

THE WISCON CHRONICLES
VOL. 6

The WisCon Chronicles

VOLUME 6

Futures of Feminism and Fandom

Edited by
Alexis Lothian



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The WisCon Chronicles, Vol. 6
Futures of Feminism and Fandom

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Introduction: Futures (and a Few Fights) for Feminism and Fandom

Alexis Lothian

When Timmi Duchamp asked me to edit this year's *WisCon Chronicles*, my first feeling after the honor and awe was a great sense of trepidation. Its 35th was not an easy year for WisCon. After making a blog post that expressed a bigoted attitude toward Muslims and refusing to engage with the many critical comments from readers that resulted, Elizabeth Moon's invitation to be Guest of Honor was revoked. Along with many other WisCon members, I entered WisCon 35 wondering what effect the events that came to be known as "Moonfail" would have. I was pleased when convention attendees seemed to make a collective decision to focus their energy on honoring Nisi Shawl and on having a great time talking about feminism, race, gender, sexuality, class, and science fiction in all its forms. In gathering contributions for this volume, I wanted both to celebrate the great things about the convention that took place and to remember the often painful conversations that led up to it. I hoped that the volume might provide an opportunity to reflect on what all this means for our various experiences of feminism and of fandom, and on how they are changing.

I had another goal too. Since long before I first began to attend, WisCon has meant much more to me than simply a weekend in Madison. Its conversations permeate my interactions and my introspections throughout the year. In the five short years since I began to attend in person, the fannish conversations bounded by more than space have grown ever greater. The fact that WisCon 35's defining event, the decision to revoke Elizabeth Moon's honored status due to her comments about immigration and Islam, happened not at the convention but online highlights the role the convention is developing for at least one subset of its attendees: it's a centerpiece, sometimes an eruption, for a community that is constantly connected through its conversations.

I knew I wanted this year's *Chronicles* to be a chronicle not only of the convention but also of spaces outside the Concourse Hotel that nevertheless shape WisCon, and that shape the lives and experiences of WisCon's fans and attendees. The first WisCon panel I was ever on was titled "Can Internet Drama Change the World?" — and it's that idea, expanded outward from internet drama, that brought me from anxiety over how to do justice to Moonfail into thinking about the futures of feminism and fandom. Disagreements, negotiations, and people being willing to step forward and speak up when something isn't right are such important ways the world gets changed, the future formed.

The kind of fandom WisCon embodies is the result of women speaking up, as Roxanne Samer's interview with Jeanne Gomoll and Amanda Bankier highlights. White-dominated feminist movements have often been exclusionary, especially on grounds of race; over the past few years, fans of color and white allies have worked to bring women of color feminisms' insights to WisCon. Many of their voices can also be heard here. We've developed quite a vocabulary to talk about these matters by now; we keep on talking. We shape our community's future not by making pronouncements about how it will be but by arguing over it, getting things wrong, bouncing back and around, and making new things happen. That's what Ian K. Hagemann and Nalo Hopkinson do in their honest, brave, and open conversation about problems and disagreements within one of WisCon's most respected daughter organizations, the Carl Brandon Society. It's what Diantha Sprouse and Oyceter do when they offer perspectives that have not been adequately addressed in con discussions of Native American story, myth, and fantasy. And it's what B.C. Holmes, Jess Adams, and Chris Wrdrnd are beginning with their calls for WisCon to deepen and complicate its analyses of class.

The volume is split into six sections. First we explore WisCon's histories through stories of the con's formation in 1970s feminist fandom and through the history and conflict around the creation of the Carl Brandon Society in the 2000s. From there we move to the conflict that shaped WisCon 35 before it began: the affair of Elizabeth Moon. I have chosen to reprint some of the most important blog essays written during the discussion — by Shveta Thakrar, Shweta Narayan, Amal El-Mohtar, Saladin Ahmed, Woodrow Jarvis Hill, and K. Tempest Bradford, N. K. Jemisin — in the hope that they may reach new audiences and help a broader section

of WisCon's membership understand just what happened in September and October of 2010, and why it matters. Thakrar, Narayan, and El-Mohtar also provided commentary from their perspective a year later. WisCon's new Statement of Principles is included, along with commentary from Victor J. Raymond and Debbie Notkin explaining how this concrete example of new community developed out of conflict took shape.

The section on "Discourse and Communication" explores how the conflicts in our communities often work, and how we can build from them. Kate Nepveu's wonderful analysis of the operations of online and offline argument offers a guide for engagement, while Maria Velazquez digs deep into the difficult subject of engaging in activism across differentials in privilege. Liz Henry's "How To Suppress Women's Coding" builds on M.J. Hardman's essay "The Russ Categories" from last year's *WisCon Chronicles*, showing how the tools that Joanna Russ built and that feminist science fiction fandom has honed can be helpful in other contexts (specifically to highlight systemic sexism in the open source software movement). Finally in this section, B.C. Holmes, Chris Wrdrnd, and Jess Adams call for an expansion of WisCon's discourses and ways of communicating around the issue of class.

The next section, "Expanding Science Fiction's Narratives," provides a sense of how the broadening out of feminism to account for more than gender also means further opening of possibilities to explore in speculative genres. In addition to the complementary essays by Sprouse and Oyceter, we have Andrea Horbinski on the Tiptree-winning manga *Ôoku* and the ways its Japanese specificities of imaginative gendering have engaged fandom; Jaymee Goh on the intersectional online and con-based landscape of steampunk's relationship to postcolonialism; and Sandy Olson on how WisCon and science fiction fandom can offer ways in to thinking about the politics of disability. Olson's piece discusses the fan video "Me and My 424," which was screened at WisCon 35.

Science fiction's narratives continue to expand in the next short section, "Transformative Works," which highlights the growing WisCon presence of a fannish community primarily engaged in fan fiction, music video-making, and other artistic engagements with science fiction and other media. Skud's "Transformational Fandom at WisCon" and Gretchen Treu and Ariel Franklin-Hudson's dialogue on "Fannish Ways of Life" explain some of the ways this kind of fandom works. WisCon's vid par-

ty, where fan videos (music videos setting images from film and TV to music, often in the form of an argument) are screened and premiered, was in its second year at WisCon 35 and will continue at WisCon 36. A descriptive playlist drawn from the introductory vidshow screened there and an interview with Charmax, who created WisCon 35's most iconic vid, may whet your appetite to attend the next one or to seek out vids online.

We live in the future that others have created, and the discourses and imaginative landscapes of WisCon may owe more to Joanna Russ than to anyone. WisCon 35 was filled with mourning for the loss of her fierce feminist spirit — one that was so willing to challenge and critique, but also to listen to the need for change, as when she wrote of her own white privilege or acknowledged that she had misrepresented and misunderstood trans experiences. The last section of the book gathers the tributes to her life and work that were read at WisCon 35 by Timmi Duchamp, Eileen Gunn, Amy Thomson, Geoff Ryman, Jeanne Gomoll, and (in absentia) Farah Mendelsohn, and supplements them with reflections from Candra Gill and Nancy Jane Moore.

Finally, Nisi Shawl's Guest of Honor speech may inspire you to invent and challenge new futures. "We are all stories," she says, and "changing stories changes everything"; what will we learn to change next? Two poems from Mia Coleman close the book, tangling familiar words to play with the ways we imagine our feminist and fannish past and future.

The cover, the hand with the map held up as if, perhaps, to say "stop!", as if to suggest new routes and prospects, suggests to me the ways we form, shape, and tell our communities: through conflict, sometimes, and always through connection, through reaching out, through the ways we touch one another. Just as the future of feminism is not in a narrowly defined understanding of gender-based activism, the future of fandom is not neatly bounded by a time, a space, a group of people. In all their intersections both are ever-changing, contradictory, complicated, alive.

Dialogues on WisCon and History

Reflections on Queer Feminist Fandom Then, Now, and in the Future: Interviews with Amanda Bankier and Jeanne Gomoll

Roxanne Samer

Prior to last January, I did not even know that such a thing as feminist science fiction existed. As a first year graduate student in Critical Studies, however, I had taken it upon myself to diversify my interests, and just a few weeks into an interdisciplinary graduate seminar on race, nation, and science fiction, I got hooked. We read Octavia Butler's *Parable of the Sower* and *Kindred* as well as Nnedi Okarafor's *Who Fears Death*, and through further reading on the side I soon became familiar with the work of others, including Joanna Russ and James Tiptree Jr. My previous academic research had more often than not been attendant to second-wave feminism, looking to the manner in which avant-garde films of the seventies had taken up issues of the time as well as how critics and other viewers had subsequently responded. I had been especially interested in the intersection between lesbianism and feminism and how many of these feminist films were or were not read as what we would now call "queer." In the seventies, sexuality often seemed to have been dropped from the public conversation on gender altogether or to only have been taken up in the most benign fashion possible. I was curious: What does such neglect suggest? What can be read between the lines and within the erasures of such discourse? Did private conversations simply reflect that had in public? Or does correspondence in the archive reveal something else? Feminist science fiction literature appeared to be another apt arena in which to ask such questions, and I was soon pursuing a research paper on the depiction of women-only worlds in seventies feminist science fiction and their subsequent reception.

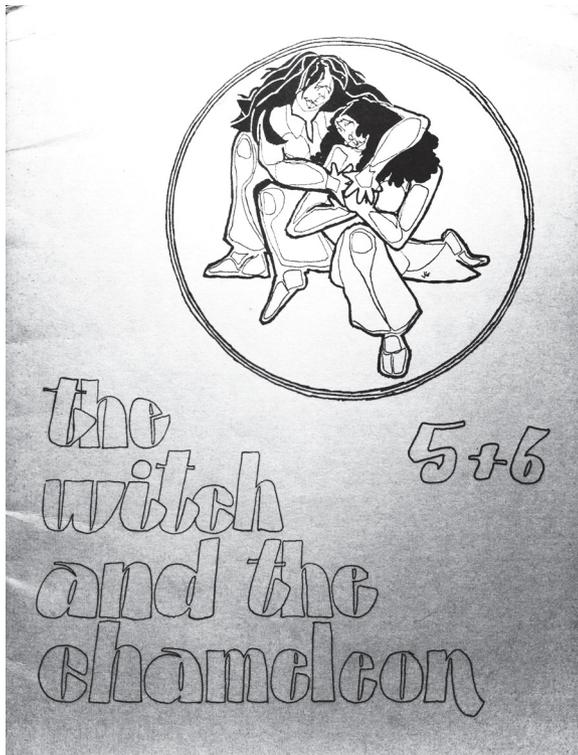
I quickly discovered that most of the reviews in the feminist academic and professional science fiction journals did not recognize the usually implicit, but at times explicit, lesbianism of the texts. Public discourse from the period of their publication seemed to suggest that they, too, were read as feminist but not lesbian. Recent blog posts online by other young queer science fiction fans, such as Brit Mandelo, however, let me know that I was not alone in my more hybrid proto-queer femi-

nist interpretations. The key questions for me soon became: Were fans back then reading them differently than the academic and professional reviewers? Did lesbians read them and if so how? What sort of possibilities did they seem to offer? How did these fans understand the relationship between feminism and lesbianism? I decided to visit WisCon in order to pursue these questions in oral histories with long-term feminist science fiction fans. The trip also provided me with the opportunity to visit my little sister, a graduate student in Chemistry at UW Madison (and an even bigger nerd than me), as well as to assess the contemporary feminist science fiction community to see if it was somewhere that I could feel at home.

Comfort, however, was not the immediate sensation that I experienced. As a first-timer at WisCon 35, I was overwhelmed and exhausted, which was largely a result of the intense adrenaline rush that kicked in upon first entering the hotel that Friday night. There was so much to do and so much to see. I was torn at times between my desire to attend events related to my personal interests, such as the Whedonistas panel, the Buffy sing-along and the genderfloop dance party, and those more attendant to my academic interests, such as the “Teaching Science Fiction” panel, “What is Queerness” panel, the “Women of Color” reading and the James Tiptree Jr. Award’s 20th birthday party. Somehow I managed to fit most of them in. Too much of a good thing is not necessarily a bad thing, but I discovered that it certainly can be trying. At the same time, some of my favorite moments at WisCon came from unexpected happenings at the standard, less-hyped events. For example, because of the exquisite dealer’s room (and a very generous salesman who I’m pretty sure sold me a stack of novels at an illegally low rate due to my novice enthusiasm) as well as the Tiptree auction, where I won a set of seventies issues of *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*, my science fiction collection octupled, and I, like many out-of-towners, had to mail a giant box of books back home. In the following months, I have thought of a number of ideas for future programming, namely ways of building on the comments that came out of this year’s panels, such as screenings of feminist science fiction films (the new independent film *Codependent Lesbian Space Alien Seeks Same* would be amazing) and a panel that expands on the what is queerness panel to incorporate our

presumed shared interest, so as to ask: what is queer sci-fi and what does it have to offer?

What I would really like to share with you all here, however, are two interviews that came out of my visit to WisCon, both of which came closer to answering the original questions I had about the intersection of feminism and lesbianism in early feminist science fiction fandom than any of the published reviews from the seventies had. Amanda Bankier, though unable to attend WisCon this year, responded via email to a call I had posted online prior to the convention about how women-loving women read seventies feminist science fiction texts, and I met Jeanne Gomoll at the Tiptree Award birthday party that Friday night. Having recently read Helen Merrick's *The Secret Feminist Cabal*, I realized that I had made contact with two of the editors of the first two feminist fanzines, *The Witch and the Chameleon* and *Janus* (later *Aurora*). Both Amanda and Jeanne were kind enough to provide me with issues of their fanzines in the following weeks, and in June and July, respectively, I set up a Skype interview with each of them. Both of the conversations went on for hours and were informative as well as immensely entertaining. Due to their lengthiness, however, I have only been able to transcribe a few of the most exciting excerpts. I hope that others might learn from and enjoy them as I have and that their reflections on the past may help us think about our queer and/or feminist fan futures.



Amanda Bankier Interview

Roxanne: So how did you discover feminist science fiction: when did you begin reading, where and with whom?

Amanda: Well, it sort of depends on what you mean by feminist science fiction. I started reading science fiction at the age of seven or eight, but that was in the late fifties, so as you can imagine there wasn't really anything you could call feminist science fiction at that point. "When it Changed," Joanna Russ's short story in *Dangerous Visions* was probably the most explicit early feminist science fiction, and then I was searching out whatever I could find by women writers. I wasn't reading it with anyone at that point. I was in England from '70 to '72, and when I came back that was when I got involved with

feminism in a serious way. We started the Hamilton Women's Centre and later on the Rape Crisis Centre.

R: When you first read "When It Changed" were you like, "This is it; this is feminist science fiction"?

A: Absolutely, yes. The whole set-up of the story was one of looking at a different situation and setting it up against what we were experiencing in our own lives. I considered it brilliant and was very impressed by it.

R: Can you tell me about *The Witch and the Chameleon*? How did it get started as a fanzine?

A: Ah, yes. As it became clear that we weren't going to be able to keep the [Women's] Centre going, it was difficult. We did everything collectively. Every decision was made in a general meeting, which could be very emotionally exhausting. And so when we had to close the Women's Centre, I was thinking what will I do now? And I thought: wouldn't it be nice to do something all by myself, so that I wouldn't have to argue about anything just for a while. Within a year I was working with some of the same women on the Rape Crisis Centre, but just for that moment what I wanted more than anything else was to do something myself about an interest that wasn't really shared by the women I had known in this group. I knew about fanzines at that point, having read a few, and I thought, "Well, there's nothing much in any of these about women and science fiction, and so why don't I start a fanzine with that as the central focus?" I put an ad in the progress report of the Washington DC World Science Fiction Convention, called Discon, saying that I was going to start a feminist fanzine and inviting contributions and good faith subscriptions. The very first letter I had was from Vonda McIntyre. She wrote a very friendly and supportive letter and offered to let me print an excerpt of her first novel, which she was working on at that point, and also to get me the addresses of writers who were mentioned in the fanzine, it being considered a good thing to send copies to people whom you wrote about. I wrote a number of things, including an article called "Women in the Work of Andre Norton," and my sister wrote a report on a panel about

women and science fiction at a convention. I put out a mimeographed short fanzine, and I got a very strong response to it. A lot of women really wanted to talk to other women, which wasn't that easy to do just going to conventions or being in SFWA. We were sort of lost in the crowd there. I got responses from women writers and long-term women fans. Andre Norton, for example, wrote a short letter. I had finished my overview of her work by saying that her habit of having strong women characters, who were sort of loners, meet a loner male to be their best friend and/or future husband, was a little improbable and perhaps it would be a sensible idea to have other endings; perhaps the woman finding women friends or having to get by on her own. Norton's letter was very friendly, but she felt it necessary to say, "Oh, I could never show two women of that sort becoming friends," this is paraphrased but it is roughly what she said, "because people would draw conclusions that I never intended from it."

R: Uh oh.

A: And she mentioned the fact that she was dependent on library sales. What she said did not mean she was necessarily homophobic. It's something even a lesbian might have said, and I'm not speculating about her (I know nothing about it). But it was an example of how careful people had to be. I got other very encouraging letters from people.

R: Did you publish the Norton letter in one of the issues?

A: Yes, in the second issue. The most important thing about the fanzine was the interaction, the back and forth between fans and in particular the women writers, who were so glad to have a place where they could talk to each other that they really got involved. Kate Wilhelm wrote a very interesting long letter, almost an article, on her experiences as a woman writer. Vonda McIntyre wrote a long detailed review of Marion Zimmer Bradley's *Darkover Landfall*, and that led to a very spirited exchange. Bradley wrote a really offended letter but also very open in certain ways. Joanna Russ, who had agreed with Vonda's negative impression of the novel, after she read Bradley's letter wrote a letter [in response].

R: Who was reading *The Witch and the Chameleon*? How was it being distributed?

A: Well, at that time there was a kind of a network among fans who produced fanzines, and a lot of the way it worked was through people exchanging fanzines and people writing letters. You typically would produce a fanzine for a small price to cover the supplies required to produce it and mail it, or in exchange for a contribution. Typically, it was fairly random how things got distributed, and it was largely by reference. The reason I got so many women writers involved was largely due to Vonda's help, because she enabled me to offer to the various women writers a chance to comment on things said about them, and many of them wanted to get involved. People who read fanzines would recommend them to friends. It was a much smaller network than we now have through the Internet.

R: Switching gears, I am particularly interested in lesbian texts, and how they are read; to make it more personal, I was wondering if you identify as gay or lesbian or queer or bi.

A: Yes, I do. When you described your research, part of what interested me was the intersection you were looking at, because I do think the lack of commentary at the time that you mentioned [the seventies] had to do with what it was like for those of us who were coming out at that time. It was a very complicated situation. It's complex enough now. You were listing a number of possibilities for how I might identify. It's complex enough to deal with that range of variation, but the cultural differences between people of different ages were also very strong at that time. And I don't know how aware you are of how close that time was to the time of total illegality and terror that was the experience of the generation before mine and people just a little older than I was. There was a very real risk of losing everything. Joanna Russ, for example, waited until she had tenure before she was very open at all about her sexual orientation. Bradley mentioned in her letter [in *WatCh*] that she was a lesbian, and I think Joanna responded to it at all largely in terms of a kind of covert acknowledgement of her bravery, because

that was very much the point of what she was writing about. Everyone worried.

To go back to that original story that we were talking about: “When It Changed” was in a tradition that had been pursued earlier by science fiction writers. John Wyndham’s *Consider Her Ways*, for example, was a long story or short novel set in a future world where there were only women and they, as so often happened in these things, had a single man come into the picture. “When It Changed,” in many ways, was Joanna’s answer to what was wrong with these earlier stories, in which, typically, all the women suddenly discovered that the relationships they had with each other were trivial and useless compared with the one they thought they could have with the great marvelous man who had turned up and was acting like a total twerp. In the course of writing about the return of the men in this single-sex society, she put in these very intense and down-to-earth relationships with an intense sexual undercurrent. And the down-to-earth part was all anyone talked about as a rule. That was the part they regarded as the social purpose of the story. The one person who acknowledged that Russ wrote good sex was a pornographer that she had been arguing with for quite some time.

R: Who was that?

A: I’m not sure. Whoever he was, he was the editor of a pretty influential fanzine, and he boasted about the fact that he wrote pornography, which is why I refer to him as a pornographer. I’m afraid my memory isn’t clear enough here. I read about it, and he was commenting to someone else that whatever else was wrong with her, she was one of the few people who wrote really good sex scenes in science fiction. I don’t know if she was flattered by that or not — it would depend on how much she cared about the source I would assume — because I’m sure she wanted to write good sex scenes. Usually there would be some mention that, “Oh, they had to be lesbians because they had no other choice,” which is probably one of the reasons why Whileaway was one of the parallel worlds in *The Female Man*; [Russ] wanted to go further and make very clear that although the viewpoint character in “When It Changed” was worried that her society would succumb to the change, that in reality

it was stronger than that. That was also, by the way, the very first time I encountered — when one of the male characters asks the police woman about the woman she lives with and hesitates as to what to call her, she says “we’re married, we’re wives” — and that was literally the first time I encountered the idea that if you had a same-sex marriage, you wouldn’t argue about who was the husband and who was the wife. You would use the appropriate sexed term for each person, and that is now the routine here in Canada, where same-sex marriage has been legal for several years.



Jeanne Gomoll Interview

Roxanne: How did you come to discover feminist science fiction? When did you begin reading it and with whom?

Jeanne: I graduated from UW Madison in 1973, and I started a feminist reading group, because I missed having the kind of group reading experiences that I'd had in school. I started getting excited about [science fiction] again, and I said, "We should write something about this!" And the others were like, "Jeanne, we're not in school any more! We don't have to write term papers!" And then it was just happenstance that there was an ad in the local student newspaper saying that there was a group getting together to publish a science fiction magazine — we did not know the word "fanzine" at that point. I offered to help, and what they really needed was an

artist at the time, so I ended up being the layout and design person, and I also wrote some articles, but that's how I got into that world.

MidAmeriCon (34th Worldcon) in Kansas City, MO, was our very first convention. I found in the program that there was one panel on "Women and Science Fiction," and it was held in a little tiny room that was really hard to find. By the time I found it, I couldn't get into the room, because it was so packed. We found out that the panel had been set-up by Susan Wood, who was a very prominent fan and probably the best-known feminist in fandom at the time. She had had to argue with the committee that there would be people interested in the panel, and obviously there were, because you couldn't shoehorn people into that room. So I never saw that panel, but there was an enormous lounge outside the room, so after the panel everybody spilled out into it and was so excited to talk. By that point we had already published a few issues of *Janus*. Another person there was Suzy McKee Charnas, and she suggested we all go off and have lunch together, so my co-editor and I, Janice Bogstad, and Amanda Bankier and Suzy Charnas went and had lunch.

- R: Had you just met Amanda [Bankier] there that day?
- J: Yeah, that's where I met her. We all went and had lunch, and it was a very long lunch, because we had a whole bunch of stuff to talk about. And we went back [to Madison] and decided to start a convention that had way more than just the one "Women and Science Fiction" panel. So that was the start of it for me.
- R: Yeah. Actually, that conversation is one of my favorites [published in *Janus*]—that lunch talk with you, Suzy, Janice, and Amanda. I am interested in lesbian science fiction, and it's one of the more controversial and more productive early conversations around [lesbianism and sf]. It got a bit heated, it seems like. I mean, the energy is there even in print. And then all these reflections came in that you guys published two issues later. I was wondering if you could reflect on the conversation, especially in terms of the intersection between lesbianism and feminism in sci-fi—how did it permeate into the feminist sci-fi community, if at all?

- J: I think at least for those of us at WisCon and to an extent *Janus*, though it was mainly WisCon, we immediately felt that feminists and lesbians [were] naturally allies. WisCon had programs right from the start about gender and about alternate sexualities. In fact, at WisCon 2 we were attacked by some prominent organizers of Midwest conventions, which during the late-seventies were mainly known as being “relaxacons,” but we did something that was so far away from that with heavy programming. We also did quite a few programs — I mean, I can’t say that we had radical lesbian panels — but the content and points of view were that this was silly to be adversarial; we’re allies, not enemies. At that point all we needed to do was say, “Yeah, we’re all friends; we’re all in this fight together; it is ridiculous to be homophobic,” to be seen as radical. So at WisCon 2 the Midwest convention people coined a new name for our convention; they called us “Pervertcon.” We pretty much took that as a badge of honor and thought that was the greatest thing ever.
- R: The term came about because you guys were collectively so invested in gender and sexuality?
- J: The term came about, because we were not actively discriminating against gays and lesbians.
- R: Wow.
- J: Because we considered ourselves allies. Because we felt that [homosexuality] was part of the conversation; it was not another conversation.
- R: Right.
- J: There were no panels about the gaps between feminism and lesbianism, which there should have been, because this was going on at the time. NOW was being torn apart by that, but I don’t think we were aware enough about what was going on in feminism generally. At this point, we were pretty much operating on our own definition of feminism, and none of us thought this was a big issue.
- R: *Janus* has so many interviews with people who are now icons (Suzy Charnas, Octavia Butler, Elizabeth Lynn), and they were also

writing in and participating in the conversations as well. Can you speak to the author-fan relationship at this time? Was this particular to feminist sci-fi?

J: I think all the way back to the thirties and forties, a lot of male authors had interesting relationships with their readers. A lot of the authors came from fannish groups, and when they became writers they stayed connected to the groups that had nurtured them. But I think what happened in the seventies was all of a sudden we started using that same model to honor and interact with women authors. This is actually a wonderful thing about the science fiction world, that authors can come and meet the people who are reading their work and get a lot of “Egoboo,” as it is called. WisCon was a place where women writers, for the first time, could come and find their fans in large numbers. So it wasn’t our invention, but we took that convention and made it an old girls network instead of an old boys network.

R: How wide of a circulation did *Janus* have?

J: I think our print run was six or seven hundred. The thing is, they got passed around, so I can’t say how many people actually read it. We were nominated for at least three Hugos as Best Amateur Fanzine; Janice and I were nominated as Best Fannish Editors; I got a number of nominations as Best Fannish Artist, so we were very prominent at the time. The first time we got our award nominations, sadly, I got hate mail from guys who said, “You should turn this nomination down; feminism is not fannish. Obviously you only got it because your readers block voted you.”

R: Wow.

J: That was pretty shocking, but we said, “Of course our readers voted for us! Isn’t that how it works?” I got a little angry about that.

R: I actually just got back from Oregon, where I was visiting the Joanna Russ archive.

J: Oh, that’s wonderful.

- R: I started with the Tiptree files, because it was Russ and Tiptree who brought me into this world. But what I was so fascinated by in the archive, in general, was how in close of contact everyone was. Everyone seemed to have these great epistolary friendships. I am wondering if you feel like the technology has changed sci-fi fandom.
- J: Oh, absolutely! Once I started doing *Janus*, I would get a dozen or more letters of comment each week, talking about reactions to the magazine. Also, I would be writing all the people I had met in Seattle, Vancouver, San Francisco, and other places, because that was the only way you could keep in touch. I couldn't afford the long distance phone calls. I think I'm very happy that the year I chaired the Tiptree Jury — '93 — it was just before everybody had email, so none of us thought of communicating through it as judges, and I had a stack of letters probably six or seven inches high. What a wonderful record! I don't think I would have that feeling of joyful, intimate contact with those people that year if we had done it by email. Now they're using wikis, and this year they are using Base Camp. These are all really excellent ways to keep the information accessible, so that when the judges are finished the coordinator can access them all and put together the annotated list of everything, but I'm sure it must make a difference in how they interact with each other. I'm glad I experienced it that way once though, and I'm also glad that I lived through the days of paper fandom, where people communicated by letter.
- R: It seems like most of fandom has moved online.
- J: Oh yeah, exactly. To print all the stuff out and mail it out would cost a fortune, so creating a PDF and making it available for people to download, if you're going to create a work anyway, keep the artifice [is what people now do], but I agree, a lot of it is now blogs...
- R: ...and LiveJournal.
- J: Yeah.
- R: It's all a little overwhelming for me. I sort of wish it was the seventies again. I think I might have the temperament for slow communication.

J: Yeah. Gradually what happened—and it really feels like it began with WisCon 30—was that WisCon was no longer a regional convention. The Concom was no longer regional; it was from all over the world, which meant that we had to find ways to communicate like we never had before. I also think that with WisCon 20 we came back to our feminist roots, only as strong more mature feminists. The feminist content became more explicit, and the alliances with other groups became more important. I think starting then you are going to find many more discussions about the connections between LGBT [issues] and feminism. And I think in the decade after [WisCon] 30, we've expanded even more. Our definition of feminism included a larger range of partners and allies. The huge efforts we put into making WisCon a more diverse convention are really obviously paying off. One of the things that happened is we used our memories of what it had been like be a minority group of women in mostly male fandom to offer space and to sit back and listen to what these new groups wanted and believed and felt. I think this decade is the decade in which the definition of feminism really expanded to social activism, to social justice. And I think that there might be another shift in the decade of the forties, where we are heading towards. I'm not sure what it is. I think that, just as the allies of the women in the seventies couldn't have predicted what would happen with WisCon, we as allies of all sorts of different social justice groups that are coming into WisCon and becoming active are handing over the reins. Anyone who wants to can become active, and we can't predict what is going happen, but it really feels like we are going to go through some big sea changes. I think it could be really exciting. Every year at the opening ceremonies we ask how many people for whom this is their first WisCon, and we are always surprised by how many hands go up and how many of those hands belong to very young people. By keeping the conversation open to whatever people are interested in, I think it keeps WisCon more youthful, more lively, more dynamic.

R: Well, I did have a wonderful first WisCon, and so did my little sister, whom you met.

J: Oh good, that's great!

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