

Spring/Summer 2009
Volume 5

The Aqueduct Gazette

Top Stories

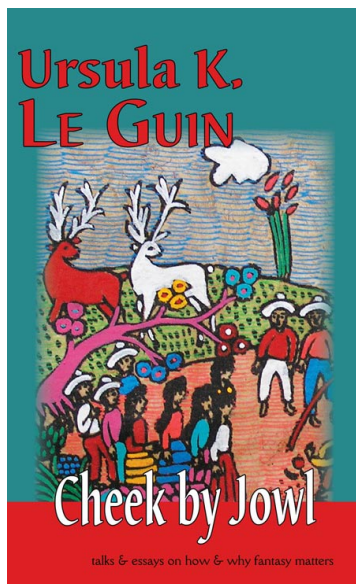
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Special Features

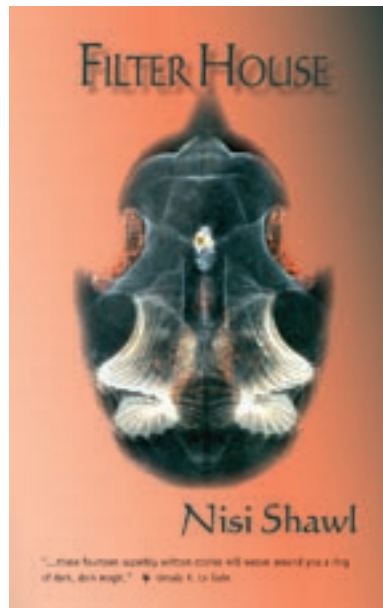
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Filter House Co-Winner of the Tiptree



On April 26, 2009, The James Tiptree, Jr. Literary Award Council announced that the 2008 Tiptree Award will be going to Patrick Ness's young adult novel *The Knife of Never Letting Go* and Nisi Shawl's *Filter House*, an Aqueduct Press book.

The Tiptree Award, an annual literary prize for science fiction or fantasy "that expands or explores our understanding of gender," will be presented on Memorial Day weekend at WisCon in Madison, Wisconsin. Each winner will receive \$1000 in prize money, an original artwork created specifically for the winning novel or story, and a confection, usually chocolate. The 2008 jurors were Gavin J. Grant (chair), K. Tempest Bradford, Leslie Howle, Roz Kaveney, and Catherynne M. Valente.

The award is named for Alice B. Sheldon, who wrote under the pseudonym James Tiptree, Jr. By her impulsive choice of a masculine pen name, Sheldon

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New from Aqueduct: Ursula K. Le Guin, *Cheek by Jowl*

Talks and Essays about How and Why Fantasy Matters

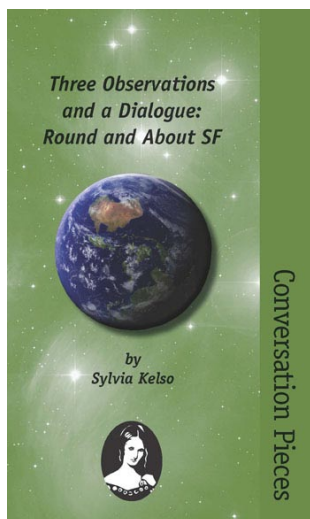
The monstrous homogenization of our world has now almost destroyed the map, any map, by making every place on it exactly like every other place, and leaving no blanks. No unknown lands. A hamburger joint and a coffee shop in every block, repeated forever. No Others; nothing unfamiliar. As in the Mandelbrot fractal set, the enormously large and the infinitesimally small are exactly the same, and the same leads always to the same again; there is no other; there is no escape, because there is nowhere else.

In reinventing the world of intense, unreproducible, local knowledge, seemingly by a denial or evasion of current reality, fantasists are perhaps trying to assert and explore a larger reality than we now allow ourselves. They are trying to restore the sense—to regain the knowledge—that there is somewhere else, anywhere else, where other people may live another kind of life.

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New Conversation Pieces

Three Observations and a Dialogue: Round and About SF by Sylvia Kelso



After WisCon 20, Sylvia Kelso engaged Lois McMaster Bujold in a rich, snappy correspondence about Bujold's Vorkosigan novels. "You...remark that '[my] post-modern despair is not [your] emergency' over the failure of feminism to transform SF," she wrote to Bujold. "My postmodern despair OUGHT to be your emergency, *buen'amiga*, because one of the reasons

you are being ignored is that...you don't fit the male canon either in the community or the critical industry; so unless you catch their eyes with a sand-blasted like *The Left Hand of Darkness*, the male academics are also gonna find you invisible..."

That correspondence became "Letterspace: In the Chinks Between Published Fiction and Published Criticism," which is published here.

"Third Person Peculiar: Reading between Academic and SF-Community Positions in (Feminist) Sf," a critical essay discussing the intricacies of an Australian feminist scholar writing about science fiction, was inspired by Sylvia's first WisCon. "In equally feminist fashion," she writes, "let me use some personal experience here. 'Long, long ago, in a galaxy far, far away'—as far away as North Queensland, which is the finger at the eastern side of Australia, and longer ago than I intend to admit—there was a kid sitting on the homestead veranda on a hot January afternoon, reading a book. At least, her body was there; the rest was sneaking across a mysterious sub-Alpine plateau at the head of the Amazon. She read a lot, including a good Children's Encyclopedia, where she had found

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The Buonarotti Quartet by Gwyneth Jones

The man who'd given his handle as Drummer raised heavy eyes and spoke, sonorous as a prophet, from out of a full black beard. "We will be ordered to the transit chamber as we were ordered to this room; or drugged and carried by robots in our sleep. We will lie down in the Buonarotti capsules, and a code-self, the complex pattern of each human body and soul, will be split into two like a cell dividing. The copies will be sent flying around the torus, at half-light speed. You will collide with yourself and cease utterly to exist at these co-ordinates of space-time. The body and soul in the capsule will be *annihilated*, and know GOD no longer."

—from "The Voyage Out"



In Gwyneth Jones's White Queen Trilogy, the reclusive female genius called Peenemunde Buonarotti invented the instantaneous transit device of the same name. In the four stories of *The Buonarotti Quartet*, Gwyneth Jones shows us humans traveling via the device to alien worlds and situations. Some are diplomats, some are extreme travelers, some are prisoners. All are in for a rough, wild ride.

Author's Notes on *The Buonarotti Quartet* by Gwyneth Jones

1. A Few Remarks on the Buonarotti Transit

The Buonarotti Transit first appeared in *White Queen*, a novel about an alien invasion of Earth—in which human gender issues come up against another way of cutting up the world, and a mechanist global civilization is overcome by a non-mechanist, highly

cont. on page 3

Buonarotti Quartet (cont. from page 2)

intuitive and devious crew of buccaneers. Meanwhile, reclusive genius Peenemunde Buonarotti has been researching a means of instantaneous interstellar transit. She's been piggy-backing her experiments on the Big Science giant accelerator nearest to her place of work: translating herself into pure information, splitting the code and sending two code-versions of herself around the ring, to collide at lightspeed and reach fusion with the State of All States. Not quite ready to publish, she returns from her first successful landing on an alien planet, the night the (apparently) faster-than-light-powered Aleutians announce their presence... "That's torn it," says Peenemunde, robbed of her big moment.

The Buonarotti Device features in the next two episodes of the Aleutian story as a lost treasure, as proof that humans were not always colonized and inferior; and as the symbol of an Utopian future, in which Humans and Aleutians will share the freedom of the stars as equals.

2. On "The Fulcrum"

It all seems so long ago... "The Fulcrum" is the first Buonarotti story I wrote, and the most loosely connected to the universe of *Spirit*, the novel for which all these stories are preparatory sketches. It was my contribution to a themed anthology called *Constellations*. Orion is my favorite constellation, so that choice was obvious. I already had a device that sent people across interstellar distances, with unpredictable results. I found out about the Bok Globule, the star nursery in the Orion Nebula (also the Osiris angle), and there I had my science/astronomy strand. The fiction is a pure spoof on post-cyberpunk sf *noir*—hyper-masculine playground for nihilist vigilantes, where ordinary people (whatever their sex) had better shut up, accept that violence rules, and keep off the streets. I like a little fantasy mayhem as much as the next fan, but I despaired at the message that the critically acclaimed sf of the new millennium was

"I like a little fantasy mayhem as much as the next fan, but I despaired at the message that the critically acclaimed sf of the new millennium was giving to women, especially young women, as genre readers and as writers... and my response was laughter."

giving to women, especially young women, as genre readers and as writers...and my response was laughter.

If you're fond of Dashiell Hammett's *The Maltese Falcon*, or rather the 1941 John Huston movie, you'll spot liberally scattered references to this great and venerable "noir" in my plot, characters, and McGuffin. Orlando and Grace, besides being named for a (heterosexual, but conventional!) cat couple in a UK classic series of children's picture books, are not aliens, they are humans with body-mods who like to *call* themselves aliens. Nice Eddie is the name of a character in *Reservoir Dogs*, another favorite old movie. Look out for what happens to the perfect (virtual) girlfriends: Sara Komensky and "Annie-Mah."

3. On "Saving Tiamaat"

Every so often, science fiction futures need to be refreshed. New Space Opera is Space Opera updated, with the Cold War-ish scenario that's been around since *Star Trek I* finally consigned to the recycle bin, the media taking their modern share in the making

of governments, the megadeath weaponry refurbished, and sci-fi concepts like *robotics, cyborgs, mind-control, total surveillance* enhanced by contact with the actual technology. There was modern Space Opera before NSO (try C.J. Cherryh's *Cyteen*), but what's really new is that in C21 the globalization of planet Earth is inescapable. If the proper study of science fiction is the present day, then

right now NSO is the genre mirror of our world—a multi-state organization (choose your political flavor!) of diverse but basically similar peoples; struggling toward unity, beset by horrific genocidal wars, where the privileged few can cross staggering distances in no time, while the many casualties of the process are just moved from one internment camp to another. When I wrote "Saving Tiamaat," my vague idea that I'd like to write a novel-length (new) Space Opera had become a firm intention, so this isn't only a drama about a moral dilemma at a peace conference—and the mistake we still make (though we should know better!) when we

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Visit our blog: Ambling along the Aqueduct aqueductpress.blogspot.com/

Buonarotti Quartet (cont. from page 3)

assume that a woman will be *nicer*, more all-round *civilized* than a man. It's also a sketch for "Speranza," my interplanetary capital, the latest incarnation of a long-gone seedy space station called The Panhandle—the public architecture, the vast bureaucracy, the staffers' breakfast bars; and the secret, ruthless shadow-self that every Utopian State conceals.

Physically (er, given that it's inside a hollowed asteroid), Speranza is modeled on the EU glass and concrete hives of Strasbourg and Bruxelles: please substitute the majestic, allegedly good-willed super-government behemoth of your choice.

4. On "The Voyage Out"

If the Buonarotti stories followed a fixed chronology (which they don't, I never thought about it), "The Voyage Out" would come soon after "The Fulcrum." The Panhandle has become a deep space Remand Center, where condemned prisoners wait to be transported to the unknown shore where they'll serve life sentences. They don't know if the Landfall planet even exists: maybe when they lie down in those couches they simply get vaporized; but they soon discover that the Buonarotti Torus, where the barrier between mind and matter is broken, makes spooky company...

When I wrote "Voyage" for Lynne Jamneck's *Periphery* collection (it's an anthology of Lesbian sf erotica), I'd been reading L. Timmel Duchamp's *Alanya* to *Alanya*. I think "Ruth Norman" is sideways-related to Timmi's "Kay Zeldin," a high-powered elite-academic in a similarly lawless yet oppressive future. A woman who has starved herself of pleasure so that she can live a life of principle; who has beaten herself up repeatedly, to keep her career (as a political activist, in this case) intact, but who has all kinds of longings and untapped potential. The secret life of nightdresses is a very ancient fantasy of mine, to do with a fairytale about some princesses who used to sneak out of bed at night and go dancing in fairyland. I used to spend a fair amount of time ill-in-bed when I was a little girl, and was devoted to my nightclothes. Much nicer than the clothes I had to wear in the waking world, where

it was school uniform and other depressing outfits. The original Hilde was a girl at school with me, who had frizzy cinnamon braids and a beautiful smile. I always liked the look of her, but I never said anything, she was sporty, it was hopeless. I don't think I need to explain the Gruffaloes.

5. On "The Tomb Wife"

Here's the rationale, a C21 variation on a venerable sf trope: the material universe, in the final analysis, cannot be logically distinguished from the perceptions of the observer, the maps of firing neurons that light up when you see the stars or think about string theory. We can manipulate *one* of these sets of information, pretty much without limit: why not the other? Once you've broken the barrier between mind and matter (for instance using the Buonarotti method; there are more dangerous ways, outlined in a series called *Bold As Love*, but they've been outlawed) you can do just about anything. If you know the 4-space coordinates of your destination you can simply arrive there, by an

act of will, and your informational self will take material form from the ambient chemistry it finds—not merely your body, but your survival gear; or even large hunks of ancient masonry, if you've had the proper neuro-training.

The catch is that *what really happens* is an equation of staggering complexity, a huge volume of information space resolved into a new pattern. Conscious travelers (and some of the party must be conscious, or nobody's going anywhere) experience this complexity as an intense, disturbing dream. In *White Queen*, Buonarotti's lab rats didn't know about this effect, which proved to be a bit of a nightmare. In "The Tomb Wife," the last story I wrote before the new novel, the perils of non-duration travel have been tamed, to an extent. There's a consensus reality (we're on a starship). There's a navigator, who knows exactly what she's doing. But things can still go wrong.

There are genre stories that are only genre because a strand of the arbitrarily strange has been threaded into the everyday world. "The Tomb Wife," on the other hand, is a sci-fi tale with added strangeness.

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Filter House Wins Tiptree (cont. from page 1)

helped break down the imaginary barrier between “women’s writing” and “men’s writing.” Her fine stories were eagerly accepted by publishers and won many awards in the field. Many years later, after she had written other works under the female pen name of Raccoona Sheldon, it was discovered that she was female. The discovery led to a great deal of discussion of what aspects of writing, if any, are essentially gendered. The name “Tiptree” was selected to illustrate the complex role of gender in writing and reading.

Publishers Weekly, which selected *Filter House* as one of the best books of 2008, described it as an “exquisitely rendered debut collection” that “ranges into the past and future to explore identity and belief in a dazzling variety of settings.” Tiptree jurors spotlight Shawl’s willingness to challenge the reader with her exploration of gender roles. Juror K. Tempest Bradford writes, “The stories in *Filter House* refuse to allow the reader the comfort of assuming that the men and women will act according to the assumptions mainstream readers/society/culture puts on them.”

Juror Catherynne M. Valente notes that most of Shawl’s protagonists in this collection are “young women coming to terms with womanhood and what that means in terms of their culture, magic (almost always tribal, nuts and bolts, African-based magical systems, which is fascinating in itself), [and] technology.” In her comments, Valente points out some elements of stories that made this collection particularly appropriate for the Tiptree Award: “‘At the Huts of Ajala’ struck me deeply as a critique of beauty and coming of age rituals. The final story, ‘The Beads of Ku,’ deals with marriage and motherhood and death. ‘Shiomah’s Land’ deals with the sexuality of a godlike race, and a young woman’s liberation from it. ‘Wallamellon’ is a heartbreaking story about the Blue Lady, the folkloric figure invented by Florida orphans, and a young girl pursuing the Blue Lady straight into a kind of urban priestess-hood.”

Filter House is the first book published by Aqueduct to be awarded the Tiptree. Four other books—*Life* by Gwyneth Jones, *Love’s Body, Dancing in Time* by L. Timmel Duchamp, *Dangerous Space* by Kelley Eskridge, and *Mindscape* by Andrea Hairston—have been on the Honors List in past years.



Three Observations (cont. from page 2)

a beautiful plate of an iguanodon, old style, sitting on its hind-legs like a kangaroo. So she knew what they were, and how they looked, and how long it had been since they’d existed. And lo and behold, as Conan Doyle’s intrepid explorers rounded a clump of bushes... there was a glade full of grazing iguanodons.”

Also included are “Tales of Earth: Terraforming in Recent Women’s Sf,” which considers colonialism in science fiction by women, and “Loud Achievements: Lois McMaster Bujold’s Science Fiction through 1997,” which closely examines Bujold’s Vorkosigan novels.

The pieces in this volume are both fascinating and incisive. Sylvia *never* pulls her punches—not even when she’s straddling the border between admiring fangirl and sharp feminist critic.

Cheek by Jowl (cont. from page 1)

The literature of imagination, even when tragic, is reassuring, not necessarily in the sense of offering nostalgic comfort, but because it offers a world large enough to contain alternatives and therefore offers hope.

“The fractal world of endless repetition is appallingly fragile. There is no illusion, even, of safety in it; a human construct, it can be entirely destroyed at any moment by human agency. It is the world of the neutron bomb, the terrorist, and the next plague. It is Man studying Man alone. It is the reality trap. Is it any wonder that people want to look somewhere else? But there is no somewhere else, except in what is not human—and in our imagination.”

—from “The Critics, the Monsters, and the Fantasists”

Special Feature: A Conversation with Liz Henry about *The WisCon Chronicles, Vol. 3: Carnival of Feminist SF*



Timmi: Liz, first I want to thank you for editing this book. It is the only book we've so far published that I'll be doing a first reading in its finished, published form. So now I'll get to see what it's like to pick up an Aqueduct book and read it, and that's oddly exciting for me. Of course I'm really curious to see it. My hope with the series is that every volume of *The WisCon Chronicles* will reflect a different vision and set of WisCon experiences. So perhaps we could start with that—with the vision of this volume and the experiences it presents and engages with. Why did you choose the subtitle “Carnival of Feminist SF” and commission a carnivalesque cover image for the book?



Liz: Well, thanks for handing over the car keys, Timmi! I hope you like the book.

The title “Carnival of Feminist SF” pays homage to blogging. Blog carnivals have been around for a few years now. They're blog post round-ups on a particular topic, usually with rotating editors who volunteer for the position. I briefly organized a Carnival of Blog Translation, am peripherally involved with feministsf.net's Feminist SF Carnival (<http://carnival.feministsf.net/>), and would like to mention the new Asian Women Blog Carnival as particularly noteworthy. Right now I am most interested in the Disability Blog Carnival. The way you conceived of *The WisCon Chronicles*, as a book series with new editors for each volume, decentralizing authority, reminded me of blog carnivals; as an editor, I am thinking of myself as a carnival's temporary host.

WisCon has many carnivalesque aspects. In recent years, it begins with “The Gathering” in a big central room, with an assortment of little booths, tables,



attractions, and events. Last year there was a little stage and microphone where people could show off their tattoos and explain their significance. Other events at WisCon, for example the Tiptree Auction, have a circus-y atmosphere. There's an aspect of performance and spectacle, but with a subversive attitude that anyone can be that performer, speaker, or center of attention. We're having conversations, but we're consciously having them in front of each other and making them public

I was also thinking of Bakhtin's idea of carnivalization—that through playfulness and satire, fandom resists the centralization of power and authority. I wanted to represent or foreground some of the more chaotic, hilarious discussions and events at WisCon, like the Carnitopia world-building panel and the Robot Rebellion. There's serious political discussions of feminism, politics, anti-racism, science fiction and fantasy, and literature, but it's super important that those discussions take place next to all these parties and goofy costumes and movies and gaming—not just because we're having fun, but because we're often talking about tv shows, movies, and games

that ARE fun. It's hard to represent real-time or multimedia fun in a book.

Working with the cover illustrator was great. I showed the illustrator the range of articles in the book, and talked about why they were included. Then we sat around brainstorm-

ing WisConny elements that could be in a carnival picture. This also meant the illustrator had to interpret my vague, maddening editorial demands: “Can you put in the WisCon Space Babe, but different, more empowered somehow?” Space Babe is meant to be ironic but has sometimes been controversial because

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Conversation (cont. from page 6)

of the ways her pop culture sexual iconography plays into what it critiques—always a danger when you don the spandex hotpants. She’s on the cover as a happy child holding a balloon shaped like a whale, holding hands with a vampire who’s strolling along with a goblet of blood. There’s a ballerina troll with a bow on her head yelling at the scene, and watching over it all and facing us, the book readers, is a fanged, clawed, hairy ringmaster as Momus (god of masks and satire) half-pulling off her mask and taking off her white gloves. I love the cover’s sense of simultaneous layers of activity, and of people watching and being part of a show at the same time.

Timmi: One of my several aims, with this series of volumes, is to create a sense of what WisCon is. And I think your characterization of it as carnival sums up exactly the challenge of that aspect of the project: WisCon’s utter hybridity, its deliberate mixing of spheres and interests and genres and affects. I have to say, feminisms that embrace the hybrid and refuse to divide the world into separate spheres are extremely appealing to me. And you, Liz, strike me as a sort of example of someone who isn’t afraid to mix it all up—fiction (from the heights of Monique Wittig and Virginia Woolf to the devalued genre of slash) and comics and gaming and blogging and politics and theory and scholarship, all of which featured as centers of interest at WisCon 32. Could you talk a bit about the presence of some of these in your volume?

Liz: WisCon does a good job of making space for change. Fandoms change fast, and their media changes too. So rather than becoming a con that’s perfect for one form of media, or one fandom like Harry Potter, WisCon tries to be a good home for new stuff. I feel that the core is still book-focused, but that there’s room for expansion into games, ARGs, movies and vids, and so on at the con—it just takes someone who wants to step up and organize that aspect. So, the flexibility and changeability of the con from year to year has meant we include a little bit of a lot of fandoms.

I’m usually ignorant of TV shows until a really in-

“Space Babe is meant to be ironic but has sometimes been controversial because of the ways her pop culture sexual iconography plays into what it critiques—always a danger when you don the spandex hotpants.”

teresting fandom develops. So I didn’t get completely into *Battlestar Galactica*, for example, but because the discussion of it was so intense, I watched some and read episode summaries so that I could understand the criticism and the fic. I’m probably not ever going to watch *The Dollhouse*, but the feminist critiques of it have been amazing to read and watch. Shannon Palma’s post on “Working in the Dollhouse” < <http://blogs.feministsf.net/?p=1138> > is a good entry point; it’s an explication of Gianduja Kiss’s vid. And while I like comic books, I’m not deep into any one area of superhero comics or manga or independent/web comics. So it’s nice to have WisCon as a place where I get to hear about a lot of different things, and I don’t just get the review article that gives me “Manga 101”; it is possible to be exposed to really in-depth criticism.

I enjoy the academic track at WisCon too, and it provides a good place for academics who are also fans to read their work. I think that academic writers benefit from reading their work in a place where non-academics, who as feminist fans are sometimes

the subject of the work, can hear it. In other words, an academic writer might speak more clearly and carefully in front of other fans who aren’t also going to the MLA conference.

“WisCon does a good job of making space for change”

Anyway, I tried to represent some of this in the book. If I’d had more time to put in, I might have run a companion website with video content and discussions. And I had the idea to put an actual ARG up with clues on the web and in the book, but didn’t quite get it together to do all that work and pull in the people necessary to do a big original creative project.

My main thought for the book was trying to represent a bit of everything rather than exploring a particular theme, book, or aspect of feminism. Though you might say that representation and diverse media are feminist, or that being a dilettante, or unfocused, is validated by feminism. As a dedicated dilettante, I like to think that’s so.

Timmi: Thanks, Liz. And now I’m even more eager to get my hands on the book!



Five years ago, Aqueduct released its first book, and its second was already in the pipeline. Looking back, I remember finding the process of getting out the first two books bone-wearyingly laborious—it demanded constant attention to details and tasks that often made me feel as if I'd been breaking rocks with a sledge hammer—while the requirement that we spend thousands of dollars without knowing whether we'd ever recoup any of it made my timid, German Lutheran-raised soul deeply anxious. And on top of that, I carried around the constant awareness that I didn't know what I was doing! Talk about steep learning curves! My lifeline was Gavin Grant of Small Beer, who'd given Tom and me lots of helpful advice both before and after we took the plunge, and to whom I dashed off emails every time I feared I might be doing something stupid. And yet I remained strangely confident. Some of that unwarranted confidence had to do with my sheer sense of amazement each time I held one of our finished books in my hands and saw what a beautiful job Kath had done, designing and producing it. And certainly I could not have felt so confident had I not been able to rely, without question, on Kath's competence managing production and Tom's willingness to manage the finances. Although I knew marketing was our weakest area, Eileen Gunn's advice, which generously flowed to me nearly ever week, when we met for our writing date at Victrola, repeatedly buoyed my spirits. But most of my confidence came from the continual stream of positive feedback we were getting from the feminist sf community. Without that, I would probably have given up after publishing the first two books.

Think of this: we purchased our first ISBNs in a set of ten with the idea that it would take us three or four years to use them all. In fact, it was only a year later that we bought another set—of one hundred. By then, the constant attention to details and tasks that took me away from my own fiction had become routine. I don't recall noticing precisely when the publishing life became simply ordinary and the prospect of repeating the process that had at first seemed so onerous ceased to faze me, but I don't think it can have been long after I accepted the Philip K. Dick Award on behalf

of Gwyneth Jones for our second published book, *Life*. And now, today, we've published fifteen trade paperbacks, twenty-five volumes in the Conversation Pieces series, and two GoH chapbooks, and we have three trade paperbacks in the pipeline for publication later this year, along with numerous other projects at various early stages.

When I started Aqueduct, I was driven by a vision, one that I dared articulate only to Kath and Tom. I think by now that vision must be fairly evident to anyone with any connection to Aqueduct. But at the time I started Aqueduct, it seemed absurdly grandiose, even to me, and not meant for public consumption. Gradually I've been spelling some of it out, first in *The Grand Conversation*, and then in my WisCon 32 GoH speech. To be frank, I would never have started Aqueduct without such a vision. I had no illusions that micro-press publishing could be profitable, and even if I had, I'd never have agreed to lavish so much of my time and energy simply to make money, and I know that Tom and Kath certainly wouldn't have, either.

So when, looking back over Aqueduct's first five years, I ask myself how we're doing, what interests me most is not our sales figures or even the awards our books have won or the critical regard in which many of them are held, but signs that we're succeeding in carrying out our openly avowed mission. Searching for such signs, I find two that particularly hearten me.

First, Aqueduct has published a good deal of feminist sf that could not be published elsewhere. This has been the case with many of our books, most notably with Gwyneth Jones's *Life* and Andrea Hairston's *Mindscape*. *Life*, of course, won the Philip K. Dick Award and was included on the Tiptree Honor List; *Mindscape* was also included on the Tiptree Honor List and was a finalist for the Dick Award. By any measure, they are very fine novels. And yet both Gwyneth and Andrea had no success marketing them to publishers, and they had put their mss aside by the time I asked to see them. Over the years, as feminist sf has faced obstacles getting into print, one of my great fears and sorrows has been that the writers whose work I love might stop writing feminist sf, not through a conscious decision that feminist sf can't sell and is

therefore not worth the time it takes to write, but through the ordinary inclination of writers to write what will be noticed and appreciated. And so one of my greatest pleasures in the last two years has been knowing that several writers are writing new feminist sf in the knowledge that at least one market will be open to it.

Second, Aqueduct's list makes visible the vitality and sheer variety of twenty-first century feminist sf. Can anyone glancing through our catalog doubt that feminist sf is not alive and well in 2009? And that it encompasses a range of styles, interests, and feminisms? The voices of Aqueduct are many and varied, testimony to my belief that the Grand Conversation of feminist sf must not be dominated by a monolithic hymn to an agenda sung by a choir of voices chosen for their identical tones, timbres, and vocal registers.

Looking forward to the next five years, I am especially hoping to expand that range as we continue to bring our readers work that challenges our thinking and stretches the imagination.

In closing: thank you everyone—Kath and Tom, our many wonderful authors, our many supporters, and the feminist sf community at large—for making Aqueduct possible.

—Timmi Duchamp, May 10, 2009



Looking Forward

Aqueduct will be publishing a new book by Gwyneth Jones in late 2009, titled *Imagination/Space: Essays and Talks on Fiction, Feminism, Technology, and Politics*. The pieces in this book range from Gwyneth's acceptance speech for the 2008 Pilgrim Award to her detailed notes on her experience shadowing a scientist in a lab in preparation for writing *Life*, to speeches and talks delivered at conferences and conventions, to her critical reconsideration of the feminist sf canon. Her sharp analyses and observations make this a must-read for anyone who cares about feminism, science fiction, or both.

In Fall 2009, Aqueduct will be publishing *Narrative Power: Encounters, Celebrations, Struggles*, edited by L. Timmel Duchamp. This volume was inspired by the Narrative and Politics panel Timmi moderated at WisCon 32, which discussed how ideology infuses narrative and thus often blindsides writers, scholars, and intellectuals whose work expresses itself as narrative. In the essays in this volume, Samuel R. Delany, Lance Olsen, Andrea Hairston, Wendy Walker, Carolyn Ives Gilman, Eleanor Arnason, Rachel Swirsky, Claire Light, and other writers and scholars take a close look at narrative politics and the power of narrative.

And in December 2009, Aqueduct will be publishing *The Secret Feminist Cabal: A Cultural History of SF Feminisms* by Helen Merrick. This book unearths the rich history of how fans, writers, and scholars have collectively constituted feminist science fiction, constantly re-negotiating and re-visioning its story over the years. It begins from the premise that feminist science fiction is not merely a body of texts, but is, rather, a vibrant, on-going cultural process.





Hanging Out Along the Aqueduct...

by Nisi Shawl

My book *Filter House* is one of this year's winners of the James Tiptree, Jr. Award. This is hugely significant to me. Just about everyone I try to emulate in my writing has won the Tiptree. Feminist SF is what gave me the idea that I **could** write; Russ and Charnas in particular. I distinctly remember thinking when I read *The Female Man* and *Walk to the End of the World*, "Wow, you can get away with doing stuff like that—and get **paid** for it!"

But also significant to me is my place as the first black Tiptree winner. Hiromi Goto's *Kappa Child* won in 2001, making her the first person of color to receive the award, just ten years after its inception. But I'm the first person of African descent. I was pretty much astounded when I realized this. It's a historic moment. In an interview for *Fantasy Magazine* I compare myself to Arthur Ashe. But then I change the comparison to one with Barack Obama. That's more apt not only because his presidency is a more recent first; like winning the Tiptree, becoming a U.S. President is based partly on merit and partly on approbation.

I was a judge for the 2003 Tiptree Award. I was a strong advocate for the winner, Matt Ruff's *Set This House in Order*, an extraordinarily well-written book which turns gender expectations—including my own—on their figurative ears. Matt Ruff is a white man.

Why didn't I advocate for another black? I'm fairly sure that none of that year's nominated works were by blacks. I know now that I could have nominated a book or story myself for consideration, but the idea didn't occur to me at the time. Also, I wasn't aware of anything that I thought of as qualified. Gazing at my bookshelves I come across only one book of sf by a black person published in 2003 that hindsight reveals as an oversight: *Zulu Heart* by Steven Barnes. Though the novel centers on Kai ibn Rashid, a black man in a position of power in an alternate-history U.S. colonized by Africans, there's a subplot involving a black female engineering genius who invents the submarine. That

character tickled and delighted me, and the book was probably worthy of nomination because of her. But I didn't nominate it.

Nor did I go looking for nomination candidates by blacks outside genre boundaries. Certainly past Tiptree juries have honored books not marketed as science fiction or fantasy; some of them, such as Margaret Atwood's *Alias Grace* have only tenuous connections with the fantastic. I didn't do that, though I've often

reminded others that this sort of outreach is an important part of increasing the genre's diversity.

It may be that the same sorts of obstacles kept blacks off Tiptree Honors lists in other years.

As a black juror, was it my task—and mine alone—to make sure blacks were fairly represented among Tiptree winners? I don't know if anyone expected that of me. I know I didn't.

Still, it bothers me that I would be the first black Tiptree recipient. I went back through the lists of honorees as soon as I thought that might be the case. Nalo Hopkinson's work explores gender in a myriad of ways, and she has been honored more than once by Tiptree juries. Her novel *Midnight Robber* made the Short List in 2000, along with her fabulous short story "The Glass Bottle Trick." And "Once on the Shores of the Stream Senegambia" by Pamela Mordecai, published in an anthology Nalo edited, made the Short List that same year. Nalo's first novel, *Brown Girl in the Ring*, made the Short List in 1998. Which was also the year Octavia E. Butler's *Parable of the Talents* appeared there.

And there are others: Nnedi Okorafor's *Shadow Speaker* was on the Tiptree Honor List for 2007; *Mindscape* by Andrea Hairston was on there for 2006; *Writing the Other* made the Long List for 2005. (Both of those last two were also published by Aqueduct, by the way.) So, recently there have been many black honorees. Perhaps that's a reflection of the growing number of black authors.



Hanging Out... (cont. from page 10)

When I told Aqueduct's Managing Editor Kath Wilham that I was the first black Tiptree recipient, her initial response was several seconds of stunned silence. She was surprised that Octavia E. Butler hadn't ever won, and I have to admit that the omission of Octavia strikes me as odd, too. But, as I reminded Kath, the Tiptree Award has only existed since 1991, while it was in the '70s and '80s that many of Octavia's most Tiptree-worthy works were published.

Nonetheless, there have been retrospective awards. The nominees and winners were chosen by previous jurors during the Tiptree Award's fifth year. Octavia made the retrospective awards short list for *Wild Seed*, as did Samuel R. Delany for *Babel-17* and *Triton*.

Were earlier nominees' works not given the Tiptree because jurors saw the authors' engagement with race issues as overshadowing their engagement with gender issues? If so, the roots of that attitude may lie in the same sort of disconnect first-wave U.S. feminism had with African-descended women, the disconnect Sojourner Truth addressed in her "Ain't I a Woman?" speech.

The nominations and selections any year's Tiptree jurors make hinge on how they read them. Last year,

in her WisCon 32 Guest of Honor speech, Aqueduct Editor Timmi Duchamp received a standing ovation for her remarks debunking the universal intelligibility of stories. [<http://ltimmel.home.mindspring.com/Duchamp-WisCon32-GoH-speech.pdf>] More recently there have been some insightful posts on the Carl Brandon Society listserv about ways in which a reader's background affects their understanding of a book." [<http://www.carlbrandon.org/>] Claire Light responded to a message about a negative review *Filter House* received by posting some quite intelligent questions about reading, and Eileen Gunn's responses were good, too. Jed Hartman of *Strange Horizons*, where my story "Momi Watu" was first published, wrote about how personal familiarity with an author can lead to familiarity with that author's culture, and make it easier to read their work knowledgeably. Specifically, he was talking about remarks I'd made on the importance of hair in black culture. Because of those remarks he saw why something his upbringing treated as trivial was central to the story's plot.

When you read what I write, do you see me dealing with gender issues? Race issues? Both? More?

What will you see when you look at future Honorees of the James Tiptree, Jr. Award?

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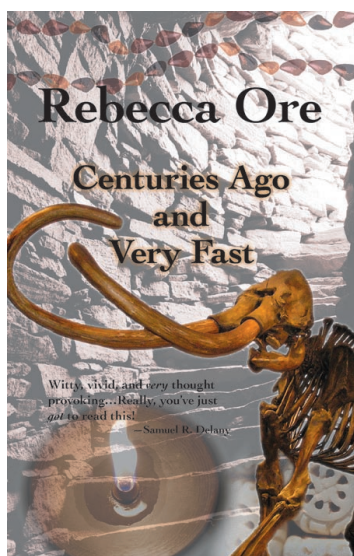
Spring 2009 Releases

Centuries Ago and Very Fast by Rebecca Ore

A gay immortal born in the Paleolithic who jumps time at will, Vel has hunted mammoths, played with reindeer tripping on hallucinogenic mushrooms, negotiated with each successive wave of invaders to keep his family and its land intact, lived as the minor god of a spring, witnessed the hanging of “mollies” in seventeenth-century London as well as the Stonewall riots in twentieth-century New York City. He’s had more lovers than he can remember and is sometimes tempted to flirt with death. *Centuries Ago and Very Fast* offers fascinating, often erotic glimpses of the life of a man who has just about seen it all.

“Witty, vivid, and *very* thought provoking, these interwoven narratives of the most sophisticated of primitive lusts start with a gay caveman who happens to have been around over fourteen thousand years.... Ore’s little book has intelligence and charm. Really, you’ve just *got* to read this!”

—Samuel R. Delany, author of *Tales of Nevèrÿon*



“I was struggling to think of something to which I could compare this slim but well written collection of very odd, related stories, and the closest I could come was R.A. Lafferty, although only if he was collaborating with Harlan Ellison.... The tone of the stories is a balancing *act between* the serious and the comic. One of the most difficult books to

describe I’ve read recently, this should appeal to fans of literary SF, satire, and nifty prose, and it is almost certainly not going to be what you’re expecting.”

—Donald D’Amassa, *Critical Mass*, April 22, 2009



What Remains by Ellen Klages & Geoff Ryman

What Remains is a limited edition of 150, published in conjunction with the appearance of Ellen Klages and Geoff Ryman as the Guests of Honor at Wiscon 33, May 22-25, 2009, Madison, Wisconsin

What Remains features three stories, two of them by Geoff Ryman. In “No Bad Thing,” a certain brilliant, world-famous scientist has become a vampire and duly turns his intellectual gifts in a new direction; while in “Care,” a story set in the fascinating world of Belo Horizonte, a little boy’s father stands with him on the Edge of the world, looking down at Rio, shows him how to walk off the Edge, then disappears.

In Ellen Klages’s “Echoes of Aurora,” Jo Norwood goes back to her hometown to bury her father and meets a lovely, mysterious woman named Aurora, and through the summer, Jo and Rory make passionate love, poetry, and a story together—a story that begins “Once upon a time, you kissed me.”

Also included are Eileen Gunn’s interview of Geoff Ryman and Debbie Notkin’s interview of Ellen Klages.