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## WisCon 38

### TABLE OF CONTENTS

#### WISCON 38 GUESTS OF HONOR

Hiromi Goto .....	1
Hiromi Goto Bibliography .....	3
N. K. Jemisin .....	4
N. K. Jemisin Bibliography .....	6

#### WISDÓTTIRS

Broad Universe .....	7
Carl Brandon Society .....	10
Interstitial Arts Foundation .....	13
The James Tiptree, Jr. Award .....	15

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**WisCon**

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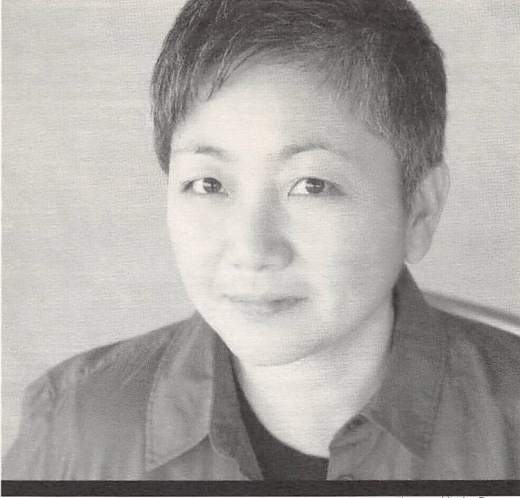


photo: Kiely Ramos

# HIROMI GOTO

by Wendy Pearson

*"This living is a mysterious event."*

This concise truth is spoken by the embryonic kappa, a creature from Japanese mythology, whose existence swims at the centre of Hiromi Goto's second novel, *The Kappa Child*. Today, many years after I first read Hiromi's work—beginning in 1994 with *Chorus of Mushrooms*—I remain amazed at Hiromi's ability to bring together in a single novel a meditation on Japanese-Canadian life on the prairies, a mythological creature, a vivid depiction of the difficulties and joys of lesbian desire for the unnamed protagonist, and a reflection on the lies and disappearances that underwrite such "pioneer classics" as Wilder's *Little House on the Prairie*. Above all, what struck me on first reading *The Kappa Child* was not only what a brilliant work of speculative fiction it is, but also how incredibly funny it is.

I first met Hiromi when she came to Trent University in Peterborough for a reading. The story she read, "Drift," was just about to appear in *Ms. Magazine*. "Drift," like much of Hiromi's work, is a story about family, in this case about the relationship between mothers and daughters. The daughter, Megumi, tries and fails to drag her okasan through several kilometres of deep snow to a natural hot spring. Their discussions reveal that Megumi, who has

two children, has separated from her husband, Barney, and taken up with a woman. In a strikingly funny scene, the two find themselves in a cheap motel, listening to a young couple with a baby have sex. Hisako complains that "it might affect the child's psychological development. It might grow up to be oversexed or, you know, strange." Megumi points out that she slept in a crib in her parents' room and saw them having sex. "Then it's our fault that you-you-you're with that woman!"

This is so typical of Hiromi's work, this mixture of the humorous and the poignant, this emphasis on the everyday inability of families to communicate and on the unexpected and mysterious ways in which communication sometimes does happen, as when both women step into the disdained commercial hot spring: "The liquid heat seeped into muscles, bone, and they lay back to float like they were in outer space... Fingers clasped, they gazed upward and the snow falling down looked like stars flying past them." Hiromi's writing is imbued with sometimes wickedly clever commentary on the human condition—something that seems at once broadly universal yet also incredibly particular. We are all human, yet we are not each other. In "Drift," in *Chorus of Mushrooms*, in *The Kappa Child*, and in her more recent YA novels, Hiromi has made me imagine what it would be like to be a runaway rodeo-

riding Japanese grandmother or a professional collector of stray shopping carts who has sex (or maybe sumo wrestles) with a non-gendered stranger on an airport runway.

One of the interesting things about Hiromi's writing is how easily she defies categories. Despite its speculative and magic realist elements, *Chorus of Mushrooms* was firmly located by critics within the canon of the new CanLit (Canadian Literature), part of the move away from its white (WASP) past, to a new vision of a nation teetering between the pragmatically multicultural and the superficially multi-ethnic (something Hiromi herself critiques in the brilliant poem "the body politic"). At least as excitingly, though, this period of publishing coincided with something I might call a queerly Canadian renaissance that began in the 90s and lasted for more than a decade. Hiromi has been a very important part of that, alongside Larissa Lai, Tomson Highway, Shyam Selvadurai, SKY Lee, Shani Mootoo, Wayson Choy, Dionne Brand, Makeda Silvera, Gregory Schofield, and Nalo Hopkinson, to name a few.

Yet Hiromi's work calls into question queer canons, national canons, and generic canons. It is not easy to determine where *The Kappa Child* fits generically, for example—and that is one of the novel's strengths, as it is able to combine techniques and tropes from science fiction (the alien encounter on the Calgary airport runway), from speculative fiction, from magic realism, and from mythology. This is also true of *Chorus of Mushrooms*, which begins as a seemingly straightforward family drama of immigrant life in an environment plagued by racism as much as by drought, but also filled with unexpected moments of joy, wit, and just plain weirdness. On one level, Hiromi's adult novels could be more recent versions of

the Japanese-Canadian story exemplified in Joy Kogawa's *Obasan*. It is certainly steeped in history, including the shameful history of Japanese-Canadian internment during World War II, and the more peculiar history of the 600 families that signed up to labor on sugar beet farms on the prairies to avoid being separated. Yet it is equally steeped in a recognition of the colonial history of the Canadian west, particularly the dispossession of First Nations people and the glorification of Prairie settlers (thus Laura Ingalls Wilder). In fact, one of the most poignant moments in *The Kappa Child* comes when the narrator sees Melissa Gilbert, playing Laura Ingalls on television, transform into a malnourished settler child with bad teeth. "They got it all wrong," she tells the narrator. "Children need happy stories." But that's a disputable statement, especially when happy stories paper over unhappy truths.

Hiromi's two most recent novels, *Half World* and *Darkest Light*, utterly refuse to conceal unhappy truths from their teenage readers. Both novels combine mythological images and grotesque moments in order to tell fantastic stories. In both, a human child is forced to undertake an extraordinary quest into the Half World, the space trapped between the realms of the Flesh and the Spirit. Both novels ask the reader to think deeply about moral problems, particularly in a realm where people seem destined to live out horrors no matter how they have behaved in the Flesh. Yet if these stories have any moral, it is that the end never justifies the means, even if living remains, always, a mysterious event.

We can only hope that Hiromi continues to help us explore these mysteries. 🍄

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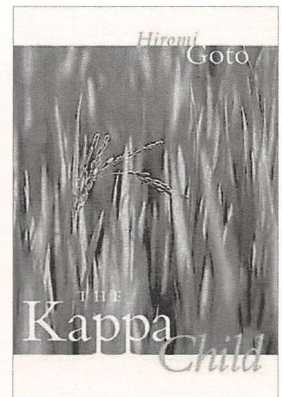
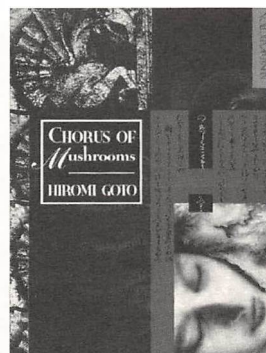
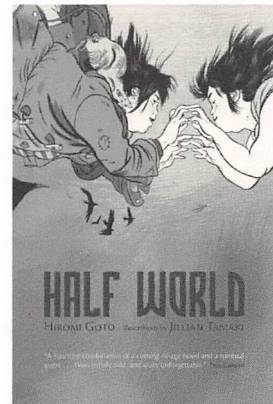
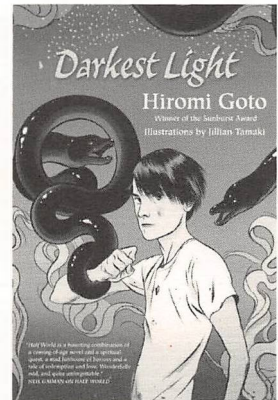
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# N. K. JEMISIN

by Mikki Kendall

(with contributions by Jamie Nesbitt  
and K. Tempest Bradford)



photo: E. C. Myers

Virginia Wolff, when talking about Jane Austen, says that what we know of her is “derived from a little gossip, a few letters, and her books.” Austen confided in few people, and the person closest to her burned many of the letters she’d sent to keep them from the prying eyes of fans and scholars. Wolff also said that Austen “pervades every word that she wrote” and to read her novels is a way to know her, though you’ll never *really* know her. It’s the same with N. K. Jemisin. You may be an avid reader of her books, follow her on Facebook or Twitter, or read her blog. But unless you’ve met and spent time with Nora, you don’t really know her, for the same reasons we don’t know Austen.

Those of us lucky enough to know her also know that she pervades every word she writes, too. Reading her books gives you a glimpse into the best of N. K. Jemisin. And really, what else do you need to know?

Her biographical details are far less illuminating than her fiction, but do provide a few clues to why her work is so vibrant and alive with possibilities for everyone. Born in Iowa, she lived for many years in Mobile, Alabama and in Brooklyn, New York, where she grew up having daily adventures in a city that had a life and mind of its own. She’s been involved in activism and social causes since her college days at Tulane, and later University of Maryland,

where she and a few other Black female friends gate-crashed the Million Man March. After living in Springfield, MA and Boston, she finally returned to Brooklyn a few years ago.

It was around this time that I met Nora. We found each other on the Internet before we met in person. In fact, I knew her as a fellow blogger on *AngryBlackWoman.com* long before I read any of her fiction. When we did finally meet, we had one of those slightly awkward, albeit pleasant conversations that are part and parcel of friendships that start online. I knew she had a book coming out, but I am generally too impatient when it comes to book series. But the longer we talked that day, the more interested I became. What kind of stories would she tell?

In person, N. K. Jemisin has this aura of cheerfully violent competence that fascinates me. So, I broke my own rules and read *The Hundred Thousand Kingdoms* as soon as it was available.

That... was a mistake. It’s possible I spent the next several months being one of those really exuberant fans referred to in certain circles as a brat. I read the book it took her years to write in a matter of hours. Twice. Then I whined, pouted, and generally was a friendly nuisance until I got my greedy little hands on the next book. I wish I could say I waited patiently for the one after that, but I was probably



annoying then too. In my defense, it was so satisfying to see people who look like me in a genre that I love so much. Her books are full of all the things to love in fantasy and short on the things that can feel so exclusionary in speculative fiction. Gods, princesses, elaborate societies with norms that weren't rooted in Eurocentric ideals?

*The Inheritance Trilogy* was a revelation in all the things fantasy could be if it branched out and did new exciting things. Because it was so unpredictable, so fun to read, and complex without being overly complicated. Instead of relying on the same tired tropes you so often see for characters of color, hers were central to the story, and yet not alone segregated from the rest of society. From there I started reading her short stories, and I found again world-building done quickly, deftly, and beautifully. Here was fiction I could happily fall into again and again. I've read everything she's published, and I cannot wait to read more.

Her work is grand and awe-inspiring and challenging. Her stories stay with you long after you have turned the final page. She makes world-building look effortless, and creates heroines worth rooting for. Her work is the kind that should be flying off the shelves of every public library and bookstore across the country, the kind you longed to read as a kid even if you had no idea they could exist.

Yet when I asked Nora about her writing choices she told me that she doesn't think of her work as fantasy. In fact she doesn't draw much from traditional fantasy. Instead her work is inspired by music, horror, shoujo manga, comics, history, and current events. Her work goes beyond the patriarchal male journey tropes that are so common in traditional fantasy, to a place with much broader definitions of what it means to be a hero. She shows readers that it is not just those with a destiny from on high that matter, that change comes about in society because of the efforts of many people in all walks of life. It's no surprise that her favorite stories to read are the ones where anyone can access the power to save themselves, or to blow up things in order to save others.

"I've always struggled to find a place for myself in society," Nora says. "I grew up feeling unfeminine, too shy to be

black, too mouthy to be smart, geeky but too black and female to fit in, etc. I wasted a lot of my life trying to force myself into moulds that weren't right for me. Which I guess is why so much of my fiction is about people struggling to fit themselves into the roles that their society is pushing on them—and failing because those roles aren't right for them in the first damn place, and figuring out their own way to do things."

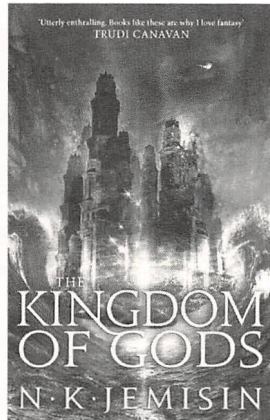
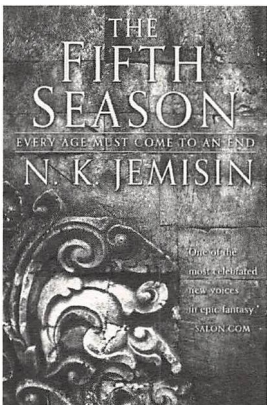
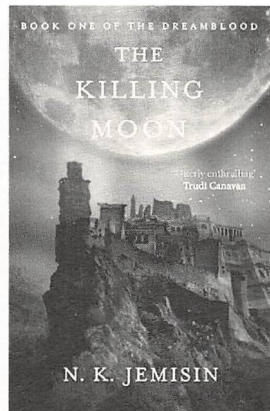
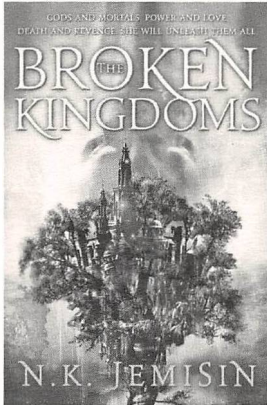
Nora is always willing to tackle tough topics in and out of fiction. In a genre where race and representation are always an issue, her blog posts and public speeches cover incredibly tough conversations diplomatically, and with a tact that sometimes eludes the rest of us at [AngryBlackWoman.com](http://AngryBlackWoman.com). She's earned a lot of respect in a very short time.

But that's not all that she's earned. Fans of her work are unstinting in their adoration, and for a very good reason. Her inclusionary approach means that anyone can find someone to connect to in the worlds that she builds. Yet Nora is refreshingly unaware of her impact on readers. She has no desire for others to put her on a pedestal because she considers herself a "raging, squeeing fangirl" just like the rest of us. "The biggest reason I write is that I want to read things worthy of my squee," she says. "And I publish because I want somebody to squee *with*."

Yet it's undeniable that her works are very important to fans, especially young Black people and other readers of color who don't have nearly enough books to read where someone just like them gets to be the hero, royalty, or a goddess who is loved and loves in return. And when they get a chance to meet her in person, Nora is always sweet, friendly, and gracious. She is remarkably grounded to be so talented, and that makes me so happy and honored to be able to call her my friend.

If there is any complaint to be made about N. K. Jemisin, it is that her career is still in its infancy, and there is not a 20-year-long backlog of things to read between books. Fortunately, we have many more years ahead to discover what she can create, and hopefully learn the patience needed to survive the time it takes for her to write them. 🐾

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[nkjemisin.com/bibliography/](http://nkjemisin.com/bibliography/)

# EVOLUTION AND MOVEMENT IN PUBLISHING, SF/F, AND FEMINISM— AND WHY WE NEED IT

by Tricia Wooldridge

Some years ago, I was a resident assistant at my university. We were in the middle of redesigning the whole dorm and resident assistant program—a *complete* overhaul. Nearly all the RAs who had been there for years fought against the change, myself included. “Everything works fine. We don’t need to change.”

The newly-hired Resident Director (a brand-new position) and his husband were running a “learn the new rules” meeting in their dorm apartment. I did think it was cool that the school had hired a gay couple and gave them fair benefits—but dammit, my life was going to get complicated and harder with all this change!

My life didn’t end, I still graduated with excellent grades, and I really don’t remember much else from the experience except the *feeling* of being put out with no material memories to back up the emotion.

And the one mantra our new RD kept telling us over and over:

“Change is always good.”

While I’m not entirely in agreement with the “always,” that point stuck with me. There was important truth to that; I knew it. Allow me another digression—I’ll bring all this back to publishing, genre fiction, and feminism—I promise!

In addition to writing and editing, I ride horses. One of the recent skills I learned is a “side pass,” which is to get the horse to move sideways (or sideways-ish) by applying pressure and guiding the rear legs while they are mid-step. The fact the leg is off the ground and *moving*—*changing* one might say—allows the rider the opportunity to steer and direct where that step lands. If done well, your horse will easily glide to where you want her to go. If not, your horse can misstep or just plain ignore you. But

it’s important to catch it *during* the step because then you’re in charge of the potential: where that foot *will* land.

Right now, the publishing industry is mid-step. It’s *moving*. It’s *changing*.

Right now, the culture around science fiction, fantasy, and speculative fiction as a whole is mid-step. *Moving*. *Changing*.

Right now, feminism is moving, changing.

That hoof is in the air, and we can apply the right pressure and direct where it lands. We can guide this change to be a good one.

Publishing, social change, all of that is a *journey*. This horse isn’t going to take just one step. Even if we miss directing one step, there’s another. And another. A learning rider may take an hour’s lesson to learn to direct just one step, but she gets to keep trying. (I know; I’m not that great of a horsewoman.)

# Broad Universe

*The voice for women writing science fiction, fantasy, and horror*  
[www.broaduniverse.org](http://www.broaduniverse.org)

What we see in publishing is a change in how books are made, distributed, obtained, and consumed. A savvy author can use her resources to create a self-published book that's indiscernible from one put out by a major publishing house. Small- and mid-sized publishers straddle the freedoms of independence with the distribution channels and exposure of larger businesses. Authors, editors, agents, readers can all connect on more levels than ever. Readers have more options than ever to enjoy the written word.

All these options appearing in the industry give more power to voices that haven't been heard as well before. Significantly so. Finally hearing the stories of these voices is changing the culture. Changing readers' awareness of the world around them. Isn't that one of the reasons we love our speculative fiction? We want to see the world differently! We want to see

and hear new worlds, new cultures, different viewpoints. Does that make it uncomfortable to the people whose comfortable income and lives leaned on the privilege they'd had in less competition? Of course it does. Might these people make less money and get less attention? Possibly—there are only so many readers. But someone else might start to make a sustaining wage doing what they love, too.

Of course, many of these previously unheard voices came from women—and that's where feminism is important. In a recent panel, there was good debate about how "modern" feminists don't seem to be accomplishing as much as earlier feminists. It is true that you can find specific goals met by feminism in history. It is, however, still the same history mostly written by white, middle-class, cis-gendered persons. While in theory, anyone who identifies as a "woman" should share

in these won civil rights, *everyone* does not. And there is a growing movement of feminists that realize that. Terms like "intersectionality" describe this issue. How does one's class, race, ethnicity, etc. intersect with also being a "woman?" Or neither woman nor man—but still a *person*? This slowing down and investigating is also a change in the feminist movement. And there are people who wail and scream against this change. Rights and benefits that affect them are not being won fast enough. Yet, this awareness has opened a door for other women so they may advance from being utterly invisible to getting *noticed*.

From 2000 to 2014, Broad Universe, a feminist organization that works to be the voice of the unheard women, has gone through a lot of change. And we continue to do so. The more opportunities there are for women, the better the world is.

Broad Universe asks: How can we support these new endeavors and opportunities? How can we utilize these new tools that level the playing field—let women get more attention, more reviews, more chances to make money by doing what they love? There are still many challenges, many oppressors, many abusers out there. And their tools change as well. That's why we need to keep evolving, keep changing.

The tools we started with—a website, book tables, readings, an online magazine, several motivated Broads—have evolved. Our website is newer, shinier, more secure. Book tables can take credit cards more often, and they appear at more conventions and events than ever. Readings have grown into regular events that conventions contact *us* about, for which they give us extra-long slots to include more members—and bigger rooms to hold more audience members! Our magazine has morphed into an active social media presence and a newsletter with tips and information linked to members' pages—as well as a monthly podcast that showcases members' readings and events.

In addition to evolving our original tools, we've added new ones! Last year saw the release of an e-sampler of members' fiction. This year we've started a brand new service to members: a NetGalley membership. NetGalley is one of the largest reviewing sites that connects reviewers and bloggers with electronic manuscripts. It's an expensive venture for an individual author or even some small publishers. Thanks to Terri Bruce and her committee, members of Broad Universe can purchase monthly slots at an affordable rate—a great way to level the playing field no matter how someone is published.

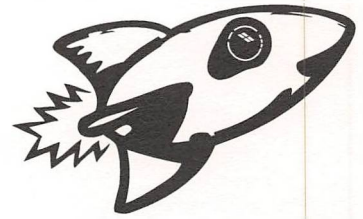
There is a lot of shouting and anger happening online in regards to publishing, our speculative fiction culture, and feminism—beyond feminism to all negative *isms*, really. All that noise, all that energy means that things are moving and changing. This horse is stepping, and *now* is an excellent time to direct that energy to the right step. 🐾

**Broad Universe is a 501(c)3 organization that was “born” at WisCon 2000. Our vision is equal recognition, pay, and opportunity for women writing and publishing in science fiction, fantasy, horror, and other speculative genres.**

**Find out more at [www.broaduniverse.org](http://www.broaduniverse.org)**

Trisha J. Wooldridge of Auburn, MA edits and writes for Spencer Hill Press and gets called “Madame President” at Broad Universe. She is also a member of the Horror Writers Association, New England Horror Writers, and the Society of Children's Book Writers & Illustrators. Her first novel (under T. J. Wooldridge), *The Kelpie*, was released in December 2013, and her second, *Silent Starsong*, comes out July 2014. [www.anovelfriend.com](http://www.anovelfriend.com)

# DEMANDING THE BEST



by *K. Tempest Bradford*

**A**t last year's WisCon, Andrea Hairston and Debbie Notkin threw a party to thank the con and community for making their time as guests of honor at WisCon 36 an amazing one. In keeping with the theme of thankfulness and WisCon celebrationosity, Andrea asked people to write down what they like best about the con so she could read it to the assembled revelers. I'll never forget what one slip of paper said:

**I love WisCon because it demands the best of me.**

Unfortunately, I've forgotten who wrote this (please speak up if it was you!) I do remember that I yelled YAAAAAS! when Andrea read that out because it's so very true. WisCon does demand the best of us. And that's one of the major reasons why I love coming to this convention.

## **Being Demanding**

Demand is a strong term, and I know some might bristle at its use. I submit that demand is exactly the right word because it's aggressive and forceful. That's what's necessary when discussing and dismantling sexism, racism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, fatphobia, classism, and other oppressions, as WisCon-goers regularly attempt to do in panels, in readings, in academia, in fandom. Rights are very rarely bestowed on those who sit around waiting for them, every now and then timidly asking politely and sending gentle reminders. Rights must be fought for.

Feminism itself is a demand to society to be better, to see and treat women as equals, to do away with antiquated notions of gender, to create a culture of respect for every single person no matter what.

And so that word, *Demand*, is completely apropos for what we do here at WisCon as we strive for a better world, be it the real world or a speculative one.

## **Towards A Safer Space**

That's not to say that WisCon is the perfect feminist utopia. There are still areas of concern and improvements to be made, and individual and systemic problems that need addressing and resolving. That's true for every community and organization. But at this con, more than almost any other I've been to or part of, attendees and organizers are less willing to just accept problems as the way things are and always will be, to ignore issues, to flat-out deny that there is anything wrong. Sometimes it takes a little while to get to this point, and not everyone gets there; perfect consensus isn't necessary or wholly desirable. In the eleven years since I started coming

to this convention it has changed, grown, adapted, faltered, floundered, and become better for it. Why? Because we demand the best.

In the late 90s, members of the concon (specifically Debbie Notkin, though I'm sure she was not alone) recognized that WisCon was, to put it plainly, mighty white. To change this, they reached out and invited people of color to the con and offered financial assistance to those who needed it. When con-goers of color got together and started talking about what they needed and wanted from this con and the wider community, those discussions eventually led to the formation of the Carl Brandon Society. Our organization isn't just made up of women of color, nor is it made up only of people of color. CBS doesn't end with WisCon, but we've never stopped considering this feminist science fiction convention our home.

Since then the number of POC attendees, program participants, and concon members has grown (slowly, at first) from handfuls to roomfuls. And with that growth came a stronger commitment to intersectionality on a number of different axes. Along the way there have been serious growing pains—the formation of the Safer Space for POC being one that stands out particularly for me—some so severe that they led people to quit or

walk away for a little while... or a long while. I'm always questioning whether WisCon is a safer space itself, and if it needs to be. Is it the kind of con where it's okay to react to problems without having to temper one's tone or constantly search for the most polite way to put things or ask for what one needs? Is it a space where people will listen and not attack?

WisCon can be that space. It has been on some fronts and for some people for a long time. It's possible to expand that safety net wider, encompass more people and points of view. That can happen only if we keep up with our demands.

### Outside These Walls

All of this is possible because WisCon isn't just any con, it's a feminist science fiction and fantasy convention. A fairyland in which time moves faster than in the rest of the world (how else do you explain how five days can go by so quickly when they really should last forever) and pockets of pure concentrated awesome are found around every corner. Not all cons are like this one. Not all cons are or have safer spaces.

I acknowledge that out in the non-WisCon world, it isn't always possible to be in a community that demands the best of people. I accept that begrudgingly and wear a mask of cynicism to keep myself from

drowning in disappointment over it. However, that "demand the best" spirit reverberates throughout the speculative fiction community from multiple sources, not just WisCon. It replaces my cynicism with hope bit by bit.

I see it in the discussions and actions of our professional organizations, like SFWA, and in the call for clear and strong anti-harassment policies at fan-run cons both small and large. The spirit takes many forms, some of which don't feel very "demanding" at all. Like when Kate Nepveu asks the community to donate to or bid on items in the Con or Bust auction to raise money for a fund that helps send fans of color to conventions and the community responds with amazing generosity. Or when we at the Carl Brandon Society raise funds and awareness for the Octavia E. Butler Scholarship, which pays for writers of color to attend Clarion and Clarion West, and the community responds by giving money and attention to the amazingly talented recipients of this prize.

These things also represent the best of us.

### It Doesn't End With WisCon

That's why we have to keep on demanding, no matter what form that takes, no matter what kind of pushback we get. Wanting the best



*"I love WisCon because  
it demands the best of me."*

The mission of the Carl Brandon Society is to increase racial and ethnic diversity in the production of and audience for speculative fiction.

[www.carlbrandon.org](http://www.carlbrandon.org)

We envision a world in which speculative fiction, about complex and diverse cultures from writers of all backgrounds, is used to understand the present and model possible futures; and where people of color are full citizens in the community of imagination and progress.

from your community isn't wrong. In fact, it buoys and benefits all of us together.

Don't forget to celebrate when demands are met. Let your voice be just as loud when amazingness reverberates out into the world as when you're fighting for amazingness to be acknowledged.

The board and members of the Carl Brandon Society are making a point of doing exactly that this year. We're building a new website at [carlbrandon.org](http://carlbrandon.org) and we hope you'll join us there to engage in discussions about racial and ethnic diversity in literature and fandom, find amazing SFF writers, and perhaps even volunteer your time or donate to support our work. 🐾

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# INTERSTITIAL ARTS FOUNDATION

by Felice Kuan

The Interstitial Arts Foundation (IAF) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to interstitial art: art found *in-between* genres that doesn't fit tidily under familiar marketable labels. We are devoted to breaking down the many barriers—commercial or creative—that force artists into categories and genre boxes.

One of the major ways we support interstitial art is through our series of anthologies, including the print fiction anthologies *Interfictions* and *Interfictions 2*, the online anthology of literary criticism, *Interfictions Zero*, and accompanying projects such as an art auction and a series of improvisational readings. This time last year—at WisCon!—we launched our latest addition, the inaugural issue of our biannual online anthology *Interfictions: A Journal of Interstitial Art*.

Our goal was to use the flexibility of web publishing to remove barriers

between genres and mediums, and even between academia and art. To that end, this first issue showcases works of “fiction,” “poetry,” and “non-fiction” that remix and re-imagine traditional forms, some dwelling nebulously among several genres and others mingling text with illustration, translation with music, or literary scholarship with personal essay. Our wonderful inaugural contributors were Keith Miller, Rose Lemberg, Dan Campbell, Kiini Ibura Salaam, Gwynne Garfinkle, Brit Mandelo, Jedediah Berry, Paul Jessup, Janalyn Guo, Sunny Chan, and C. L. and Emily Jiang.

Our second issue, published in October, features fascinatingly varied pieces from Maria Romasco-Moore, Henry Lien, Katharine Haake, Sean Pessin, Mark P. Williams, Brenda Hammack, Alexandra Seidel, Kathrin Köhler, Sara Norja, Sonya Taaffe, Nancy Hightower, Anil Menon, Alan DeNiro, Kevin Brockmeier, Molly

Gloss, and Nikki Alfar. These pieces all transcend easy categorization in ways completely different from those of Issue 1. Furthermore, our contributors have continued to explore the playful and powerful potential of an online journal, weaving multimedia links throughout a critical essay and recording themselves reading their work. Both issues are truly delightful and are viewable at [interfictions.com](http://interfictions.com).

IAF co-founder Delia Sherman is the executive editor of *Interfictions*, with Christopher Barzak and Meghan McCarron editing fiction, Sofia Samatar editing nonfiction and poetry, and Henry Lien (whose “Supplemental Declaration of Henry Lien” appears in Issue 2) joining as visual arts editor for Issue 3 and beyond. Henry's presence is the first major step toward our vision of a journal that encompasses *all* art of an undefinable nature, whether literary, visual, performing, or something



Contact us for salons, *Interfictions*, other inquiries, or just to introduce yourself: [info@interstitialarts.org](mailto:info@interstitialarts.org)

*Interfictions*: [interfictions.com](http://interfictions.com)

new. As *Interfictions* grows, we welcome ideas for how to better serve interstitial artists. If you have thoughts for our future direction, skills that may be useful, or just want to be involved in some way, we urge you to get in touch with us. Forthcoming issues will be supported by crowd funding, so please check our webpage for fundraising updates, as well as notifications about the next submissions window.

Our blog at [www.interstitialarts.org](http://www.interstitialarts.org) is another venue where we promote interstitial artists and foster discussion. This year, we spotlighted both new and established artists, such as the new Native American theatre group, *The Eagle Project*; composer/performer Bobby Previte; and the chamber group *Ensemble Pi*. We

also began a series of interviews with editors and curators about how interstitial artists can get their work to an audience. IAF blog contributor Ron Bass wrote a three-part series re-introducing forgotten works of interstitial art. Plans are in the works for a blog redesign this coming year, as well as an explosion of featurettes, interviews, and practical advice columns in the spring, so be sure to check back often!

As always, we also continued hosting our interstitial art salons. These are a throwback to the literary salons of wealthy 17th century patrons, modernized into friendly gatherings of artists and art-lovers for conversation, portfolio-sharing, collaboration, and community warmth. Our Indianapolis salon was founded by executive board member Ellen Denham in 2009 and still meets today. Our New York City salon, founded by working group member K. Tempest Bradford, is now exuberantly and creatively hosted by writer Anthony La Russo. Previous salons have been held in Boston, New Brunswick, and Los Angeles, but if you don't live near one of these cities, you may wish to host one of your own! These salons are purposefully low-key and are easily held in cafes, bars, bookstores, or private homes. Visit the "How To Host a Salon" section of our webpage and send us

an e-mail so we can connect you with fellow interstitial artists near you.

This year we were thrilled to have writer, editor, and photographer Diane Silver join us as the newest member of our executive board. In addition to the nationally syndicated op-ed column, *Political IQ*, Diane has written two books and published numerous articles and essays in print and online. She served as editor-in-chief of six award-winning publications for the University of Kansas and KU Endowment and was a communications consultant for the Kansas Democratic Party. We are not only grateful for Diane's significant grant writing expertise, but also for the warm humor and deft organization she brings to our meetings. Welcome, Diane!

The Interstitial Arts Foundation, unlike many other nonprofit organizations, is entirely run by volunteers. The executive board provides planning and leadership, and the Working Group provides ideas, talent, and the backbone of our volunteer force. Many, many thanks to WisCon for the space in this booklet and much encouragement throughout the years. We are deeply grateful to the Friends of the IAF for financial support and volunteered time, without which the IAF would not be possible. 🐾



# THE TIPTREE AWARD

by *Alexis Lothian*

**T**he James Tiptree, Jr. award honors works of science fiction and fantasy that expand or challenge our ideas about gender. The award is named for someone whose life expanded and challenged the science fiction world's ideas of gender. James Tiptree, Jr. was a woman—but complicatedly so. “Tiptree” was born in 1915 as Alice Bradley, and took the married name Sheldon in 1945; but, under a male pseudonym in the 1960s and 1970s, he took shape as a science fiction writer with a mysterious government job and a dense, direct writing style that Robert Silverberg would call “ineluctably masculine.” His piercing stories had a lot to say about masculinity and femininity, and he took part in discussions that shaped what we would come to know as feminist science fiction.

James Tiptree, Jr. lent her/his name to an award thanks to a conversation between two writers of fiction that often expands and explores our ideas of gender: Karen Joy Fowler and Pat Murphy. In 1991, Pat was soon to be Guest of Honor at WisCon, and all the science fiction awards were named after men (or celestial bodies): Hugo (for Gernsback); Campbell (for John); Clarke (for Arthur C.); Nebula. Karen and Pat agreed that a science fiction award

named after a woman was sorely necessary. And wouldn't it mix up everyone's assumptions if the woman so honored were Tiptree? In the WisCon Guest of Honor speech that year, Pat launched the Tiptree Award—not simply as a “women's” award, but as an award that highlighted the ways science fiction and fantasy can show how impoverished our stereotypical categories of “man” and “woman” often are, and how many other ways there are to think about gender. And as an award that reminded us also of the power and pleasure in the traditionally feminine—it would be funded through bake sales, and the prize would be not only cash but also chocolate. Because (as Pat Murphy said) if you can't change the world with chocolate chip cookies, how can you change the world?

One day after the speech, convention members began planning not only bake sales, but also publications. The raucous Saturday night Tiptree auction, hosted by author and Motherboard member Ellen Klages, has been a WisCon highlight for nineteen years. As our genres and our movements continue to expand and challenge gender in its intersections with other structures of identity, power, and privilege, the award will continue to change and grow. 🍪

## 2013'S TIPTREE AWARD GOES TO N. A. SULWAY FOR *RUPETTA*



photo: Andrea MacLeod

### The Tiptree jury describes *Rupetta*:

N. A. Sulway's imaginative and highly original novel tells the story of *Rupetta*, an artificial intelligence created 400 years ago from cloth, leather, and metal, brought to life by the touch of her creator's hand on her clockwork heart. Although *Rupetta* is a constructed being, she is not a robot. Her consciousness is neither digital nor mechanical. Nor is she an android, a creature that is, etymologically, male. (The word is not *gyndroid*). *Rupetta*'s power does not come from her brain, but from her heart. Sulway has placed her construct not in the future, but the past, and made her female, created with traditionally feminine technology: sewing and weaving. *Rupetta* is a woman, made by a woman in the image of a woman, and the world changes to accommodate her existence.

### N. A. Sulway Bibliography

*Rupetta*. Tartarus Press, 2013.

*What The Sky Knows*. Illustrated by Stella Danalis. University of Queensland Press, 2005.

*The True Green of Hope*. University of Queensland Press, 2005.

*The Bone Flute*. University of Queensland Press, 2001.

### 2013 Honor List

Eleanor Arnason, *Big Mama Stories*.  
Aqueduct Press, 2013.

Aliette de Bodard, "Heaven Under Earth."  
*Electric Velocipede* 24 (Summer 2012).

Nicola Griffith, *Hild*. Farrar Straus & Giroux,  
2013.

Alaya Dawn Johnson, *The Summer Prince*.  
Arthur A. Levine, 2013.

Ann Leckie, *Ancillary Justice*. Orbit, 2013.

Bennett Madison, *September Girls*.  
HarperTeen, 2013.

Sarah McCarry, *All Our Pretty Songs*.  
St. Martin's, 2013.

Janelle Monae, *Electric Lady*. Bad Boy  
Records, 2013.

Helene Wecker, *The Golem and the Jinni*.  
Harper, 2013.

S. M. Wheeler, *Sea Change*. Tor, 2013.

# ON BEING A TIPTREE AWARD JUROR

by Joan Haran

I was first invited to be on a Tiptree Award Jury when I was a PhD student working on my thesis about feminist science fiction. I was overwhelmed by the honor and that feeling of surprise and gratitude was further reinforced when I was asked to chair the jury. This was in 2001, well before ubiquitous social media and the always-on digital world that we currently inhabit. Taking my duties as chair very seriously, I suggested that we discuss the books using text chat software—I can't even remember what the product was in those days—but one of our jurors could not be persuaded. They felt that they would be disadvantaged in such a discussion because they were a slow typist. Of course, I conceded the point in the interests of equity, but I found it rather frustrating. I had fondly imagined impassioned discussions of all the books and stories recommended to us, but I had misunderstood how the process would work.

There was so much material recommended—and some of it distinctly off-topic—that we couldn't all read and exhaustively debate everything. In fact, I had been cautioned that this would likely be the case, but I was reluctant to give up on the fantasy. With time

zone differences—I'm based in the UK—not to mention the full-time occupations of the judges, real-time discussion was always going to be a challenge. But we managed to exchange our thoughts on all the works submitted, dividing the labor between us, and sharing our observations by email. And we did have some impassioned discussions as we narrowed our focus to the books from which we would eventually pick our winner.

I think that for a Tiptree Jury, the choice of winner is very much dependent on the shape of the entire field of nominees in any given year, as well as the contests and negotiations between the particular judges over how they imagine questions of gender and sexuality are best explored and expanded. This is not based on any ideal type of fiction, or checklist of political points to be ticked off, but is rather contingent on the convergence—or divergence—of the points of view of the judges, current debates, and the way that the nominated texts can be read in relation to each other. In our year, some novels caused extreme differences of opinion with jurors: for example, finding one work either troublingly misogynist, or original and boundary-pushing, or another

work either politically compelling or frustratingly didactic.

In a way, our choice, *The Kappa Child*, which I enthusiastically championed, was a surprise to me. Prior to receiving and reading the selection of nominated titles I would have imagined that I would have chosen a book that explored and expanded gender and sexuality in the context of an explicit critique of the social relations of science and technology. But Hiromi Goto's playfulness with genre, as well as gender and sexuality, was one of the aspects of her work which I most enjoyed, and which made it stand out from the field. 🐼

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**Nominations are always open for the next award; to make a suggestion, or to explore the list of all winners, honor list titles, long list titles, and retrospective nominees, please go to [www.tiptree.org](http://www.tiptree.org).**



**PAST WINNERS OF THE TIPTREE AWARD**

2012 Winners  
**Caitlin R. Kiernan**  
*The Drowning Girl*

**Kiini Ibura**  
*Ancient, Ancient*

2011 Winner  
**Andrea Hairston**  
*Redwood and Wildfire*

2010 Winner  
**Dubravka Ugresic**  
*Baba Yaga Laid an Egg*

2009 Winners  
**Greer Gilman**  
*Cloud & Ashes: Three Winter's Tales*

**Fumi Yoshinaga**  
*Ōoku: The Inner Chambers, Volumes 1 & 2* (originally published in Japanese)

Special Award:  
**L. Timmel Duchamp**  
*The Marq'ssan Cycle*

2008 Winners  
**Patrick Ness**  
*The Knife of Never Letting Go*

**Nisi Shawl**  
*Filter House*

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

2005 Winner  
**Geoff Ryman**  
*Air: Or, Have Not Have*

2004 Winners  
**Joe Haldeman**  
*Camouflage*

**Joanna Sinisalo**  
*Troll: A Love Story* (originally published in Finnish; published in U.K. as *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  
**Hiromi 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*

**Theodore Roszak**  
*The Memoirs of Elizabeth Frankenstein*

1994 Winners  
**Ursula K. Le Guin**  
*"The Matter of Seggri"*

**Nancy Springer**  
*Larque 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 AWARDS**

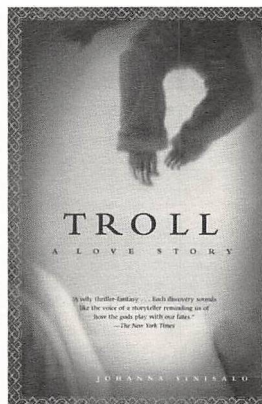
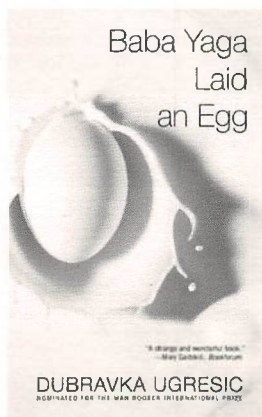
**Suzy McKee Charnas**  
*Walk to the End of the World* (1974), *Motherlines* (1978)  
 (two sequential novels treated as one work)

**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)

**LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD**

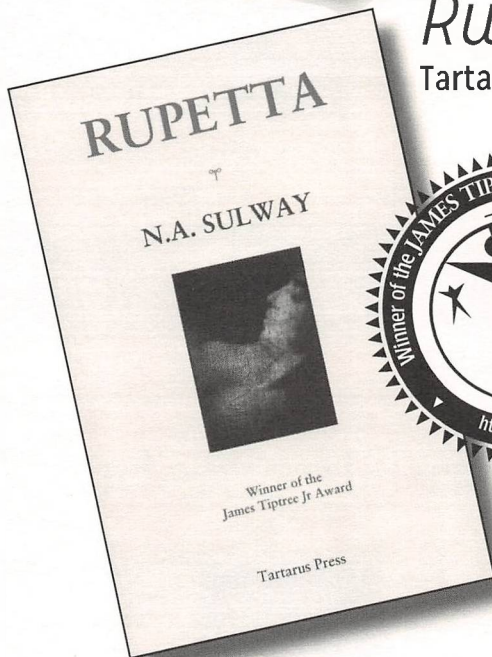
**Angela Carter**





The James Tiptree, Jr. Award  
**congratulates** the winner of the  
2013 Tiptree Award—

*N. A. Sulway*



*Rupetta*  
Tartarus Press



## ***Suggest fiction to the Tiptree Judges!***

Have you read something this year that you think should be considered for the Tiptree Award? Send us your suggestions!

Mail or use our on-line form:

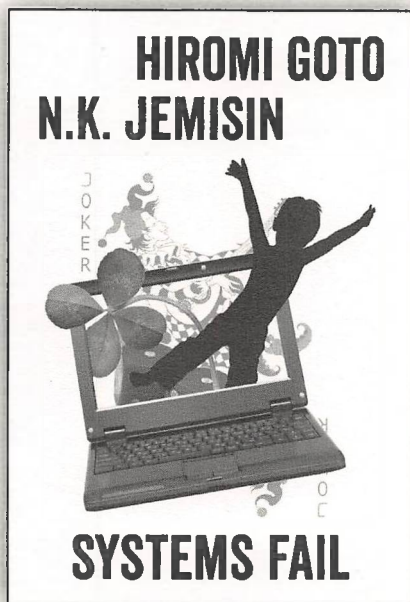
James Tiptree, Jr. Literary Award Council  
680 66th Street, Oakland, CA 94609  
<http://tiptree.org/2013-james-tiptree-award-recommendations>

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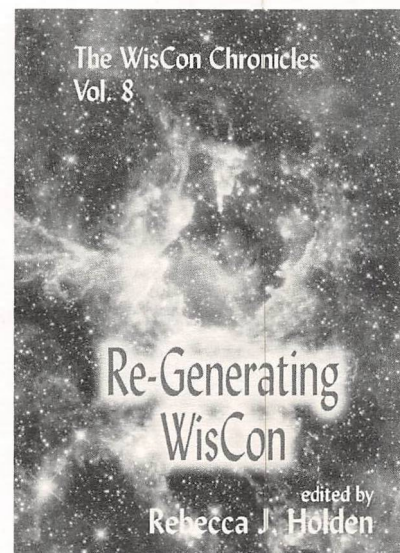
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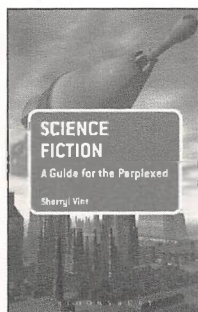
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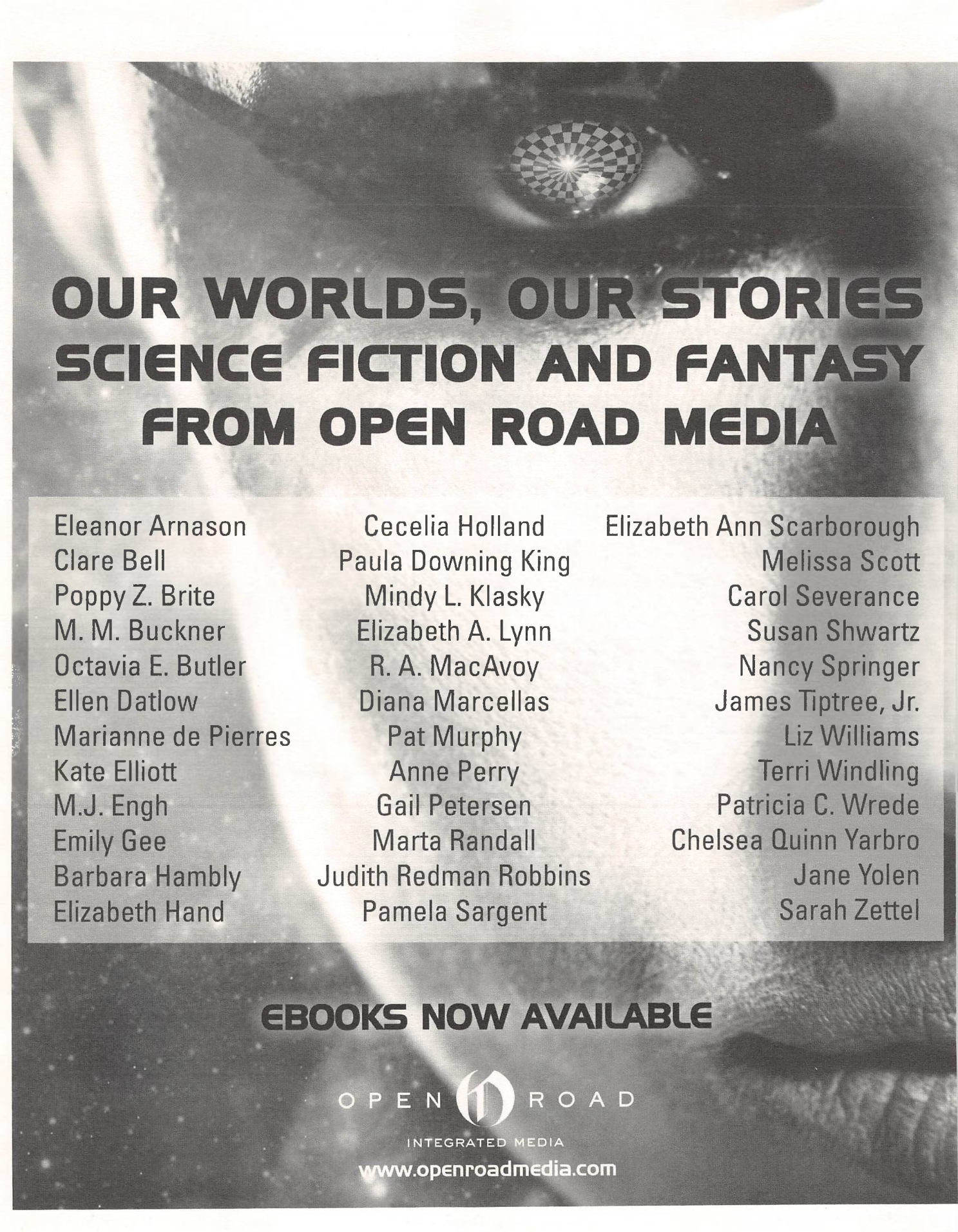
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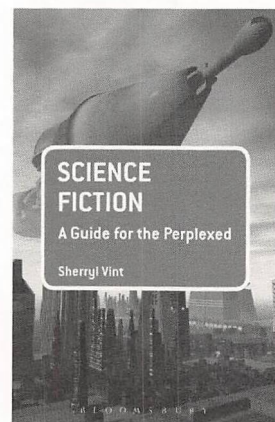
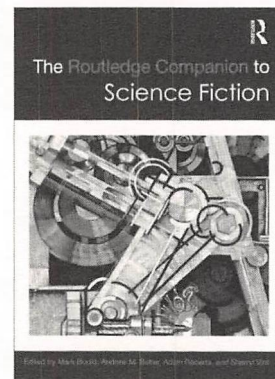
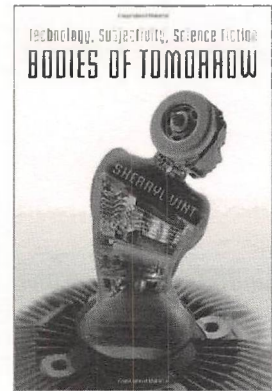
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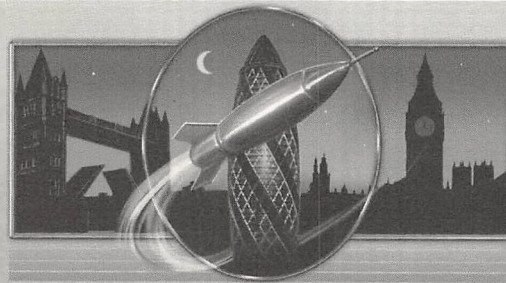
*It seems like everyone is jumping on the  
Sherryl Vint bandwagon right now.*

themselves in print fiction, television, and film, and currently co-edits two journals, *Science Fiction Studies* and *Science Fiction Film and Television*, while formerly serving as a co-editor of both *Extrapolation* and *Humanimalia*, the latter of which she co-founded. Her current project is a book manuscript tentatively named *The Promissory Imagination: Speculative Futures and Biopolitics*.

She has three other scholarly articles in progress, and blogs on science fiction television for *The Los Angeles Review of Books* ([blog.lareviewofbooks.org/category/sf-tv/](http://blog.lareviewofbooks.org/category/sf-tv/)). Last

year, she was invited to give a TED talk on science fiction, posthumanism, and bioconstitutionalism (available at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_etwFVLIy4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_etwFVLIy4)). This year alone, Dr. Vint has been requested to deliver keynote speeches at six different conferences, including one just before SFRA, in Israel! It seems like everyone is jumping on the Sherryl Vint bandwagon right now. She and her work are getting a lot of attention, so it's a lucky thing for her that she isn't really shy, just private. 🐼

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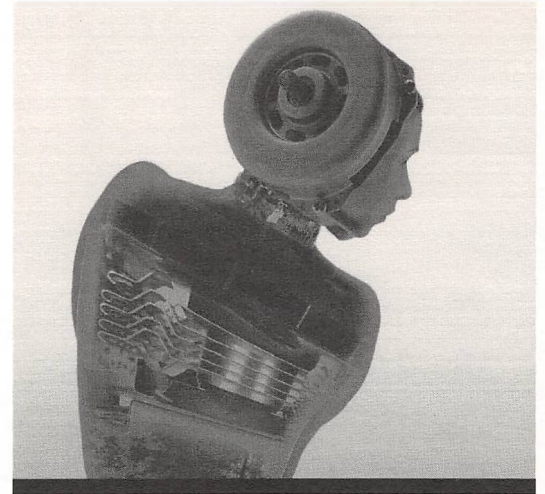
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# SHERRYL VINT

by Michael Levy

Dr. Sherryl Vint, SFRA's scholar guest of honor, is a Professor in the Department of English at the University of California, Riverside, where she teaches courses in science fiction, SF film, digital media, and technoculture. A Canadian by birth, she received her PhD in 2000 from the University of Alberta and she has previously taught at Brock University and St. Francis Xavier University. She came late to science fiction, discovering it in graduate school as part of a "feminist theories of the body" course. I've known Sherryl since the early twenty-first century when she began showing up at conferences of the SFRA and the International Association for the Fantastic in the Arts, delivering thoughtful, critically dense papers on writers like Joan Slonczewski, Ken MacLeod, and Octavia Butler.

Two important things to know about her: first—she's, well not exactly shy, but very private, and second—she's brilliant. I say the former from the point of view of someone who has been trying to dig up biographical information on her to include in this essay for a couple of months (I now know that she has a brother, had a conservative upbringing, and eats pizza). I say the latter from the point of view of someone who's read much of her published work, some of it in draft form, as well as many of her unpublished but equally dazzling, more or less



Source: *Bodies of Tomorrow: Technology, Subjectivity, Science Fiction*

off-the-cuff critiques of essays submitted to the journal *Extrapolation* when we were co-editors there.

Sherryl's books include the just published *Science Fiction: A Guide for the Perplexed* (Bloomsbury, 2014), a high-level introduction to the field that I was privileged to be asked to blurb; *The Wire* (Wayne State UP, 2013), a study of the critically acclaimed television series; her much praised *Animal Alterity: Science Fiction and the Question of the Animal* (Liverpool University Press, 2010), which concerns the overlap between animal studies and science fiction studies; *Bodies of Tomorrow: Technology, Subjectivity, Science Fiction* (University of Toronto Press, 2007), her important first book on transhumanism; and *The Routledge Concise History of Science Fiction* (Routledge, 2011), coauthored with Mark Bould. She has also co-edited several essay collections, including *Beyond Cyberpunk: New Critical Perspectives* (Routledge, 2010), with Graham J. Murphy; *The Routledge Companion to Science Fiction* (Routledge, 2009), with Mark Bould, Andrew M. Butler, and Adam Roberts; and *Fifty Key Figures in Science Fiction* (Routledge, 2009), also with Bould, Butler, and Roberts. She is the author of numerous book chapters, scholarly articles, conference presentations, reference book articles, and reviews on science fiction, fantasy, posthumanism, subjectivity, and animal studies as these topics manifest

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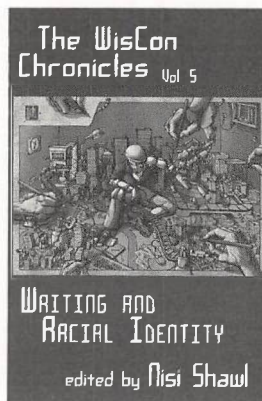
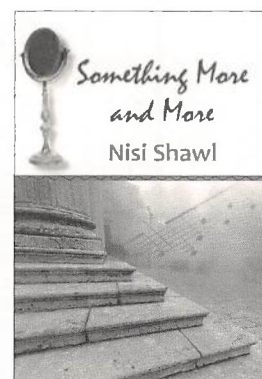
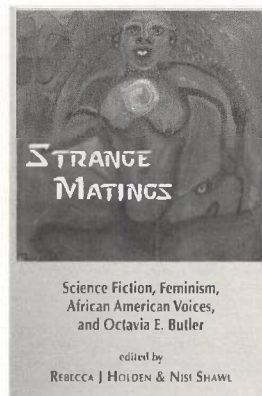
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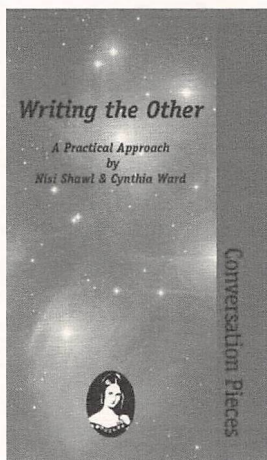
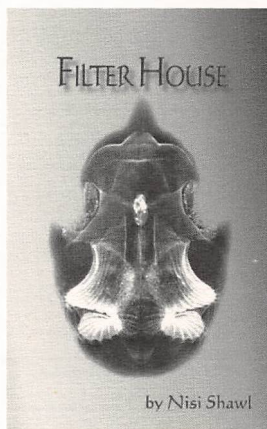
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A complete bibliography including reviews, columns, & interviews:

[www.nisishawl.com/Bibliography.html](http://www.nisishawl.com/Bibliography.html)



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*All of Nisi Shawl's work ... is distinguished by  
a combination of heart and intellect,  
and sharp wit and generosity.*

that in real life endowed the London School of Economics.” Other writers of color have also responded to the challenge, and the subgenre as a whole, having had its consciousness raised, is slowly becoming more inclusive.

Nisi has made additional critical contributions through the columns she has written for *Strange Horizons* (particularly her brilliant piece on “Reviewing the Other,” which appeared on March 24, 2014) and two of the nonfiction books she has edited, *The WisCon Chronicles: Writing and Racial Identity* (2011) and *Strange Matings: Science Fiction, Feminism, African American Voices, and Octavia E. Butler* (co-edited with Rebecca J. Holden, 2013). She has been reviewing books regularly for the *Seattle Times* for more than a decade, requiring her to hone her ability to deliver insightful judgments in pithy form, and occasionally reviews for *Ms. Magazine*. For the last three and a half years she has been the reviews editor of *The Cascadia Subduction Zone*, a feminist literary quarterly published by Aqueduct Press. As reviews editor, she has both brought attention to books that are often overlooked by other review publications and provided a feminist take on the field that is all too rarely offered elsewhere.

Like many writers, Nisi devotes a significant amount of her energy and talent to service work. As a long-time member of the board of Clarion West, she has carried out a variety of functions, such as serving as Director of Publicity. She has been a key figure in the Carl Brandon Society since its founding in 1999; her efforts on behalf of the Octavia E. Butler Memorial Scholarship, in particular, which annually provides substantial financial assistance to a writer of color attending Clarion West, have been tireless. Nisi’s generosity extends also to teaching writing—in local programs for young people, at the Centrum Foundation in Port Townsend, WA, and, of course, conducting Writing the Other workshops with Cynthia Ward.

All of Nisi Shawl’s work—whether fiction, essay, or editing—is distinguished by a combination of heart and intellect, and sharp wit and generosity. It is a potent combination that makes all she writes and edits rich and rewarding. ♡



# NISI SHAWL

by L. Timmel Duchamp



photo: Carol Ann Corely

Nisi Shawl was born and raised in Michigan in the 1950s. She attended Clarion West in 1992, and moved to Seattle. Since then, she has been producing a steady flow of short fiction; currently, she is writing, for Tor, a steampunk novel. Although she is best known to SF fans as the Tiptree-Award winning author of *Filter House* (2008), her critical work, perhaps not as well known to fans, has over the last decade become increasingly important to the field at large.

The writing manual she co-authored with Cynthia Ward, *Writing the Other: A Practical Approach* (2005), which grew out of the writing workshops they had been teaching under the same title, has become a valuable resource for Clarion West and other writing programs across the country. The volume includes two of her essays, “Beautiful Strangers: Transracial Writing for the Sincere” (originally published in 1999) and “Appropriate Cultural Appropriation” (originally published in 2004). The latter reflects on the difficult question of how writers can avoid both theft and exclusion (and thus, implicitly, erasure) of non-dominant cosmologies; both essays tackle issues that can be vexing for readers (particularly those of color) and anxiety-producing for white writers.

At the peak of the steampunk trend that swept the field a few years ago, Nisi’s contributions to a 2009 World Fantasy Convention panel on steampunk created a minor uproar with productive creative consequences. As she explained to Cat Rambo, posting in October 2012 on Tor.com: “The pro-colonialism, the implicit—and sometimes explicit—backing of Britain’s Victorian Empire? That, I simply could not stomach. Though I searched, I found very few examples of what Doselle Young calls ‘cotton gin punk,’ but the intersection of people of color and industrial technology seemed a natural one to me. So during the panel, after pointing out some ways to make the subgenre more inclusive, I announced to everyone in the room that I was going to write a steampunk novel set in the Belgian Congo... Then I had to figure out how to turn one of the worst human rights disasters on record into a book that would seduce an audience... A chance discovery of the history of Henry Ford’s failed corporate South American colony, Fordlandia, gave me my model. The book’s title, ‘Everfair,’ is the name of an imaginary Utopia set up on land purchased from the Belgian Congo’s ‘owner,’ King Leopold II. In my novel, Britain’s Fabian Socialists join forces with African-American missionaries to make the purchase using funds

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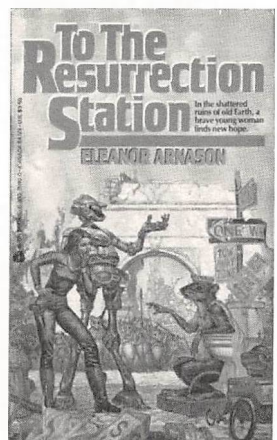
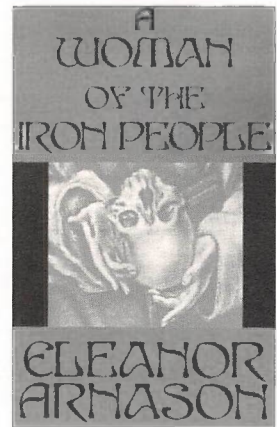
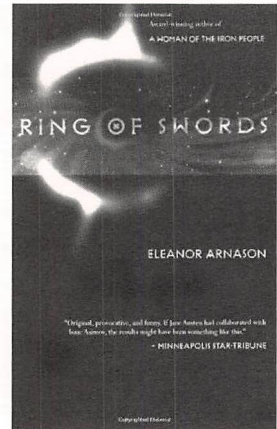
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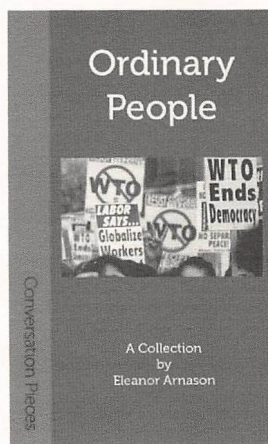
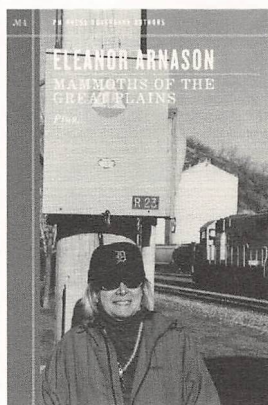
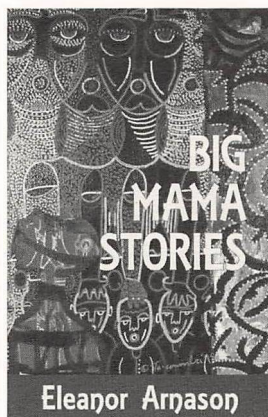
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"The Hound of Merin." *Xanadu*. Tor, 1993.

4. Flee to the mainstream. It worked for Ray Bradbury and Kurt Vonnegut. However, see number 6 below.
5. Rediscover the wheel. Mainstream writers (see above) get credit for great originality and profundity by reinventing tropes long familiar to SF readers, such as the post-apocalyptic road movie, the misogynist dystopia, the clone dilemma, and the eco-catastrophe.
6. Be a man. While things are better now than when Joanna Russ wrote the rule about percentages and the literary canon in the 1970s, nevertheless lists of Great Books of the Century, cyberpunk writers, and the like always under represent or omit the women. Men are remembered, women all too often erased.
7. Celebrate and sing herself. It worked for Walt Whitman. It worked for Norman Mailer. It works for Jonathan Franzen. It works for countless contemporary writers who blog and schmooze and tweet their way into the public consciousness. This tactic is harder for women to pull off (see number 6), unless they are willing to be outrageous. I fear it also comes up against Arnason's Scandinavian Americanness (see number 3).
8. Be less funny. Humor runs like a silver thread through even the darkest of Arnason stories. If her humor were broader, less tricky, it might have gotten her more mainstream attention, that authors like Christopher Moore have gained. Typically, however, each joke is so deeply embedded in character, perspective, and social situation that it is hard to extract one even to illustrate. Here, for instance, is a rather pedantic human scholar of the future commenting on how another race reacted to the appalling discovery of a species (us) who indiscriminately mix the sexes, who form heterosexual romantic attachments instead of proper homosexual

ones, and who allow women and children to get caught up in men's violence:

As far as can be determined, the stories in this collection were all written after the *hwarhath* learned enough about humanity to realize how similar (and different) we are. Our existence has, in fact, called into question many ideas about life and morality that most *hwarhath* would have called certain a century ago. When the *hwarhath* began to understand humanity, they were shocked to discover that an intelligent species could produce accidental children and permit men to bring male violence into the home. They tried to deal with this disturbing information through theory (see appendices) and art. ("Introduction to Ten Examples of Contemporary *Hwarhath* Fiction," *Paradoxa* 4:10)

I know that scholar. I probably am that scholar on occasion. But how else would one try to deal with disturbing information but through theory and art?

9. Be less committed. The above quote is no less passionate than it is amusing. Arnason cares about many things, such as social justice and an ecologically sustainable way of life, and her fiction reflects that passion. It may be too much to ask of a certified Red Diaper baby like Arnason (someone whose exposure to radical politics started at birth) that she hold back on commitment.
10. Keep doing what she's doing and figure that the world will eventually catch on, as it finally did with Philip K. Dick.

I'll go with number 10. Eleanor, please ignore the rest. Riches and fame are overrated anyway. 🐼

# SOME THINGS ELEANOR ARNASON COULD DO TO BECOME RICH AND FAMOUS

by Brian Attebery

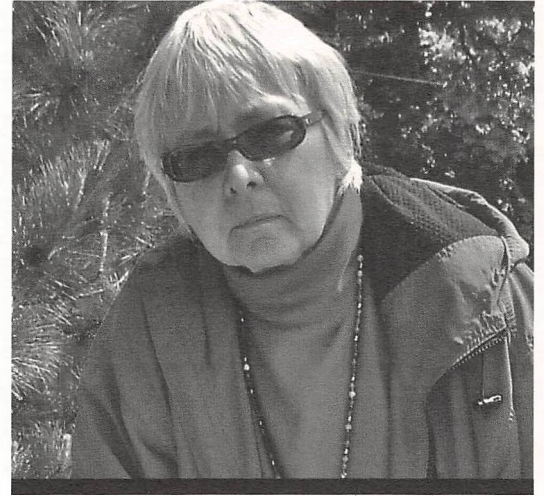


photo: Patrick Arden Wood

Eleanor Arnason is one of our finest writers of science fiction and fantasy. She is well respected by the academy: her story “The Warlord of Saturn Moons” is widely taught as one of the first and still most engaging pieces of meta-SF, and her novel *Ring of Swords* is on many syllabi and would be on even more if it were reliably available. She is admired by her peers and also by genre connoisseurs, as evidenced by receiving both the Tiptree and the Mythopoeic Awards for *A Woman of the Iron People*, as well as numerous Nebula and Locus Award nominations. One critic, writing for the *New York Review of Science Fiction* (okay, me), calls *Ring of Swords* a classic, “one of the best science fiction novels of the 1990s—or indeed, of any decade.”

Yet Arnason has not reaped the fame and fortune granted to many a lesser writer. I thought it might be an interesting exercise to propose some of the ways she might have become rich and famous. Here’s my list:

1. Write the same thing over and over. How long did it take you to think of an example of a writer has been successful using this tactic? But Arnason never writes the same story twice, even when she returns to the same world, as in the wonderful *hwarhath* tales that followed her introduction of that race in *Ring of Swords*.
2. Write melodrama. Melodrama exaggerates dangers and heightens the distinction between good and evil characters—audiences know exactly when to cheer and when to hiss. Arnason’s heroes are problematic, her villains downright appealing, her moral issues realistically muddy. One of my favorite moments of her fantasy novel *Daughter of the Bear King* is when the heroine discovers that the great enemy she must fight is not evil but the forces of shoddiness. There is more shoddiness in the world than outright evil, a much more subtle enemy.
3. Overwrite. Many popular authors write prose that is the equivalent of a Spielberg movie soundtrack—every emotional beat is underscored, every response cued. Arnason is a master of understatement, dry, ironic, and often heartbreaking. She is, after all, a Scandinavian American, and although her ancestry is Icelandic rather than Swedish, her work often reminds me of social occasions in Sweden, where whole roomfuls of partygoers will make less noise than a single offended two-year-old. I suspect that Icelanders, like Swedes, have perfected the Art of Murmuring—which, by the way, is a phrase that would work equally well as the title of a book about Bergman movies or one about Arnason’s fiction. I don’t think that’s a coincidence.

*without being subjected to [the] power-politics that can still be found at bigger academic conferences.*

Things have changed quite a bit since 1976. There are many many more successful women writers. We have new terminology such as “fantastic fiction” and “feminism.” We have fewer constraints on what we call “fantastic fiction” and how we study it. We have also have fewer constraints on how we study feminism, politics, and race/class/gender. WisCon and SFRA were part of that transformation. They were organizations that grew up because they filled a need—an intellectual space where people could discuss ideas that may not yet have been legitimate (but should have been) in formal academic settings.

So WisCon is in its 38th year, SF<sup>3</sup> is in its 39th, and SFRA in its 44th. The SFRA website states: “Founded in 1970, SFRA was organized to improve classroom teaching, to encourage and assist scholarship, and to evaluate and publicize new books and magazines dealing with fantastic literature and film, teaching methods and materials... ” There is nothing in this statement that deals with the flexibility of this intellectual venue. My memory of the early conferences and the associated journals (like *SFRA Review*, *Extrapolation*, and *Science Fiction Studies*) was that I could find articles about women writers and gender-bending fantastic fiction that featured serious critical approaches similar to the studies done of “more legitimated” literature. All of these activities are still going on at SFRA.

And from my perspective, so is another significant function. SFRA is a place where emerging scholars can test their theories without being subjected to some of the more restrictive and dismissive power-politics that can still be found at bigger academic conferences, while also finding a community of scholars who have the background and knowledge of fantastic fiction itself to give their ideas a good hearing and engage in productive discussion.

Since my first MLA academic paper, I have published papers and reviews, edited books and journal issues, and presented papers at diverse venues like WisCon, SFRA, IAFA, Popular Culture Association, Kalamazoo and Leeds Medieval Congresses, and the American Historical Association. SFRA is one place on the intellectual continuum, like WisCon, where young and old scholars alike can speak freely about the value of fantastic fiction to their peers. I don’t foresee that the dynamic excitement that this freedom of expression generates will ever disappear. So more than a place or an event for me, SFRA will always be a way of thinking about and talking about my favorite (even at the tender age of 64) literature—fantastic fiction—as a world-changing phenomenon. 🐾

— Janice M. Bogstad  
Professor, Head of Tech Services, and Faculty  
in the Graduate, Honors and Women’s Studies Programs  
University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire

*SFRA is a place where emerging scholars  
can test their theories*

accomplish. Also significant were Samuel R. Delany's interest, his participation at the Center for Twentieth Century Studies at UW-Milwaukee, and his writing career and investment in science fiction as a serious literary genre.

For me, that meeting at WorldCon represented a range of legitimations—I ran into Mary Badami, who invited me to an SFRA party. There I met and talked to Tom Moylan, who both reassured me about the potential for a scholarly career and told me to get involved with SFRA. But he and several other people were also interested in what I was trying to do with WisCon. WisCon is and has been many things, but at that time, for me, it was an intellectual space somewhere between the fan convention and the academic conference where one could present ideas that were not quite legitimate in the academic community but might be in the future. And SFRA was also within the spectrum from fan convention to large national academic conference—closer conceptually to something like the Modern Languages Association, but without some of the intellectual strait-jacket within which MLA still operates. And frankly, this is when my own intellectual career began to coalesce, something I suspect was true for a lot of female scholars of science fiction as well as female authors emerging at the time—like Octavia Butler, for example (we miss you, Octavia). At that WorldCon in 1976, almost

all the women writers were all on one panel together. We got the idea that we would have dinner with a few women writers and talk with them about women, gender, and science fiction. And women writers and gender issues were starting to come up at SFRA.

In December 1977, I attended the MLA, along with Tom Moylan and Phil Kaveny. I gave my first MLA paper on a young adult novelist with female scientists in her fiction (*The Rains of Eridan* by H. M. Hoover). It was that year that women academics decided to circumvent MLA strictures: they had all been put on panels against each other, so one whole afternoon they took over a large room. They did their presentations sequentially, with a long list of amazing women writers and scholars energizing a big crowd of more than 500 people. The “more legitimate” sessions at the same time had very small attendance—they were legitimate but not exciting, and definitely not of central interest to women and progressive scholars. I tell you all these details because only much later did I come to understand the amazing confluence of interests—WisCon's fan-feminist-sercon, SFRA, the MLA conference—that was that energetic period between 1975 and 1980. This is what SFRA meant for me—a path I could use to unite my longtime interest in science fiction, women writers, feminism, and literature.



photo: A. Anderson

## SFRA AND THE CONTINUUM OF INTELLECTUAL TIME-SPACE FOR ADEQUATE APPRECIATION OF FANTASTIC FICTION

by Janice M. Bogstad

It was 1976. I was struggling in graduate school in Chinese (soon to be Comparative Literature for literature in Anglo-American, French, Chinese, and German traditions). We had just started SF<sup>3</sup> and had a few issues of *JANUS*, later to split into *Aurora* and *New Moon*, under our belts. Several of us, urged by Hank Luttrell, decided to go to the WorldCon in Kansas City, where Robert Heinlein was going to be the Guest of Honor. It was there that I met Tom Moylan, Mary Badami, and the (sadly) late Judith Clark and discovered SFRA, which I assumed at the time had been in existence for many years. It was only much later that I discovered it wasn't a lot older than WisCon, and that we were trying to address some of the same issues—SF<sup>3</sup> and SFRA were both trying to “elevate the consideration of science fiction as serious and literary accomplishment” and “take into account the representation of new ideas and new styles of science fiction.” SFRA was still a lot more traditional than WisCon and had not yet begun to promote the study of women writers, writers of color, and gender issues, not to mention women scholars of fantastic fiction. Mary Badami's article on Ursula K. Le Guin in *Extrapolation* was one of the first published about a woman and by a woman. To be fair, WisCon was still calling itself “woman oriented” and not that many people were even using the word feminist anywhere.

There weren't a lot of widely-recognized women writers outside of Le Guin and Russ and a few others, but we had decided our niche would be to feature women writers, and serious approaches to SF. And we were able to assemble a few of what were to become significant women writers for an information event at the WorldCon that really got WisCon folks enthusiastic, a lunch with Suzy McKee Charnas, Vonda N. McIntyre, and Joan D. Vinge. I also realized later, with encouragement by Judith and Tom, that WisCon would have an influence on SFRA that would affect the careers not only of female sf writers, but also female scholars of science fiction. It was still slow in coming, as some of the “senior” women SF critics would tell you today. As WisCon has grown in influence and size, creating intellectual spaces for women to test their critical approaches, so has SFRA developed sophistication, although not the numbers of WisCon.

Authors and critics had an influence on SFRA as well as WisCon. Early attendance by Butler, Charnas, Vinge, and Joan Slonczewski, among others, and later by Le Guin, encouraged WisCon's feminist leanings. SFRA continued to attract, and pioneer, scholarship of science fiction, with publications and awards that began to influence the academic community and to legitimate the study of fantastic fiction: cultural work that WisCon could not



# PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

by Pawel Frelik

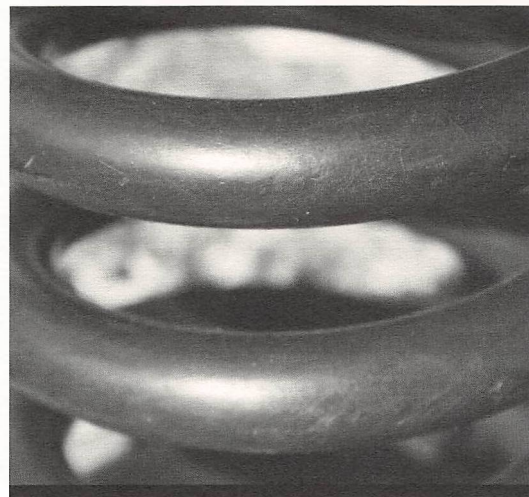


photo: A. Anderson

It is my distinct pleasure to be writing this since, as Ritch Calvin points out in his brief history of our organization, the idea of a joint SFRA/WisCon event may have been born in Poland in 2011, during our Lublin conference. Then and there (possibly on the way to see a countryside museum of Socialist-Realist art), Ritch suggested joining forces to the WisCon veterans Karen Joy Fowler and Pat Murphy, who came to collect the Claeson Award presented to the Tiptree Motherboard. Of course, many other people from both organizations have become involved in the project since that bus ride, most notably the conference's co-chairs Michael Levy, Rebecca J. Holden, and Victor Raymond.

Writing this in early March, I am already confident that the 2014 joint SFRA/WisCon conference will be a great success: as a coming together of the two organizations that share so many passions and interests; as a social event bringing together friends new and old; and as a scholarly gathering with not one but two separate academic programs. Even more importantly, this conference reconfirms SFRA's commitment to forging new links and alliances, both domestically and internationally. We have had to postpone the Brazil conference, planned for 2015, due to relatively low interest (no doubt caused by the rather unadventurous economic situation), but we are still

working hard to extend our international membership. In 2011, we held a conference in Poland and in 2013 joined forces with the Eaton Conference and Collection in Riverside, CA. In 2015 we will meet on Long Island, NY, but, if all goes well, in 2016 we will go abroad again, to Canada. By the end of the decade, we hope to return to Europe—perhaps to Germany, where there is a possibility of teaming up with Gesellschaft für Fantastikforschung [Association for Research in the Fantastic], which has been running very successful, bilingual conferences since 2010.

As we look into the future, we also remember the past. When you're reading this, the new, improved SFRA website should be online with a new separate archival section of past conferences. With the help of our members, we hope to populate it with all kinds of information about our past: session programs, leaflets, posters, badge designs, and participants' memories, not to mention photographs.

For now, though, have a great conference! Rebecca, Mike, Victor, and everybody else involved in making this happen—thank you so much! 🍷

— Pawel Frelik  
Maria Curie-Skłodowska University, Poland  
SFRA President

And that's the essence of the SFRA. It is an organization that formed out of a perceived need, and has existed as a nonprofit professional organization since 1970, solely on the basis of the voluntary efforts of a group of scholars, critics, and teachers who are committed to the role that science fiction plays in our society and in our lives. And its existence has, in many ways, paralleled that of WisCon. Furthermore, the organization has been, from the very beginning, committed to diversity in all its forms.

While we were in Poland, perhaps on the bus out into the Polish countryside to see an exhibit of Soviet social realism, I suggested to Karen and Pat that the SFRA and WisCon might partner for an upcoming conference. They were positive about the possibilities, but, of course, the idea has gone through a lot of people and a lot of organizing to bring it to fruition. Although the SFRA conference and WisCon have historically had limited crossover, much of that had to do with scheduling. The conferences tend to be held just one month apart. However, some individuals have participated in both conferences, including Janince M. Bogstad, who was a long-time editor of the *SFRA Review* and one of the original founders of WisCon, and two of this year's co-directors, Michael Levy and Rebecca Holden. The third co-director, Victor Raymond, who is new to SFRA, has been active in WisCon for many years as well.

We hope that you enjoy this year's joint SFRA/WisCon conference, and we hope that this is only the beginning of a fruitful collaboration and cooperation. 🐾

— Ritch Calvin  
SUNY Stony Brook  
Immediate Past President, SFRA

A huge thanks to Donald "Mack" Hassler for his reminiscences about the early days of the SFRA. Mack served as President of SFRA (1985–86) and as Treasurer (1983–1985 and 2004–2010). He succeeded Clareson as the editor of *Extrapolation*, and served in that role until 2007. Mack was awarded the Thomas D. Clareson Award in 2001. His recollections were vital. —RC

*We hope that you enjoy this year's joint SFRA/WisCon conference, and we hope that this is only the beginning of a fruitful collaboration and cooperation.*



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Beginning with issue #194 (in early 1992), the magazine changed its name to the current form, the *SFRA Review*. Since the change, editors have included Daryl F. Mallett, Amy Sisson, Karen Hellekson and Craig Jacobsen, Barbara Lucas and Shelley Rodrigo Blanchard, Christine Mains, a reprise by Karen and Craig, and finally, Doug Davis, Jason Embry, and Michael Klein. More than half of the history of the *Newsletter/Review* has been under the editorship of a female editor.

Like WisCon, the SFRA has an annual conference, though the SFRA conference moves location every year. The very first conference was held in New York City, hosted by Virginia Carew. Conferences have been held in, among other places, Atlanta, Detroit, Kansas City, MO, Los Angeles, and New York City; and outside the US, in Guelph, Ontario, Canada; Lublin, Poland; New Lanark, Scotland; and St. Anne de Bellevue, Quebec. In 2007, the conference was held jointly with the Heinlein Centennial conference in Kansas City, and in 2013, the conference was held jointly with the bi-annual Eaton Conference in Riverside, CA.

### SFRA/WisCon

Each year at its annual conference, the SFRA hands out several awards, including the Thomas D. Clareson Award for Distinguished Service to the field of science fiction and fantasy. The award was first established in 1996 in honor of Thomas Clareson, who was an early science fiction scholar, an early science fiction educator, creator and editor of *Extrapolation*, and a founding figure in the SFRA. The award “recognizes an individual for outstanding service activities, which may include promotion of SF teaching and study, editing, reviewing, editorial writing, publishing, organizing

meetings, mentoring, and leadership in SF/fantasy organizations.” The Clareson Award has been given to such luminaries as Fred Pohl, James Gunn, Elizabeth Anne Hull, Joan Gordon, Patricia Warrick, and Muriel Becker.

In 2011, the SFRA presented the Clareson Award to the Tiptree Motherboard, including Karen Joy Fowler, Debbie Notkin, Ellen Klages, Jeanne Gomoll, Jeff Smith, and Pat Murphy. That year, the annual conference was held in Lublin, Poland, and both Karen Joy Fowler and Pat Murphy made the trip in order to receive the award on behalf of the Motherboard.\*

The committee that selected (and presented) the award to Karen and Pat consisted of Paul Kincaid (chair), Andy Sawyer, and Joan Gordon. In their award remarks, they noted first that the Tiptree Motherboard certainly meets the criterion of “distinguished service” to the field. They noted second that the Tiptree Award is unlike most (all?) other awards in that it does not attempt to select a “best” work or writer, but rather takes as its mission the “positive message” of selecting a work or works that expand the categories and concepts of gender. In their acceptance remarks, Karen noted that the Tiptree Award began with a “specific mission, to support and encourage a kind of speculative literature [they] worried was not being recognized,” and Pat added that she and the Motherboard felt gratified in receiving the award from the SFRA because she had “never met a group of people who read as carefully and think as deeply about the literature that we all love.”

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\*An account of Murphy’s and Fowler’s journey through Europe, including the SFRA conference, can be found online: [tiptree.org/welcome-to-the-website-of-the-james-tiptree-jr-literary-award-council/whats-new/poland-a-trip-report-by-pat-murphy](http://tiptree.org/welcome-to-the-website-of-the-james-tiptree-jr-literary-award-council/whats-new/poland-a-trip-report-by-pat-murphy).



photo: A. Anderson

# WELCOME

## TO THE JOINT SFRA/WISCON CONFERENCE

by *Ritch Calvin*

The Science Fiction Research Association (SFRA) is the oldest professional science fiction organization in the world, and is dedicated to the study and teaching of science fiction and fantasy literature, film, and media. As the "About" page on the SFRA website notes, "the SFRA was organized to improve classroom teaching, to encourage and assist scholarship, and to evaluate and publicize new books and magazines dealing with fantastic literature and film, teaching methods and materials, and allied media performances."

The Science Fiction Research Association was created in 1970 as an offshoot from the Modern Language Association (MLA). While the MLA has regular panels on standing topics, they also allow individuals or groups to propose special topic sessions. In the late 1960s, science fiction was beginning to find its way into the classroom, teachers and professors were developing classroom syllabi, and more and more scholars were studying and writing about science fiction as literature. However, in the 1960s, New Criticism and close reading was in full force in the academy, and some of the science fiction scholars hoped for the opportunity to study living writers, and to turn away from the more academic aspects of criticism. In addition, the participants in the MLA science fiction panels had, and wished to further develop, ties with science fiction authors

of the day. So, the SFRA emerged as a "natural evolution" from the MLA sessions into a full-fledged association.

Tom Clareson, one of the MLA participants, began the publication of *Extrapolation* in 1959, the first journal of science fiction criticism. The journal began as a mimeographed newsletter that was copied by Tom and Alice Clareson in the basement of their Wooster, Ohio home, and it served as the newsletter for the MLA science fiction group. When the SFRA emerged in 1970, the connection between the SFRA and *Extrapolation* helped the newsletter become a full-fledged journal. In its early incarnations, it was published twice a year, and continues to serve as one of the core journals available to the SFRA. Early essays on sex, gender, and sexism in science fiction appeared in *Extrapolation*, including Beverly Friend's essay "Women and Sex in Science Fiction" (1972) and Mary Badami's essay "A Feminist Critique of Science Fiction" (1978).

However, the SFRA also publishes its own quarterly magazine. The *SFRA Newsletter* began publication in 1971, with Fred Lerner as the editor for the first three years. The *Newsletter* focused on the operations of the SFRA, reports on the annual conference, and reviews of both nonfiction and fiction books. Subsequent editors have included Beverly Friend, Roald Tweet, Elizabeth Anne Hull, Richard W. Miller, Robert A. Collins, and Betsy Harfst.



SCIENCE FICTION RESEARCH ASSOCIATION

# Feminism, Fans, and the Future:

*Traveling the Shifting Worlds of Writers, Readers,  
Gender, and Race in Science Fiction*

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### ESSAYS

Welcome .....	1
President's Address .....	4
SFRA and the Continuum of Intellectual Time-Space for Adequate Appreciation of Fantastic Fiction .....	5

### SFRA GUESTS OF HONOR

Eleanor Arnason .....	8
Eleanor Arnason Bibliography .....	10
Nisi Shawl .....	12
Nisi Shawl Bibliography .....	14
Sherryl Vint .....	16
Sherryl Vint Bibliography .....	18

### SFRA: SOUVENIR BOOK

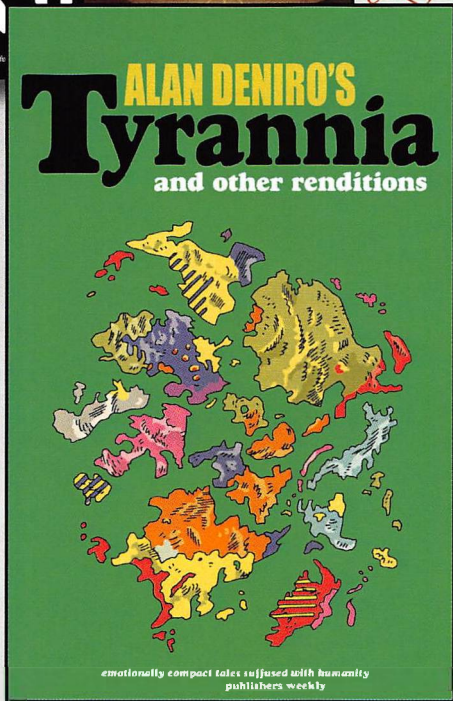
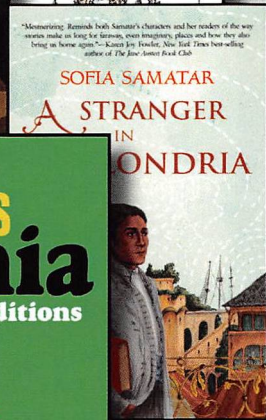
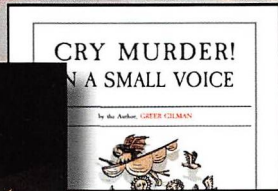
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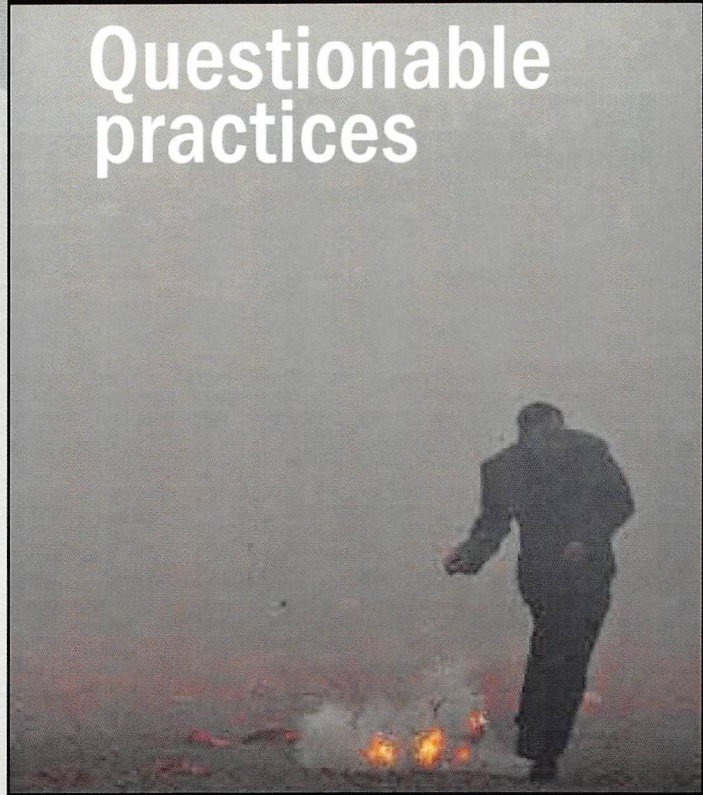
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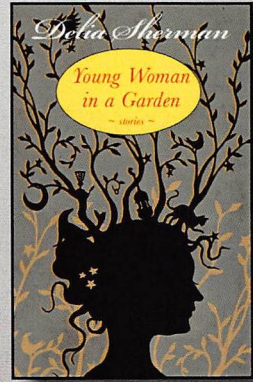
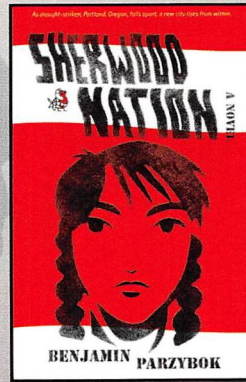
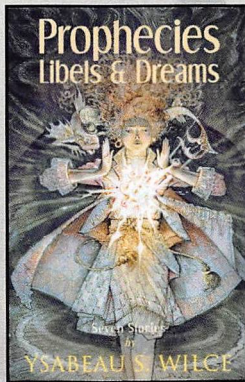
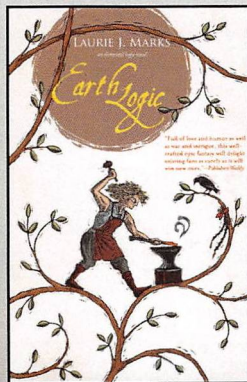
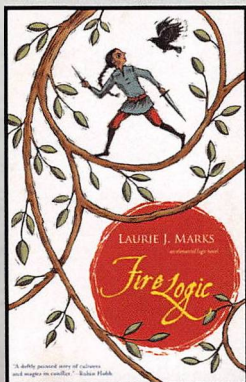
"Without Eileen Gunn, life as we know it would be so dull we wouldn't recognize it." - Ursula K. Le Guin

# Eileen Gunn

## Questionable practices



Welcome to WisCon! Come see our books in the Dealers' Room! Since last year — when you gave such a warm welcome to Sofia Samatar's debut *A Stranger in Olandria* — we have published Greer Gilman's chapbook, *Cry Murder! in a Small Voice*, Alan DeNiro's hypnotic *Tyrannia and Other Renditions*, and most recently, Eileen Gunn's second collection, *Questionable Practices*, which has received universally glowing notices. Please do pick up a copy! Below is a taste of what we have planned for later this year — not counting Peter Dickinson reprints and our zine, LCRW. As ever, thanks for reading!



Feminism, Fans, and the Future

# CFR

