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Volume 9

The Aqueduct Gazette

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Special Features

In Other News

FORTHCOMING

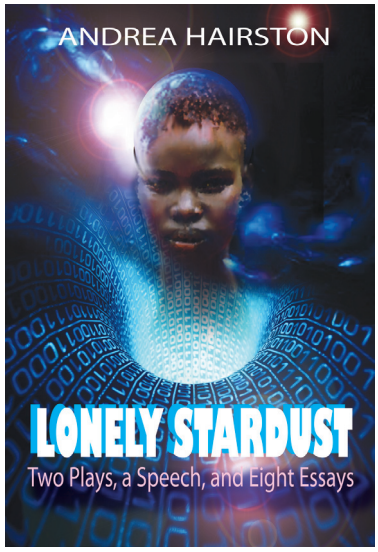
NoFood
Short Fiction by Sarah Tolmie

Elysium
A Novel by Jennifer Marie Brissett

The Haunted Girl
Short Fiction & Poetry
by Lisa M. Bradley

New from Andrea Hairston

Lonely Stardust: Two Plays, a Speech, and Eight Essays



Andrea Hairston's new collection of essays and plays seamlessly blends scholarly acuteness with beauty, profound social critique with the fantastic and marvelous. Read on for her thoughts on performance, myth, community, and storytelling.

Aqueduct: This is the first time your essays and plays are bound together in a book, and I have the impression that the two sections go hand in hand, as if maintaining a conversation where ideas are first presented and then performed. Does this impression make sense to you?

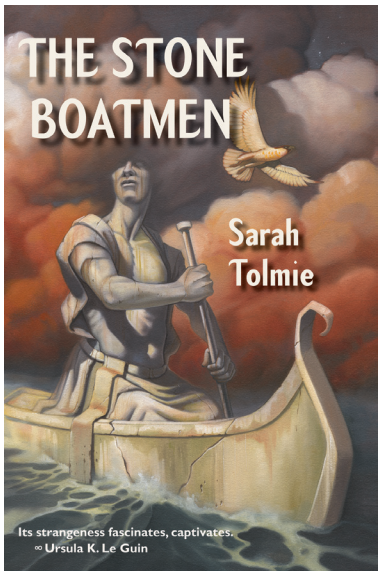
Andrea: Actually, the ideas are first performed.

My plays and essays are indeed in conversation with one another, but the plays start the conversation. Writing a play, novel, or screenplay, I discover what I'm thinking, what I make of my experiences

cont. on p. 4

Mystery and Ceremony

A Conversation about Sarah Tolmie's The Stone Boatmen



Sarah Tolmie's first novel The Stone Boatmen, *on the mutual rediscovery of three ancient cities divided for centuries by the ocean, is one of Aqueduct's newest releases; yet it seems imbued with an ancient spirit. Ursula K. Le Guin has said of it "To read it is to find yourself in a country a long, long way from home, taken on a unforeseeable journey—and when it's over, you wish you were still there." Aqueduct has been in conversation with Sarah on ritual, discovery, and art.*

Aqueduct: *The Stone Boatmen* follows the lives of characters that remind us of archetypical medieval figures: we find beloved queens and hunting princes, courtly poets and wise priests. As a medievalist, you know these types well.

cont. on p. 6

New Conversation Pieces and a Look Back

In Aqueduct Press's first ten years, we've developed four series of books—the Conversation Pieces series (now thirty-nine volumes), the Heirloom Books series (now three volumes), The WisCon Chronicles (now eight volumes), and the WisCon Guest of Honor series (now seven volumes). The Conversation Pieces series grew out of my conceptualization of feminist science fiction as a "grand conversation" implicit in every text as well as extending beyond individual works in the genre, encompassing its readers and fans. (Some of my thinking on the subject can be found in the first volume of the series, *The Grand Conversation*.) Since a great deal of this conversation takes place in extra-novelistic forms, it seemed essential to me that Aqueduct find a way to present the least marketable of these forms, too, in its list.

The series' thirty-nine titles represent a range of forms, often mixed within the same volume, something which makes some of them difficult to categorize within the standard publishers' book categories and nearly impossible to market commercially. The fourth volume, by Kim Antieau, for instance, *Counting on Wildflowers: An Entanglement*, contains a carefully composed mix of poetry, essays, photographs, and fiction, while *Talking Back: Epistolary Fantasies* may be considered fiction by some readers and nonfiction by others; I, the editor of the volume, couldn't begin to say which classification is "correct." Despite its marginalization within the sf/f field as a whole, poetry is proving important to the Conversation Pieces series—something that doesn't surprise me, recalling how essential poetry was to second-wave feminists of every sort. Short fiction has featured most heavily, of course, and essays have been important also.

In future volumes in the series, readers can expect more of all these—and perhaps additional forms, some of them as unclassifiable as the epistolary fantasies in *Talking Back*. Who knows? We're wide open to feminist creativity, which is now, more than ever, in full, marvelous bloom.

L. Timmel Duchamp

Conversation Pieces Vol. 38

Numa: An Epic Poem with Photo Collages by Katrinka Moore

The poems in Numa tell the story of a shape-shifting numen. Numa, whose home body is that of a wild feline, learns by trial and error to take the form of other animals, plants, and the elements. As she grows up, she uses her skill to experience and share the divine in nature. She gives birth to a cub and begins raising her to shape-shift. Then an interloper appears, a young man on a quest for glory who believes he should defeat the "monster" in the forest.

Conversation Pieces Vol. 39

Myths, Metaphors, and Science Fiction: Ancient Roots of the Literature of the Future by Sheila Finch

"The great myths seek to explain us to ourselves—our exploits, passions, triumphs, and failures. They can be found all over the world, often displaying remarkable similarity.

"Nobody—scientist, seer, or science fiction writer—can reliably predict what will happen two days from now, let alone two millennia. Science fiction is really about us as humans—living, loving, fighting, raising families—but set in another place and time so that the message may get through without being censored by the self-protective function of our egos." *(From the Introduction)*

Selections from Numa

Hatches

Numa weaves through the forest
four-legged but wings
flap close to her temples. Slows
beneath river-bottom pines.

Clears a circle, sweeps away
needles, digs a fox hole.

(birds she's eaten crunching
tiny bones spitting out
beak texture of claws)

Begins by rolling into
an egg-shape, growing
a shell.

bird's head on
a young girl's
body / feathery
crest, yellow-
tipped / thin fast
downy legs hop
from one
foot to the
other / a berry
in her hand

back to her body / she
crouches / tail
switching / watches
a rowdy flock skim
the shallows / snap-
ping up dragonflies

Body

particles eddy /
circle being-
as-light / swaddle
luminosity in
flesh and bone / in
luxury of fur
and tongue / back
to the body / familiar
wonder / Numa spills
her deep light
through mass / past
hide / out among
earthward

Monster

He seeks a monster
to meet & challenge. Chances upon
the numen, protean nymph-animal —
no breath of fire no fearsome talons
no sword-proof scales. Scaddle creature,
circler, unguarded guardian, wordless
messenger, *monstrum* omen, vessel.

Andrea Hairston's Lonely Stardust

(Cont. from p. 1)

and inquiries, what everything means. Poetry comes too, to explain and shape reality. Poetry and stories are spontaneous improvisations, performances in the theatre of my mind. I have to *decide,* consciously, to write an essay. Or people persuade me to write an article; they tempt me with a juicy proposition or question. Plays and stories just tumble out. Characters talk at me, nag me until I write them down. They demand my full attention. What happens or might happen to my characters consumes my creative problem-solving apparatus. I'm a hyperbunny, yet when working to express a character's reality or when putting on a play, my geek self is fully engaged. Everything I experience becomes part of whatever story/drama I am working on. And these stories illuminate my life.

Writing is a non-linear process.

My characters are tricksters, puzzle-makers challenging me to play, to risk myself before I know the rules or what's at stake.

Questions, not ideas, seem to come before the stories, but these questions come as I am writing/producing a story/drama. The ideas are embedded in the questions, the meaning embodied in the stories. And one story leads to the next. I've been "chain writing" for so long it's hard to find the origin of the conversation. In the middle of a scene, a character utters a line: "Homeless Eshu. Will do magic for small change." This line troubles my mind—in the good sense. "Will Do Magic for Small Change" becomes the prompt, the title of my next novel. A character from "Will Do Magic" speaks of "the theatre of the mind"—neuroscience poetry that I'm exploring further in my current play, *Thunderbird at the Next World Theatre,* and in "Archangels of Funk," my next novel.

Whenever I am writing or performing, questions emerge that can't be dealt with in the project of the moment. My characters are tricksters, puzzle-makers challenging me to play, to risk myself before I know the rules or what's at stake. The ideas, the meanings, are hidden from me, waiting to be discovered as I try to answer the questions. For example, I was writing "Wilderness," the unpublished prequel to *Mindscape,* while doing theatre workshops with pregnant and parenting teens, recovering drug users, teen-peer educators, and social workers in Springfield. For a writing/improv exercise, I asked them: What would happen if an alien landed in Springfield, Massachusetts? How would the alien respond? What would the folks in Springfield say or do with the alien?

My workshops with these lively groups spurred me to write and produce musical plays: *Lonely Stardust* about an alien in Springfield and later *Hummingbird Flying Backward. Hummingbird* is about an ancestor spirit taking refuge with a group of strangers in a video store in Springfield as a gunman shoots up the streets. Full of the ideas and questions still dangling from these plays and *Mindscape*, I wrote the "Driving Mr. Lenny" essay for WisCon. Writing *Redwood and Wildfire*, I researched Minstrelsy, Wild West Shows, and early film; taught a class on Minstrelsy and wrote a screenplay version of *Redwood and Wildfire*. This work lead to "Disappearing Natives" and my essays on *King Kong* and *District 9*. I perform my papers. They are monologues in my long-running Professor Artist/Scholar show.

Aqueduct: I'm very interested in your advocating of story as technology, of myth as a tool. You mention in a footnote that your preferred medium for "provocative questions, exciting ideas, and intriguing research" is fiction. What does fiction do for you, as a tool, that an essay doesn't do?

Andrea: Human beings are hungry for play, for stories. We are pattern makers delighting in the beauty and tragedy we find in our chaotic universe. Through performance, through narrative we understand how we are moving through the universe. The characters' experiences, their immediate circumstances, their dilemmas and choices, the world they create and that creates them—all of this makes sense of the time-space that I/we inhabit. Story, not analysis, is my response to the books I read, to the plays and films I watch, to the events that I experience or hear about, to the spiders that crawl on the wall and weave webs of life and death. I know what is "on my mind" by the stories that come. Poetry or story is what I do when I feel excited, angry, curious, charged up. Plays are my response to injustice and ignorance, to triumphs and hard-earned wisdom, to sleepless nights, nightmares, and dreams. Theory embodied, equations in the flesh…

I come from a family of dramatic storytellers. Family dinners were feasts with grand performances! I was treated to social worker dramas, car mechanic mysteries, boy genius farces, and grandmother myths.

Everyone held forth; between mouthfuls of green beans and mashed sweet potatoes, these relentless debaters revised the past and fashioned the future. Every night I was challenged by wily philosophers, brilliant comedians, and death-defying critics to speak/think/act the world I wanted into being. These powerhouses railed against folly and bad logic. My family dances with the ancestors now, but I speak to them and they speak through me. I have become them.

Stories are what we use to explore infinity, grasp the unseen, and project ourselves beyond the lonely moment we inhabit.

Actually I try to get stories into my essays, so that I can tap into the story place in my audience. Despite reductionist desire for pure untainted entertainment, all stories are power tools to fashion a universe for the tellers and for the audience. Stories are what we use to explore infinity, grasp the unseen, and project ourselves beyond the lonely moment we inhabit.

Aqueduct: The many subjects you deal with—such as struggle, solidarity, and survival—both in *Hummingbird Flying Backwards* and *Lonely Stardust* can be regarded as deeply rooted in what the occupation of "High Art," as in mimetic realism, is supposed to be—but then science fiction kicks in. How does the fantastic interact with your take on mimesis in your plays?

Andrea: I start with the fantastic, with the Magic If. I am not imitating actions to illuminate the status quo, but speculating on what might be or might have been. Realism doesn't interest me as a writer. I've been an anti-realist since before I wrote my first play. Theatre for me has always been an experiment, an extrapolation.

I think on the Lakota heyoka and other sacred clowns. We anti-realist artists are like sacred clowns, going into battle riding a horse backward. We shake up the minds of those who charge against us with weapons aimed at our spirits. Like sacred clowns we turn the "enemy world" upside down and inside out. Battleground becomes playground where innovation and transformation are possible.

I am out to change the world with my stories.

Aqueduct: You speak of art as "about transcending individual boundaries and experienc[ing] communitas with others." In *Hummingbird Flying Backwards* we are presented a group of battered, wounded strangers who face the possibility of survival by leaving the weakest behind, but this communitas, represented perhaps by Spirit's character, is at work all the way through. How do the actors' own personal histories inform this representation of community in rehearsals and performances? Do your non-fictional relationships as performers affect said representation, and vice-versa?

Andrea: I work with a company, an ensemble. We've been working together twenty, thirty, forty years. I write for my actors and musicians. They inspire and challenge me and vice versa. I am truly blessed to have on-going artistic relationships with artists who want to experiment and extrapolate.

Aqueduct: Finally, where does the audience stand in this network of reality/fiction, performer/character, mimesis/fantasy, individual/community relationships you create? Can we participate as spectators in a way we cannot when sitting on our own with a novel?

Andrea: The audience always completes the play. The witnesses are essential participants. The audience evokes the spirit of the performers. I am mindful of the audience's story world, and I hope to join their stories to mine. Writers are technicians of the sacred wielding the power of the word, the story. It's Eshu (West African deity) power, Ashé—the power to make things be. Artists are conjurers. We must feel the audience, journey to them, respect them even as we trick and challenge them. Art is a religious engagement with the mysteries of the universe. Spectators and performers share breath and sweat. In a performance, heartbeats and laughter sync up. Audience and performers taste each other's tears. The audience becomes the performers. In a novel, the same thing happens, the reader's body syncs up with the characters, but this takes place in the theatre of the mind. The live audience and the home audience are on a miraculous continuum. We're all, reader, live performer, live audience, making the story whether we witness, perform, or read it. This is part of the miracle and mystery of our Universe. Thus, to tap Ashé, the power to make things be, I always pour libation to Eshu, master of uncertainty. This keeps me humble and open to the surprise of the artist-audience exchange.

Sarah Tolmie's The Stone Boatmen

(Cont. from p. 1)

What attracted you to them? In what way is the novel a response or a tribute to medieval works such as Piers Plowman, which you mention in the author biography?

Sarah: The book was specifically conceived as a tribute to Langland's long, strange poem *Piers Plowman*, almost as a continuation of it. *Piers* is a poem set firmly in the late 14th century, in the urban, bourgeois world of late medieval Catholic Europe. Its great achievement is the way in which it makes everyday life into a mystery: one tiny action in a human life can have many meanings simultaneously, and one word can mean utterly different things to different groups of people even if they are neighbors. The world he was writing about was incredibly complex, yet its categories were fairly stable. I wanted to move that feeling of enigma forward, roughly to the early modern period: I think of my text as the equivalent of the early 17th century, a time in which basic tools people used for understanding the world changed drastically in their hands. We tend to think of this period as a time of violence and revolution, and this it certainly was. But it was also a time of profound conceptual change. This may sound less dramatic, but in fact, in my view, it is far more dramatic. Killing and destruction have a pretty universal sameness: their conclusions are foregone. The point about the discoveries that happen in *The Stone Boatmen* is that their conclusions are not foregone and can just barely, waveringly, be foreseen. What I most wanted to convey in the book was the deep feeling of discovery, its unnervingness, tentativeness, passion, and satisfaction.

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Aqueduct: There is a constant sense of reflection as the events unfold: action is more suggested than shown, hints are often favored over exposition, and most radical changes seem to happen inside the characters' minds. Could you comment on this?

Sarah: This book was written utterly piecemeal, in paragraph-length sections during my commute to work on the bus. What I was really interested in, always, were the characters' thoughts. I had an hour and a half each time to work, so I cut to the chase each time—the inner chase, you might say. I am aggressively uninterested in plot. I'm the kind of reader who reads the last pages first to get that all over with. Who can say what actually happens in *To the Lighthouse*? Who cares? Certainly what I wanted to write, each day as I sat down, was primarily a record of my protagonists' sensory and cerebral experiences.

Aqueduct: Faren Miller writes in her recent *Locus* review, "[p]hysical objects, relics like the gigantic statues known as the Stone Boatmen, inspire a more active type of explorer to get a move on." Indeed, your carefully detailed descriptions of objects, pieces of art and craftsmanship, set them at the forefront of many momentous scenes: the skulls of one of the Perihelion rituals, the Silverlink rings, and Fjorel's tapestries are some of these. What would you say is their role; how do these unique objects partake in the story?

Sarah: This is my poet persona taking over. Ekphrasis is a central technique for most poets I know. *The Stone Boatmen* was the first piece of prose of any sustained length I ever wrote, and because I wrote it in that paragraph-by-paragraph way, in short bursts, it was in many respects like writing a series of poems, or prose-poems. The idea of vision is central to the book as a whole, and many of its central scenes came to me as clear visual pictures. The whole thing, indeed, sprang from a single scene in a dream: of two identical men, in the dark, by torchlight, one of them in a small boat, one in the water, gripping the boat's side, two perfectly opposed profiles. That grew from a paragraph-length description into the whole story of Nerel and Azul.

The time and effort people put into crafting objects like the boatmen, or the ship *Aphelion*, or Rose's poems, or Fjorel's tapestries, is also something I really wished to register as action, even as heroic action. In fact, as far as I am concerned, making objects of art is the most significant thing that people do, far more absorbing than anything else, including war, sex, or conversation, those actions we expect characters to perform for us in books. If you want to witness people doing the most critical, visceral,

necessary, and universal thing of all, it won't even be agriculture: it will be art.

Aqueduct: Ritual, in the novel, seems to be an active force that envelops the lives of the characters and interlocks them with each other. In that sense, it seems to be a healthy alternative to the Ritual in Mervyn Peake's Gormenghast books, which present it as a collection of meaningless tasks that exasperate many of the inhabitants of the castle. Do you think ritual is necessarily a conservative force?

Sarah: No, I don't think ritual is necessarily a conservative force at all. Rituals can, in fact, be exploratory, and they can and do contribute to learning. Almost all forms of both institutional and domestic learning are highly ritualized, when you think about it, and all the coding that surrounds the material to be learned—who stands where, and who wears what, and exactly how people move, and how you hold the pen, and so on—remains an intrinsic part of both absorbing and remembering it. Context, quite broadly conceived, is critical to cognition, as cognitive science is busy telling us now, and as sophisticated medieval practitioners of memorial arts, verbal, pictorial, and ceremonial, were likewise very clear about. (Anyone who wants a thorough grounding in this amazingly prescient body of rhetorical theory should read Mary Carruthers.) In short, I believe that ceremony is a form of thinking. Important things can be taught in it, and through it, as they can through oral or textual or visual form. I am especially interested in the ways in which it engages proprioception and the kinaesthetic senses into the larger brain landscape of teaching and learning.

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Aqueduct: Although a lot of things happen throughout the length of the novel—murder, treason, love affairs—I noticed that the book is, in general, a placid one. Love rivals part in peace; first encounters between cultures are more like reunions with long-lost relatives; marriages are long and happy; the people love their rulers. How do you think the lack of violent conflict, so common in medieval inspired fantasy, serves the story?

Sarah: I am proud to reclaim the word placid. Possibly even serene. This is an effect, I suppose, of the book's most fantastic dimension, the part that makes it most clearly speculative, which is whatever transcendental power it is that unites the ancestors and the people of Nerel and Fjorel's time, however precariously, and that likewise joins them, holistically, to the world. In their world these powers, which remain unnamed, but which might have analogues in ours as *prana* or *chi* or *dao*, though I am not pushing these equivalencies very hard, are more palpable than they are for us. So, the visionary characters who can perceive these forces sometimes can take refuge in what Wittgenstein called "the mystical feeling" more fully than we are able to, and they are calmed and fulfilled by it. The major feelings elicited by *Piers Plowman*, the this-worldly equivalent, are anger and bafflement. Solace is a lot harder to come by, and is mostly a lie or a power trip. In alternate-world fiction, reality can be kinder, or at least simpler, and therefore more copacetic.

One other feature worth mentioning here, probably, is the novel's overall commitment to examining the effects both of acting and of refraining from acting (exhibiting what Langland calls patience), since both are exercises of the will. Mahar, for example, is a character of decision, and yet likely his most important move in the narrative is to wait aboard ship and soothe his fractious crew with the birds Redcap and Rose rather than rushing off heroically to get them all killed. Again, without overstating the comparison, this is the kind of observation that Ursula Le Guin regularly carries out in her work as well, and I am one of her biggest fans.

I Don't Fly

Gwyneth Jones

It happened like this. In the summer of 2005 I had two invitations to the US. The second of these had reached me while I was actually *in* the US, checking my email in a hurry on somebody else's computer. I said yes, believing the dates were close enough for me to cover both engagements in one trip. Later, I looked again and found I'd been mistaken, so I ended up making two transatlantic flights in a few weeks. You, who are reading this, probably can't remember how it felt to be outraged and miserable about the changes the War On Terrorism brought to air travel: the bullying, the petty humiliation; the horrible, dehumanizing effect of their work on many of the staff implementing the whole thing. You shuffle along like lambs to the slaughter, or maybe even with a warm glow in your heart: because by enduring the new normal you are helping our State of Permanent Warfare to make the world safe. In 2005 I hadn't got used to it, not at all. I didn't like it, and I was doubly infuriated because, though I don't dispute that a lot of people died on 9/11/2001, I believed (I still believe) that the whole War On Terrorism thing was and is largely the twisted, dishonest, disastrous result of twisted, callous, and dishonest foreign policy on the part of the US (Who trained Osama Bin Laden?) and of course of my own bad guy PM, Tony Blair. So I was angry, and when one of the uniformed persons (very mildly suspicious of my two entries and exits) suggested happily that I should apply for a visa, I experienced a moment of clarity and thought to myself: *I have a better idea*. I am not going to put up with this. I am NEVER going to do this again.

You, who are reading this, probably can't remember how it felt to be outraged and miserable about the changes the War On Terrorism brought to air travel: the bullying, the petty humiliation; the horrible, dehumanizing effect of their work on many of the staff implementing the whole thing.

I got myself home safely, without glowering at the wrong person and ending up naked in a small room, incommunicado and with large guards about to beat me up. I flew to Greece a few days later. We had rented a house from someone on Naxos for a month, and it was all booked: and that was it. I haven't stepped onto a plane since August 2005, except once for a family emergency, when I needed to get across to Northern Ireland fast.

It doesn't hurt a bit.

That was then. Now it's 2014. Iraq is a country destroyed, Afghanistan's agony continues. There has been no victory, no happy ending; nothing that was promised to the people of that initial post-9/11 theatre of war; only permanent warfare digging in deeper, finding new sites. And *of course* no mention of the Precious Bane (in all its dirty forms) that drives the machine and fuels it. Talk about terror, talk about religion, but *don't ever talk about the fossil fuel*. Or that's the way I see it, while continuing to insist that things could be different. Meanwhile, you'll probably have seen, or encountered in some way, the latest UN climate change report? Back in 2005 I knew aviation fuel was a carbon emissions bad guy: I didn't have any idea things could move so fast. You won't find a melted Arctic in the near future fiction I was writing then. So now I have another very pressing reason to keep my feet on the ground. I don't fly; I don't drive if I can use public transport. I don't use public transport if I can walk. It's not much, and it's not rigorous (I've travelled on big boats, across the Channel, the North Sea and across the Med to Greece, since 2005). But I'm trying to do *something*. I'm trying to save the future.

I think aviation fuel ought to be rationed. I think mass air travel has had its day. I'm an atheist where the Almighty God of Economic Growth is concerned, but I even think the economic argument cuts both ways. Change the "business as usual" paradigm, and the new paradigm will start protecting itself, and insisting change is impossible, just like nothing happened. Don't worry about the money. Money's a weed; it'll always find a way to grow. Habitable planets are not so easy to find. Let's try to hold onto this one.

Gwyneth Jones, writer and critic of science fiction and fantasy, is the author of many novels for teenagers, mostly horror and thrillers, using the name Ann Halam, and several highly regarded sf novels for adults. Her essays and reviews are collected in *Deconstructing the Starships* (1999) and *Imagination/Space* (2009). Among other honors, several of her novels have been nominated for the Arthur C. Clarke, the latest being *Spirit* (2009), and *Life* won the 2004 Philip K. Dick award.

September 1, 2024: A Speculation

Predicting what may become of us, our fellow humans, and our world is not only a common trait of science fiction, but also our nature. A firm grounding in contemporary reality (and perhaps an element of chance) has helped generations of authors compose extremely acute visions of the future. There have also been pretty funny failures in their naivety and enthusiasm.

The world has changed greatly since Aqueduct started ten years ago—there is no need at this point for us to mention that technology is transforming the way we communicate, consume, and even think at a dramatic speed, and that it is bound to keep doing it. We have asked Aqueduct authors and friends to send us their glimpses of what they think or hope the world will be like in ten years' time, in the form of short articles, press releases, and even tweets—cats are definitely in the cards. The result is an eclectic mix that we shall leave for posterity to judge.

Aqueduct Press is proud to announce the release of *Notes from Low to the Ground: Feminist Essays and Prose Poems* by Hawthorne Tiptree Keefer (2000–2019), theoretician and cat. After the invention of cat translation software in 2015, H.T. Keefer quickly established herself as a prolific critic, publishing in traditional venues such as *Feminist Studies* and *Pandagon* as well as feline publications including *Outside the Box* and *Feh!* Her monthly column in *The Stepstool: News for Queer Cats* gained a huge following: the installments "Raising Humans" and "I Can Have Grammar" became instant classics in the Housepet Dignity Movement. Hawthie's previous books include *Feather Your Engines: Collected Music Reviews* and *Kitteh Relations Theory: A Shameless Psychoanalytic Paradigm*. A biography, *Hawthorne Keefer, Cat of Many Colors*, is forthcoming from Julie Phillips.

Josh Lukin

September 1, 2024

Today, the National Science Foundation (NSF) announced that principal investigators on all future scientific research proposals will be required to budget for an expert in feminist science fiction as part of their project team. Jane Fieldman, Head of Policy at the NSF, explains: "It has come to be widely recognized that writers, critics, and indeed fans of feminist science fiction pose the most challenging questions about the funding, conduct, and consequences of scientific research and its applications. No scientific research should proceed without the benefit of the insights of such critical friends. No research that the NSF funds will do so in future."

Dr Joan Haran

Time Controversy Explained

Controversy rages over yesterday's time travel experiments, which sent a domesticated cat back in time. The *Gazette* asked our local scientific professor what's up. "We intended to prove definitively that the timestream resists paradox, and we have," she explained. "If the cat made changes that prevented herself from being born, she could not have gone. But many of our critics think our memories of yesterday are faulty because the timestream is always in flux. Others say we're now living in a paradox, or that we simply created another of many multiple worlds. Unless we can come to agreement over the results of our experiments, we'll lose our grant funding." The *Gazette* thanks Professor Fluffy for her help and wishes her the best with her new litter.

Kristin King

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Aqueduct Press is proud to announce this year's winner of the For the Rest of Your Life fellowship. Due to her decades-long commitment to blurring genre boundaries in uncountable works of interfiction, Aqueduct author Kiini Ibura Salaam will be awarded her own island, an annual income of $150,000 dollars, and a literary center to run workshops and residencies. While the For the Rest of Your Life judging panel valued all of Ms Salaam's work, her latest effort, the Pulitzer Prize-winning *Bloodlines* was particularly instrumental in selecting her as this year's winner. In 2025, Aqueduct will be publishing *Sitings, Sensations, and Sound: On Rhythm, Sensuality, and Meaning in the Work of Kiini Ibura Salaam.* Please join us for the award ceremony on October 1 in Ms Salaam's hometown of New Orleans, Louisiana.

Kiini Ibura Salaam

Annalee Newitz
@Annaleen 11h

Does anybody know how to un-install the Google translate app for Android braingate? I keep speaking German when I select Russian. #Googlesucks

WisCon 2004–2014: Challenges and Transformations

In the ten years of Aqueduct Press's activity, we have witnessed a steady rise of awareness about structures of oppression and discrimination within feminist sf/f community and fandom. WisCon, the main event that brings many of us together every year, is as a result the perfect scenario where change can be seen at work. We have asked contributors to Aqueduct's past WisCon Chronicles volumes to tell us about their own WisCon experiences, past and present.

Sandy Olson

In my seven years coming to WisCon, I've been fortunate to be involved with changes and progress in making the convention more accessible, for people with and without disabilities. Since WisCon 31, some of these changes have been better signage; traffic lanes on the sixth floor; blue-taped squares and reserved seats for people with disabilities in panel rooms; scent-free soap in the main hotel bathrooms; a large-print program book; microphone use by panelists; and a quiet room on the second floor. In the past few years we've been able to hire ASL interpreters for portions of the convention, and we've had a captionist at the Guest of Honor event. I've also seen more panels on disability topics, and although we don't keep track, it seems like more disabled people attend WisCon now than even five years ago. We on the Access Team are always trying to improve accessibility at the convention, and hopefully we can apply our knowledge to other areas of our lives.

Our Access initiatives directly benefit people with disabilities; and they indirectly benefit everyone because of raised awareness in the wider fandom community. The "blue tape" meme has spread to other conventions. In my own circles within fandom, disability discussions are normal.

I value The WisCon Chronicles as an important means of recording our feminist history and have been thrilled to contribute to them. Volume 7, *Shattering Ableist Narratives*, edited by JoSelle Vanderhooft, is a good place to read more about WisCon and disability.

WisCon has made huge progress in accessibility, but there is always more to do. Stay tuned for more changes!

Debbie Notkin

As a co-author of WisCon's statement of principles, I was asked to write here "on WisCon ten years ago and now, how it has changed, what still needs doing.

Melissa Harris-Perry has recently addressed this far better than I could:

> For me, feminism is a question: what truths are missing here? The feminist thinker and organizer should always be asking this question. What are we missing? Who are we excluding? How is our analysis true, but still limited by missing truths? For me this means feminism creates a posture of intellectual humility and a willingness to question ourselves as much as we question systems of oppression. I am always distraught to encounter feminists who are utterly sure of themselves and never willing to admit to their own need to grow, expand and change.

WisCon 38 will be more diverse, more aware, and more thorough in improving awareness and diversity than WisCon 28 was. Dozens of WisCon feminists put in countless hours of examination and effort: how do we bring in more people of color? How do we improve access? How can we honestly address have/have-not financial issues? What does it mean to invite a guest of honor, and how accountable are we for our guests' politics? Where does harassment live in the community and what are we doing about it?

So yes, improvement. *Lots* of improvement. But never, never "success."

What *are* we missing? Who are **we** excluding? *How* is our analysis true, but still limited by missing truths?

If WisCon is still asking these questions ten years from now, and still finding new answers, if we are not utterly sure of ourselves, I will keep calling that success.

(The Harris-Perry quotation can be found at: http://jezebel.com/melissa-harris-perry-answers-your-questions-1558553163)

Ian K. Hagemann

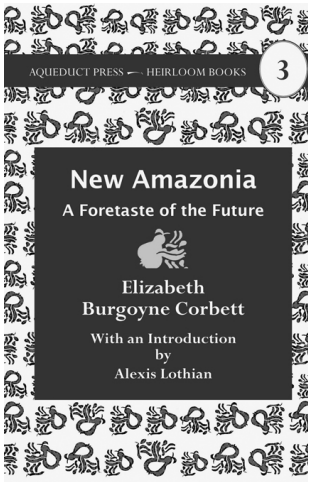
(Brief) WisCon Memories

My first WisCon was in 1996, when membership was first expanded to 1,000 (and there were fewer than 10 People of Color at the entire convention), and my second WisCon was in 1999, when the convention planned to set aside some POC-only organizing space but was unable to do so, and I helped found the Carl Brandon Society to help make SF friendlier for People of Color. I have been to every WisCon since.

In reflecting on the past ten years of WisCon, I would have to say that it's been a mixed bag for me person-

ally. It's certainly a relief that there are so many more POC in attendance than there used to be, but I no longer know *anything* about some of us. I appreciate that WisCon has "Safer Space for POC," but I'm not always comfortable there due to resigning in fury from the Carl Brandon Steering Committee in 2007 for reasons discussed with Nalo Hopkinson in *The WisCon Chronicles, Vol 6: Futures of Feminism and Fandom.*

I come to WisCon to connect with ideas and people. I like the increased diversity, transparency, and democracy in programming, and appreciate that there are now panels about personal growth at the convention. I also miss the functionality of the old "Voodoo Message Board," because people are now only listed if they individually change an obscure setting in their web account—but I certainly appreciate that it is no longer associated with "Voodoo," and I still always find some meal companions in the lobby at the last minute and eat meals in the Con Suite.



New Amazonia: A Foretaste of the Future is the third volume in Aqueduct's Heirloom Books imprint. In this feminist utopia by Elizabeth Burgoyne Corbett, a writer falls asleep in 1889—raging against an antifeminist statement signed by "ladies" opposing the cause of women's suffrage—and wakens, in company with a hashish-smoking "masher," in a future world run by women. This new edition includes an introduction by scholar Alexis Lothian, a fragment of which you can read below.

A Foretaste of the Future, a Caution from the Past: New Amazonia's Feminist Dream

When Elizabeth Burgoyne Corbett sat down in the late 1880s to imagine a world 500 years hence, she can little have imagined that her words would be pored over in another century, on another continent, in a community gathered around the kinds of imaginative engagement with gender that she was pioneering. L. Timmel Duchamp has described feminist science fiction as a "great conversation"; Corbett's speculations about New Amazonia are part of that conversation's prehistory, a fictional contribution to political debates with which the writer was intensively engaged. The book you are holding is a piece of utopian fiction, but it is just as much a feminist rant—entertaining, educational, and more than a little over the top. Hilarious at some moments, *New Amazonia* is shocking and dispiriting at others. Corbett's vision of an ideal woman-centered society makes the presumptions and prejudices of her feminist moment acutely visible, forcing us to remember how easily a critique of gendered norms could and still can coexist with racism, class hierarchy, imperialism, and the ableism that has justified eugenic reproductive practices.

I became aware of *New Amazonia* because the title caught my attention as I browsed historical bibliographies of feminist science fiction.[1] It stuck in my mind because its name, which is the name of the utopian society it depicts, made me think of female superheroes—of Wonder Woman. It is also the name of the planet where Elizabeth Bear's 2006 science fiction novel *Carnival* is set. When I sought it out in the stacks of the British Library, it stuck with me for its combination of typical and complicated engagement with period and genre tropes and for its sometimes awkward, sometimes humorous tone. One can never quite tell whether Corbett's tongue is in her cheek, whether she wishes her narrator's voice to be taken at face value. In an entry for Aqueduct Press's 2013 speculative encyclopedia *Missing Links and Secret Histories: A Selection of Wikipedia Entries from Across the Known Multiverse*, L. Timmel Duchamp brings this tonal uncertainty to the fore, imagining Corbett's narrative as a critique written by a New Amazonian radical who borrows the voice of a woman from the past in order to criticize retrograde political movements in her country.

Untangling the threads that make up Corbett's narrative reveals it to be, while problematic to a point that will (and should) horrify contemporary readers, a good deal more complex than it sometimes seems. My hope is that the book's reappearance in Aqueduct's Heirloom Books series will bring others to wrestle, variously, with its complexities—so that we may better understand the prejudices, presumptions, and horrifying contradictions that face our feminist imaginations now.

1 Such as L. Timmel Duchamp's online bibliography of "Science Fiction and Utopias by Women, 1818-1949" and Roger C. Schlobin's *Urania's Daughters.*

The WisCon Chronicles, Vol. 8 Re-Generating WisCon

edited by Rebecca Holden

Volume 8 of The WisCon Chronicles series, released at this year's WisCon, comes packed with contributions, as Rebecca Holden puts it, on the "generations and various feminism(s) of WisCon," the relationships between "waves" of feminism, remembrance, and the present and the future of feminism.

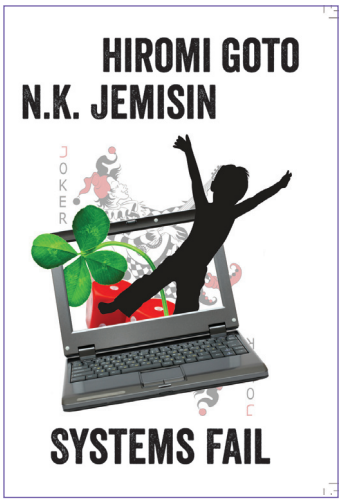
> This volume…is not designed to simply celebrate what goes on at WisCon, but to chronicle its triumphs, its challenges, its struggles, as well as the perspectives of various attendees—whether or not they consider themselves insiders or outsiders. WisCon has witnessed and partnered to some degree in the birth of the Carl Brandon Society, Broad Universe, Aqueduct Press, and the safe space for people of color—all new beginnings that were not simple, easy births.
>
> (*From the Introduction*)

The title includes Heather Lindsley's "Mayfly," on generational relationships and "the promise of an expanded future," L. Timmel Duchamp's essay, "Making Visible the Context of Feminist SF: WisCon and Aqueduct Press," on WisCon's importance for Aqueduct's mission; Nisi Shawl's exploration of the meaning of being feminist in three generations of her family; and Joan Haran's reminder on the ways different waves of feminism actually overlap. Elise Matthesen and Nancy Jane Moore deal with sexual harassment as a story that repeats itself in the experience of too many feminists and con-goers, and provide possible ways of putting an end to it. Speculative poetry and visual art are featured also, as well as Kiini Ibura Salaam's story "Marie" from her Tiptree-winning short story collection *Ancient, Ancient*, contributions by Janice Mynchenberg on being a Christian minister at WisCon, Beth Plutchak on 1970s feminism's compromises at the expense of women of color, Naomi Mercer on Sheri Tepper's *Raising the Stones*, Rachel Kronick on WisCon and the danger of imposing the role of educator on transgender guests, and Lisa Bolekaja on being new at WisCon and "embrac[ing] the work of re-presenting black women in her writing who may be outsiders, but are also outside of the typical binaries reserved for black women, both fictional and real."

Systems Fail

by Hiromi Goto and N.K. Jemisin

Systems Fail is a limited edition volume celebrating the work of WisCon 38 Guests of Honor Hiromi Goto and N.K. Jemisin.



This seventh installment of the Guest of Honor series includes Hiromi Goto's short story "What Isn't Remembered" and novelette "Sleep Clinic for Troubled Souls"; Nisi Shawl's interview with the author; N.K. Jemisin's short story "Non-Zero Probabilities" and an interview with Karen Burnham, as well as her essays "Dreaming Awake," "Fantastic Profanity," the frequently linked-to "Why I Think RaceFail Was the Bestest Thing Evar," "There's No Such Thing As a Good Stereotype," "Time to Pick a Side," and her Guest of Honor speech at Continuum IX (June 2013, Melbourne, Australia).