



WisCon³³
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
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photo: Ellen Dailow

ELLEN KLAGES— THE ORIGIN MYTH

by Pat Murphy*

THE WISCON CON COMMITTEE has asked me to answer the obvious question: How did Ellen Klages get her super powers? (Those who are asking “What super powers?” have clearly neither attended a Tiptree Auction nor read Ellen’s work. Come to the auction on Saturday or pick up a copy of Ellen’s short story collection *Portable Childhoods*, and you will not ask that question again.)

I present here just a few of the many theories that notable individuals in the science fiction and fantasy community have advanced to explain the phenomenon that is Ellen Klages.

Karen Joy Fowler, a well-known troublemaker and occasional wise woman, has suggested that Ellen was raised by coyotes. “It’s perfectly clear,” Fowler says. “In Ellen’s writing and in the auction, you’ll think she’s going one way—and before you know it, she’s somewhere else altogether. That’s coyote all the way.”

On the other hand, Jeanne Gomoll, who has worked with Ellen Klages at many Tiptree Auctions, claims that Ellen was raised by feral librarians. (Gomoll may have been influenced by Ellen’s well-known story, *In the House of the Seven Librarians*).

And several folks (who have attended auctions that involved a chicken suit) surmise that the Giant WereChicken of Petaluma, the giant hen that stalks the egg capital of the world by night, may have been involved in Ellen’s upbringing.

Despite extensive research, I have found no evidence supporting any of these claims. However, as is so often the case with rumors, I found something in Ellen’s history that may have spawned the notion that Ellen was raised in wild circumstances.

Ellen spent many years running naked in the woods. That was in Lake County California, home of Harbin Hot Springs, a clothing-optional

community. I did not know Ellen then, but I have visited Harbin, a painfully bucolic rural retreat where deer graze among rustic wooden cabins and naked people are meditating everywhere you go. And so I have a clear mental picture of Ellen’s time at Harbin.

Imagine a few hundred naked vegetarians communing with nature and peacefully soaking in the natural hot springs. Now imagine Ellen tossing back a beer and barbequing a steak, skillfully managing not to burn any important bits of the steak or of any of her parts that have opted to remain free of clothing. This mental image makes me frightened for the peaceful and meditative vegetarians.

But I digress. In my search for the truth, I consulted other experts.

Maureen McHugh, former Wiscon GOH and author of *China Mountain Zhang* among other works, says she knows for a fact that Ellen Klages is the daughter of a beautiful burlesque

*With help from Karen Joy Fowler, Jeanne Gomoll, Maureen McHugh, Carol Emshwiller, Eileen Gunn, Delia Sherman, Ellen Kushner, Ursula K. Le Guin, Sharyn November, and Geoff Ryman. (It takes a village to write about Ellen Klages.)

dancer (who performed with white angora cats) and a charming but roguish comedian who seduced the dancer (even the cats liked him) and then left her. Ellen's mother continued to perform, carting Ellen around in a trunk full of sequins until she was a toddler. One night, in despair of the peripatetic life she was inflicting on her daughter, she sat in a diner, drinking coffee. A kind gentleman sitting next to her at the counter, was so moved by her story that he took Ellen into his own family and raised her on his own. (The mother, performing in Europe two years later, caught typhoid and died, alas.)

That's McHugh's story. Carol Emshwiller, who has been around long enough to know a thing or two, has another. She claims Ellen was bitten by a radioactive spider that had spun a web in the Geiger counter exhibit at the Exploratorium, San Francisco's interactive museum of science, art, and human perception. Having fed for months on clouds of mutant fruit flies that escaped the museum's biology lab, this dry and hungry arachnid injected Ellen with radioactive venom that invaded her system and changed her ... permanently.

Is it true? Hard to say. Emshwiller, the author of *Carmen Dog*, knows a thing or two about transformation. I can testify that Ellen did work for a number of years at the Exploratorium,

where she celebrated Pi Day (on March 14, of course), experimented to determine the shelf life of Hostess Snowballs (forever, apparently), and wrote haiku that incorporated facts about the biology of frogs.

I can also report that Ellen often carries around shards of radioactive glass. She seems inordinately fond of the stuff. Coincidence? Perhaps. Ellen claims that she began collecting radioactive glass when she was writing her first novel, *Green Glass Sea*, but writers are all liars and I wouldn't put much faith in that.

Eileen Gunn, author of *Stable Strategies for Middle Management*, also implicated the Exploratorium in her account of Ellen's origins. Gunn tells a complicated (and, in my opinion, highly improbable) story of genetic manipulation by scientists at the Exploratorium: they turned a quiet, introverted child with a pudding-bowl haircut into 2Ellen, a powerhouse of card tricks and distracting patter. Fearing that 2Ellen's chimeric talents would escape into the wild, the Exploratorium kept her in a cage at the museum, where she wore a chicken suit and was exhibited as "Exploro the Wonder Chicken," playing games of NIM with schoolchildren. By placing small bets with the kids' parents, 2Ellen saved enough money to bribe a guard and make her escape. Joining a down-at-the-heels sideshow, she

worked a gaff: "Can you outsmart the chicken-woman?" Later she performed with a troupe of clowns, under the name Chickenbelle. The rest, Gunn says, is history.

As I said, an improbable tale. (I'm sorry to disillusion you, but you really can't believe everything Eileen Gunn tells you.) But once again, the story contains an element of truth. I do know that Ellen spent more than one summer living among the clowns at Clown Camp, founded by Wavy Gravy. The clowns taught her to juggle, walk on stilts, and ride a unicycle. She taught the clowns to make trouble. No one knows who taught Ellen to make trouble. Perhaps that came naturally.

Delia Sherman, author of *The Porcelain Dove* and other works of fantasy, explains that Ellen Klages is not a singular phenomenon, but rather part of formidable group that Sherman dubs the "Ellens." Sherman writes: "Every schoolchild knows that all Ellens get their superpowers from the mystic resonances of their names. 'E' clearly stands for Energy (or Effervescence or Excellence or possibly all of the above.) Those E's bracket a pair of 'L's, which may represent Lightning squared or LOL (in either or both of its translations) or Loyalty or perhaps Double Tooth Picks (or all of the above). 'N,' of course, signifies the ineffable and unquantifiable quality

of Ellenness that is the sum of the foregoing. Klages's particular brand of Ellenness is identified by the letters of her last name, which, among other qualities, signify her Kleverness, her Laugh, her Acting ability, her talent for Games, and her Excellent Sense of direction."

Ellen Kushner, who should certainly know a thing or two about being an Ellen, let slip a secret of the clan. "Ellen Klages, in fact, hails from Ellenville, a wide place in the road through the deep forest, where Ellens are created and trained to bring order and decisiveness into the world. Ellens usually know where the best restaurant is, or how to find the beach, or at least how to find the person who does know. While some do consider them bossy and overbearing, others realize that without them their lives would be a meaningless sham, and they would never have made it to the airport on time."

Though Kushner seems quite confident in the truth of her account, Kushner's brother (described by Kushner as "the imminent (sic) psychiatric visionary Sigmund") has a different take on the matter. He writes: "I am sorry, indeed, to have to tell you that there is, in fact, no Ellen Klages. She is merely a wish-fulfillment of the collective WisConian unconscious."¹

Not so, says Ursula K. Le Guin, who needs no introduction. Le Guin poohpoohs other theories of klagegenesis, insisting that "all really serious ellenologists know that klages occur only during cataclysmic volcanic eruptions such as Krakatoa and Mt. St. Helens. When they solidify they may be quite stable for long periods, but can be identified by their volubility and the slight seismic activity that always accompanies them. Even in its more reticent manifestations, the klage retains its characteristic quality, scientifically defined as 'pizzazz.'"

Sharyn November, Ellen's editor at Viking, is equally certain that she knows why Ellen is as she is: "Ellen Klages will always be a ten-year-old child. And I mean this in the best possible way."

Geoff Ryman, author of *Was* and Ellen's co-GOH at WisCon 33, has a different explanation for Ellen. According to Ryman, the fearsome winds of a tornado ripped Ellen's childhood home from its foundation and carried it (and Ellen) to a far-off land. After adventures involving a robot made of tin, a lion that talked, and an artificial intelligence made of dry plant matter, Ellen returned to Ohio with strange stories to tell and a pair of magical red shoes.

I have checked the weather records for Ohio during Ellen's youth, and there

are accounts of houses being carried aloft. Those who have observed Ellen at WisCon will testify that she tends to whirl rather fast and has an affection for red shoes. Though I wonder whether Converse high tops are common in fantasylands, I do believe that Ryman may be onto something.

Ryman goes on to reveal that Ellen Klages is the author of very, very good books—often about the world as revealed in old issues of *Life* magazine, histories of J. Robert Oppenheimer, and a seriously overheated imagination. He also notes that she is a mean cook and indefatigable friend.

On those last points, all those I have consulted agree: Ellen is a fine writer, an excellent cook, a great friend, and so much more. I can testify that she has spent many years living and playing and dreaming and thinking among the clowns and the vegetarians, the scientists and the dreamers, the coyotes and the writers (which are sometimes difficult to tell apart). Perhaps her life does not exactly match the stories told above, but close enough, I think.

All origin myths aside, those of us who know Ellen are grateful for whatever strange conjunction of experiences resulted in the often thoughtful, startlingly funny, amazingly smart cataclysm that is Ellen Klages.

1. I feel it is necessary to point out that some (myself among them) believe that Ellen Kushner's brother is himself fictitious, which renders his opinion on the fictitious nature of Ellen Klages rather suspect.

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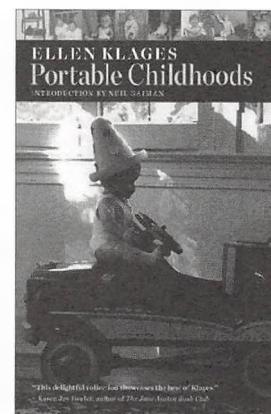
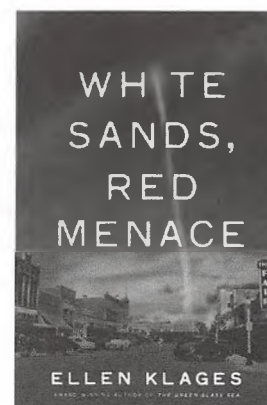
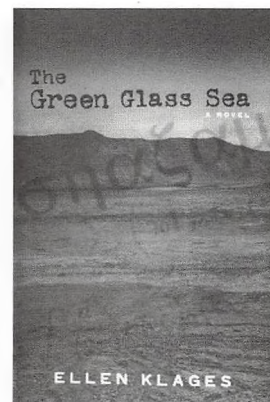
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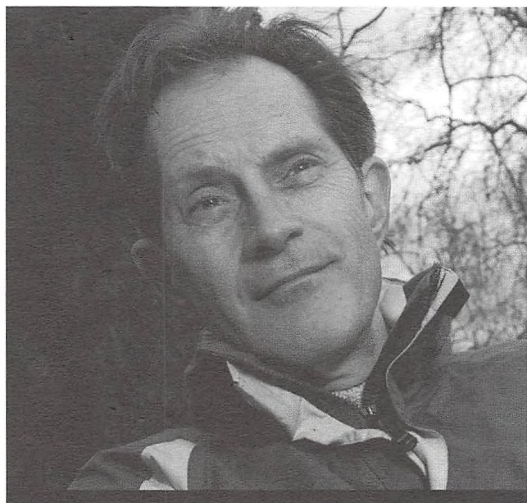


Photo: Joby Sessions

PERSPECTIVES ON GEOFF RYMAN

by Paul Kincaid

LET'S GET THE OBVIOUS OUT of the way first.

A few years ago there was a pair of documentaries on British television that followed two writers through the writing and publication of their latest novels. One of the two was Geoff Ryman, and we watched it with fascination and an odd sense that there was something strange about it. We'd got most of the way through the programme before we realized what this was: we were seeing Geoff eye to eye. You never see Geoff eye to eye, you're always looking up at him.

So the first thing to be said about him is that Geoff Ryman is tall.

The second thing is also obvious, in its way.

The first time I met Geoff (no, that's not true, I'd run into Geoff first at Lumb Bank writer's workshop and again a number of times after that,

but it was the first time I was made aware of what Geoff did as a writer) was the first time I went to the UK version of a Milford workshop. It was a truncated version that year, a long weekend rather than a week, so we were reading a lot of stories in a short time. A number of high-powered writers were at that workshop, but only one story really stood out for me, and does so still, twenty years or more later. It was a story of alien invasion, but the aliens came disguised as everyday objects, water towers and the like. It entailed one of those shifts in perception that we like to think is fundamental to science fiction though we encounter it so rarely.

The story was, of course, by Geoff. It didn't see print for several years after that Milford, and when it did it was, I think, in a rather different form. But I enjoyed a paradigm shift of my own at that Milford: the discovery that Geoff Ryman's fiction entails radical changes

in perspective. And it is something that still makes his fiction hum with an energy all its own. It's what makes *The Unconquered Country* so breath-takingly powerful, but it is equally the driving force of *Air* or "Pol Pot's Beautiful Daughter."

So the second thing to be said is that you see the world from a different angle when you read his work.

The third thing is maybe less obvious, if only because fewer people are likely to encounter it.

Around the time of "Love Sickness," the original version of *The Child Garden*, I spent a day with Geoff at his London flat conducting an interview that would later appear in *Interzone*. He was as friendly and hospitable as any of the people I've interviewed, but when we talked about his work the thing that struck me was how sharp he was, by which I mean not critical or cutting but acute, perceptive about what worked and why.

I've found this in most of the writers whose work I admire most: an awareness about the mechanics of putting words on a page, about why one word is so much better than another that means the same thing. All good writers have this self-awareness to some extent, but few of them (Christopher Priest, M. John Harrison) can extend it to the work of other writers. Novelists on the whole don't make great critics (just as critics rarely make great novelists). When Geoff was on the jury of the Arthur C. Clarke Award a few years ago, I discovered at first hand that Geoff has this added ability. His comments were often ruthless, but inarguable. This is probably why Geoff now lectures on creative writing at the University of Manchester. I've never heard him lecture, I imagine the experience is salutary but invaluable. To the best of my knowledge he doesn't review: he should.

So the third thing to be said is that you've got a lot to learn from talking to Geoff.

The fourth thing involves a word that isn't used as often now as it once was, and it can open up sensitivities and arguments, but in this instance I can't think of a better choice: cosmopolitan.

Geoff is a cosmopolitan writer. By which I don't mean that he is an inveterate traveler, though he is, and I remember countless conversations

about various esoteric parts of the world to prove it. But rather, I mean that he is liable to set his work anywhere in the world, and inhabit that location with extraordinary aplomb.

I have never been to the portion of Central Asia that features in *Air*, and I'm not sure I've ever met anyone who has (with the possible exception of Geoff himself). And yet when I read that novel I feel that the landscape, the smell of the soil, the feel of the wind, are made real to me. (Similarly, of course, I've never been a woman, but when I read *Air* I feel that I understand perfectly the sensibilities, the cultural background, the way it feels to be if not all women then at least this particular woman.)

It's fiction. It's what a fiction writer is supposed to do. But most writers restrict their invention to a much narrower comfort zone. Geoff, on the other hand, seems intent on expanding his invention outside the comfort zone and still making it real. Central Asia may not be exactly as it is presented in *Air*, but by heaven it should be.

So the fourth thing to be said is that there are whole worlds to be found in his fiction. They are stories that will, in their way, infect you. And if you want an introduction to Geoff Ryman there's nothing better than his books and stories.

FROM GEOFF RYMAN'S RESUMÉ

Geoff Ryman is a Canadian living in London. He has published eight novels, a volume of short fiction and co-edited a collection of Canadian fiction.

Since 2005, he has been first a Lecturer, then Senior Lecturer at the Centre for New Writing, University of Manchester, where he teaches creative writing alongside other faculty members such as Martin Amis and M. J. Hyland.

Other teaching experience includes teaching at Clarion workshops seven times and a guest lectureship for a quarter at the University of California at San Diego. He was, at the same time, Writer in Residence at the computer arts facility CallT2. In March 2008 he was the author-instructor for the SF Masterclass, a class for those intending to become professional literary critics. He was also Senior Lecturer in Creative Writing at the University of Northumbria at Newcastle 2004–2005.

He is frequently invited to be a tutor at Clarion West and Clarion writers workshops, now based at UC San Diego. He was a visiting professor at UC San Diego during the fall quarter 2008, teaching a workshop in Writing SF, Fantasy and Irrealist fiction, and was Writer-in-Residence at CallT2 and associated computer arts projects.

He founded the first UK government team to commission and build websites, for the Central Office of Information. His teams worked on both the first Downing Street website and the first official British Monarchy Website. He and a colleague were granted 15 minutes to brief her Majesty on her new website. After he waxed poetic about the empowering potential of the new medium, her Majesty responded, "Yes, but they'll still know there's a hidden agenda, won't they?"

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- The magazine version won the British Science Fiction Association Award

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- Gaylaxicon Lifetime Achievement award
- Impact Award shortlist
- World Fantasy Best Novel nominee (1993)

253: a novel for the Internet in seven cars and a crash (1996)

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AZ (2002)

Lars Arrhenius is a Dutch artist. His large painting tracing stories of London life on a map based on the London street map AZ shared with 253 an interest in the lives of ordinary people. The art group PEER published a version of the painting as a large format book and commissioned me to provide text for the book. I provided a spurious index, focusing on map references and asking questions about each of the characters, to help people see the links between characters.

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Co-edited issue devoted to Mundane Science Fiction, with introduction.

When it Changed: Science in Fiction

(Comma Press, 2009) A volume of 14 commissioned stories, which are the product of an introduction of an author to a University of Manchester related scientist. The aim is to base short fiction on good science, whether it is SF or mainstream literary fiction. Authors contributing include Ken McLeod, Patricia Duncker, Michael Arditti, Simon Ings, and Gwyneth Jones.

COLLECTIONS

Unconquered Countries (1985)

- John W Campbell Memorial Award Best Collection nominee

Cities (2003) (with Peter Crowther, Paul Di Filippo, China Miéville, Michael Moorcock)

SHORT FICTION

"The Diary of the Translator" (1976)

"The Unconquered Country" (1984)

"O Happy Day!" (1985)

"Love Sickness" (1987)

- British Science Fiction Award Best Short Story

"Omnisexual" (1990)

"The Future of Science Fiction" (1992)

"The King of Porn" (1994)

"Dead Space for the Unexpected" (1994)

"Fan" (1994)

- Nebula Best Novella nominee (1995)

"A Fall of Angels, or On the Possibility of Life Under Extreme Conditions" (1994)

"Home" (1995)

- Gardner Dozois' *Best Science Fiction of The Year*

"Warmth" (1995)

- Gardner Dozois' *Best Science Fiction of The Year*

"Family, or The Nativity and Flight into Egypt considered as episodes of I Love Lucy" (1998)

"Everywhere" (1999)

The author was specially commissioned to write this story by Artists Agency as part of its Visions of Utopia project, which enabled people in the north of England to explore visions of a better future.

- Gardner Dozois' *Best Science Fiction of The Year*
- David Hartwell *Year's Best SF*
- *Science Fiction Studies* anthology

"Have Not Have" (2001)

- Gardner Dozois' *Best Science Fiction of The Year*

"V.A.O." (2002)

"Birth Days" (2003)

- Gardner Dozois' *Best Science Fiction of The Year*
- David Hartwell *Year's Best SF*
- Nominee: British Science Fiction Association Award
- Shortlisted for James W. Tiptree Memorial Award

"The Last Ten Years in the Life of Hero Kai" (2005)

"Pol Pot's Beautiful Daughter" (Fantasy) (2006)

- Nominee: Hugo Award
- Nominee: World Fantasy Award

"Talk Is Cheap" (2008)

"No Bad Thing" (2008)

"Days of Wonder" (2008)

"The Film Makers of Mars" (2008, tor.com)

"Blocked" (forthcoming, *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*)

ESSAYS

Afterword (The Unconquered Country) (1986)

Afterword (Unconquered Countries: Four Novellas) (1994)

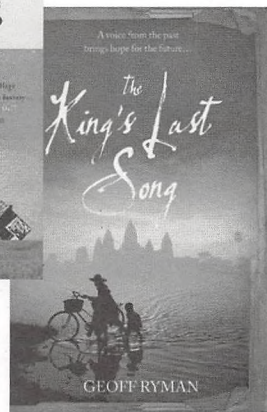
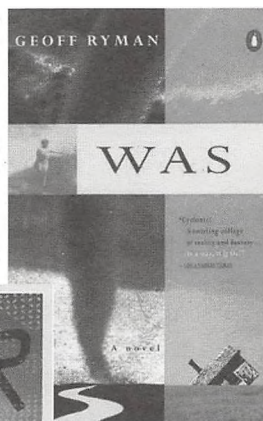
Canadian Identity? No, Thanks (introduction to *Tesseract 9*, 2005)

Writing After the Slaughter (The Guardian, 2006)

Interzone Goes Mundane! (Editorial to special Mundane issue of *Interzone*, 2007)

Introduction (Dangerous Space) (2007)

Mundane-SF (2008)



RESEARCH

I am the founder of Mundane Science Fiction, which is both a practical and a critical movement. It advocates a new focus away from impossible intergalactic travel and other improbable tropes to focus on likely futures, real science, literary values and a focus on our Earthly future. Interzone is publishing a special Mundane Science Fiction issue next year, which I am currently editing. I wrote the *Mundane Manifesto*. Continuing discussion and information can be found at: <http://mundane-sf.blogspot.com/>

Critically, *Mundanity* analyzes Science Fiction for the distortions the writing and producing process yields. A chapter on *Battlestar Galactica* for a Media Studies text on television programmes was specifically commissioned as being from a Mundane perspective.

Creatively there are a list of tropes that Mundane stories do not use. In this it resembles the school of film-making called Dogme, which denies easy cop-outs through a series of agreed voluntary creative practices. Major works of Mundane SF include the Hugo-nominated novel *Glasshouse* by Charles Stross, a forthcoming novel by Ken Macleod, and also forthcoming *The Beast with Nine Billion Feet* by Anil Menon.

OTHER MEDIA

Arena

A documentary for this BBC TV arts program was inspired by my novel *Was*. I was filmed in Kansas and South Dakota talking about Oz and history.

Scribbling

I was the subject of one of four 45-minute documentaries about individual writers struggling to finish a novel.

Arts in Cambodia

A 90-minute radio documentary with interviews from performers, musicians, arts NGOs, a rapper, a playwright, a poet and Cambodia's leading novelist Pal Vannirak broadcast on Resonance FM, London.

I Let My Pen Bleed

An hour radio documentary on the history of Cambodian rap with interviews with producers and rappers alongside music. Also broadcast on Resonance FM.

A RESPONSE TO HATE

by Eileen Rosensteel

I HAD THE PRIVILEGE of attending a large, well-run feminist, sci-fi convention this past weekend. It was filled with passionate, articulate, kind people who are guided by the principles of inclusivity and diversity. However, there was a disturbing end to the weekend. A person had chosen to spend their time at the convention taking pictures secretly with their cell phone of attendees to post them online with hateful commentary. This person decided to target fat people, transsexuals, and women in general. I was one of the many people this person tried to humiliate by posting pictures with my face covered by white out.

Yes, this is what one feminist looks like. And it's really sad that you hate your fellow women and your normal life isn't filled with being surrounded by smart, funny, creative people.

I am a certified massage therapist and decided to donate three hours of my time doing free chair massage at the conference. I didn't see this person donate any of their time doing the volunteer work that keeps conferences running, but it didn't stop them from commenting on my work.

My business is called Bodacious Bodywork and I am bodacious. I specialize in working with women of size and women with body image issues. But they guessed my weight wrong. Bad research skills, all they would've had to do was ask me and I would have told them what I weigh. Because this is what I do, I am a fat activist. I am not ashamed of my body, how I look, or what I do.

These photos and others, and the accompanying text, were posted to Something Awful the weekend of Wiscon 32. The perpetrator* has been banned from WisCon.

This is my second year attending WisCon. I go because I love this. I remember how much I hate my fellow women, and then I go the whole rest of the year thankful that normal life is never this horrible.



^This is what a feminist looks like.

There was a massage booth. I knew beforehand that there would be one, but I assumed it would be a [sic] creepy old man. But, I was pleasantly surprised.



This is Eileen. She is 400 pounds of tension release. She is bodacious. The name of her massage parlor even has the word "Bodacious" in it. Because she is.

*name withheld per WisCon policy

...it becomes a radical act when you choose to live your life and love yourself despite the negativity that we swim thorough every day.

This incident, unfortunately, is not unusual. Fat people hear negative comments, see the disgusted looks, and feel the drawing back of people around them. It's not a safe world to live in if you are a fat person. We lose our right to privacy. Pictures are taken for amusement. Our shopping carts are examined with the intent to judge our eating habits. Our health status is questioned. We are not treated with respect and dignity by employers, service people, or health care workers. This happens every time we step out of our homes. Unfortunately, these

messages can be internalized. So not only do you face the challenges of dealing with society but you tell yourself that you are ugly, worthless and disgusting. So it becomes a radical act when you choose to live your life and love yourself despite the negativity that we swim thorough every day.

I'm not sure what this person's objective was in posting these pathetic attempts at humor. But I know that they did not change my commitment to living my life joyfully and abundantly. And I prefer pictures to include my face.



Photo: David LeDoux



Assemblage: F. Anderson; Photo: A. Anderson

DEALING WITH THE WISCON PLAGUE

by Jim Hudson and Luke McGuff*

WE'RE ALL USED TO "convention crud"—when hundreds or thousands of people travel to a single location, stay in close contact with each other for several days so they can share their germs, go home, and then get sick. The WisCon 32 convention crud was very different: it was a norovirus, not a mild cold. Compared to the usual convention crud, this one was much more infectious, acted much more quickly, and debilitated its victims much more completely. We'd certainly like to avoid an outbreak of norovirus or any other "plague" at future conventions!

What happened?

Saturday afternoon, three people became ill with serious vomiting and diarrhea. A never-ceasing stream of calls starting around 10:00 a.m. Sunday morning let us know Saturday's illnesses weren't a fluke. We had a real problem. Quick action by Jim

Hudson, Mary Ellen Testen (in charge of the morning Con Suite, and former head of the Madison Public Health lab), and Nathan and Beth Clarke (heads of safety) meant that signs saying, "Stomach flu at WisCon, wash your hands" were posted almost immediately at various key locations, including all program rooms and restroom doors. In less than 30 minutes, both WisCon Co-coordinators (Betsy Lundsten and Carrie Ferguson) and the Concourse staff had been notified.

By late afternoon, the Concourse and ConComm were taking action on several fronts, and were reviewing available options (such as closing down the Con Suite and canceling all parties). We were facing both Fear, Uncertainty and Doubt (FUD) and the usual Fog of War, but knew that we had to act—and act promptly. At this point, the source of the illness was unknown, though every report suggested a viral infection.

- ☛ The physicians on the ConComm (Lisa Freitag and Susan Kinast-Porter) were involved.
- ☛ We notified the Dane County Health Department. The staff were not especially responsive during the holiday weekend, but they did perform follow-up tests, which established that a norovirus caused the illness.
- ☛ Someone created a data collection form to get at the epidemiology, to help identify and trace the problem. Many of the sufferers hadn't shared food or visited the same restaurants.
- ☛ To help stop the spread of a communicable infection, the Concourse and WisCon took several important sanitation measures, such as providing hand sanitizers. The Concourse staff bleach-wiped elevator buttons, door knobs, etc. much more frequently.

☛ The ConComm concentrated on food safety and preventing the spread of infection in the Con Suite and at evening parties. For example, we provided hand sanitizers at the door to every open party, posted more notices (just in case someone might read them), eliminated the self-serve bowls and served food on single plates, and had food servers bleach-wipe all common tools every 15 minutes and cover their hands while on duty.

☛ We also posted information on the convention's newsletter blog, for those who might be using the web.

Despite these precautions, we probably missed the major exposure route—contaminated surfaces and air-borne virus particles in the public areas—but our efforts did limit their spread.

Understandably, the Sunday night and Monday parties were a bit subdued, although some thought the response was overkill. Nonetheless, by Sunday evening, at least 25 people were affected and that number certainly doubled by the end of the convention. Worse, many became ill some days later. The total count approached 200 (20% of our membership).

Were children or food at WisCon 32 the source of the norovirus?

Neither children with unwashed hands nor the food service (ours or the Concourse's) were a factor in the norovirus outbreak at WisCon 32.

What is norovirus?

Noroviruses, sometimes called Norwalk-like viruses, are a family of highly contagious viruses that cause "acute gastroenteritis in humans," i.e., a sudden onset of vomiting and diarrhea. They are found worldwide and are responsible for about 50% of food-borne outbreaks of gastroenteritis. Norovirus spreads rapidly via fecally contaminated food or water, person-to-person contact, or inhalation of virus-contaminated aerosol. When introduced, these viruses flourish in closed environments like cruise ships, hospitals, nursing homes—and conventions.

Symptoms typically appear 24–36 hours after exposure, but the incubation period can last 12–72 hours. [Because of WisCon's 4-day run (longer than many other cons), people who were exposed on Friday night or Saturday morning started showing symptoms by Saturday night/Sunday morning, when the Con was still going on.] The onset can be sudden: from healthy to completely, miserably ill in less than an hour.

The disease generally runs its course in a few days, but an infected person can be contagious for up to two weeks after recovery. Norovirus particles themselves can be challenging to eradicate and remain infectious for several days outside of the body (for example, carpet where someone vomited could contain infectious particles if the area were not properly disinfected).

After recovering from norovirus, a person is immune for only some 14 weeks.

How do you treat norovirus?

The most important step is to drink plenty of fluid to prevent dehydration from vomiting and diarrhea. Sports drinks can help replace some of the lost electrolytes and fluid, but they do not replace lost nutrients or minerals. Adults can take anti-diarrhea medicines, but these are not recommended for children. Unfortunately, no vaccine and no antiviral medication yet exist.

How do you prevent norovirus?

Good hygiene, meaning thorough hand-washing, especially after using the toilet or changing diapers, and before eating or preparing food, remains the best prevention. Carefully washing fruits and vegetables before handling or eating them is equally important. Bleach is highly effective

at destroying the virus, more so than alcohol or detergents, so immediately disinfecting contaminated surfaces with a bleach-based cleaner will help stop the spread of the virus.

At WisCon, we share the same space, we touch the same objects (books, for example), and we hug each other—a lot. In this environment, the best preventive measures are washing thoroughly or using high-alcohol hand sanitizers before and after eating, hugging, etc. and washing thoroughly after using the bathroom.

What did the Concourse do after WisCon 32?

The Concourse thoroughly cleaned all potentially affected areas with special products, and also notified all their upcoming guests of what had happened and how they'd responded. We do not know whether the Concourse lost any business.

What does this mean for WisCon 33?

The ConComm will support “Change we can believe in” [or, for the grammarians among us, “change in which we can believe”] to reduce the likelihood of a similar outbreak at future WisCons. The ConComm and the Concourse will follow more formal food safety measures and other preventive measures. Even though

food service was not the source of the outbreak at WisCon 32, food service is a major area of risk. Other changes will include:

- ☛ *The Con Suite.* The Con Suite at WisCon 33 will be staffed by people who have been certified in food safety. Food will no longer be presented in serve-yourself open bowls, and much more food will be prepackaged in individual portions.
- ☛ *Party rooms.* The party rooms will follow different procedures that have been described in *ecUBE* and your handy pocket program. More details were included in letters distributed to the party hosts.
- ☛ *Providing hand sanitizers and disposable gloves.* Hand sanitizers will be available and obvious at every venue. The Dealers Room and Art Show will have disposable gloves available.
- ☛ *Educating members about good sanitation practices.* Thoroughly washing hands after using the bathroom and before consuming food is one of the most effective practices. Children are amazingly good disease vectors, as anyone who has had experience with day care knows, although children were not the vectors at WisCon 32. We will stress that adults

supervising children be sure that the children wash their hands thoroughly.

- ☛ *More frequent cleaning of public surfaces.* The Concourse may perform more frequent bleach wiping of surfaces in public areas (e.g., elevator buttons and doorknobs).
- ☛ *Responding quickly to health issues.* Once we knew we had a problem at WisCon 32, the ConComm responded quickly. Norovirus symptoms first appeared Saturday afternoon, but because no one knew until Sunday morning that the outbreak was widespread, more than 12 hours passed before preventive actions were in place.

BUT . . . WisCon is *still* going to be a convention of 1,000 people from all over the world, who may well unknowingly bring “bugs” with them. People who have compromised immune systems or are particularly concerned will need to worry about their own health. We certainly don't want WisCon to be like some public health conventions, where people won't even shake hands because they're worried about contagion; fandom, especially feminist fandom, is a hugging culture. As long as our members take their own reasonable precautions, we should be able to run a plague-free (and fun) convention.



Photo: A. Anderson

WHEN TECHNOLOGY IS LIKE WATER: TAKING TECHNOLOGY FROM THE MIRACULOUS TO THE MUNDANE

by Alicia “Kestrell” Verlager
and Jesse the K

LOOKING BACK AT THE SF stories from 2008 which affected us most, we were struck at how many fell into the category of what Geoff Ryman dubbed “mundane SF.” In these narratives, technology is so ubiquitous that it becomes part of the background, an element of the environment, and often is only rendered visible in conjunction with other larger issues such as identity, relationships, and careers. On the other hand, the stories which we found most frustrating were those, both in SF and in the news, which frame technology—and the people with disabilities who use them—as something marvelous or miraculous.

Two stories from 2008 which represent these opposing attitudes of the mundane versus the marvelous are Robert J. Sawyer’s “Wake” and Jennifer Pelland’s “Captive Girl.” While Sawyer’s heroine, Caitlin, is initially portrayed as a smart and independent

teenage girl who uses current 2008 assistive tech to read, write, and socialize, her technology soon takes on an aspect of the marvelous when Caitlin receives an implant which gives her the ability to “see” and communicate with the burgeoning consciousness of the World Wide Web. As a reader, Kestrell felt disappointed because, while the author had invested time and energy into researching facts that helped create a believable and likable blind character, the character was then abandoned to merely become the embodiment of a shiny (and purely fantastic) technology.

For Alice, Pelland’s heroine in “Captive Girl,” this dynamic is reversed. Alice’s technology at the beginning of the story enables her to be a cyborg guardian who is always alert for the return of the invading aliens who killed her family and left her disabled. When the government decides to discontinue the use of the cyborg

guardians, however, Alice is given the chance to receive new technologies which give her sight and mobility. The arc of the story is about how Alice’s perception of the world and her identity changes. We were excited, as readers with disabilities, because the power of the story comes from Alice’s ability to take risks and redefine herself from a isolated guardian to a socially-integrated individual. Alice has the courage to initiate a romantic relationship and we can appreciate this requires no less courage than her guardian role. The story is fascinating not because of any shiny technology, but because the tech is merely a touchstone for the development of a powerful character.

These two stories demonstrate two different uses to which technology is put in our SF. In Robert Sawyer’s work, the tech is more marvelous, shinier & “sexier.” An example of sexy tech is the iPhone which, despite

the hype it receives in the media, is neither technologically nor financially accessible to the majority of U.S. citizens. Thus mundane functionality and usability is sacrificed in pursuit of the marvelous.

Jennifer Pelland's story, on the other hand, illustrates something about our more realistic desires regarding technology: we want tech which will help us in our everyday needs, our work, our identity, our relationships, our connections with the outside world. This mundane tech is less about form than it is about function.

For us, the polarization of technology as either mundane or marvelous demonstrates our hopes and frustrations with technology in the real world. The very polarization of the mundane *v.* the marvelous seems to boil down to the fundamental, hard question: what do we want from our technologies? In case that question seems too simple, it is further complicated when we add the necessary question of who is "we" in this context, and do our desires and fears change when we consider the question as individuals? As women? A community? A nation?

Even a superficial exploration of this question demonstrates that the answer is, It varies. As many feminist/queer/disability studies texts illustrate, things break across different categories, and technology reflects this same dynamic. While many discussions of technology polarize into simple binaries—good *v.* evil, more *v.* less, dependency *v.* self-sufficiency—the everyday implications of technology use are much messier. While many of us worry about whether we are too reliant on technology, how many of us, for instance, could realistically maintain our current level of quality of life without our eyeglasses, prescriptions, cell phones and PDAs, bicycles, automobiles and other assistive technologies?

The question "are we cyborgs yet?" seems able to polarize people's view of their technology and, even in SF fandom, this question often incites one of two reactions: while some people embrace the cyborg, others view the widescale use of technology as an addiction, even a loss of self-sufficiency and human agency. In a culture where technology flows all around us, however, in the form of our invisible high tech infrastructure—heat, food,

electricity, transportation, etc.—can we afford to think of our use of technology in such oppositional terms of all/none, geek/Luddite?

SF is one of our best—and cheapest—resources for exploring relationships between us and our technologies. Indeed, SF often appears to be the playground which shapes the designers of today's and tomorrow's tech. And, as in the case of a playground, we could ask the question, When does technology offer useful play *v.* merely a lot of "ooh, shiny?" While play can be fun and exploratory, a lot of those expensive shiny toys that glittered seductively around Christmastime are broken and discarded by March.

Technology is like water: it is so ubiquitous, so much a part of our everyday environment, that it is often rendered transparent. Like water, technology is fluid, always changing and taking on the shape of the culture we use to try to contain it. Simultaneously, resources to technology work much as access to water has in shaping technology, for cultures of the past could only emerge when everybody in the culture had easy access to that most necessary resource.

Sources:

Pelland, Jennifer "Captive Girl," in *Unwelcome Bodies*, Apex Book Company 2008. Story online at <http://transcriptase.org/fiction/pelland-jennifer-captive-girl/>
Sawyer, Robert J. "Wake," serialized in *Analog*, Nov. 2008, Dec. 2008, Jan. 2009, Feb. 2009. Print hard-cover www.wake, Ace Books, April 2009. First chapters and more info at <http://sfwriter.com/exw1.htm>

ANOTHER BANNER YEAR FOR BROAD UNIVERSE

by Phoebe Wray

BROAD UNIVERSE CELEBRATES its eighth birthday at WisCon 33 with members in twelve countries cranking out exciting and award-winning work. We paneled and signed and schmoozed at over a dozen cons during the past year. We had booktables at many of them, staffed of course by volunteers. In the past four years of running booktables, we have sold over \$8,100 worth of members' work.

Our members had 54 new books published in 2008, and sold 58 stories. Many of these picked up awards and more are nominated for those to be announced at conventions in 2009.

F. J. Bergmann and Catherynne Valente both picked up a Rhysling; Brenda Cooper won the Endeavor and Kay Kenyon was a finalist; Jennifer Pelland was a finalist for a Nebula; Mary Robinette Kowal won the John W. Campbell award; Marge Simon garnered the Bram Stoker for Best

Poetry Collection. Broad Universe was well represented at the Dream Realm Awards: Pauline Baird Jones, K. G. McAbee and Danielle Ackley McPhail were winners, and Gloria Oliver, Linda Andrews, Janet Lane Walters, Lacey Savage, Mayra Calvani, and Elaine Corvidae were all finalists.

Leslie Ann Moore won the Ben Franklin Award for Best First Fiction from Independent Book Publishers. Carol Hightshoe won an EPPIE for nonfiction and was a finalist for fantasy, while fella Broads Sheri L. McGathy, Kim Richards, Gloria Oliver and Mayra Calvani were all finalists. Mayra also was a finalist for the National Book Award. Linnea Sinclair was a finalist for the RITA; K. S. Augustin, JoSelle Vanderhooff, and Catherine Lundoff all fnaled at the Gaylactic Spectrum Awards. Catherine also won the Golden Crown Award and Lesbian Fiction Readers Choice Award.

Jeri Smith-Ready won the Golden Leaf/Best Paranormal Novel from the New Jersey Romance Writers and took 3rd place in the PRISM awards. Jean Marie Ward was a finalist in two categories for the Indie Book Awards. Kelly Harmon took First Place in the Fantasy Gazetteers Quarterly Novella Contest and was short-listed for Ireland's Aeon Award.

As our membership continued to grow, our members-only and anyone-can-play discussion lists on yahoo.com were lively and occasionally spirited, especially the weeks that Trisha Wooldridge prompted BU "Mailing Parties," when members make a concerted effort to get their work into the hands of editors. We also have a LiveJournal group, under the wings of M. K. Hobson.

Broad Universe is now on Facebook, monitored by Sandra Ulbrich. It's another way to reach out to fans, writers, would-be fans and members.

*Broad Universe:
The voice for women
writing science fiction,
fantasy, and horror*

Anyone is welcome to join as a "Friend" of BU. It gives us yet another venue for announcing signings, conventions, and sales. Broad Universe started at a panel at WisCon called World Domination 101. Well, we're still on that course. Facebook is just another oar in the water.

Our signature Rapid-Fire-Readings continued to entertain (and sell books) at a dozen conventions. One of three teleconferences to help members promote their work was held (two are coming in 2009), arranged by Selly Breagle, with guest industry expert Michael Larsen.

The Broadsheet, edited by Lettie Prell, got a blink! on *Locus* every time it appeared. Special issues in 2008 focused on comix and on horror writing, along with the usual cornucopia of writing, promoting, and market tips. The pay rate for *The Broadsheet* has been

increased as a result of its success. Brochures listing our members' new books and stories disappeared from freebie stalls and our book tables. We now have podcasting on our website, and will be expanding our use of that as a promotional tool for writers.

Plans for 2009 include an update/upgrade of the Broad Universe website, an expanded number of Rapid-Fire-Readings and book tables, and more aggressive promotion of members' work. In the not-so-distant future we are planning/dreaming of BU-sponsored writers' retreats and more involvement of our international members.

Broad Universe is an international nonprofit membership group on a mission: to celebrate, encourage, publicize, and act as advocates for women writers of science fiction, fantasy and horror.

www.broaduniverse.org

2008 TIPTREE AWARD

by Debbie Notkin

THE WINNERS OF THE 2008 TIPTREE AWARD ARE:

The Knife of Never Letting Go, by Patrick Ness, Walker, 2008. This book has also won the 2008 Booktrust Teenage Prize (U.K.), which celebrates contemporary fiction for teenagers, and the Guardian Children's Fiction Prize.

Filter House, by Nisi Shawl, Aqueduct Press, 2008, also chosen as one of Publishers Weekly's best books of 2008.

The jurors for 2008 were K. Tempest Bradford, Gavin Grant (chair), Leslie Howle, Roz Kaveney, and Catherynne M. Valente.

Why did the jurors pick these two books?

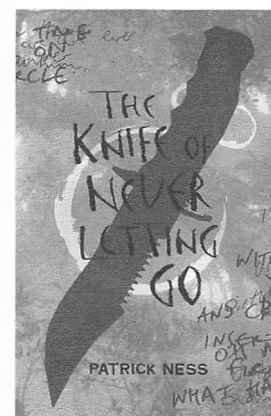
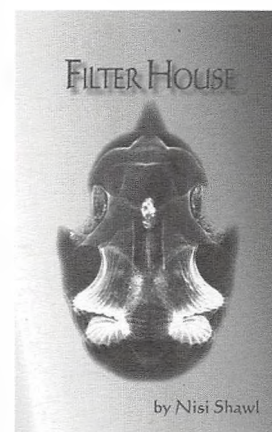
[*The Knife of Never Letting Go* has] a very old-fashioned set-up: boy growing up in village way off the grid. All the villagers can hear one another's thoughts (their "noise"), and all the villagers are men. The boy has never seen a woman or girl, so when he meets one his world is infinitely expanded as he discovers the complications of gender relations. He also has to work out the definition of becoming and being a man. There are dark secrets and possible spoilers galore. —Gavin Grant

Ness is a craftsman, plain and simple. The language, pacing, complications, plot—this story has all of the elements that raise the writing to something well beyond good. Some critics call it brilliant. It's a page-turner, and the story con-

tinues to resonate well after reading it. It reminds me of the kind of classic SF I loved when I was new to the genre. —Leslie Howle

Most of the protagonists [in *Filter House*] are young women coming to terms with womanhood and what that means in terms of their culture, magic (almost always tribal, nuts and bolts, African-based magical systems, which is fascinating in itself), technology. "At the Huts of Ajala" struck me deeply as a critique of beauty and coming of age rituals. The final story, "The Beads of Ku," deals with marriage and motherhood and death. "Shiomah's Land" deals with the sexuality of a godlike race, and a young woman's liberation from it. "Wallamellon" is a heartbreaking story about the Blue Lady, the folkloric figure invented by Florida orphans, and a young girl pursuing her straight into a kind of urban priestess-hood. —Catherynne M. Valente

The stories in *Filter House* refuse to allow the reader the comfort of assuming that the men and women will act according to the assumptions mainstream readers/society/culture puts on them. —K. Tempest Bradford





PAST WINNERS OF THE TIPTREE AWARD

2007 Winner

Sarah Hall

The Carhullan Army
(published in the U.S. as
Daughters of the North)

2006 Winners

Shelley Jackson

Half-Life

Catherynne M. Valente

*The Orphan's Tales:
In the Night Garden*

Special Award:

Julie Phillips

*Alice Sheldon: The Double Life
of James Tiptree, Jr.* (nonfiction)

2005 Winner

Geoff Ryman

Air

2004 Winner

Joe Haldeman

Camouflage

Joanna Sinisalo

Troll: A Love Story (originally
published in Finnish; title in Great
Britain is *Not Before Sundown*)

2003 Winner

Matt Ruff

*Set This House in Order:
A Romance of Souls*

2002 Winners

M. John Harrison

Light

John Kessel

"Stories for Men"

2001 Winner

Hiroshi Goto

The Kappa Child

2000 Winner

Molly Gloss

Wild Life

1999 Winner

Suzy McKee Charnas,

The Conqueror's Child

1998 Winner

Raphael Carter

*"Congenital Agenesis of
Gender Ideation"*

1997 Winners

Candas Jane Dorsey

Black Wine

Kelly Link

"Travels with the Snow Queen"

1996 Winners

Ursula K. Le Guin

"Mountain Ways"

Mary Doria Russell

The Sparrow

1995 Winners

Elizabeth Hand

Waking the Moon

1994 Winners

Ursula K. Le Guin

"The Matter of Seggri"

Nancy Springer

Laarque on the Wing

1993 Winner

Nicola Griffith

Ammonite

1992 Winner

Maureen McHugh

China Mountain Zhang

1991 Winners

Eleanor Arnason

A Woman of the Iron People

Gwyneth Jones

The White Queen

RETROSPECTIVE AWARD WINNERS

Suzy McKee Charnas, *Walk to the End of the World* (1974),
Motherlines (1978) (two sequential novels treated as one work)

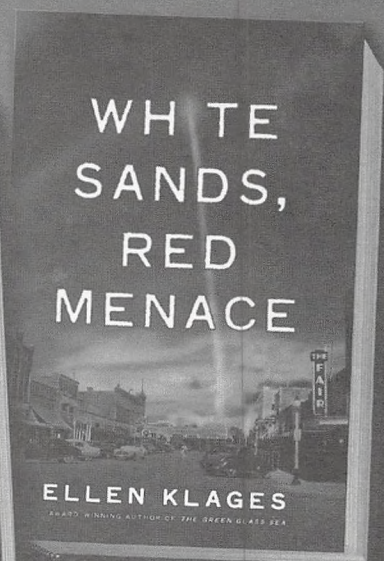
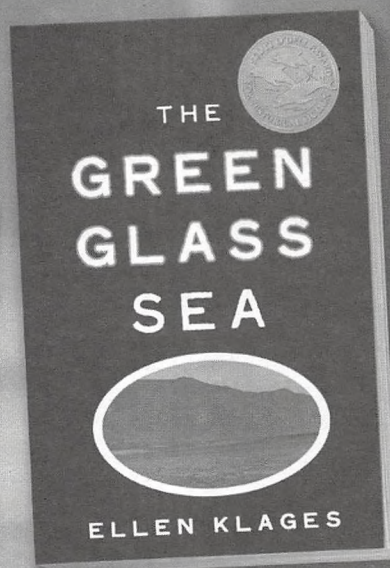
Ursula K. Le Guin, *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1969)

Joanna Russ, *"When It Changed"* (1972), *The Female Man* (1975)
(two works in the same universe treated as one work)

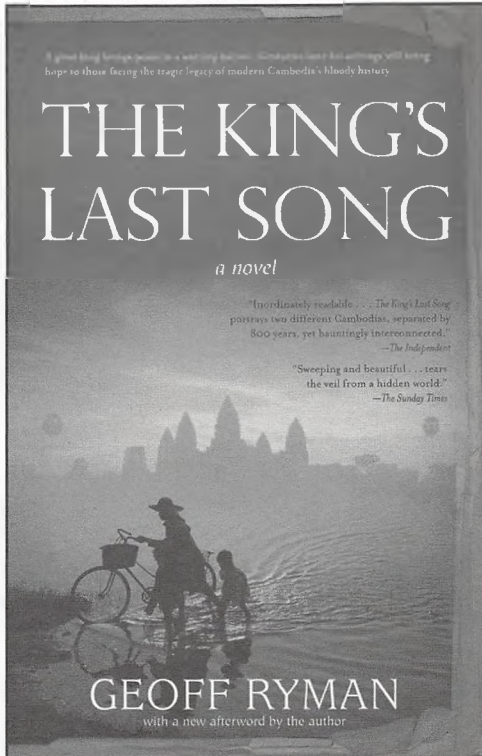
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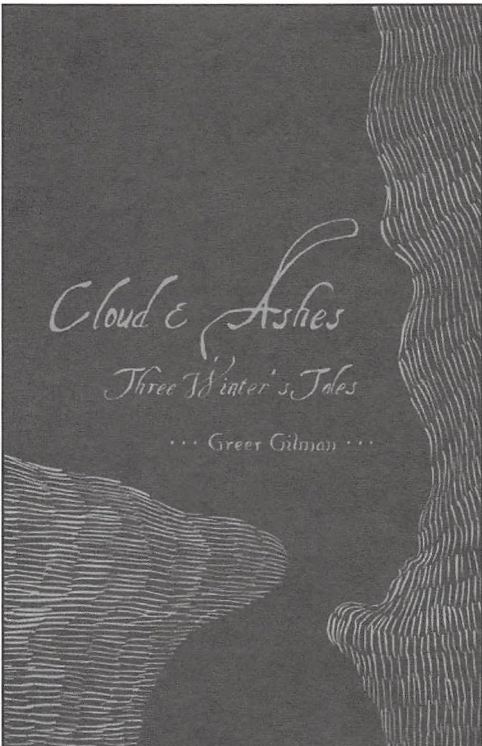
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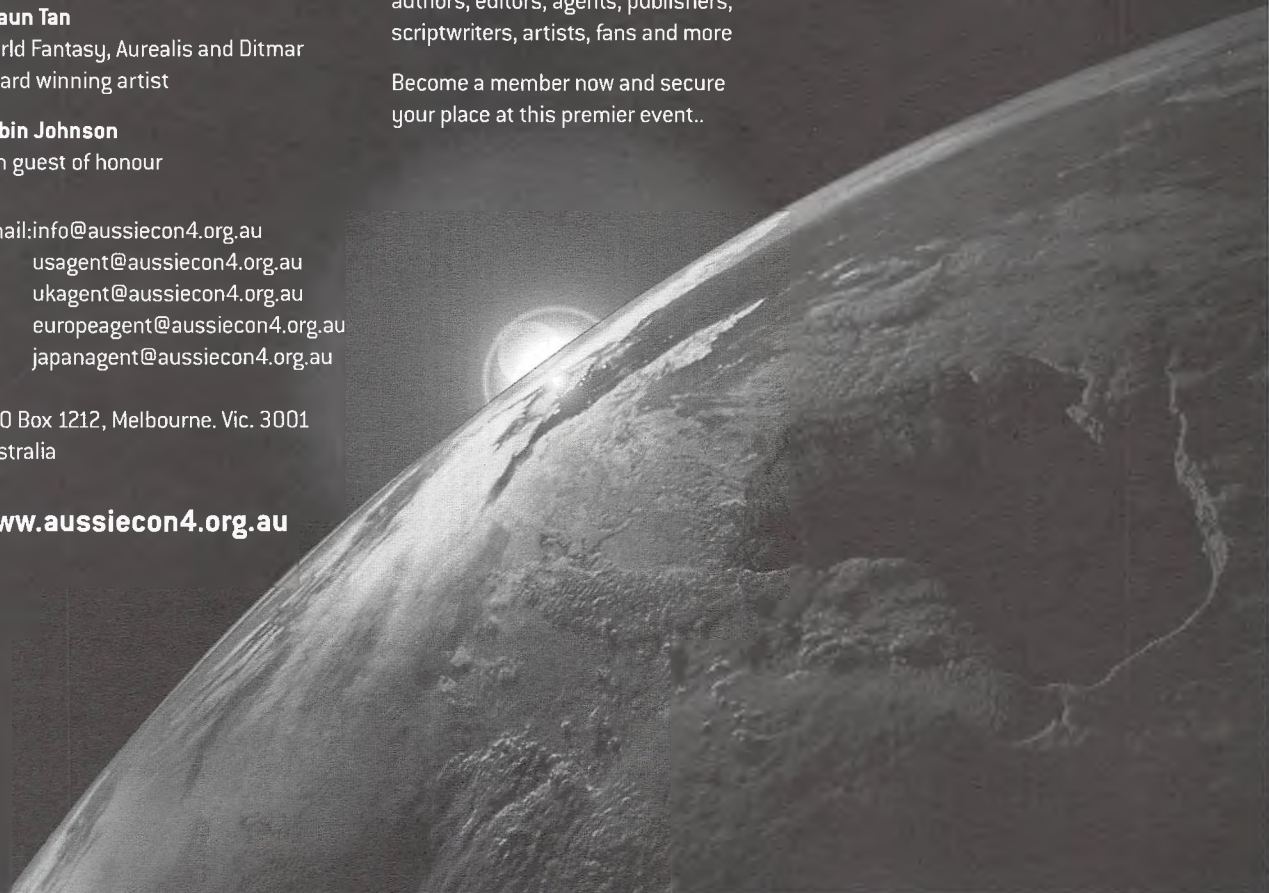
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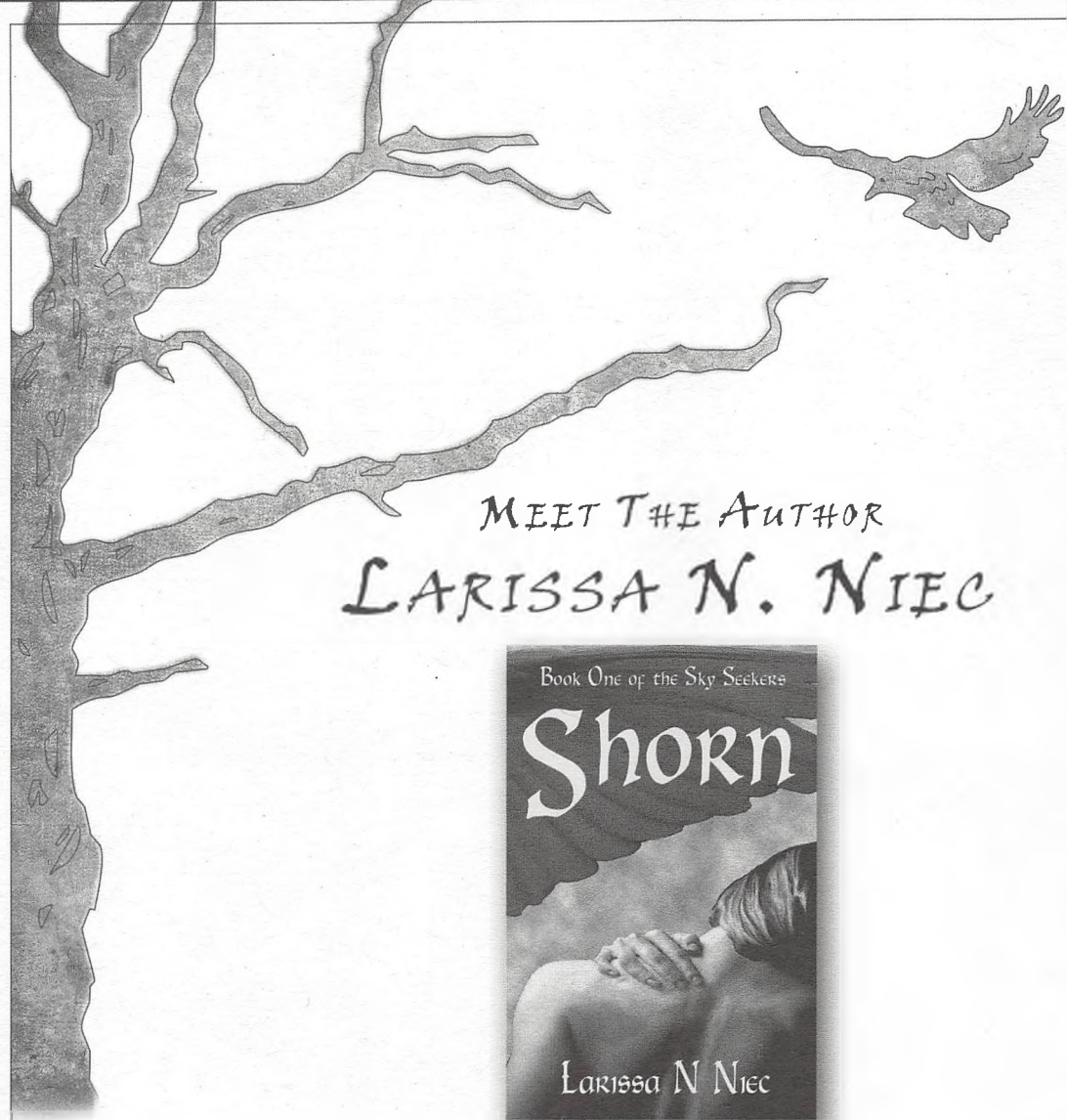
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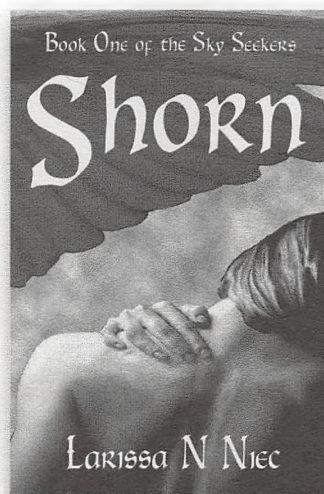
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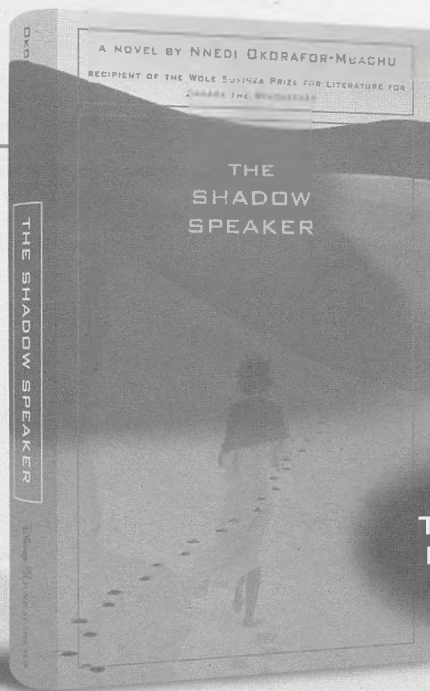
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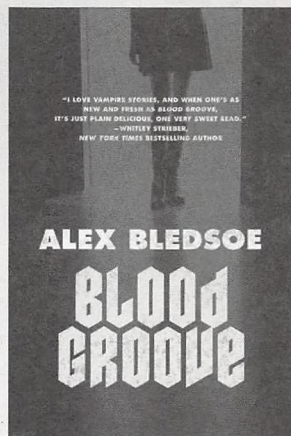
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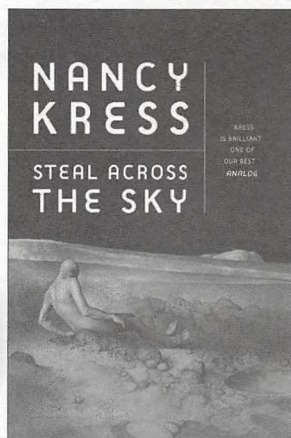


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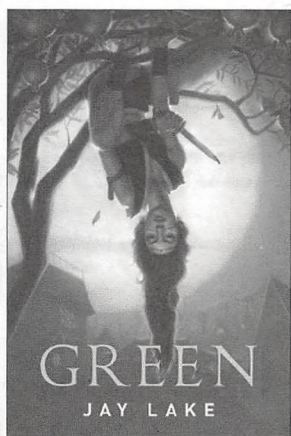


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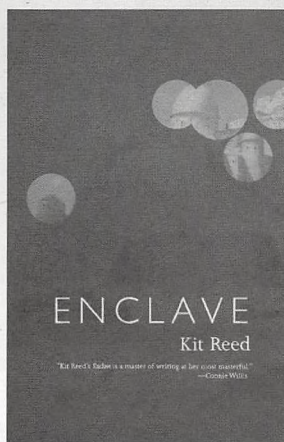


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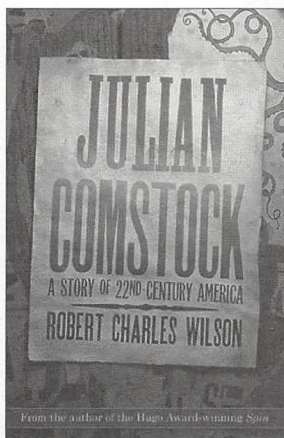


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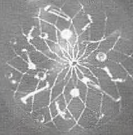
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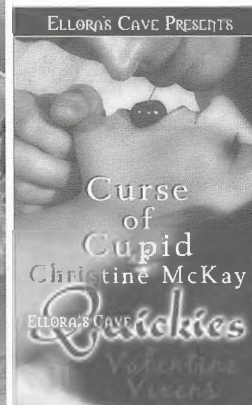
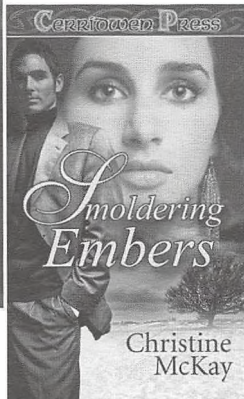
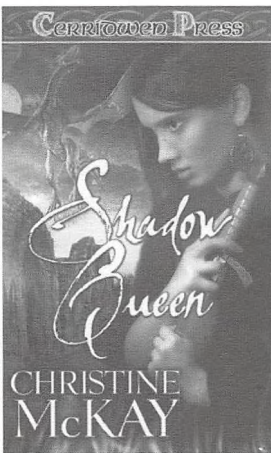
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From the opening words to the climax, *Ancestral Magic* is a light blend of *Harry Potter* and Native American herbal magic, and will cast a charm spell on readers' hearts." ~ Lara Zielinsky, reviewer

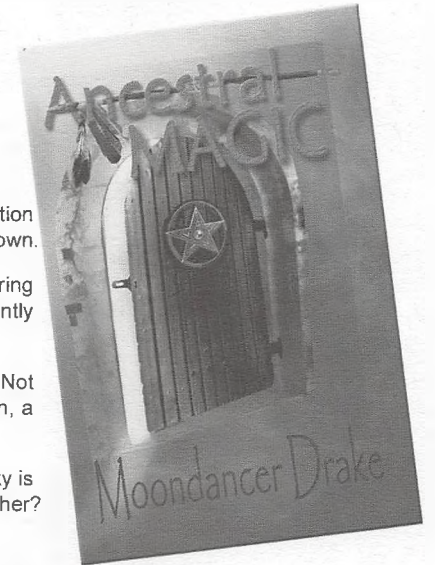
Sky is a single mother struggling to support herself and Drake, her blind son, with hardheaded determination and a waitress' salary. When Sky learns she inherited a manor house, her family's life is turned upside down.

Meg watches Sky stumble through one doomed relationship after another with the wrong men, never daring to reveal the secret love she has for Sky. Meg is devastated after finding out about the move, but is pleasantly surprised when Sky asks her to move with them.

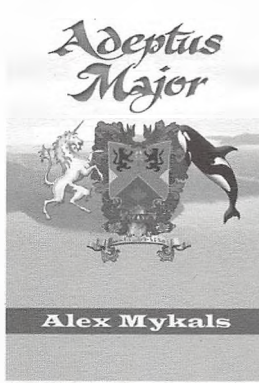
The manor house is located in Green Grove, a town hidden away to anyone without magic in their blood. Not all the magic is good, however. The Sect, a dark magic group, wants Sky's new home and Sacru Teren, a magical place her family is bound by blood to protect.

Will this move be an opportunity for the women to discover their true feelings? What of the visions that Sky is experiencing since the move – are they memories from her past or influences from the darkness around her?

978-1-933720-54-8, 188 pages



ALEX MYKALS



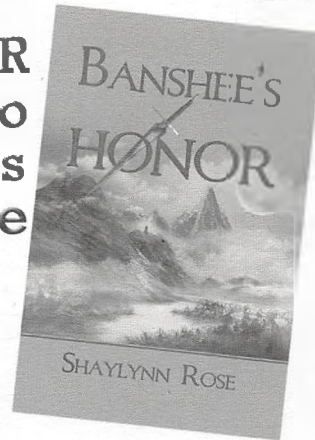
Princess Evelyne deMolay, the Heir to the Kingdom of Atlantis, and Allandre Tretiak, a young woman with an impressive array of paranormal abilities, become friends after Ally saves Evelyne's life by stepping in front of an assassin's bullet, are thrown together in the middle of a plot to overthrow the Realm.

978-1-933720-18-0, 360 pages

"I completely fell into the story and couldn't stop reading it. The alternate modern world that Alex Mykals has created is very realized and believable. This book has

everything I love in a good novel - a slight fantasy edge, political intrigue, a new society to learn about, and the love story involved is probably one of my favorites of all time. I highly recommend this book to anyone looking for a good story that will keep the reader engrossed from beginning to end." ~ M. Rice, reviewer

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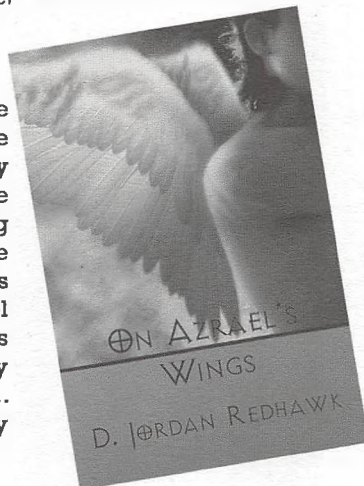
Azhani Rhu'len, once trusted warleader of Y'Dan, loses everything she has loved to treachery and now, broken near to death, she clings to the hope of regaining her honor as she discovers that an ancient evil threatens the land she once called home.

978-1-933720-11-1,
368 pages

"This is hands down one of my favorite books. Shaylynn is artful in her telling of this tale. Every character in the book vibrates off the page. There are many story lines in this book, which weave together to form a rich tapestry. The love story of the main two characters was touching and poignant and never rushed, but the story doesn't stop there. There is action, intrigue and murder afoot. There's something for everyone in this book." ~ Jean Farmer, Reviewer

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"From the very first page this is a fast ride for the reader. I found it hard to lay the book aside for those mundane tasks as sleeping or going to work. The author's world-building is brilliant. Ursula and Azrael are interesting characters and I love the way they interact with each other. ... This sure isn't a cosy, fluffy love story."



Ursula, a seamstress's slave, survives the brutal attack on her village by the King's Butcher, General Azrael of the Third Army, and finds herself thrust into the role of body slave for the infamous woman, who only wishes to retire at her estate, but her king has other ideas Azrael cannot abide, and one of them has to do with demanding sexual favors from her newly acquired body slave...the one she's unaccountably fallen in love with.

978-1-933720-39-5, 200 pages

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Booklist

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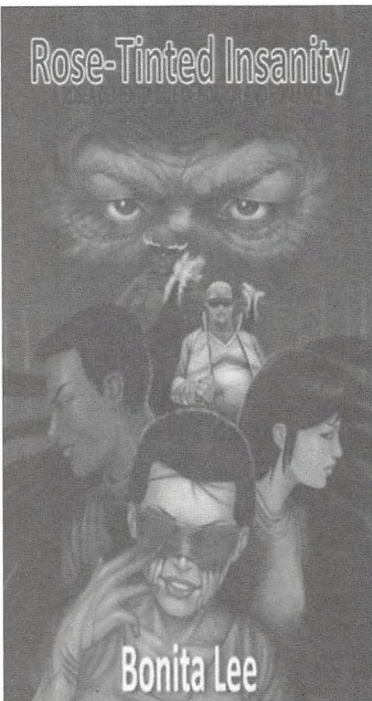
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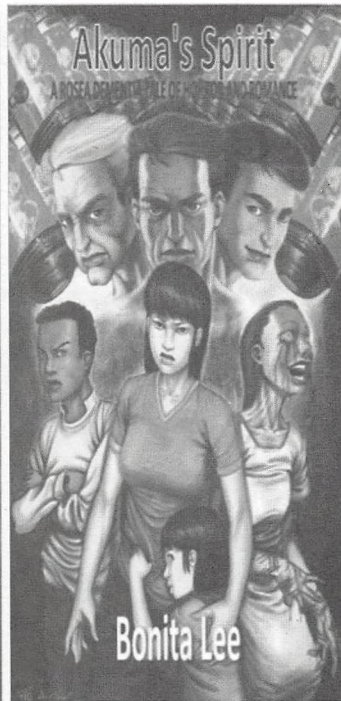
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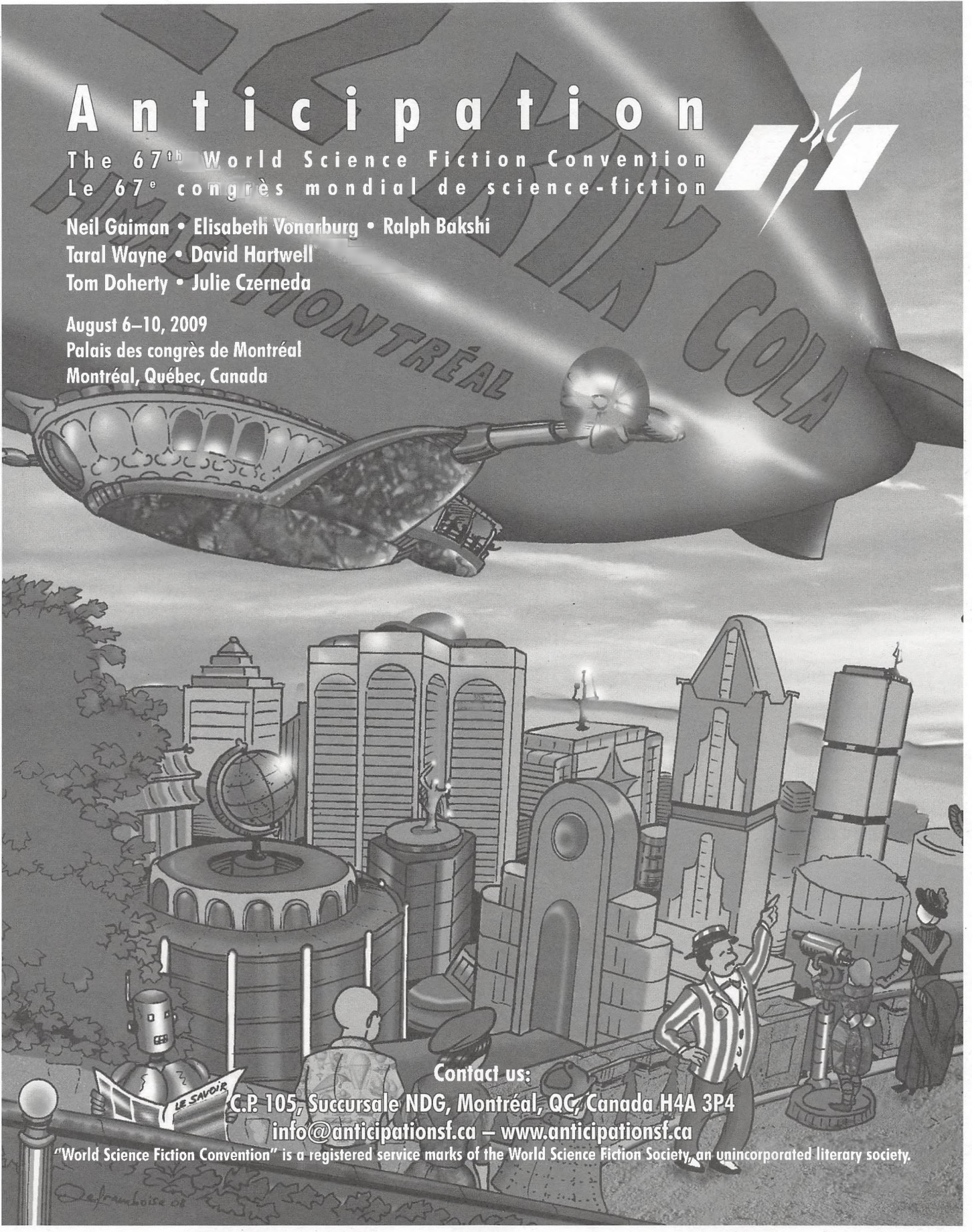
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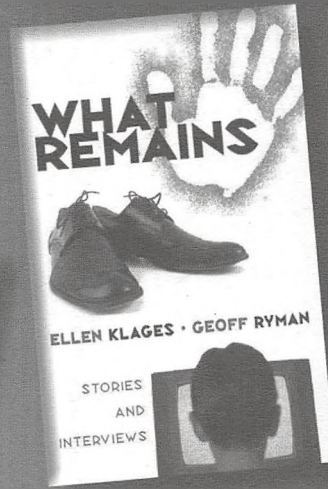
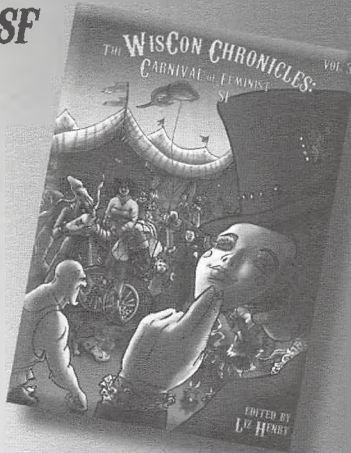
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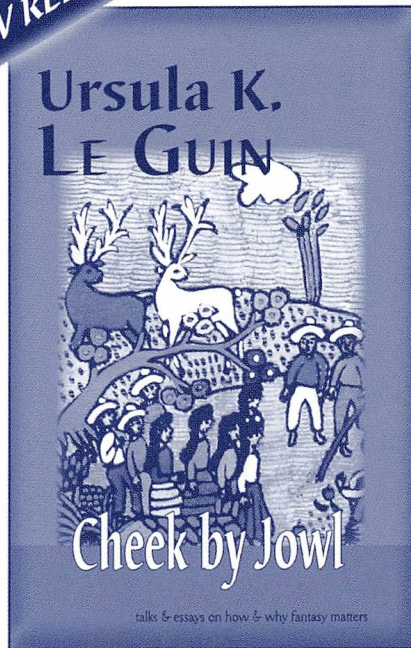
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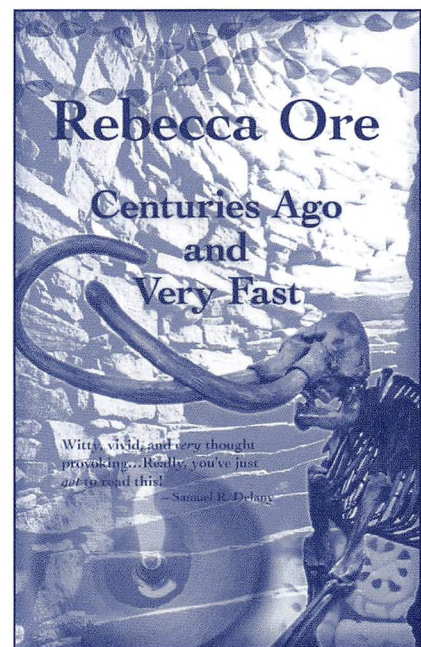
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