



The Aqueduct Gazette

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Wins the 2008
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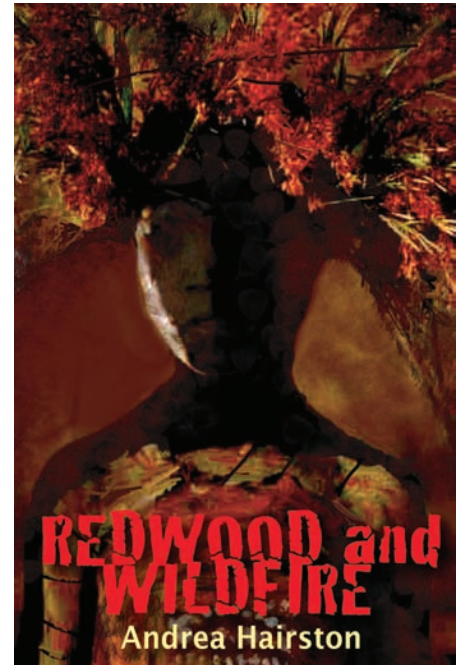
New from Andrea Hairston

REDWOOD and WILDFIRE

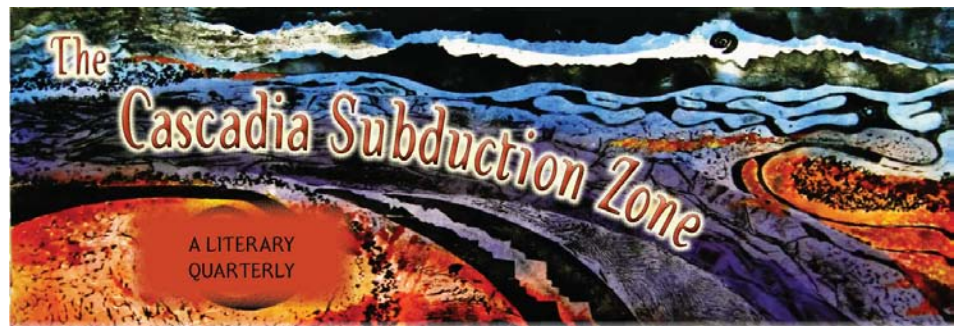
A novel of what might have been—

At the turn of the 20th century, minstrel shows transform into vaudeville, which slides into moving pictures. Hungering together in dark theaters, diverse audiences marvel at flickering images. This “dreaming in public” becomes common culture and part of what transforms immigrants and “native” born into Americans.

(Andrea discusses writing *Redwood and Wildfire*: p. 6)



Aqueduct Launches New Literary Quarterly



The idea of starting a literary quarterly came to me last spring. Two acute—and longstanding—desires provoked my idea. First, I love thoughtful, searching essays. I just can't get enough of them. I'm especially hungry for chewy essays about feminist science fiction, science fiction generally, and essays grounded in feminism that aren't necessarily about feminist issues. Second, I've long been dissatisfied with the review publications not specifically targeted at feminists that I routinely read: in any one issue of such publications I can even now, in 2010, expect to find only a token percentage of its reviews to be about the work of women writers. What would it be like, I've long wondered, to see the work of women well-represented in a publication not exclusively concerned with women's work and feminist issues?

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New from Aqueduct
The Universe of Things

Gwyneth Jones' work is the literature of ideas.

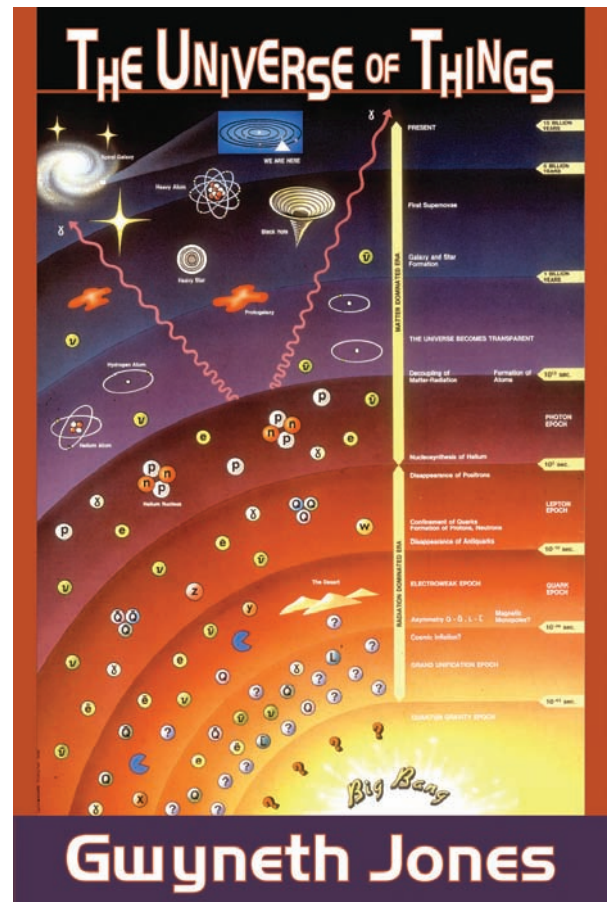
Questioningly curious, Jones examines the world for systems, patterns, and potentials, and offers the choicest of her discoveries to us in *The Universe of Things*, a collection of fifteen kick-in-the-synapse stories of science, sex, gender, and technology. An introduction from cultural critic and blogger Steve Shaviro provides a close reading of the title story that is a model of the kind of concentrated, joyfully ethical reading that each of these beautiful tales asks of us.

As a feminist writer, Jones refuses to accept compromises that leave gender inequities in place—even as she recounts the stories of such compromises and recognizes how they may well have staved off something worse. And as a science fiction writer, Jones shows deep awareness of how provisional, and fragile, all our acceptances and reconciliations can be, for there are always new potentials, new cultural or technological disruptions in the offing. —Steve Shaviro

Blue Clay Blues

A privileged journalist from a sheltered city follows a lead into the scarred exurbs of a future America, where he meets a young woman with visions as passionate and utopic as his own. Yet there are no easy solutions in this future; Jones uses the encounter to examine how radical visions are not always compatible with each other when different interests are at work. The young woman's struggle is twofold: to claim the worth of her heritage before a privileged caste that has written her off, and to claim her own worth against her own people, the same who demean and oppress her. Meanwhile, the journalist is not exactly the renegade altruist he plays...

He mugged amazement, let her know how thrilled he was to find this spore of civilization outside the citadel... It had been obvious before the end of the twentieth century that the future of data-processing and telecoms was in photochemistry. Chlorophyll in green plants converts light—energy into ex-



cited molecules without thinking twice about it. The “living chip” was inevitable, compact and fast. They called the magic stuff of the semi-living processors “blue clay”...

Red Sonja and Lessingham in Dreamland

Two people who don't know each other use a (therapeutically prescribed) video game to negotiate their way to real-world sexual health and find that even anonymous virtual sex cannot shake off the psychic weight of real-world gender roles and real-world power plays.

Sonja had heard that eighty percent of the submissive partners in sadomasochistic sex are male; but it is still the man who dominates his “dominatrix”: who says tie me tighter, beat me harder, you can stop now.

La Cenerentola

Jones examines what is kept and what is lost when people can be and are frequently cloned, tweaked, or designed...at excessive monetary cost and infinitesimally low moral cost. What remains? Who are the

women who are replicants of other women, or the children of fused eggs? And who are the women who can afford to pay the high cost of the technology that will let them remake the world.

“This is the problem, Bobbi, and it isn’t just a problem of economics. We have a system of values, of morality, based on people competing with each other to copy things, at the lowest possible cost per unit. That’s capitalism. But when the cost, the object of all this competition, effectively disappears, what happens to our system? Life gets very puzzling.”

The Thief, the Princess, and the Cartesian Circle

The Cartesian Circle—the postulate that perceptions are accurate *because* god exists—is projected into a freefalling fable of disturbed love, in which two people progress through the stations of doubt and despair to carve out their own basis for stability in the world.

She possessed her thinking self, and a shadow. The true horror of that companion was not that it was worthless and evil—like herself; but that *it was the same stuff* as herself. This is what happens to common people, and it can happen to a princess. She looks out of her tower and sees another thinking thing, a being she hasn’t invented. The citadel is broken, the world outside exists, nothing will ever be the same.

“Clarke Award-winner Jones creates several wondrous universes in which reality and fantasy bleed into each other... Jones’s sharp writing forces the reader to reconsider the standard building blocks of SF in light of real human history, sociology, and radical analyses of power structures. As engineer-journalist Johnny Guglioli observes in “Blue Clay Blues,” “The technology is helpless to save the world. It’s what goes on between people that fucks things up.”

— *Publishers Weekly*, 11/08/2010

The Cascadia Subduction Zone (cont. from p. 1)

After thinking about it awhile, I ran it by Eileen Gunn, and we playfully batted around ideas for its name. And then I asked Kath if she thought she could handle the additional work it would mean for her, and when she said she thought she could, I took the idea to WisCon, where I talked to several people about it. My main concern at that stage was setting up a collective editorial structure that would make me just another team member. At the time I talked to people at WisCon, I had the fuzzy idea of setting up an editorial board in addition to finding editors (permanent or rotating) who would each assume a set of clear responsibilities. Members of the editorial board, I thought, could take an active role in advising the editors.

When I returned to Seattle, though, my first step, though, was to recruit Nisi Shawl as editor of the Reviews section. And when Kath recruited Lew Gilchrist to be our managing editor, it soon became clear that at this stage, anyway, it would work best to have a group of people who could meet in the flesh to plan and brainstorm together. It’s possible we’ll be adding an editorial board later. But for now, we’re a four-person collective.

Although I expect it will take a few issues for the particular character of *The Cascadia Subduction Zone* to emerge, I’m hoping we’ll create a zine that is a cross between *Fantastic Metropolis*, the *American Book Review*, and *Rain Taxi*—but with a feminist sensibility. Clearly we’ll be paying more attention to sf/f/spec-fic than the latter two publications do, but we will also be reviewing interesting nonfiction regardless of whether it is relevant to literary topics. My experience with Aqueduct Press has shown me there’s really no way of predicting what can come of creating a new space.

Timmi Duchamp

FORTHCOMING SPRING/SUMMER 2011

The WisCon Chronicles, Vol. 5
Writing and Racial Identity
edited by Nisi Shawl (May 2011)

Something More and More
by Nisi Shawl (May 2011)
WisCon 35 Guest of Honor

Never at Home
Short fiction by L Timmel Duchamp (July 2011)

20 Years Dreaming: A Conversation about Suzy McKee Charnas' *Dorothea Dreams*

Suzy McKee Charnas' Dorothea Dreams, first published in 1987, which is as intricate and ethical a work as her better-known Holdfast Trilogy, has been brought back to print under Aqueduct's new Heirloom imprint. Set against the backdrop of invisibilized urban struggles over race and inequality and the isolated drama of Land Art, Dorothea Dreams is a drama that links people of many peripheries—people at the edges of populated space and the edges of public American consciousness—together in a graceful ghost story. Aqueduct goes into depth with Suzy about her writing, her characters, and her art.

Aqueduct: Dorothea Dreams takes for its narrators two women whose position in society is precarious, counterposing the different kinds of exclusion and the different degrees to which the women (Dorothea the white elder and Bianca the Latina child) have the power to choose that position, and binds them by the common thread of male violence. What else connects these two characters, if anything?

Suzy: Ambition, however repressed or disguised; a degree of self-chosen invisibility; quick wits and flexibility in the face of exigency; strong willfulness; daring and intelligence. And probably a lot of other things that aren't that clear to me.

Aqueduct: Dorothea Dreams takes up ideas of possession and escape to transform them into concepts that increasingly resemble one another. Dorothea herself is a woman artist whose life is possessed by the towering figures of the literal ghost who haunts her and her obsessive desert artwork. Both have a hold on her that she escapes by the end of the book, and yet both "escapes" are partial. There can be no total severance of Dorothea and her art, Dorothea and her ghost.

Suzy: Well, she escapes from the art because Roberto's damage of it releases her—perfection is no longer possible, acceptance of the imperfect occurs, and with acceptance comes forward motion, instead of the stasis of the perfect.

As for the ghost, Dorothea takes it into and makes it part of herself—again, acceptance, not of the course of action urged on her by the ghost but of the fact that she has been that person in that situation making that choice, but that she is now a more advanced version of that person, making instead a braver choice, to mix in with chaotic and dangerous events instead of avoiding them, and take her chances with the consequences.

Aqueduct: Likewise, the character of Bianca cannot escape from the neighborhood she comes from. It's striking that Bianca's escape from her neighborhood becomes an intrusion on Dorothea's escape from the New York art world, and that these events happen against the background of a history of shifting borders in the American West. Is "escape" a total fantasy in a world in which every piece of land is someone's neighborhood, or can it

be recast as a new way of negotiating neighborhood? Is our very idea of "escape" a politically charged one?

Suzy: The physical frontier in this country did in fact represent possibilities of escape from class boundaries and, often, lifelong poverty for both Spanish and Caucasian settlers, but usually at the expense of others (the

Indians, imported slaves from Africa or exploited labor from China and Ireland). Add the fact that for many settlers of the west the constantly moving frontier provided a literal escape from established systems on the eastern coast, and you have a wildly fractionated and heavily charged palimpsest of "escape" facts, metaphors, and, of course, frustrations ("wherever you go, there you are").

Aqueduct: Carolyn Ives Gilman, in Narrative Power, draws out some of the dangers of the tropes of novelistic narrative—its emphasis on the personal over the communal, the simple over the complex, conflict over consensus-building. In its very structure, Dorothea Dreams seems to argue (or at least entertain the possibility) that it's possible to have it all: that the human interest story and the current events story can coexist. Can you talk about your attitude to storytelling? Is there any friction between the integrity of the characters you create and

The physical frontier in this country did in fact represent possibilities of escape from class boundaries and, often, lifelong poverty for both Spanish and Caucasian settlers, but usually at the expense of others

their suitability to illustrate the conflicts and connections that they do? Or is the unity of the political and the personal a perfect one in the storytelling? If the focus on a few characters necessarily reduces a giant story, how do you as author ensure an illuminating rather than reductive simplification?

Suzy: Look, you don't *ensure* anything in this enterprise. People tend to look at finished work and read into it a great deal more pre-planning and control than actually existed in the process of envisioning and then executing. For me as an author, at any rate, I may choose a character to "stand" for an element of the story (Roberto as angry teenaged male belonging to a particular group of people with a long history and a particular vulnerability to exploitation by a stronger, richer group). But once he opens his mouth and speaks, Roberto comes to life for me. He doesn't "take over," as some authors will say of characters whom they wish to exalt in the eyes of others, but every word that he speaks (and dialog goes onto the page as dictation) asserts a kind of autonomy for him as he develops his own inner life.

This is true for all the characters who move beyond spear-carrier status to that of principal or comprimario part in the opera that develops from their interplay. I provide a rough framework within which they write their story. Sometimes I see something irresistible, and I reach in and tweak things to go a certain way, on the road to what I am beginning to discern as an appropriate ending for this story (or at least a stopping place). If the characters go along with it, if they fall in with the new pattern without resistance, that's the way we go. If they drop dead on the page, I regroup and find another way, maybe to the same conclusion, maybe not.

Once they've spoken and made choices for themselves, they acquire an internal consistency of their own that stands, for them, in the place that what we think of as "integrity" or "coherence" stands for a real human being. The author who tries to force that integrity into a pre-determined pattern or direction risks killing a story dead.

Characters develop their own personalities and politics. As an author, you mess with them at your peril.

I write to discover what I know/think/feel about some things: my characters teach me this. My job is to accept what they open to me, and explore and develop it by making room for the characters to be what they are.

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Aqueduct: Where does this internal consistency come from?

Suzy: I think it comes from the wisdom that the author's unconscious has gathered from living in the world. Without that, it's plastic toy soldiers and of no real interest to me as either writer or reader.

I write to discover what I know/think/feel about some things: my characters teach me this. My job is to accept what they open to me, and explore and develop it by making room for the characters to be what they are.

Aqueduct: One of the novel's particular strengths seems to be its insistence on the reality of unseen connections, such as between Revolutionary France and (then) contemporary US, or between communities made disparate by gulfs of space and wealth. The ghost story at the heart of the book makes, at some level, these connections concrete and present to the intuition. What else would be lost if this book were not a ghost story? What is gained by its being one?

Suzy: Part of what would be lost is simply my own understanding of the way the world works and how history exists and persists. I take a very long view, both backward and forward (one of my best courses in college was in geology: let that stuff in, and your mind is blown permanently into dimensions of time that the dominant American culture in particular is terrified of and rejects, which I take to be one reason that my work isn't of "best-seller" quality).

A ghost story, in the sense that you see it in *Dorothea*, is actually a story of the persistent influences of the past, and of our attitudes toward and relationships to the fact that there has been a past and will be a future in which we ourselves will become part of the past.

There is also, in my mind, a powerful connection between the influences of the past and the arts of the present, because I am of the opinion that we do in fact reincarnate many times, and in some lifetimes we draw on our past experiences to deepen and enrich the art that we bring to the present.

Without the ghost, that deep past full of anxious echoes wouldn't exist to ground the story in the larger

🌀 Hanging Out Along the Aqueduct... 🌀

Conjuring the World—Writing *Redwood and Wildfire*

Andrea Hairston

Redwood and Wildfire is a novel of what might have been.

At the turn of the 20th century, minstrel shows transform into vaudeville, which slides into moving pictures. Hunkering together in dark theatres, diverse audiences marvel at flickering images. This “dreaming in public” becomes common culture and part of what transforms immigrants and “native” born into Americans. Redwood’s an African American conjure woman who can hoodoo bears, hold storms in her fist, or cast a spell singing the blues, but she can’t take the curse off herself. Aidan’s a Seminole/Irish musician with a demon haunting him too, or maybe it’s a good spirit. After Redwood commits a deadly act in self-defense, they leave rural Georgia to do vaudeville and silent films in Chicago, but the past won’t let them escape so easily. They are gifted performers and hoodoo conjurors, struggling to call up the wondrous world they imagine, not just on stage and screen, but on city streets, in front parlors, in wounded hearts. The power of hoodoo is the power of the community that believes in its capacities to heal and determine the course of today and tomorrow. Living in a system stacked against them, Redwood and Aidan’s power and talent are torment and joy. Their search for a place to be who they want to be is an exhilarating, painful, magical adventure from the Chicago World’s Fair to the eve of World War I.

Actually, I never intended to write an historical novel.

The past is like a foreign country, an alien world, and despite my love of travel and adventure, I didn’t want to offer myself as tour guide to the turn of the 20th century, as chronicler of what was. So I tried to get out of it. I tried to hide the history in the subtext. I tried to have “history stuff” be backstory for a contemporary novel. This worked like dancing in cement shoes. Characters from the backstory haunted me; tantalizing scenes turned up in my journal and appeared on my laptop; the backstory stopped the contemporary action cold. Finally, after much kicking and screaming (and five hundred pages), I admitted the “history stuff” was too compelling to delete or ignore or fit around or behind some other story.

Redwood and Wildfire insisted on being written.

For many years (1979-2002), I taught a course on 20th century Black Theatre in which I briefly explored how 19th century blackface minstrelsy and its 20th century progeny served as a catalyst for contemporary black theatre and film artists. In these almost cursory discussions of performers who donned the minstrel mask, students often didn’t understand why any self-respecting African American would act in a *coon* show or why Native Americans played *Injuns* in Wild West Shows. Despite our (obvious) complicity in any number of contemporary atrocities, students insisted or hoped they would never have done minstrelsy no matter the circumstances. Few stories have addressed the complex choices facing these 19th and early 20th century performers, so I decided I had to face the awful choices, the impossible circumstances, and somehow write about characters who, given the luxury of historical distance, we might dismiss or hold in contempt.

Since 2003, I have been researching blackface minstrelsy, hoodoo, the Blues, vaudeville, Wild West Shows, and early film for a course I now teach—Minstrel Shows: from Daddy Rice to *Big Momma’s House*. The record of African American women theatre artists or Native American filmmakers from the early 1900s is scant. Even reading theatre and film histories, holding artifacts, gazing on photos, drawings, and maps, reading newspaper articles, reviews, journal entries, letters, plays, poems, advertisements, and novels from the time, or tapping my own memories of my grandparents’ generation, I felt as if I grasped after ghosts, spooks, “haints”—figures barely visible in fragmentary narratives who dissolved under close inspection.

Nothing offered me the inside of experience, the sensory catalogue of what it meant to be alive in a time I could not reach, touch, taste, or hear. Writing a novel from the perspective of those living in a blurry past, I had to speculate, trust my imagination to fill in gaps as well as make a bridge from then ’til now. Maybe I resisted writing *Redwood and Wildfire* to give myself time to do all the work I needed to do.

I have always been interested in stories that haven’t been told; in characters who have been left out of the

official narratives; in lives that don't get written down. I insist on exploring voices that were/are barely heard and telling of the unknown people who made me, and all of us, possible. Writing in the subjunctive case helps me to recover lost history.

I remember a conversation I had with Octavia Butler about her writing of *Kindred* and *Wildseed*. She recalled listening to arrogant, rash folks in the black consciousness movement dismissing the efforts of older generations as a betrayal of a hip, revolutionary present. The cavalier contempt some contemporary black people displayed for the slaves who accommodated their masters to survive spurred her to write the present into the past, literally. *Kindred*, a time traveling epic, features a 20th century black woman snatched into the antebellum South to save the life of her white slave master ancestor. Octavia was asking:

How the hell would we survive our own history?

And that is my question too.

My father's family, the Hairstons, is a prominent multi-ethnic American clan with books chronicling the family tree and large reunions. My mother was a fabulous storyteller and told marvelous tales on the Hairstons and their escapades in the Carolinas. She was always pestering me to go to reunions and talk to the old folks or distant cousins who I thought had nothing in common with me. I shied away from what I considered circus get-togethers. Too many of the relatives on that side of my family wished to claim any identity other than one with an African ancestry, talking about Indian this and Irish that.

Why did I need to hear such foolishness? Okay. My grandparents with their fair skin, gray eyes, and straight, "heavy" hair, didn't *just* have ancestors from West Africa. Stories of Cherokee and English heritage swirled around them like fairy dust. They weren't just ordinary "colored" folks. My grandmother was profoundly disappointed when all of her light-skinned children married very dark black people. Indeed, she never forgave my father for marrying my mother. Granny was always fighting over status with my grandfather who labored hard for civil rights and couldn't get worked up over color and hair. Even when black became beautiful and white ancestry meant rape and oppression, Indian blood got you out of the

African lower depths. I witnessed my grandparents' conflicts, but never really talked to them about any of this...because *I already knew what was right!* My mother told me, "You don't need to be anything other than black to be just grand."

Coming of age in the '60s, I glibly attributed the Hairston's (multicultural) family mythology to denial and self-hatred. It seemed to me that Granny et al. were all too happy to be Cherokee or English, but screamed, "I ain't African!" when connections to that "dark continent" were mentioned. In my righteous anger and black pride, I simplified what was going on. In America, many folks claim to have Indian ancestry. The reasons are painful, complex. Truth is elusive.

I wish I'd paid more attention to the tall tales my mother and the old folks told. I can no longer ask: How did you survive? What was it like? Tell me anything you remember. Everything. For me, blood connection has to be realized through a story. Speculating on erased/lost memory, I restore myself to my own imagination. Researching, I have expanded on vague recol-

lections of stories from my light-skinned grandparents about the trials and tribulations of the black, Native American, and white folk who wove a good life in the midst of turbulent and deadly times.

Like Cornel West, I am a prisoner of hope. Reinventing the past, imagining what might have been, and rediscovering

what was lost is to perform hope in the face of tragedy. Tragedy isn't always cathartic, isn't always, "Thank the Gods, I'm not Oedipus and let me *not* rock the boat least the worst should happen to me." Tragedy can move us to transformation. Out of the horrific experience can come a determination to create a different story. As a writer, I ask: even if folk are talented, powerful, and beautiful, what do they need in order to come through a treacherous world, whole and creative? Rather than follow the tragic script they were given, the ancestors who inspired my novel improvised; they got their *mojo* working. I—playwright, director, professor, novelist—was one of their story/dreams. If they could conjure the wondrous world they believed in, how could I resist writing about them and becoming a chronicler of what might have been and also what might be?

Like Cornel West, I am a prisoner of hope. Reinventing the past, imagining what might have been, and rediscovering what was lost is to perform hope in the face of tragedy.

20 Years Dreaming (cont. from p. 5)

flow of time that I believe we all inhabit, sometimes knowingly, sometimes not.

I also believe that our connections to the past, both personal and cultural, are vital and full of power. Without the ghost in this story, Dorothea would be adrift, as so many modern people are (or feel) adrift and unattached, careening toward unimaginable futures without direction or any feeling of agency.

Without the ghost to react to and against, Dorothea would not fully understand the power and depth of her choices in the present.

Aqueduct: Ghosts traditionally appear as reminders of tragedy not properly resolved—while resolution is the function of the memorial. Dorothea Dreams grapples with tragedy: whether it is tragedies we as a society choose not to memorialize (the encroachment into communities of color) or those we choose to memorialize, whose enormity resists our understanding (the French Revolutionary slaughterbench), we have traffic with ghosts, perhaps, because there are some tragedies that we cannot make memorial for. Can you talk about the function of memory and tragedy in your book? How is the ghost related to Dorothea's art? How is Dorothea's art related to the/her past?

Suzy: The ghost brings with him a small, frightened perception of one of the great tragedies (and adventures) of history: the Revolution in France of 1789 and the decades of reaction that followed that series of events. He tried to withhold himself from the great flood of emotions and events that those decades embodied in Europe. He withdrew, and circumscribed himself, making himself small and frightened, and a ready tool of administrative control.

Dorothea has also withdrawn, trying to find her own artistic authenticity as opposed to her commercial identity.

Her contact with the chaotic energy of the Cantu family and its circumstances opens a window for her to make a different choice, and she does: she rejects the ghost's self-protective contraction into self and system, and chooses instead to openly defend the exploited

and to give her creativity up to the world to enjoy and learn from—to expand back into and re-engage with the world, both through concrete action to protect the Cantu kids from the wrath of the law and through opening her artwork to the gaze of the art world.

What she remembers is that once, in another life, she made the opposite choice. That is what the ghost brings: that awareness.

What she chooses is to honor memory, and then move on, into new, riskier, more challenging territory.

Aqueduct: There's an interesting moment near the end where Dorothea's daughter accuses her of an essentially maternal weakness. ("Today, she suggested point blank that I see in Roberto something of my younger son in his more wayward, draft-dodging days.") How do you see the significance of Dorothea's role as a mother, espe-

cially with regard to death and sentimentality as her old friend and lover advances toward death? Does it speak to any generational split between women that you were seeing at the time?

Suzy: There was and is a generational divide among women about what a woman is and should be, and Dorothea has recoiled from this so far, devoting herself

to something she's seen as gender-neutral—her art. Her daughter, an active feminist of the time, has challenged Dorothea to go beyond this minimal position, to claim her rightful place as someone who challenges masculine power simply by being the powerful creative person she is.

Dorothea, strengthened by taking action in the matter of the Cantus, steps up to the plate, and can now move forward into her daughter's more activist world of feminist resistance. Time, of course, has altered this dynamic drastically. In our debased and deeply reactionary present, Dorothea's daughter's children, should she have them, would be showing their female autonomy by fellating their male schoolmates in the hallways in order to be "popular" among their peers and putting up YouTube clips of themselves in poses and activities perfectly appropriate to the Playboy "bunnies" of the past as a way of demonstrating how "free" they are.

And, as a matter of course, objecting strenuously to the term "feminist" to describe themselves.

There was and is a generational divide among women about what a woman is and should be, and Dorothea has recoiled from this...devoting herself to something she's seen as gender-neutral—her art.

It should be understood, by now, that what we do, we do for ourselves and our own peers; our female posterity will do “their own thing,” and it’s very likely to be their grandmothers’ “thing” and a direct repudiation of all that we hoped and fought for, for them.

Aqueduct: Ricky Maulders, Dorothea’s dying friend, is something of a reverse Orpheus. He steps briefly away from his own death in order to retrieve Dorothea from a life lived in the artificial absence of death that her privileged seclusion has become. Is he successful?

Suzy: I think probably yes. The power of death and dying is great, and I think we underestimate it out of fear. Ricky brings the world to Dorothea in a different way than Robert and Blanca bring it, but because he doesn’t reject the inevitability of his own impending death what he brings is very effective. There is nothing in this world that can’t be turned to positive effect, if the will to do this is strong enough. He brings her his courage, and she finds the strength in herself to recognize her own and begin to use it. Love doesn’t just give: it also accepts gifts.

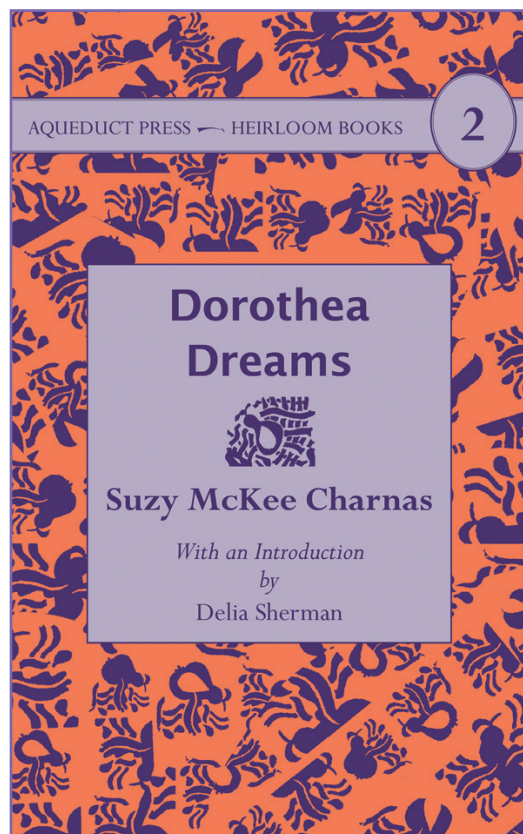
Aqueduct: What is the relationship of the land to the politics of the book? What draws you to the desert New Mexico setting?

For me, the power of the setting is its age, its endurance through past time and into future time, and its impassive presence upon which we perform our ridiculous little dances of pride and possessiveness.

Suzy: The land is the place where the politics plays itself out, but when the politics are done and gone, the land will still be here and will recreate itself as a functioning part of the ecology of the future. We make the land part of our politics, but this is only a dream of the feverish human consciousness, a fantasy of dramatic meaning.

For me, the power of the setting is its age, its endurance through past time and into future time, and its impassive presence upon which we perform our ridiculous little dances of pride and possessiveness. I love the evident age of this landscape, with no luxuriant green disguise: just the bones of the planet, right out in the open, scoured and devoured by wind and water.

It puts us in our place.



Spotlight on PM Press (www.pmpress.org)

Just as Aqueduct hit the 50th-book mark, another small socially-engaged press hit 100. PM Press, out of Oakland, California, has been putting out manuals, children's books, manifestoes, and fiction and nonfiction books on radical history, politics, culture, and art. Aqueduct is pleased to spotlight some of the speculative work that PM Press issues and to talk with Ramsey Kanaan, PM founder.

INTERVIEW WITH RAMSEY KANAAN

Aqueduct: PM Press is only three years old and already it has passed the hundred book mark. Can you tell me about the goals and achievements of the press, as they stood then, as they are now?

Ramsey: Our overarching goals (lofty I know, but you've got to have something to reach for) are to destroy Capital and the State, and build a better world. On a more mundane, but eminently practical level, we hope that by putting out quality books (and CDs and DVDs and other printed materials) in a variety of formats, styles, and genres, we might actually contribute, in some small way, in amplifying the ideas, and engaging in the practices that might actually help move us all a few steps closer. Making such work/ideas accessible, and getting it in front of folks' eyes (and ears) would be nice too!

Aqueduct: I've been seeing your exciting and gracefully-designed Outspoken Authors series at Last Word Books down in Olympia for a couple of years now without knowing anything about the press. I'm excited to learn that Terry Bisson is the editor of these books, which Eleanor Arnason's Mammoths of the Great Plains is published under. Do you have any word from Terry about what's coming down the pike for this series?

Ramsey: We do indeed have some great authors lined up. The next two will be two of SF's grandparents—Michael Moorcock and Ursula Le Guin. We've also contracted Cory Doctorow, and are working on Marge Piercy (once we've gotten new anniversary editions of her classic novels *Vida* and *Dance the Eagle to Sleep* out next year) and Paco Ignacio Taibo II.

Aqueduct: Your catalog says pretty plainly that feminism is part of the broader vision of a radical conversation going on at PM. Can you tell me what that vision looks like on your end? How do you go about bringing questions of feminism, gender, and antiracism to the table; what do you look for in a book; and what kinds of discussions do these perennial questions provoke on your staff?

Ramsey: Revolutionary change is a process. And all processes have history (and herstory) and context. Excavating, and engaging is not just part of that vision, but a prerequisite. We'd like to think that our output is part of that process, and critical engagement. Questions of patriarchy, sexism, race, gender—and, of course, class, are always on the table, and part of the editorial decisions on what, and why (not to mention, for whom, and to what end) to publish. In general terms we look for two things in a book. That it is really good. And that it contributes something beyond entertainment (not that being entertained is a bad thing per se). Unfortunately, given that we haven't yet destroyed capitalism, economic questions (i.e., can we sell it) also play a part in the equation.

Aqueduct: Finally: how can I subscribe to your newsletter?

Ramsey: Easiest way to subscribe is to just sign up over our website. Though emailing me at ramsey@pmpress.org would also work pretty good! Even better, of course, would be subscribing to the Friends of PM program. For as little as \$25 a month, the lucky subscriber gets everything we publish, sent to their door—typically 2-5 books a month!

Aqueduct: Thank you!

Ramsey:

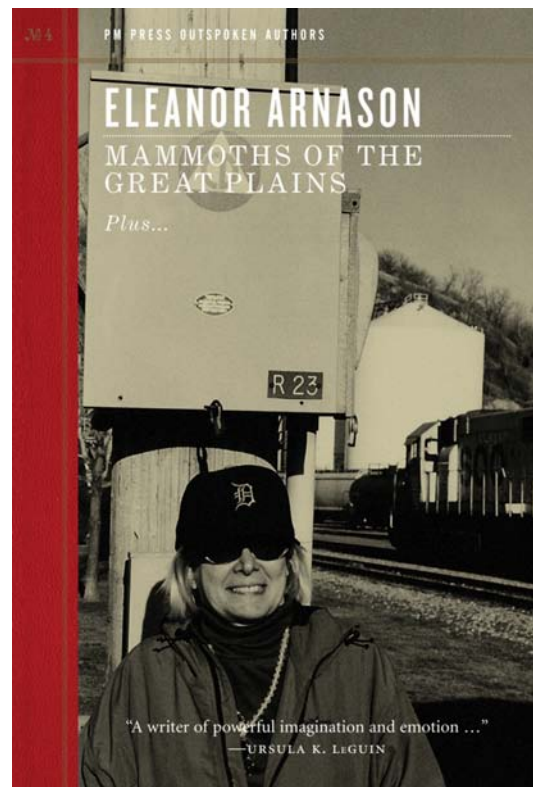
Totally a pleasure...
rock on
ramsey

MAMMOTHS OF THE GREAT PLAINS

Eleanor Arnason

In Eleanor Arnason's imaginative alternative history, shaggy herds of mammoths thunder over the grasslands, living symbols of the oncoming struggle between the Native peoples and the European invaders. And in an unforgettable saga that soars from the badlands of the Dakotas to the icy wastes of Siberia, from the Russian Revolution to the AIM protests of the 1960s, Arnason tells of a modern woman's struggle to use the weapons of DNA science to fulfill the ancient promises of her Lakota heritage. Plus: "Writing During World War Three," a politically un-correct take on multiculturalism from an SF point-of-view; and an interview with an edgy and uncompromising speculative author.

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FIRE ON THE MOUNTAIN

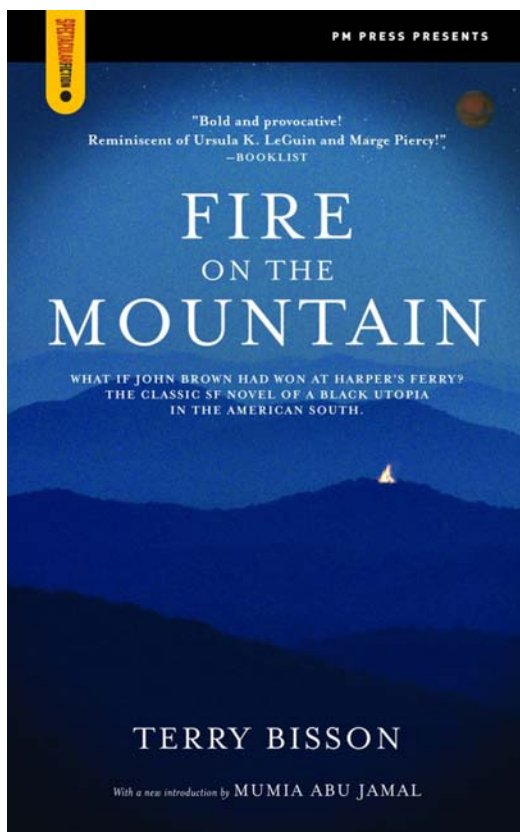
Terry Bisson

Introduction by Mumia Abu-Jamal

It's 1959 in socialist Virginia. The Deep South is an independent Black nation called Nova Africa. The second Mars expedition is about to touch down on the red planet. And a pregnant scientist is climbing the Blue Ridge in search of her great-great grandfather, a teenage slave who fought with John Brown and Harriet Tubman's guerrilla army.

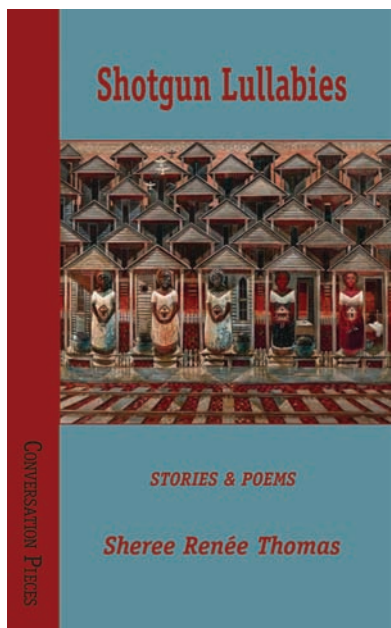
Fire on the Mountain is the story of what might have happened if John Brown's raid on Harper's Ferry had succeeded—and the Civil War had been started not by the slave owners but the abolitionists.

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Conversation Pieces Vol. 28

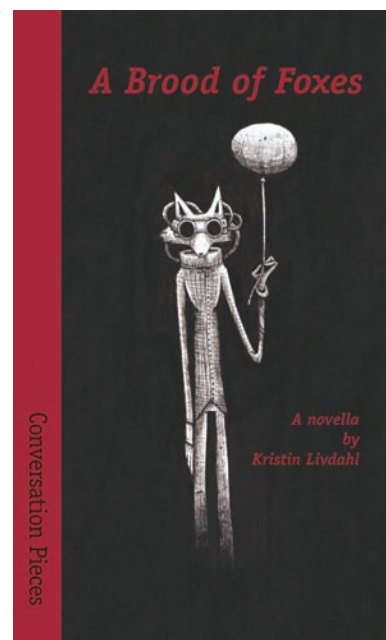


Shotgun Lullabies by Sheree Renée Thomas

In this first collection of the stories and poetry of Sheree Renée Thomas, memory is the only force strong enough to counter the terrors of a scarred and forgetful world. Thomas' characters are people scraping by in slave quarters and institutional margins, people in search of freedom and transformation who come face to face with apocalyptic powers.

Rooted in the Mississippi Delta, Thomas' language is the stuff of life and the struggle to call things by their true names. It reaches through time in search of the transformation that will allow us to survive diaspora with memory and soul intact. These shotgun lullabies puncture the walls between us and our past, the people and their birthright.

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aqueductpress.blogspot.com/



A Brood of Foxes by Kristin Livdahl

Uncanny, sweet, and shot through with fairytale weirdness, *A Brood of Foxes* takes Joey Napoleon into a world as bizarre as anyone's first adulthood—with a few differences. Set in a place where time has its own logic, human and animal is a shifting perspective, and the people we love are always slightly other—and better—than we imagined, *A Brood of Foxes* faces us with the moral dimensions of environmental disasters—in a troublingly literal way.

Coming spring 2011
Conversation Pieces Vol. 30

The Bone Spindle
Poetry & Short Fiction
by Anne Sheldon