, alert, aware, a wonderer.

Nina Kiriki loved stories. For years I read to all my kids each evening. Nina soon joined that group. And she was the first to illustrate as I read. Pretty soon they all did. I protested, saying they were supposed to *listen* to the stories, and I decided they couldn't listen and draw at the same time.

I was wrong. They dutifully stopped – until I looked at their pictures. They were stunning. Each contributed his or her unique style and I realized they were rapidly becoming artists. For they were composing, dancing, singing and playing musical instruments, as well as drawing.

Kiriki's schoolmates called her “Kreepy,” and she didn't like that one bit. So she began calling herself Nina – which was not so challenging, though then they called her Nina the Ballerina.

As soon as she learned to write, she began writing her own stories -- these were carefully hidden and were her secrets. She had quite a list of imagined friends, and she would describe to me who they were, and tell their names. She would also tell me bits of her stories – they were wondrous. Magic and mystery suffused them. I was awed.

Her education was counter-cultural, as were her brothers' and sister's. I wanted them to like, if not love, school, so if they were unhappy with one, we sought another. She and her younger brother spent a year at a “free school” we parents developed. As far as I can remember, the only subjects she studied were Chinese and pottery. Meanwhile, at home, she played, swam, danced, wrote, and learned to play every instrument she touched: guitar, piano, violin, clarinet. And she could sing! She had one of the loveliest alto voices I've ever heard – and it still is.

Time passed; it was her turn to go to college. She selected the University of Idaho because she and one of her friends were writing a book together, and her friend wanted to study geology there. Though they never finished their book, Nina's writing career flowered. She wrote for the university paper.

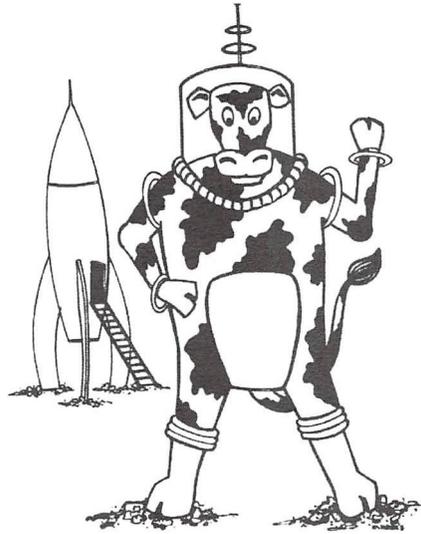
One day she called me asking what Phi Beta Kappa meant. She'd been invited to join, but didn't know what it was. I told her it was the highest honor society in a university. She joined. Then she graduated cum laude from the university, and was ready for life's tests.

She met them. After moving to Lincoln City, Oregon, where other science fiction writers came to roost, she and several friends moved to Eugene, Oregon, and a sturdy writers' group gathered. They're still there today, sharing their learning and encouraging one another's work.

Nina's career took a leap when her friends created a publishing house called Pulphouse, and published story after story of hers in their handsomely bound books. From there she moved to writing novels. The current novel takes place in Santa Barbara, and “bears no resemblance to any member of her family,” she says...well – we'll see.

Like the rest of her brothers and sister, she followed the talent of her choice – writing – to create her career in the world. My part in it was to encourage and affirm the talents they had and to encourage them to follow their hearts. She followed hers with enthusiasm. More than that, she fulfilled my dream for them all – she became a warm, loving human being (as did the others). This particular success was the one I thought most worth working for...and she does it exceedingly well.

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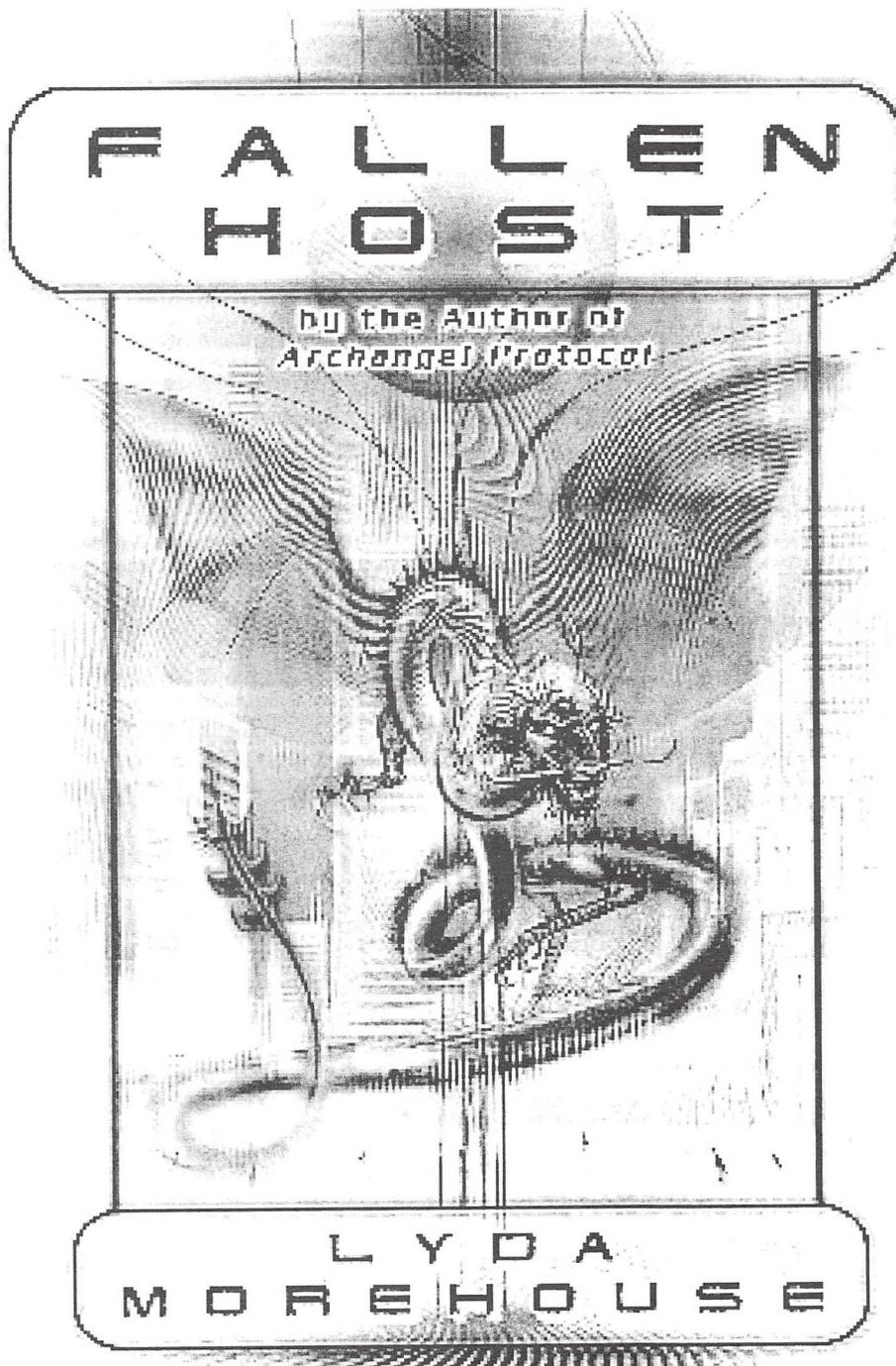
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Hiromi Goto wins 2001 Tiptree

Oakland, CA -- 4/6/02: *The Kappa Child*, a novel by Hiromi Goto published by Red Deer Press, was announced as the winner of the 2001 James Tiptree Award. In addition, the 2001 Jury announced a short list of:

The Fresco, by Sheri S. Tepper, Harper Collins/Eos

The Song of the Earth, by Hugh Nissenson, Algonquin Books

Half Known Lives, by Joan Givner, New Star Books

Dark Light, by Ken MacLeod, Tor Books

The Tiptree Motherboard will present the Award at a ceremony at Readercon 14 July 12-14, in Burlington MA.

What is the Tiptree?

In February of 1991 at WisCon (the world's only feminist-oriented science fiction convention), SF author Pat Murphy announced the creation of the James Tiptree, Jr. Award, an annual literary prize for science fiction or fantasy that expands or explores our understanding of gender.

Why The Name Tiptree?

The award is named for Alice B. Sheldon, who wrote under the pseudonym James Tiptree, Jr. By her chance choice of a masculine pen name, Sheldon helped break down the imaginary barrier between "women's writing" and "men's writing." Her fine stories were eagerly published and won many awards in the field. The name, "Tiptree" was selected to illustrate the difficulty women have in gaining recognition and credibility for their art.

How to Support the Tiptree Award

Make recommendations to the Tiptree judges from your reading. If you find an SF/F story or a novel that you think bends gender in an interesting way, suggest the title to the judges.

Read the winning stories and short-listed fiction. Talk to your friends about gender-bending fiction.

Organize a Tiptree Bake Sale at a convention near you.

Volunteer your time and join the Tiptree juggernaut.

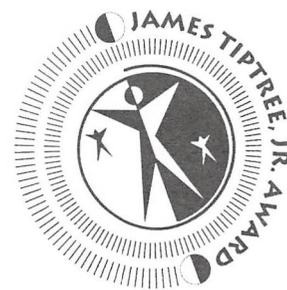
Get together a group and Bid for a future "Floating Tiptree Ceremony Convention."

The Process

Each year Founding Mothers, Pat Murphy and Karen Joy Fowler appoint 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 works via our Web site: <http://www.tiptree.org>. Publishers are encouraged to alert Karen 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 winner receives a check for \$1000.

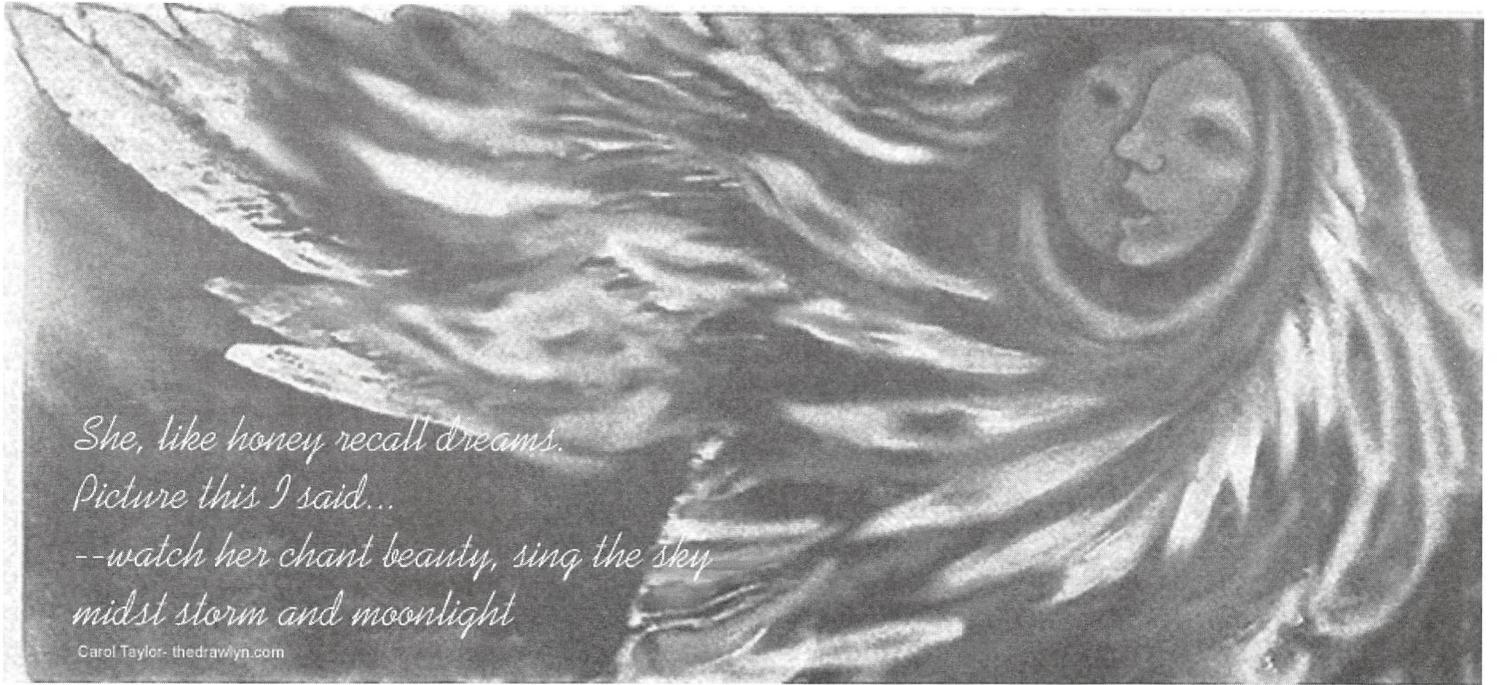
Although the judges choose not to release a list of nominees before the actual award, thus creating an artificial set of "losers," they do publish a "shortlist" of fiction to which they wish to call readers' attention. In 1994, 1995 and 1996 the judges published both a "shortlist" and a "longlist."



Contact

tiptree@tiptree.org
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Contributions to the Tiptree Award Council are tax deductible.



*She, like honey recall dreams.
Picture this I said...
--watch her chant beauty, sing the sky
midst storm and moonlight*

Carol Taylor- thedrawlyn.com