

The Cascadia Subduction Zone

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Mark Rich

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Imaginary Junctions: On Terry A. Garey and Speculative Poetry

by Mark Rich

When they do not disappear entirely from our recollections and our annals of achievement, our miniaturists come to seem overshadowed by the main events shaping our times—the novels, the movies, the television serials, even the occasional shorter piece of prose plucked up by the vagaries of voting and made prominent by prize-winning.

We know how easily short-story writers disappear, even when they publish a book or two. Think how it must be for poets, then. Some editors have regarded poets as sources for typographic filler to rank alongside anecdote-writers for *Reader's Digest*, and their poems as unworthy of listing on contents pages.

The form that is speculative poetry, and the minor literary movement of the same name, has witnessed a flux in and out on the part of writers interested in its potential, who have heeded a siren call inaudible to most others. Some dabble for a time, engaging in a few outbursts. Others settle in who address their small public as if from out of a privately discovered space, and whose voices, thoughts, and cadences then linger, becoming part of the scene's ambient texture.

I suspect that most who hear poetry's call succumb not so much due to literary ambition—although that must be part of it—as to the workings of a natural process. They have read poetry, have appreciated it, and, once having acknowledged the creative impulse within their souls, attempt it.

Some set their talents ablaze at the shrine of sheer prolificity—a winning strategy: for an endlessly “productive” writer will hit upon something publishable, at some point or points, during one headlong feat of velocity or another.

Others seem more apt to set their talents afire less impulsively—doing so when it will help them explore the space that they have discovered for themselves. These poets seem to move forward with deliberation and without undue haste.

Since having become acquainted with her work some thirty years ago, I have seen qualities in Terry A. Garey's poems that make me see her as a writer of the last sort. She displays care in her approach and

in her choice of language; and despite her great capacity for humorous comment and perspective, her works reveal a seriousness that comes from having established a rational and mature worldview along with a trained aesthetic sense.

She refers to herself at times as a failed novelist.

If ever she were to call herself a failed poet it would be, I believe, not only untruthful but uncharacteristically dishonest.

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Some elements in works that have appeared under the speculative poetry banner derive from the centuries-old Keplerian tradition that conflates the expansive worldview with the astronomical vision: for their imaginative projections move within a realm not restricted to the terrestrial. “Space flight” *per se* needs play no obvious role within these poems: for a sense of departure, of “flight,” rises into mind from the page without the super-science evocations that had proven so essential to science fiction as a genre of literary positivism during its 1930s to 1950s blossoming, fruiting, and decline. Poems of this sort draw upon troves of language and concept offered by science, deriving metaphoric splendor from the Keplerian vision. They share with “game” science-fantasy, the main successor to positivist science fiction, in having the earlier positivism reduced to stage decoration or backdrop. Yet they also share with speculative fiction, the secondary successor, in holding to the strand of Symbolism that had lent vitality to science fiction, even at its most positivist.

That Garey has felt comfortable within this tradition may be seen in two short works that appeared in an early issue of *The Magazine of Speculative Poetry* (hereafter *MSP*): “if there is a Dog Star there should be,” and “I have hidden your body.” These poems meditatively project wishes onto astronomical imagery in a way that makes them verge toward fantasy. Lacking cohesive, extended, controlling metaphors, they make their marks simply by being effective poems. Their claim to being speculative poetry falls on the weak side: for they remain rooted in a here-and-now consciousness. Neither poem adopts the

...our miniaturists come to seem overshadowed by the main events shaping our times—the novels, the movies, the television serials, even the occasional shorter piece of prose plucked up by the vagaries of voting and made prominent by prize-winning.

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Imaginary Junctions (cont. from p. 1)

These poems retain a focus on the astronomical, which counters, without counteracting, a secondary focus on the biological and earthly.

Emotions may be there implicitly.... Yet by and large emotion disappears within the calmness, the deliberation, the firm gaze.

Garey, moreover, avoids orphan concepts or phrases, especially the lexicological opacities borrowed from science or mathematics that spice the works of some poets. She hews to directness of expression and simplicity of vocabulary....

stance that its prevailing metaphor exists outside the reader's world of possibilities. Although I feel inclined to regard the glance that "spreads out to the stars / hums through the universe" as being one that is looking upon a mythic sky, hence a metaphoric and not a literal or astronomical one, this kind of imaginative leap falls short of stepping away from, and separating itself from, consensus reality.

Twelve years after those poems appeared, Garey revealed her development in new works including "Years at Bay (not a death poem)," which appeared in the Spring 1997 *MSP* alongside two other accomplished works, "Neophyte Station" and "exploration of skies."

These poems retain a focus on the astronomical, which counters, without counteracting, a secondary focus on the biological and earthly. To these elements she adds the curiosity and openness of a soul caught in confusion—a confusion born of an awareness of existing within contraries. "Dream" and the "everyday sense," for instance, exist in opposition. So do the living world and the non-living void—"space / which is closer than we know." The laying-waste that results from human effort similarly stands in opposition to the optimism that seems to redeem it.

In her technique Garey steadfastly takes an informal tone while avoiding direct emotional evocation. Emotions may be there implicitly—as was the grief, twelve years earlier, in "I have hidden your body." Yet by and large emotion disappears within the calmness, the deliberation, the firm gaze. The deflection of the personal note, despite the informal voice, suits the poems' essences as verbal constructs—as speculative poems.

Garey, moreover, avoids orphan concepts or phrases, especially the lexicological opacities borrowed from science or mathematics that spice the works of some poets. She hews to directness of expression and simplicity of vocabulary, so that perhaps her most mysterious word in these later-1990s poems is "mystery."

"Years at Bay" begins by offering a trio of similes. The first two engage the reader with fixity:

like the holdfast of kelp
like the fork of a tree anchoring a nest

These images suggest rootedness literally, with "holdfast," and figuratively, with "nest." The poem offers its third simile:

like age coming on too fast

The line engages with a colloquial sense—of one's awareness of time's swift passage—and with an imaginative one: for its phrasing suggests that something is rushing backwards in time out of the future, toward the speaker or reader. This gives the poem a giddiness: for what is "like" being rooted, while also "like" age coming on too fast? The word next to appear, "travel," situates the reader at the heart of the circling and perhaps even circular movement made by the poem:

travel pulls at my time line
blurring the stars as I look for their
steady burn
...to fasten me to a particular point

A further rootedness does seem evident in this second stanza: the rootedness of a fixed celestial view. The third stanza then repeats the approach taken by the first:

like the coldness that would kill me
like the darkness that would bleach
my features away
like the impersonal vastness in which
I am a person

These words may come from someone growing aware that she has entered a symbolic dream. The lines place her rootedness within a celestial situation in which she faces physical challenges ("the coldness... the darkness") that could nullify her existence.

Insofar as it is a speculative poem, "Years at Bay" steps for the moment toward the reader's world, although it remains separated from it. The speaker participates in being what a celestial being might be, by taking a place alongside "solar winds / that whisper o so softly out here." At the same time she clearly resides on a purely physical and human level, being susceptible to time, to aging, to cold, to dark.

The words immediately after that third stanza and beginning the fourth—"this journey"—indicate that the tension between the "person" and the "impersonal vastness" persists, as must the tension between the human being and the celestial one. The poem ends:



I know that I don't know which end
is the dream
which end
will make everyday sense to me
when I see it

Garey's short poem "exploration of skies" gives an encapsulated version of the mythic vision that unites these poems of the later 1990s. It contains the oppositions of past and future, and earth and sky, joined by the sense of conflicted hope. In its entirety:

so you see
there are places still where if you look
hard
you can see no trace of what we have
made

this is why we look up so much
so we won't blush
looking down at our mother
in our dirt

These examples show how Garey's lines move—with a relaxed but self-assured manner of address. Image and idea follow one upon the other naturally and clearly, so that the notions residing within the poem arise readily to view. A poem such as "Years at Bay" may not reveal all on first reading, or even on fifth; yet, because it has structure, and because a movement of ideas is taking place, the reader who fails to be carried along to the end is the reader—of a sort that does exist—who cannot get past the difficulty of broken lines.

Garey writes within poetic tradition, and often embraces an unpunctuated and non-capitalized avoidance of the obvious, in terms of sentence or phrase appearance. An option for poets that became a major one in the 1960s and especially in the 1970s, this visual technique has provided her with a convention within which she feels comfortable working.

Not all Garey's poems take a structural approach the way "Years at Bay" does: yet a yearning for structure makes itself felt in most; and her secure feeling for phrase and word gives some of her lines a sense of the inevitable.

This last aspect seems revealed in an anecdote that I find interesting for all it tells us about memory, continuity, and the accidents that occur along the road of poetic endeavor. The situation quite by ac-

cident involved me in minor ways, at start and at end.

It relates to the poem that at this point in time must be her best known.

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In 2012's *Lady Poetesses from Hell*, among Garey's entries appeared one titled "The Cat Star." After having been given the anthology by Garey herself at a WisCon, I read and enjoyed it; and in encountering this particular poem I felt some nudging of memory—which I thought was only to be expected: for I might have encountered any or all of these poems in earlier publications or readings. Later, news reached me that Terry had won a Rhysling award from the Science Fiction and Fantasy Poetry Association (originally Science Fiction Poetry Association, hereafter SFPA). Although I have kept a distance from this organization for decades and pay little attention to its doings, I took note when Garey acknowledged her pleasure in being recognized by her literary community.

At some point later, Roger Dutcher, who edits the magazine he and I co-founded in the middle 1980s, asked me if I kept in contact with Garey: for he needed to ask about a matter. I lacked an e-mail address but sent a note to her by another of the ethereal means at our beck and call—and ended up serving as intermediary between parties.

Dutcher had discovered that Garey's new award-winner had, in a sense, appeared in print before—in our *MSP*, in fact, in 1985. In a sense, I say, because this "new" poem that had won an award was not a poem that had appeared in print in the 1980s, but was in fact two poems that had appeared in print in the 1980s. In "The Cat Star," these poems from 1985 had been placed into sequence: first Poem One—then Poem Two—and then a few lines repeated from Poem One at the end, to tie the package together. Besides that repetition, the new single poem differs in correcting two verb tenses (one possibly a typographical error) and in eliminating one line-indentation. Anyone would regard these changes from the 1985 publications as minor, in the extreme.

As it happens, these two poems were the ones I had long recalled as having provided early evidence of a lyrical gift in Garey, even though I had at this point forgotten their

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Cont. on p. 4



Imaginary Junctions (cont. from p. 3)

The news startled Gary. She had been using the poem in Lady Poetesses readings, in its new form; and apparently she had lost...any record of its parts having seen prior publication. She... immediately made the necessary contacts herself...the SFPA officers, after deliberation, felt content to leave matters as they stood. She had won an award, and still possessed it.

...in dealing with manuscripts and publication records I know all too well how systems can fail. Gary and I, oddly enough, had experienced a similar situation in the early 1990s.

titles: “if there is a Dog Star there should be” and “I have hidden your body.”

I relayed this discovery to Gary. Dutcher wanted to bring up the issue so that she could present the situation to the SFPA herself, should she so choose, rather than having him do so. He used the word “outing” in reference to his discovery, reflecting his mood. To him I counseled flexibility and understanding.

The news startled Gary. She had been using the poem in Lady Poetesses readings, in its new form; and apparently she had lost—presuming she had ever kept—any record of its parts having seen prior publication. She expressed willingness to accept whatever decision the organization made, and immediately made the necessary contacts herself—to learn that the SFPA officers, after deliberation, felt content to leave matters as they stood. She had won an award, and still possessed it.

In the meantime I had argued to Dutcher that in its new combination the two poems became in essence a new poem. Apparently the officers thought likewise.

Dutcher felt unappeased. I felt little sympathy for his position, I fear, even though we two had been the ones to publish those early, separate poems. From my point of view, the SFPA, to which Dutcher did belong, represented a community of interest that had exercised its right to administer its awards as it thought appropriate. At having become part of the history behind “The Cat Star,” I myself felt content. Those two early poems had fallen upon an unresponsive audience—partly, I suppose, because the community that supported SFPA never seemed to support *MSP*. “The Cat Star,” however, has won attention. It fully deserves it.

Although the words and phrases remained physically and visually unchanged, between the two old poems and the one new poem, they changed in other ways. The light airiness, the fancifulness, of “if there is a Dog Star there should be,” for instance, became weighted and enriched by being tied to the elegiac “I have hidden your body,” the longer poem that ended up subsumed within the shorter.

The two poems’ success in 2013 as a single poem seems, in a way, to correct the poet’s error in thinking they were separate entities, in 1985.

In fact, Gary had not gone back to two published poems and decided they were parts of one poem. In fact, she had found what she thought were drafts and combined them. In fact, she never came across their titles in her list of published works because these early poems never had titles. At *MSP* we had needed something to denote them on the contents page, and so, for titles, simply used their first lines.

This story points toward a difficulty poets face without being conscious of the fact—especially in their earlier years when they tend to feel more fluent and fluid, and when their works proliferate almost without their being aware. In writing multiple poems within limited time spans, the topics, words, rhythms, and sonorities may keep changing—yet, especially if the poet is pushing her or himself to write daily, to produce endlessly, a single impulse may well underlie all the different poems. A new statement of essential understanding, arising from inner processes, cannot surface every time a poet sits before paper; and so all those many poems may, in essence, be only one.

Two aspects fascinate me. For one, the story underlines Gary’s command of her materials. She had chosen words that struck her as the right ones, in 1985. When she revisited those words much later, perhaps in the 1990s or early 2000s, again they struck her as the right ones. Then when preparing the Lady Poetesses volume for publication, yet again she found her original word choices fitting. The part of her that comprised her poetic mind, in other words, remained fixed in its choices. The passage of decades failed to change it.

A second aspect fascinates me: for in dealing with manuscripts and publication records I know all too well how systems can fail. Gary and I, oddly enough, had experienced a similar situation in the early 1990s. When she took it upon herself to edit *Time Frames: A Speculative Poetry Anthology*, I sent her a trio of unpublished poems. Much later I discovered that one of the trio had already seen print. My records had failed me, perhaps; my memory, most certainly: for the poem had appeared in *Tales of the Unanticipated*—whose poetry editor’s records and memory failed her, as well; for she was Gary.

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“Interests, myriad. Weaknesses: pork buns, cats, big brown eyes, SF poetry.” When these unassuming words appeared in print, the woman they described lived in San Francisco. By then she had known for nearly a decade that poetry nourished her in an important way; and already she was thinking of herself, formally, as Terry A. Garey. During that decade she had gained an early sense of what it meant to belong to a literary community in the Bay Area, and then she had found a different level of acceptance upon entering the science fiction community. Learning afterwards from Berkeley poet Andrew Joron about the new SFPA must have pleased her to no end: for until then she had felt nearly alone in combining her literary communities. Her “interests, myriad” appeared in the SFPA membership directory published in June, 1979.

From her father’s family’s point of view, Theresa Ann Garey, born in 1948 in Berkeley, was a fifth generation Californian. That state only occasionally served as her childhood home, however. Since her father, who had been a tail gunner in the European Theater in World War II, joined the Air Force permanent reserves in the early 1950s, Terry spent formative years in Texas, Missouri, West Germany, Oregon, and England.

“I didn’t write much as a child,” she recalled recently. “School paper was precious and I was taught not to waste it. I did enjoy drawing and painting at school, however, and I read whatever I could find—the usual fairy tales and nursery rhymes, at first. Then in fifth grade my father took me to a public library in Portland, Oregon, got me a library card—and the world opened up. I think he didn’t want to be seen in the children’s section, so since I was tall for my age he showed me the humor section on the adult side of the library. And so there I was reading James Thurber, Dorothy Parker, H. Allen Smith, and Robert Benchley.

“I discovered the children’s section when I brought my sister in to get her card.”

In her high school years at a USAF base in England several influences helped move her nearer poetry: a pair of congenial teachers, a classmate who wrote poems to Terry’s liking, and John Lennon’s two volumes of fanciful ingenuity. Since the Beatles’ music and lyrics had so greatly

broadened her horizons, she felt she owed them an effort in return, and in her senior year wrote a screenplay for the rock and roll quartet that, handwritten, she mailed them.

In 1966 her parents sent her to live with her paternal grandmother in California, which led to her entering the state’s tuition-free community college system. She became friends with Chiron Kanshendel, who had published poems under this pen name but who would soon re-establish herself as Wendy Rose. Rose introduced Garey to the creative community and the small press. That another friend was taking a class taught by a published poet further intrigued her. “I had no idea people could teach how to write poetry,” she recalled. “I had him submit a couple of my poems as his. He got an ‘A’ for them.” At Rose’s urging she enrolled, and learned “mostly what not to do.”

Rose became Garey’s main influence, especially after a few years had passed during which both entered marriages that then deteriorated and collapsed. The former, who had begun attending University of California at Berkeley through a work-study program, became the latter’s mentor—while the latter, who was “throwing three to five hundred newspapers a night every week in the Berkeley hills around the university and having some rather awful experiences now and then,” became Rose’s student and sidekick. “We hung around together for mutual support. I helped her sell her paintings at powwows, where I met the Native American community,” Garey recalled. Attending readings in which Rose was taking part, Garey found herself becoming immersed in writings and writers being identified as “Third World.” While academic and Beat poetry had yet to make an impression upon her, she identified with this community and its writings, which seemed rooted in reality and life experiences.

She met and heard Native American writers including Simon Ortiz, Joy Harjo, Leslie Silko, N. Scott Momaday, Paula Gunn Allen, Carol Lee Sanchez, Mary Tall Mountain, Duane Niatum, and Maurice Kenny. She came into contact with Asian-American poets as well, such as Ron Tanaka, and African-Americans, including Ishmael Reed, Maya Angelou, and Eugene Redmond.

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“It was quite heady, talking to people about writing...after years of being afraid to mention that I read books.”

Cont. on p. 6



Imaginary Junctions (cont. from p. 5)

Garey found publication in the company of Third World writers, appearing alongside Rose, Sanchez, and Kenny, as well as Roxanne Dunbar, in the litzine *dodeca*, predecessor to *Contact/II*.

“Women were usually in the minority in these readings, but they were there,” she recalled. “There were also a lot of women-only readings around the Bay Area, but in spite of this Wendy and I rarely got to read together. For one thing she was a better poet; and for another, they were still dividing the white poets from the non-white, even at group readings! It was frustrating.”

Whether it would be due to her influence on Garey or to an intrinsic commonality between them, Rose’s position that a poem should speak to the listener or reader without mediation, especially without academically elitist mediation, might easily be seen as Garey’s.

Through an amateur press association in the middle 1970s, Garey met another who would prove an important influence: Camilla “Mog” Decarnin, who was obtaining her master’s in poetry at San Francisco State.

“We had both been Air Force kids, we were both the oldest child, and we were both the weird, inexplicable kid at home and at school,” recalled Garey. “Essentially we were sisters, or at least cousins.”

Garey found publication in the company of Third World writers, appearing alongside Rose, Sanchez, and Kenny, as well as Roxanne Dunbar, in the litzine *dodeca*, predecessor to *Contact/II*.

Years would pass before Garey would take seriously Rose’s insistence that she keep consistent records of writings and publications. Even so, Garey believes *dodeca* gave her her first publication.

Through Rose, too, Garey entered a quite different community. “She introduced me to science fiction fandom,” Garey said, “and I had a home. It was wonderful, exciting. I was accepted. I met Bob Silverberg, Chelsea Quinn Yarbro, Susan Wood, Terry Carr, Poul Anderson, Debbie Notkin, Tom Whitmore, Dave Nee, and many others. Quinn introduced me to many visiting writers. Alfie Bester kissed my hand. I had no idea who he was. Bertie Chandler and I discussed navy bases in Scotland. Again, I had no idea who he was. He bought me a cup of tea. ...It was quite heady, talking to people about writing...after years of being afraid to mention that I read books.” She also encountered her first fanzine—a feminist one by Wood.

Her new community altered her life in unexpected ways. She found work at a map store run by Yarbro’s father, at the bookstore named *The Other Change of Hobbit*, and at a San Francisco magic nightclub frequented by area science fiction and mystery writers.

If at first she met no one writing poetry within the genre community, she did find a few poems in science fiction magazines, and discovered as well Edward Lucie-Smith’s *Holding Your Eight Hands: An Anthology of Science Fiction Verse*. “But it wasn’t exactly what I had in mind,” she recalled. “There seemed to be an awful lot of sex and death involved, and what seemed like awkward rhyming and overlarge words.”

Lucie-Smith’s anthology presented an overwhelmingly male slate of poets, with the exception of California poet Ruth Lechtliner. Through the 1970s Garey gradually grew aware that other women were publishing imaginative poetry, however—including Phyllis Gottlieb, Ursula K. Le Guin, Diane Ackerman, and Janet Fox. With Suzette Hayden Elgin’s founding of the SFPA and its newsletter *Star Line* in 1978, and with other new publications appearing then and in the early 1980s, she grew more strongly aware of others who had been or were now active in the field, including Ruth Berman, Janet Fox, Karen G. Jollie, Kathryn Rantala, and Jane Yolen.

Garey would come to see herself as a “quiet facilitator for speculative poetry—especially readings, because people love to be read to.” Her facilitating began with the 1979 Westercon and, from a distance, the 1979 WisCon. Since she, Rose, and Decarnin were unable to attend, they mailed a poetry reading on cassette. Garey then became involved in the 1981 Worldcon, Denvention II, at a reading that either she or Robert Frazier, or both, organized.

After having suggested to various science fiction anthology editors in the 1970s that they hire her to edit poetry, she became a significant editor in the field in the 1980s, although never professionally—beginning in 1981 as poetry editor for feminist zine *Aurora*. After her 1983 move to Minneapolis, she became the first poetry editor for *Tales of the Unanticipated*. After the magazine commenced in 1986, her editorship continued for nine issues.

Through the 1970s Garey gradually grew aware that other women were publishing imaginative poetry....

Garey would come to see herself as a “quiet facilitator for speculative poetry—especially readings, because people love to be read to.”



She edited and co-edited several individual projects as well, notably her 1991 hardbound anthology *Time Frames*, which featured generous selections of works by, among others, Berman, Decarnin, and Ann K. Schwader.

Her work as editor grew from the same sources that gave rise to her facilitating. Especially in the 1970s and '80s, she perceived that the writing of poetry fell beneath the notice of many prose writers, and perhaps beneath their dignity, as well. This seemed true especially within science fiction. When editing for *Aurora* she strove to counter this, saying to her prospective authors: "Believe in poetry. Give it the thought and love you would give any other piece of writing and more. Wendy Rose once told someone at a literary party that she was a writer as well as an artist. The person asked what it was that she wrote. When she said poetry, the person said, 'Oh, I thought you said you *wrote*.'"

Garey herself encountered this kind of offhand rejection—a snubbing that had nothing to do with gender relations, and nothing specifically to do with genre. It arose from an elitist feeling, a notion of superiority, that had spread among prose writers.

Garey came to learn, in other words, that the form of writing which she had chosen, or that had chosen her, earned her a sometimes instant rejection without her work having been read.

Her efforts won her the respect and support of congenial souls, however. Her facilitating at conventions flourished in the Minnesota twin cities, with the poetry readings she began hosting at Minicon in 1984 attracting Yolen and Tom Digby, among many others. Her poetry workshop began meeting during those years, its members being Eleanor Arnason, Ruth Berman, Rebecca Marjesdatter, K. Cassandra O'Malley, John Calvin Rezmerski, and Laurel Winter. The readings and workshop in combination led to the group readings under the Lady Poetesses from Hell name, which became popular convention events.

In the meantime Garey had established her presence in the periodicals *Star Line*, *Uranus*, *Velocities*, and *MSP*, the last two of which firmly embraced the "speculative poetry" name and approach; and she ap-

peared in the anthologies *Aliens and Lovers* and *Burning with a Vision*—alongside Wendy Rose, in the last. Despite never being prolific, in the 1980s Garey ranked among the more visible woman poets associated with speculative poetry, alongside Ackerman, Berman, Melissa Cannon, Sonya Dorman, Elissa Malcohn, and Rantala. By and large these writers wrote poetry for the sake of writing poetry, and not in order to give themselves springboard publications toward publishing fiction.

A personal favorite of hers appeared in 1988, titled "Photons":

are salmon
that never return
to the river

Eight years afterwards Garey's much lengthier "Spotting UFOs while Canning Tomatoes" appeared in the anthology *Serve It Forth: Cooking with Anne McCaffrey*, resulting in its winning a Rhysling for long poem in 1997.

The past decade has proven challenging for Garey, in part due to the illness, slow decline, and death of her old friend "Mog" Decarnin, as well as the death of her father in 2009. Although she withdrew from the world of submissions and publications, she has continued writing and meeting with her poetry workshop, now in its third decade. In 2012 she helped give her reading circle a more formal existence, with the *Lady Poetesses from Hell* anthology; and in 2013 she received her second Rhysling. Her recent retirement from library work has given her the time to begin reconsidering and organizing her decades of work.

∞ ∞ ∞

Many who first asserted their literary spirits in the 1970s, '80s, and '90s existed upon licking stamps, pounding typewriter ribbons to faintness, and pure hope. The small press had seen an ebullient flash of life before their time, thanks to low printing costs: but for this group, as they were struggling to find their personal voices, the economic doldrums and artistic Salt Flats of the Reagan years and their aftermath made it seem that magazine runs of under two hundred copies per issue offered them their sole ticket to literary redemption.

Under other conditions I believe Garey might have emerged as a primarily serious poet, focused upon issues of con-

Especially in the 1970s and '80s, she perceived that the writing of poetry fell beneath the notice of many prose writers, and perhaps beneath their dignity, as well. This seemed true especially within science fiction.

Garey herself encountered this kind of offhand rejection—a snubbing that had nothing to do with gender relations, and nothing specifically to do with genre. It arose from an elitist feeling, a notion of superiority, that had spread among prose writers.

Under other conditions I believe Garey might have emerged as a primarily serious poet, focused upon issues of conscience. She may yet.

Cont. on p. 8



Imaginary Junctions (cont. from p. 7)

Garey has long displayed a quiet, whimsical humor that seems to bring its own measure of reward, insofar as gentle humor builds community more than it undermines it.

I believe, despite the current mood within the genre of embracing confessionalism, mannerism, and euphuistic exoticism, that her solid and accomplished approach to capturing a distinctly human impulse will win her more readers in coming years.

science. She may yet. She had stumbled upon an education in the Bay Area that made her aware of vibrant indigenous and sexual-political issues; yet afterwards she had found acceptance within a genre-based community that rejected poetry only slightly more quickly than it rejected feminism, and that smiled upon verse only when coy or clever.

Garey has long displayed a quiet, whimsical humor that seems to bring its own measure of reward, insofar as gentle humor builds community more than it undermines it. I have worried that this aspect would overwhelm the essential Garey, however. That a “recipe” for canning tomatoes should win her a poetry award seemed almost unfortunate, since it publicly elevated a relatively lightweight concoction of hers above work that seems to me to exhibit her deeper ambitions. Yet that “The Cat Star” afterwards won an award from the same organization comes near to redeeming the situation: for this work achieves at a level beyond that to be reached by most writers, in our day.

I say the above not to denigrate her humor, which I value not only in her poems but in her quilting art and in her approach to life in general. How can one not approve the instinct that led her to affix canning lids with hot-glue to the frame in which she displays her first award certificate—and to her similar plan to affix toy cats to the frame for her second?

The low-key humor, the self-deprecation, the Minnesotan shying from the spotlight—all may have become an ingrained part of Garey, the poet, by this point. Yet I think a motivated, penetrating vitality remains within her; and I believe, despite the current mood within the genre of embracing confessionalism, mannerism, and euphuistic exoticism, that her solid and accomplished approach to capturing a distinctly human impulse will win her more readers in coming years.

To close, from “Years at Bay”:
this journey puzzles me
shoves my mind around while I stare
at imaginary junctions wondering
how much is enough
how much is what it used to be
and where will I go when it is all over

Mark Rich has published in publications ranging from *Poem*, *Rattle*, and *Ship of Fools* to *Analog*, *SF Age*, and *Amazing Stories*. His most recent book is *C.M. Kornbluth: The Life and Works of a Science Fiction Visionary*. He lives in Wisconsin.

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Elephants in the Alley

Terry A. Garey

In the dream my mother and I
hold each other—
sobbing with exhaustion—
the menopause fairy
has cursed us with insomnia.

I'm so tired
she cries into the cotton nighty
on my shoulder.
I know, I know, I croon into her hair.

An old friend comes into the room,
points to the window.
Look, he cries, just look!

In the alley I see circus elephants
passing through on the way
from the train to the Big Top.

Mom, look!
Elephants in the alley—
You can see them between the garages!

Startled, she sees them,
looks at me,
sees me, and at last she understands
what we've been missing.

We laugh like sisters and watch the elephants,
we play cards all night,
sing, tell jokes, get cracker crumbs in the bed.
Finally we sleep together on top of the covers,
dream of being kids.

In the alley, elephants keep walking to the Big Top



untitled

Terry A. Garey, a member of Lady Poetesses from Hell from the Twin Cities, has edited several volumes of poetry and has received two Rhysling awards for her work: for “Spotting UFOs while Canning Tomatoes” (1977) and “The Cat Star” (2013).

Cave Discovery

(for Giovana)

Terry A. Garey

a hollow reed
makes a hollow vulture bone
into a flute

the anthropologist
supplies breath and fingers
the bone flute
plays the cave
as an instrument

old dreams
flutter
around the music
their wings
borne on updrafts of sound

echoes of their round dance
drops of water
are now a rhythm
given strength
by many hands
who drew magic
from sound
all those years ago

the cave is in concert
once again

the anthropologist
watches the pictures on the walls
begin to dance



The Female Man: Swift Classic

The Female Man, by Joanna Russ

by Kim Stanley Robinson

It is an angry book. Russ wrote once of being "addicted to rage," and I think it is true that anger is her typical literary mood. But she is also very funny; very precise; very tricky, indirect, subtle, ingenious.

There are moments in The Female Man meant to shock the reader.

This feminist classic is very swift. Even the longest chapters are short, and the shortest ones run less than a page. In the rush of information the chapters shift not just in character and setting, but also mode and register. As Samuel R. Delany wrote, the styles include "a compendium of (and in *The Female Man*, almost a textbook on) various modes of discourse—rhapsody, polemic, satire, fantasy, foreground action, psychological naturalism, reverie, and invective—each brought, in its turn, within the science fiction frame for the changes that result." This is a good way to see the book.

There are four Js in the novel: Janet from Whileaway, a planet occupied only by women; Jeannine, a young woman brought up in an alternate 1950s USA, where the Depression never ended; Jael, a soldier in a sex war between men and women, in some near future; and the slippery Joanna, apparently the author of the book, who appears from time to time to comment on the action, and sometimes join it.

The action, though jumbled, has a clear plot, which is the stepwise unveiling of each of the four different worlds' natures and their relation to each other. Together the tangled scenes tell one story, in 214 packed pages. The compression is explosive; I recall reading the book in a single sitting in 1975, and afterward feeling stunned—slapped around, but also exhilarated.

It is an angry book. Russ wrote once of being "addicted to rage," and I think it is true that anger is her typical literary mood. But she is also very funny; very precise; very tricky, indirect, subtle, ingenious.

She wrote the book between 1969 and 1971; it was published in 1975. It is a very Sixties text, in that it is experimental, revolutionary, graphic, politicized, theatrical.

I think it likely that Russ read Doris Lessing's *The Golden Notebook*, published in 1962, and decided that Lessing's idea of having a woman writer express four different personalities in four differently colored notebooks, which then coalesce into a golden notebook, was a good idea, but not fully exploited by Lessing, because all the

voices in *The Golden Notebook* sound much the same, and Lessing seems to abandon her plan about halfway through. Russ literalizes this structure by way of science fiction, with her four people genetically the same but living in four different worlds. The device is foregrounded by this science fiction literalization, and it drives the plot: how are these four J women different, and why? And what will they do together?

Russ only wrote about Doris Lessing once that I can find, in a 1971 essay called "What Can a Heroine Do? or Why Women Can't Write." She wrote there, "In novels of Doris Lessing, an authoress concerned with a great many things besides love, the heroines still spend most of their energy and time maintaining relations with their lovers (or marrying, or divorcing, or failing to achieve orgasm, or achieving it, or worrying about their sexuality, their men, their love, and their love lives)." This is not a very generous evaluation, and perhaps it came in the context of Russ writing *The Female Man* and in effect doing more than Lessing did with Lessing's device. Ultimately they were wrestling with similar problems, and the two books would make a good reading pair.

There are moments in *The Female Man* meant to shock the reader. The early cocktail party where Janet knocks down the host is not one of these, as it seems meant to make all readers, male or female, cheer for the tough outsider fed up with the pompous bad guy. The scene fits the template of a thousand other stories, and its gender flip, salutary and instructive, is easy to follow and agree with. Ah yes, one thinks (one man, me, 1975), Janet is a strong, sensible person from a strong, sensible culture, reacting to a stupid, pretentious culture. She's the cowboy in the drawing room, Crocodile Dundee in New York. If I were that woman I would behave like that too! one might hopefully think. And this reaction is a step along a way.

But Janet and her home planet Whileaway keep getting more complex as we learn more. Indeed, one of the main plots in this novel is the successive revealing of



aspects of Whileaway. At first it can be taken as a version of a feminist, all-female utopia. All the women are above average and independent, romantic love is discouraged, they do all the jobs that exist, they duel, they wander in the wilderness as teenagers, and so on. These are the early facts we get, which give us the impression this is Russ's version of utopia.

Then we learn that all the children are taken from their mothers at age five and raised collectively. The resemblance to the British upper-class tradition of sending children off to boarding schools, with well-known devastating results, is unremarked; but on page 52 we get the following: "Whileawayan psychology locates the basis of Whileawayan character in the early indulgence, pleasure, and flowering, which is drastically curtailed by the separation from the mothers. This (it says) gives Whileawayan life its characteristic independence, its dissatisfaction, its suspicion, and its tendency toward a rather irritable solipsism." This all sounds quite like the character Joanna, and maybe even Russ herself. And later the narrator adds about this society, "[t]here is too, under it all, the incredible explosive energy, the gaiety of high intelligence, the obliquities of wit, the cast of mind that makes industrial areas into gardens and ha-has.... Whileawayans work all the time. They work. And they work. *And they work.*"

Still very much Joanna, it seems. Whileaway is her place; we relate to it, we can still think this is Russ's utopia. Then, much later in the book (p. 143) comes a scene saved as a late surprise. An old woman on Whileaway, retired, goes off on her own. Apparently this is illegal, and so Janet, being a police officer, goes out to find her and bring her back; and when she won't come back, Janet shoots and kills her. That's the law.

This is meant to be crazy, I think, by which I mean Russ intends it to be an assault on liberal or bourgeois values of individuality and respect for life. Russ is here saying, Whileaway is not utopia; it's a civilization in which all the people are biologically female. Such a thing could have fascist elements, and by this example we see this one does have them. Here collectivity is mandatory and lethally enforced, even though the child-rearing method admittedly leads toward solipsism, so that

the system as a whole cuts against itself. Being human, it could be bad; it could be anything. Internalizing this message is part of internalizing the title of the book.

Janet follows the telling of this shocking story by explaining to Laura that she is Whileaway's emissary to Earth, and a police officer back home, because by Whileawayan standards she is substandard. She puts it like this: "*I am stupid.*"

The narrator then goes on to imagine what the murdered old woman, Elena Twason, was like; what a remarkable person she was, how no Earth man would have noticed her, but the narrator would have liked to make love to her, how nice that would have been; but she's dead; and her death was "a bad joke," not on the part of Whileawayan society, but on the part of Joanna, writing her book. Then the scene moves on, without even a break, when Jeannine comes across Janet's gun and doesn't recognize it for what it is. And then the story moves on yet again, on in its violent rush and tumble, page after page of new information pummeling the reader with a crosschop of contradictions, so that the brief recounting of the legal murder of an old woman almost seems like a bad dream, but still sits there inside the idea of Whileaway—a slap to the face, a shaking by the shoulders till your head snaps on your neck. You think, but wait, I like to wander off in the hills! I plan to do that myself in my own old age! These women of Whileaway, what are they? They're just like men!

In the end you stagger out of this book, knowing more than you did before about being a female man, or any other kind of human; but not in any simple way. The book can't be collapsed to a meaning any shorter than its 214 pages. All the incidents together make its meaning, and then it's a koan to puzzle over.

This is not Russ's only great book.

Her first novel, *Picnic on Paradise*, gives us a barbarian sword and sorcery heroine, wrenched into science fiction and feminism both by a spacetime and a generic discontinuity, with hilarious and tragic results. Her second, *And Chaos Died*, is I think the best novel ever about telepathy,

Russ is here saying, Whileaway is not utopia; it's a civilization in which all the people are biologically female. Such a thing could have fascist elements....

These women of Whileaway, what are they? They're just like men!

In the end you stagger out of this book, knowing more than you did before about being a female man, or any other kind of human; but not in any simple way.

...really all her novels are transgressive and offensive, while also engaging and moving. They are the best kind of novels, troubling and unforgettable.

Cont. on p. 13





Cosmic Terror and Innumerable Riches

Lovecraft's Monsters, edited by Ellen Datlow, Tachyon Publications, April 15, 2014, 384 pp., \$16.95.

reviewed by Usman T. Malik

Some hallmarks of Lovecraftian stories are their atmospherics and their evocation of a universe bigger and darker than we could imagine, which, by virtue of its alien mis-structure, is essentially indifferent to human existence.

Weird Fiction, especially the myth of The King in Yellow created by Robert W. Chambers, has recently enjoyed a surge in mainstream popularity because of a certain television show, but the Weird Tale itself has been around for a long time.

It owes its modern form to a number of practitioners, but early formalization (at least in the West) seems to have occurred in the Lovecraft Circle,¹ a group of writers surrounding a literary icon in horror's history, H.P. Lovecraft. So it goes that a reading of Lovecraft's work is useful to understanding and appreciating many facets of the modern Weird Tale.

Some hallmarks of Lovecraftian stories are their atmospherics and their evocation of a universe bigger and darker than we could imagine, which, by virtue of its alien mis-structure, is essentially indifferent to human existence. Lovecraft's worlds are frequently in conflict with themselves and with their spatial and temporal laws. In that sense his stories become stories about the relationship between the protagonist and his essentially hostile physical and psychological environment.

If you have tried HPL's fiction and not been drawn into it for whatever reason, and you're looking for a contemporary rendering of his fascinating themes, an anthology that draws inspiration (and monsters) from his multiverse may be the next best thing.

Enter *Lovecraft's Monsters*.

Multi-award winning editor Ellen Datlow has gathered an impressive array of fiction from some of the leading writers of Lovecraftian and Weird Fiction. In compiling this anthology, Datlow says, she wanted to avoid pastiches and recurrently reprinted stories, and to present works by authors who don't usually write Lovecraftian stories. I believe she has done marvelously by those parameters.

One deficiency I note is a lack of global diversity. Besides Nadia Bulkin, all writers are Anglo-American or North American, and nearly all primary settings Western. (To be fair, there seem to be only a hand-

ful of authors writing global Lovecraftian fiction, but perhaps a grander sweep could be made in the future.)

The standouts, for me, were "Children of the Fang" by John Langan, "The Same Deep Waters as You" by Brian Hodge, "Black as the Pit from Pole to Pole" by Howard Waldrop and Steven Utley, "The Dappled One" by William Spencer Browning, "The Bleeding Shadow" by Joe Lansdale, and Gemma Files's creepy poem "Haruspicy." That said, it's a stellar lineup with *every* story offering innumerable riches. I'll summarize several that appealed to me.

"Bulldozer," by Laird Barron is an immersive Western-Horror novelette about a late Nineteenth Century Pinkerton who comes to town looking for a murderer and Satanist and, in classic noir fashion, finds more than he was looking for. One of the many things Barron is proficient at is his tangential approach to horror; hints, suggestions, and clues garnered through our protagonist's interrogation of the locals build an ominous arc with a terrifying conclusion.

A powerful tale set in Indonesia and riffing off the myth of The Goat with a Thousand Young (Shub-Niggurath), Nadia Bulkin's "Red Goat Black Goat" is on the surface a story about a destitute woman who seeks employment in an isolated house on a hilltop. She's hired to work as a maid and nanny for children supposedly protected by the legendary Goat-Nurse; but, unravel that premise and the story works rather successfully as a metaphor for motherhood and its vagaries. It's an enjoyable read in a strong, assured voice.

Featuring the Cthulhu Mythos Innsmouth motif, "The Same Deep Waters as You," by Brian Hodge, is a highly atmospheric story about a woman who faces her biggest fear head on and is changed forever. The story builds slowly. There is a tenderness to the monsters here, which, nevertheless, doesn't preclude the reader's feeling of cosmic terror. If anything, it sharpens the story's gut punch at the end. The metaphor of imprisonment within and without, with jailers sometimes be-



coming the jailed, is quite potent. One of my favorite stories, period.

“The Dappled Thing,” by William Spencer Browning, is a fantastic steam-punk story told in a Victorian voice. It features our hero, Sir Bertram Rudge, on a quest into the heart of a perilous jungle crawling with savages. Sir Rudge has been entrusted with the task of securing and bringing back the eloped granddaughter of one Lord Addison, and for his traveling and fighting needs he’s been given a tentacled, armored craft named Her Glory of Empire. Browning’s story is a funny, frightening, pulpy-yet-original, and satisfying tale that I suspect readers will return to again and again.

Fred Chappell’s “Remnants” is Lovecraftian space opera. The Old Ones and

their Shaggoth slaves have invaded Earth and are transforming the very nature of our world unto “their own image.” A group of survivors including Echo, an autistic telepath, and the group’s dog, Queenie, are hiding in the jungle. Echo receives a telepathic message, possibly a simplified map, and sets the group on a quest for survival and perhaps meaning in this horrendous new world. A gripping adventure story.

Thomas Ligotti’s work, as any Weird Fiction aficionado will tell you, has long had a cult following for a very good reason: he is a master of Lovecraftian atmospherics and a poet of cosmic awe. His “Sect of the Idiot” is about a man who finds himself in a strange old town with oddly shaped buildings and houses. The very matter of the town inspires strange dreams, signals

Cont. on p. 14

The Female Man: Swift Classic (cont. from p. 11)

an incandescent display of science fiction imagination and prose poetry.

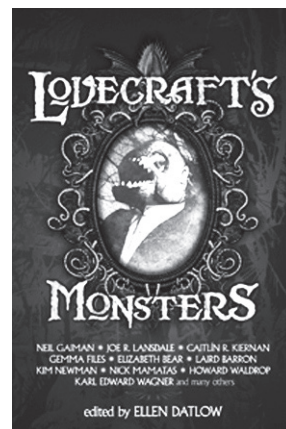
Then came the *The Female Man*, and after that two more novels, *We Who Are About To...* and *The Two of Them*. The first demolishes the idea of a small group of humans crash-landing on another planet and making a go of it. This salutary lesson is solidly ecological in logic, unromantic in import. *The Two of Them* returns to the frequent Russ theme of an older woman trying to help a younger one out of her awful situation in patriarchy. This time Russ critiques the idea ferociously; what’s needed, this protagonist realizes, is not individual rescues, but revolution; and if sympathetic men don’t get with that larger program, as the protagonist finds is the case with her male partner, then it’s appropriate to kill that partner and get on with the real work. Another shock; really all her novels are transgressive and offensive, while also engaging and moving. They are the best kind of novels, troubling and unforgettable.

There are also three volumes of excellent short fiction, very much of a piece with her novels; these stories are mostly collected in *The Zanzibar Cat*, *Extra(ordinary) People*, and *The Hidden Side of the Moon*. There is also a fine short novel that seems autobiographical, *On Strike Against God*, which could almost be appended to *The Female Man* as something by Joanna, the styles employed are so similar.

Taken all together, there’s not that much fiction. Russ struggled with illness in her last three decades, and wrote little in that time. That’s a real loss, but we have to feel lucky we have as much as we do. It’s one of the great bodies of work in science fiction, and in American literature. There is nothing trivial, nothing second-rate, nothing offhand. Even the mimeographed slash fiction written under the name “Janet Alex,” portraying the sexual relations of Captain Kirk, Mr. Spock, and Bones, is funny and sexy and moving. Find it if you can!

It’s also true that Russ was an excellent critic. That work is mostly collected in *How to Suppress Women’s Writing*, *What Are We Fighting For?*, and *The Country You Have Never Seen*. These are crucial parts of science fiction and feminist history and theory. Really, every book she wrote will give a reader immense pleasure and insight, along with permanent worry and pondering. She was a great artist.

I wanted to meet her and tell her how much her writing meant to me, and in her last decade she lived in the same town as my parents, so I probably could have. But I was a little scared of her, thinking she might judge me. Maybe she would have, but I should have tried anyway. Now I so much wish I had. I would have said to her, you changed me.



In compiling this anthology, Datlow says, she wanted to avoid pastiches and recurrently reprinted stories, and to present works by authors who don't usually write Lovecraftian stories.

Taken all together, there's not that much fiction. Russ struggled with illness in her last three decades, and wrote little in that time. That's a real loss, but we have to feel lucky we have as much as we do. It's one of the great bodies of work in science fiction, and in American literature. There is nothing trivial, nothing second-rate, nothing offhand.

Kim Stanley Robinson's fiction works include *Antarctica*, the Mars trilogy, *Forty Signs of Rain*, and *Escape from Kathmandu*. Robinson was an instructor at the Clarion Workshop in 2009, and in 2010, was guest of honor at the 68th World Science Fiction Convention in Melbourne, Australia.



Cosmic Terror (cont. from p. 13)

One deficiency I note is a lack of global diversity... but perhaps a grander sweep could be made in the future.

The illustrations by World Fantasy Award winning artist John Coulthart, which accompany each story, are a treat in their own right.

My appetite is certainly whetted for more works from these authors and more anthologies from the editor Ellen Datlow.

Usman T. Malik is a Pakistani vagrant camped in Florida. He writes strange stories, likes long walks, and occasionally strums the guitar. Stories published are in or forthcoming from *Strange Horizons*, *Daily Science Fiction*, *Pseudopod*, and other venues. Please find him at www.usmanmalik.org.

that lead our protagonist to a hellishly extraordinary conclusion. Like the chaotic nature of the deity that the Sect follows, the story's structure is also intentionally foggy.

"Black as the Pit from Pole to Pole," by Howard Waldrop and Steven Utley, is *Frankenstein* meets *The Lost World* meets *Journey to the Center of the Earth* meets *Moby Dick* meets Lovecraft. I loved this one. Wonderfully written, with a powerful arc, the novelette is the untold story of Frankenstein's monster's escape across the harsh ice. Ostensibly fleeing his creator's revenge but really fleeing his own demons, the creature discovers a fantastical lost world and ends up descending into the interior of a dark and hollow earth. The title is from William Ernest Henley's poem "Invictus"; that poem's title presumably mirrors the unconquerable spirit of our supposedly nonhuman protagonist. This is the first time I've read a Waldrop/Utley story, but it won't be the last.

"Waiting at the Crossroads Motel," by Steve Rasnic Tem, begins as a strange man with sentient blood waits at a rundown motel in the middle of nowhere (but really at a crossroads of worlds) in the company of his two strange children and his frightened wife. Soon the motel begins to fill with peculiar guests, all of whom gaze at the horizon expectantly. A creepy, Lovecraftian story hinging on a poignant metaphor. Tem's work always delights with the lyricality of his prose and his ingenious character machinations.

Joe Lansdale's "The Bleeding Shadow" is his take on Lovecraft's "The Music of Erich Zann." It's a frightening Southern story about a private eye hired by an escort to look for her vanished brother, who sent her a record filled with eerie, terrifying music. A tightly-paced thriller of a tale with sin and redemption at its core, it gripped me and didn't let go for a moment.

"Haruspicy," by Gemma Files, is a terrifying piece about a nameless teacher beckoning her pupils, human and inhuman, to gather under the gallows and rip open a hanged man for divination. A reminder of how potent and allusive poetry can be, it is at once a reflection on human atrocities and a reminder that our existence is, as Nabokov says, but a brief crack of light between two eternities of darkness. I found it hard to put this piece out of my mind.

John Langan is a master at weaving tricky narratives. His nonlinear novelette "Children of the Fang" pieces together sketches from different times in a blind woman's life and features a mysterious grandfather who in his youth made a startling discovery in the Empty Quarter deep inside Saudi Arabia's deserts: an underground city that may or may not be Iram, Lovecraftian mythos's City of Pillars. Bold, atmospheric, and clever, the real power of this story lies in the histories of both this family and the inhabitants of the sinister desert city, two fiercely familial narratives that Langan brings together seamlessly.

Stories by Neil Gaiman, Karl Edward Wagner, Nick Mamatas, and Caitlin R. Kiernan, and another poem by Gemma Files are also worthy inclusions in an anthology sure to please even the most jaded readers. The illustrations by World Fantasy Award winning artist John Coulthart, which accompany each story, are a treat in their own right. My appetite is certainly whetted for more works from these authors and more anthologies from the editor Ellen Datlow.

1. Lovecraft Circle, H.P. Lovecraft Mythos Book Club and Reading Group, <http://lovecraftbookclub.wordpress.com/lovecraft-circle/>



The Anthology as Literary Resistance

Long Hidden, edited by Rose Fox and Daniel José Older,
Crossed Genres Publications, May 2014, 363 pp., \$19.95.

reviewed by Maria Velazquez

Long Hidden began as a labor of love. This anthology of historical speculative fiction emerged from a “discussion that became an idea that became a book” (i) between activist lovers of genre fiction. The introduction, collaboratively written by both Fox and Older, emphasizes the collaborative nature of the project. It also emphasizes that the work involved is ongoing, including mention of the connections to its earliest origins as a public Twitter conversation between activist lovers of genre fiction, organized by Cassandra Taylor (@p0ppet on Twitter), and an outline of its editorial and funding process. This last is particularly interesting; embedded in a lively discussion of editorial policy and submission guidelines is a burning commitment to the critical utility of the anthology as an act of “literary resistance” (ii).

Using the anthology format and solicitation guidelines designed to emphasize their outreach to non-traditional and non-mainstream authors, Fox and Older assembled a crew of 27 writers/readers/activist dreamers. These contributors span the gamut from established writers (including Tananarive Due and Nnedi Okorafor) to early career and first-sales writers (including Shanáe Brown and S. Lynn). Lisa Bolekaja (“Medu”) is a graduate of the Clarion SFF workshop, an active member of the Carl Brandon Society, and a recipient of the Octavia E. Butler Memorial Scholarship. I mention all this because I think it’s important to highlight how deliberate the editorial, authorial, archival, and *genealogical* politics framing the publication of *Long Hidden* are.

This is not just an anthology about history and magic. It’s an anthology emergent from ongoing histories of oppression, collaboration, and resistance; one that orients itself towards a radical future featuring multiple storytellers while simultaneously connecting itself to a shared past filled with secret histories of survival, hope, and grief. This shared past is not built around the erasure of specific political, ethnic, and temporal identity; each story begins with

the date and place of its setting, and the submission guidelines asked that each author provide a bibliography and suggestions for further reading.

Long Hidden’s political and editorial commitment to collective resistance is threaded through each of its short stories. These move from continent to continent and era to era, are meticulously researched, and feature narrators who strike a delicate balance between being products of their time and place, and unique voices exploring innately human questions of loss, identity, and love. Highlighting the project’s insistence on the importance of marginalia and ephemera, the first story, “Ogres of East Africa” by Sofia Samatar, centers on the writing of a bestiary commissioned by a British man obsessed with going on safari to hunt ogres. In the edges of this bestiary, Alibhai, the expedition organizer and cataloguer, reflects on the stories of these ogres, connecting their evolving histories to himself as a product of Britain’s colonial displacement. Ultimately, these notes, what Alibhai’s employer assumes are “fly-tracks, smudges from [Alibhai’s] dirty hands” (1), tell a story of pan-African identity and illustrate how claiming an African identity in the midst of anti-blackness and imperial exploitation is always a political act. Alibhai’s reflections on identity, history, and myth are simultaneously hidden in the margins and publicly encoded into this official record.

Unlike “Ogres,” which centers on collective action and memory, “Free Jim’s Mine” by Tananarive Due explores collective trauma. Pregnant Lottie and her husband William escape from Lottie’s master, heading towards North Carolina and the sanctuary promised by the Quakers. Desperate for shelter, they appeal to Free Jim—who “[sold] his heart for freedom” (25) and who warns them that the slavecatchers’ dogs might be better than his mine. Set decades later and cities away, Jamey Hatley’s “Collected Likenesses” continues to explore the legacies of slavery. Firmly situating the sexual violence experienced by enslaved



...embedded in a lively discussion of editorial policy and submission guidelines is a burning commitment to the critical utility of the anthology as an act of “literary resistance” (ii).

This is not just an anthology about history and magic. It’s an anthology emergent from ongoing histories of oppression, collaboration, and resistance; one that orients itself towards a radical future featuring multiple storytellers while simultaneously connecting itself to a shared past filled with secret histories of survival, hope, and grief.

Cont. on p. 17

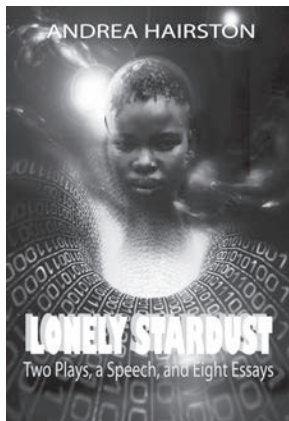


⚙️ A Song of Andrea Hairston

Lonely Stardust: Two Plays, a Speech, and Eight Essays, by Andrea Hairston, Aqueduct Press, June 2014, 344 pp., \$20.

reviewed by Adrian Khactu

From one of the opening essays, a praise song for Octavia Butler, to an ending call-to-arms speech that is a must-read for any writer who feels marginalized, all of Hairston's voices cohere and sing together a medley of what science fiction can be.



Hairston dizzyingly deconstructs this film to explore how science fiction offers a subversive resistance to hegemonic constructions of identity (and bad military guys).

Though this is heady and intoxicating academic writing at its finest, it certainly helps to have been introduced to literary and cultural theorists like Said, Butler, Brecht, and Fanon. It will also help if you've heard of performance studies, queer theory, and postcolonial criticism.

There is a fierce intelligence pulsing through Andrea Hairston's latest collection. The title, *Lonely Stardust: Two Plays, a Speech, and Eight Essays*, certainly suggests diversity in prose and genre, yet each piece resonates with Hairston's acuity and ambition. From one of the opening essays, a praise song for Octavia Butler, to an ending call-to-arms speech that is a must-read for any writer who feels marginalized, all of Hairston's voices cohere and sing together a medley of what science fiction can be.

She begins with eight essays that demonstrate how academic prose *should* be written: both witty and trenchant, featuring whipsmart turns that delight even as they provoke. Each essay connects popular culture with critical theory, cleaving away easy film analysis to unearth shocking and persuasive readings.

"Disappearing Natives: The Colonized Body is Monstrous" starts with a series of rhetorical questions that incorporate postcolonial negritude, Orientalist monstrosity, and disability studies to examine *Source Code* (2011), the Jake Gyllenhaal time-travel/quantum-physics action movie. Hairston dizzyingly deconstructs this film to explore how science fiction offers a subversive resistance to hegemonic constructions of identity (and bad military guys).

Hairston's other essays are equally propulsive, bobbing and weaving through, among many other concepts, Brechtian performance, contemporary African *realpolitik*, and radical identity politics. She savages the leering misogynistic pleasures in *Strange Days* (1995), while convincingly re-centering the movie around the woefully underused Angela Bassett. She lovingly posits the central robot romance of Pixar's *WALL-E* (2008) as revolutionary, connecting it to the long legacy of Marxist worker robots, starting with Čapek's *RUR*. And she translates the Nigerian government's ban of the movie *District 9* (2009), set in South Africa, into an urgent discussion of whiteness, alien-ness, and privilege.

The last essay, "Stories are More Important than Facts," is certainly Hairston's pièce de résistance. While explicating Guillermo del Toro's fantastical and realist *Pan's Labyrinth* (2006), Hairston shows how stories are indeed MORE IMPORTANT than "truth." Story is how we order the universe. Story is how we give our lives, in all their brutality and banality and hopes, meaning. This essay demands close and careful reading. But it also articulates something that all of us writers and readers have always known in our bones. Stories are power. Stories are magic. And this magic can change the world.

I'm not gonna lie.

Though this is heady and intoxicating academic writing at its finest, it certainly helps to have been introduced to literary and cultural theorists like Said, Butler, Brecht, and Fanon. It will also help if you've heard of performance studies, queer theory, and postcolonial criticism. Hairston uses words in unusual and foreign ways, defamiliarizing and deconstructing your standard summer popcorn flick into a gleaming and glorious mess.

But isn't this what the pleasure of reading science fiction is all about? To take the familiar and extrapolate the beautiful and strange? To use the words around us in staggering combinations? To push us beyond our comfort zone and into the future? Yes, everyone should read these essays—quickly, urgently—and appreciate what prose like Hairston's makes possible.

I'm not gonna lie.

The bulk of the book consists of two plays, "Hummingbird Flying Backward" and the titular "Lonely Stardust," that suffer in comparison to Hairston's radiant essays. Less realist dramas than idea-driven performance pieces, both are the type of plays in which exceedingly hyper-articulate characters ruminate about Life. And Aliens. And The Future.

In "Hummingbird," what might appear a conventional set-up for a police-procedural—a group of diverse adults taking refuge from a shooter in a random video



store—evolves into a choreographed dance of time-traveling gods, faith in humanity, and the power of song. In “Lonely Stardust,” a gender-fluid alien lands in a drug-riddled urban neighborhood and narrates his search for an Earthling to take into the world beyond. Both plays neatly challenge SFF male hero-fantasies, as the characters who must make the critical decisions to “save the universe” are women of color in grim situations: “Hummingbird” features Tangella, a pregnant teenager working at a CVS; and July, in “Lonely Stardust,” is a former drug user still struggling with temptation.

I suspect that seeing these plays performed is more satisfying than reading them. But despite some oddly distancing stage devices, emotion certainly resonates through both plays; voices form harmo-

nies and add overtones to the staging; and both plays achieve a kind of polyphony.

While I adored Hairston’s novels *Mindscape* and *Redwood and Wildfire* (definitely wearing my library’s copies ragged through re-readings), this collection is a harder read. Yet I am pleased and invigorated by it. We haven’t seen academic work on science fiction that pushes its boundaries so relentlessly and breathlessly. And though her plays are slightly eclipsed by the brilliance of her essays, Hairston’s writing still invites you to join the song she weaves. Consider *Lonely Stardust* a provocation that asks us to think beyond what science fiction currently is. A demand to challenge what we want in our genre comfort food. Or even a praise song that conjures a compelling possible future for science fiction.

We haven’t seen academic work on science fiction that pushes its boundaries so relentlessly and breathlessly. And though her plays are slightly eclipsed by the brilliance of her essays, Hairston’s writing still invites you to join the song she weaves.

Adrian Khactu currently lives, studies, and works in Philadelphia. He holds creative writing degrees from Stanford and Temple Universities, where he was a student of Samuel Delany.

The Anthology as Literary Resistance

(cont. from p. 15)

black women as *familial* and *domestic* violence, the narrator moves within a world where rape, secrets, and shame continue to define what it means to be free. The ongoing complexities of this shared legacy are emphasized through the author’s use of second person. The “you” of “Collected Likenesses” is both the object trapped by these histories and the subject navigating with and against them.

These reflections on blackness, African identity, and survival are positioned within a collection that also challenges the reader to think critically about heroism. For example, Sunny Moraine’s “Across the Seam” focuses on the 1897 Lattimer Massacre, during which Slavic immigrants fought back against financial exploitation by Pennsylvanian mine owners. By making a queer, trans narrator central to this exploration of labor rights, Moraine emphasizes that the amnesia surrounding these histories of resistances erases multiple types of historical actors. In Sabrina Vourvoulias’s “The Dance of the White Demons,” K’antel, an albino and a witch’s apprentice, befriends Tekún Umám. This folkloric figure was declared a national hero of Guatemala in the 1960s; the traditional “Dance of the Conquest” tells the story of his last battle against the Spanish and culminates


in his death and the forced conversion of his people to Christianity. Instead of focusing on Umám’s death, Vourvoulias depicts the work of witches, old women and girls who assemble an army made of corn men whose dance “demands justice” (356), on “women heroes...who speak aloud the forbidden history” (355), and on cultural survival through symbol, myth, and story.

Long Hidden is a consciously edited anthology whose contributors reject the “Chosen One” mythos that so often plagues SFF. Instead, the narrators of these tales are located in vibrant communities whose wellbeing and survival are central to the story itself. These are not stories about lone wolves, rootless travelers, or strangers in strange lands. Instead, these stories feature narrators embedded in local culture whose experiences of oppression, resistance, and magic are enmeshed in the everyday. This echoes *Long Hidden*’s origins: a conversation begun on Twitter, a movement fostered by social media, a contribution to ongoing conversations on marginalized identities in SFF. Its publication now reflects the growing power of fans of color, LGBTQA fans, and other marginalized voices. The quality of its stories reflect the power of these voices and the passion behind their craft.

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Maria Velazquez is a doctoral candidate at University of Maryland, College Park. Her research interests include literacy, social justice, and embodiment in virtual spaces. She blogs for the feminist *The Hathor Legacy*. Some of her book and movie reviews can be found on her Academia.edu page.



 Resistance as Duty to Self

Kantianism, Liberalism, and Feminism: Resisting Oppression, by Carol Hay, Palgrave Macmillan, July 2013, 216 pp., \$85.

reviewed by Nancy Jane Moore

[The author's] argument is based on the work of Immanuel Kant, who said in The Metaphysics of Morals and other works that people have a duty to themselves to resist attacks on their reason. According to this theory, oppression is an attack on one's reason—one's rational self—and therefore should not be permitted.

Should women resist sexual harassment and other forms of oppression?

Yes, says Carol Hay, a philosophy professor at the University of Massachusetts, in her book *Kantianism, Liberalism, and Feminism: Resisting Oppression*. People have “a duty of self-respect to resist their own oppression” (p. viii). Her argument is based on the work of Immanuel Kant, who said in *The Metaphysics of Morals* and other works that people have a duty to themselves to resist attacks on their reason. According to this theory, oppression is an attack on one's reason—one's rational self—and therefore should not be permitted.

Kant, Hay points out, was no feminist. However, she asserts that it is possible to “ignore Kant's sexism”—which was based in part on the social milieu in which he lived—and “translate his claims into gender-neutral language” (p. 51). She rejects arguments against Kant based on his idea that the rational self should take precedence over the emotional. Such a stance is not a shortcoming, she writes, “because conflicts between the demands of reason and the emotions will arise only when our emotions are telling us to do something *immoral*” (p. 59). At all other times, she argues, rationality and the emotions will be in sync.

According to Hay, what makes Kant unique among philosophers is his emphasis on the duty to the self, particularly the duty of self respect. Protection of our rational nature requires this duty, according to Kant. And it is this duty of self respect that leads Hay to apply Kant to feminism, and specifically to sexual harassment.

And she does this in an excellent manner, providing detailed arguments as to why women in particular should resist ill-treatment. Her thesis can easily be adapted to cover oppression directed at other groups besides women.

Hay begins her book with a detailed discussion of oppression, concluding that it is “a form of injustice that concerns groups” (p. 4). Individuals are harmed by oppression if they are treated badly because they

are a member of a group that has a relative lack of social power, if another group benefits from the harm, and if the harm is unfair or unearned.

Hay also points out that the harm of oppression is not necessarily intentional—a fruitful analysis in a world in which privileged groups are often unaware of the problems faced by others. She writes:

But in the more usual case, oppressive harms are not the result of the intentional actions of an individual person. Instead, they are the unintentional result of an interrelated system of social norms and institutions, or of the implicit biases held even by those individuals who consider themselves to be egalitarian. (p. 9)

I found Hay's discussion of oppression provided a useful framework for responding to those who argue that privileged groups can be oppressed. It's not that she is saying something new, but rather that she is saying it in a clear fashion and supporting it with arguments based on well-thought-out philosophy.

Under Hay's definition, oppression requires four things. It occurs when a person is subjected to unjust harm (1) because of membership in a group that has a relative lack of esteem or power (2), and when members of another group benefit from that harm (3) in an unfair way (4) (p. 6). To explain the systemic effects of sexist oppression, Hay uses the birdcage analogy first set out by Marilyn Frye in her book *The Politics of Reality*. Frye writes, “[I]f you only ever look at a birdcage one wire at a time you will never see how such a structure could limit the mobility of its occupant” (p. 7). I found this very compelling.

As Hay points out, any one action—a catcall, a dirty joke, an exclusion from an opportunity—can seem inconsequential when taken by itself. When we pay attention to them, we see the way these harms work systemically and understand the im-

According to Hay, what makes Kant unique among philosophers is his emphasis on the duty to the self, particularly the duty of self respect.... And it is this duty of self respect that leads Hay to apply Kant to feminism, and specifically to sexual harassment.



portance of resisting even what appear to be small slights.

In her core argument on the obligation of resisting sexual harassment, Hay makes an argument that I have often made myself, though I come at it from years spent in martial arts rather than from a study of Kant and other philosophers: Responding to harassment will eventually teach the harassers that their behavior will not be tolerated. As Hay puts it:

For if all, or even most, cases of harassment were confronted, harassers would soon get the message that such behaviour was inappropriate. To those who would object that harassers already know this behaviour is inappropriate, but simply do not care, the response can be that perpetual confrontation might give them reason to care. (p. 102)

Or, to put it in the martial arts context: the more women fight back, the more harassers will learn that women aren't easy targets.

Hay's argument for resistance is not a form of victim blaming. Given that women are not at fault for harassment, Hay acknowledges that an obligation for them to resist harassment is unfair. "But unfair obligations are obligations nonetheless" (p. 106). And to protect their autonomy, women must address the harms that are done to them.

Nor is she arguing that bystanders are excused from a duty to resist sexist oppression. "Make no mistake: those who do not resist patriarchy are neglecting a moral obligation to fight injustice" (p. 106). But the fact that others have a duty does not relieve women from theirs.

Hay does note that internal resistance to oppression is acceptable in place of direct action, particularly in dangerous situations. But it should be real resistance, with an awareness that the harassment was unjust and inappropriate, not simply an unwillingness to deal with an unpleasant situation.

Hay's philosophical argument for resisting oppression is well-timed. I have observed a number of instances over the past year in which women are fighting back against harassment and ill-treatment of all kinds. A series of incidents and responses within the science fiction community have been particularly noteworthy.

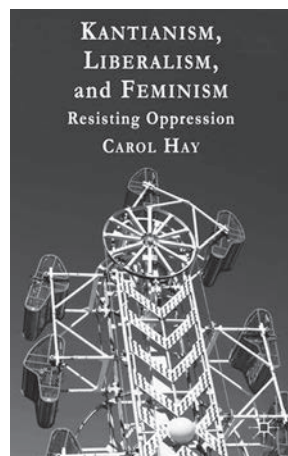
From the absurd "fake geek girl" accusations to the vicious attacks on N.K. Jemisin (rooted in both gender and race) to the nasty infighting over publication changes by the Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America, women—with the support of some men who understand the issues—have been refusing to sit down and shut up.

This resistance has been visible in the larger world as well. Hay's book is a valuable tool in support of such resistance. I would highly recommend it for use in gender studies classes as well as in philosophy courses. Although the book discusses complex philosophical ideas in detail, it does so in language accessible to the average reader. I have not read Kant, but I had no difficulty in following Hay's arguments.

I would, in fact, recommend the book for anyone interested in philosophical underpinnings of feminism, but readers should check their library for a copy before deciding to buy it. Because it's published by an academic press, this book is expensive—\$68 for the Kindle edition and more for the hardback, as noted above. I wish academic presses would realize that many of their works are of interest to a wider audience and price them accordingly.

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As Hay points out, any one action—a catcall, a dirty joke, an exclusion from an opportunity—can seem inconsequential when taken by itself. When we pay attention to them, we see the way these harms work systemically and understand the importance of resisting even what appear to be small slights.



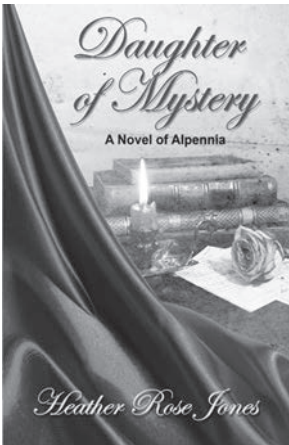
Nancy Jane Moore frequently writes essays on gender issues. Her two most recent works of fiction are *Ardent Forest* and *Walking Contradiction and Other Futures*, both available from Book View Café. She lives in Austin, Texas, and Oakland, California.



⚙️ Coming of Age in Alpennia

Daughter of Mystery, by Heather Rose Jones, Bella Books, February 2014, 246 pp., \$12.96.

reviewed by Liz Bourke



Prominent friendships between women in works of speculative fiction are far from ubiquitous. Romances? That's a whole different animal, and one that's still interestingly transgressive.

In the Christianity current in Alpennia, it is possible—with the right rituals, the right symbolism, and the right prayers—to produce a constructed “miracle,” although very few people can reliably tell when, or whether, such a miracle has taken place....

Daughter of Mystery is a romance and a coming-of-age story....

Perhaps one day I'll no longer find it startling to read a fantasy novel—a satisfying one, a well-written one—that takes as its central concern a romance between women. Prominent friendships between women in works of speculative fiction are far from ubiquitous. Romances? That's a whole different animal, and one that's still interestingly transgressive. Male sexuality is constructed as normal, as normative; the male gaze pervades visual media. A love story without a man in it remains powerfully subversive.

Much as, from a personal perspective, I might wish it didn't.

Daughter of Mystery is the debut novel of California author Heather Rose Jones. Set in a post-Napoleonic Wars Ruritania—Alpennia, an invented country that seems to be bordered by Austria and Italy—it has something of the flavor of a Regency romance, albeit one with differences from England in the declining years of George IV. In Alpennia, important aristocrats and wealthy types are entitled to keep an *armin*—a bodyguard/duellist—in their service, for protection, and to settle affairs of honor, an element that brings to mind as much Ellen Kushner's *Swordpoint* novels as Europe in the late 18th or early 19th century.

A second important difference is the aspect of *Daughter of Mystery* that makes it a fantasy novel instead of a Ruritanian romance: the religion of Alpennia (or perhaps of Europe as a whole) is a slightly different version of Christianity than any of the denominations with which we're familiar from history. In the Christianity current in Alpennia, it is possible—with the right rituals, the right symbolism, and the right prayers—to produce a constructed “miracle,” although very few people can reliably tell when, or whether, such a miracle has taken place, and until recently studying the predictability of miracles came under a certain amount of suspicion for heresy.

Daughter of Mystery is a romance and a coming-of-age story that involves both the Alpennian custom of the armin and the

mystery of the constructed religious miracle. It also involves secrets, inheritances, conflicts of manners, and treason.

Barbara is armin to the wealthy, ill, and eccentric Baron Saveze, and she is also his indentured servant. Margarit Sovitre is Saveze's goddaughter. Neither of them have yet reached their twentieth birthday. When Saveze dies, he unexpectedly leaves his entire unentailed fortune to Margarit, to spite his unpleasant wastrel nephew Estefen. But the bequest comes with a condition: Margarit must take Barbara (who anticipated receiving her freedom and a bequest to make her way in the world) into her household until they both have reached their majorities at the age of twenty-one.

Neither of them is quite at ease with the new state of affairs. Margarit has the funds to go her own way, but until she reaches her majority, she is still subject to her guardians' oversight. They want her to marry well, while Margarit would prefer not to marry at all, and devote herself to studying. Barbara takes refuge in her duties as an armin, but soon comes to feel more than professional loyalty for her employer. In Alpennia's capital city, Rotenek, Margarit discovers in herself a talent for constructed miracles. Barbara, on the other hand, is pursued and assaulted by men who threaten her with a secret connected to the parents she doesn't remember. As Barbara tries to discover this secret, Margarit becomes part of a mystery guild working on building their own miracle—but what Margarit doesn't realize is that the miracle she's helping to construct is aimed at treason, and Saveze's nephew intends to make sure she—and Barbara—take the blame. Forced to go into hiding until they can speak for themselves, they realize that clearing their names will require Margarit's honesty and the truth of the secret from Barbara's past. And the revelation of that secret, and its consequences, will change the slowly-blossoming relationship between the pair.

This is a strong debut. It seems even stronger by comparison to the majority of queer/lesbian romance novels in



the field of speculative fiction, where the prose tends to lack elegance, and often the world-building contains many obvious holes. Jones has a good hand with the evocative turn of phrase, and a gift for precise, telling description. I have something of a weakness for those things. Barbara and Margarit—and the other, minor characters—have distinct personalities and feel appropriately like the products of their contexts. The relationship between them seems entirely appropriate and natural, even inevitable—and as a matter of personal bias, I'm really happy to see a woman in a historic context whose ambitions are primarily scholarly. It's something that gives me a great deal of pleasure.

For the most part, Jones's choice to keep the pacing measured and entrust the greater part of the tension to interpersonal relationships and conflicts of manners works very well. But that pacing grows uneven

when it comes to integrating Barbara's investigations into her past with Margarit's involvement in the mystery guild, and in the combined resolution of the secret and the treason-plot storylines. That resolution seems to come a touch too easily. It's followed by an extended dénouement, in which it appears that political matters and their respective stations will interfere with Barbara and Margarit's happy ending. This tension is maintained by the fact that neither of the women are communicating with each other very well, and is eventually resolved without a great deal of fuss.

The brief epilogue is entirely unnecessary.

These flaws aside, however, *Daughter of Mystery* is a very promising debut. An intriguing romance, with interesting world-building and strong characterization: I look forward to seeing Jones mature as a writer.

Daughter of Mystery is a very promising debut. An intriguing romance, with interesting world-building and strong characterization....

Liz Bourke writes the Sleeps With Monsters column at Tor.com. In 2014, she was nominated for the BSFA Award for Best Non-Fiction. She is nominated for a 2014 Hugo Award for Best Fan Writer.

☼ Cauldrons and Gratuitous Botany

The Memory Garden, by Mary Rickert, Sourcebooks Landmark, 2014, 304 pp., \$14.99.

reviewed by Caren Gussoff

For those of us familiar with Mary Rickert's horror (written, usually, under the slightly altered nom-de-plume M. Rickert), *The Memory Garden* is a startling departure. It's a tender, sentimental magical realist story of the Alice Hoffman and Sarah Addison Allen flavor: witchy and a little predictable, with a veil-thin mystery, garden ghosts, and gratuitous botany. Though this reader takes umbrage with the clichéd kitchen witchery, the language soars, and Rickert creates a poignant and exceptionally well-drawn teenage co-protagonist.

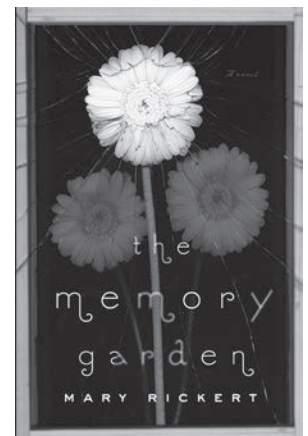
Bay Singer is sixteen, and her awkward code-switching between girl and woman is as real as flesh: a rare treat in adult fiction. These days, we've entered a great young adult fiction renaissance, and more and more authentic teenaged characters pepper our cultural vocabulary. But a solid teenager in a non-YA novel is such a delight that I was more patient than my personality would otherwise dictate with the stereotypical chick-littiness of the wise-woman-witch trope.

Sixteen is a difficult age for anyone, but Bay has some definite obstacles to the invisibility and acceptability desper-

ately desired by those between thirteen and seventeen. She lives with her adoptive mother, Nan, a witch (having been left as an infant in a shoebox upon her doorstep, and so invoking the appropriate magical changeling story). The two inhabit a house littered with planters made from the shoes townies have tossed at them, hemmed in by dangerous woods, which Bay has been warned again and again to avoid after dark.

Bay isn't entirely convinced her mother is, indeed, a witch rather than just eccentric, and while we spend more time with Nan, it is Bay whose presence drives the action, even as the pair's tiny world is temporarily widened with the visit of two of Nan's childhood friends.

Nan, Ruthie, and Mavis have long been estranged from one another, and they reunite prompted by Nan's apparent overreaction to a seemingly innocent gift of honey from the local sheriff. Ruthie and Mavis accept Nan's invitation, perhaps for no other reason than that they have been bound together and kept apart by shared secrets. And honestly, if the novel had a third protagonist, it would be these secrets, whose palpable presence is hinted at, suggested,



The Memory Garden is... a tender, sentimental magical realist story...: witchy and a little predictable, with a veil-thin mystery, garden ghosts, and gratuitous botany. Though this reader takes umbrage with the clichéd kitchen witchery, the language soars, and Rickert creates a poignant and exceptionally well-drawn teenage co-protagonist.

Cont. on p. 22



Coming of Age with Gratuitous Botany

(cont. from p. 21)

Those of us hungry for a believable and complex teenager for adult readers will fall in love with Bay Singer. And those who admire Rickert's love affair with language will find images of great beauty throughout.

Caren Gussoff writes both literary and speculative novels and short stories. She lives in Seattle.

ignored, talked around, and worried over for most of the book.

There are secrets Nan has kept from Bay—some she shares with her friends and some she has borne alone—and there are secrets Bay herself has kept from her mother. Astute readers, particularly those well-versed in genre, will quickly unravel the gist of these long before the reveals.

When Ruthie and Mavis arrive we're treated to a long and somewhat tortured (and tortuous) reunion. Barbs and insults fly, old wounds are picked open, and guilt rains down on the remorseful Nan, tormented Ruthie, and cancer-stricken Mavis, as well as the hormone- and angst-ridden Bay. The book's plot gets temporarily ridiculous, however, when a fifth woman, the grandniece of Eve (another childhood friend of the adults), arrives to research her family history. Then the actual reveals proceed, and while there's nothing,

as I mentioned, that will shock a reader, we glimpse some of the truly dark worlds where Rickert (as M.) flourishes. The secrets of the three women, of how Bay came to be on Nan's step, and Bay's own mysteries (beyond those normal to any boiling cauldron of adolescence) are laid bare.

The darkness is not enough to turn the book from its witchy romanticisms, but it is a lovely way to tie up the story. Just as lilacs are described in the novel as "used to surround the dead when they lie in state, to mask the odor of decaying flesh," the moodiness at the novel's end does much to sweeten its unremarkable secrets.

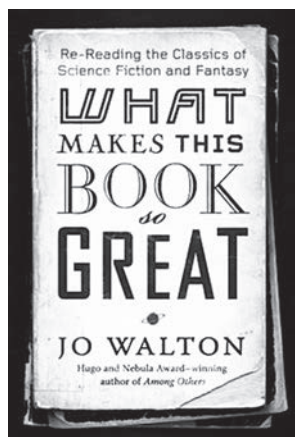
Ultimately, Rickert's book is worth reading. Those readers enthusiastic about the unsurprising portrayal of the magic of women will be richly rewarded. Those of us hungry for a believable and complex teenager for adult readers will fall in love with Bay Singer. And those who admire Rickert's love affair with language will find images of great beauty throughout.

Joys of Reading: Fictional, Non-Fictional, and Meta-Fictional Modes

What Makes This Book So Great, by Jo Walton, Tor Books, January 2014, 448 pp., \$26.99.

© *My Real Children*, by Jo Walton, Tor Books, May 2014, 320 pp., \$25.99.

22 reviewed by Cat Rambo



Walton loves books deeply, and she knows that there are many kinds of reading. One is the joy of devouring the fresh page, hot off the press and stuffed with new words, new worlds, new whirls of character and plot. And then there's rereading, coming back to a book you love....

For those of us who love books—and I suspect that readers of book reviews are likely to fit into that group—there's a line in Jo Walton's *Among Others* that resonates: "If you love books enough, they will love you back." Walton loves books deeply, and she knows that there are many kinds of reading. One is the joy of devouring the fresh page, hot off the press and stuffed with new words, new worlds, new whirls of character and plot.

And then there's rereading, coming back to a book you love, finding perhaps a few new things, but mainly loving what's familiar, like a funhouse ride repeated: here we are lifted, here we are spun about, here we are plunged to the depths of despair before rising triumphantly once again.

In *What Makes This Book So Great* Walton says: "My ideal relationship with a book is that I will read it for the first time entirely unspoiled. I won't know anything whatsoever about it, it will be wonderful, it will be exciting and layered and complex and I will be excited by it, and I will re-

read it every year or so for the rest of my life, discovering more about it every time and every time remembering the circumstances in which I first read it" (19).

This book will itself be a reread for some: it's a compilation of Walton's Tor.com blog posts from July 2008 to February 2011, and if you want to read the book in an alternate, larger form, you could read those posts there with all the comments, as well as those not reprinted in the book.

I found myself doing two things while reading *What Makes This Book So Great*: the first I do sometimes, the second fairly infrequently. I wrote down a lengthy list of books, dividing it into categories: books new to me; old favorites I wanted to go back and reread in light of Walton's comments; books I wanted to try again based on her analysis (*Dirk Gently's Holistic Detective Agency*, Stephenson's *Anathem*). I agreed with so many of her assessments, of books like Tanith Lee's *Don't Bite the Sun*, Susan Palwick's *Shelter*, and Samuel



R. Delany's *Nova*, and of authors such as Daniel Abraham, C.J. Cherryh, or Lois McMaster Bujold (although if I had any nitpick with the collection overall, it's that it was pretty Bujold-heavy).

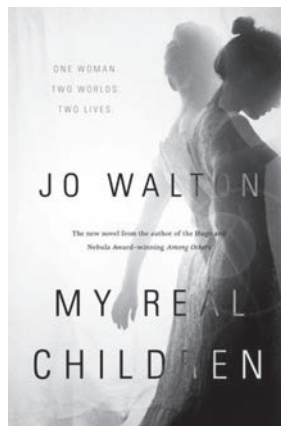
At the same time, I found myself underlining passages because Walton says so many smart things, not just about books or rereading. On "comfort re-reads":

...while the prose might be clunky, the characters might have only two dimensions and the plots when examined may be ridiculous, they're really good on the storytelling level. They may look contrived when you step away from them, but while you're immersed, you can care. Indeed, you're allowed to care, encouraged to care. They're manipulative in some ways, but you feel that the author is buying what they're selling, they're button-pushing, but they're honest. They're the author's buttons too. (222)

On the protocols of reading SF:

There's the simple infodump, which Neal Stephenson has raised to an art form in its own right. There are lots of forms of what I call including, scattering pieces of information seamlessly through the text to add up to a big picture. The reader has to remember them and connect them together. This is one of the things some people complain about as "too much hard work" and which I think is a high form of fun. SF is like a mystery where the world and the history of the world is what's mysterious, and putting that all together in your mind is as interesting as the characters and the plots, if not more interesting. We talk about worldbuilding as something the writer does, but it's also something the reader does, building the world from the clues. When you read that the clocks were striking thirteen, you think at first that something is terribly wrong before you work out that this is a world with twenty-four-hour time—and something terribly wrong. Orwell economically sends a double signal with that. (322)

Reading and rereading are two different acts for Walton. A third kind of reading is reading multiple works by the same author in rapid succession or at the same time (not simultaneously from moment to moment, but the way you can be reading several books during a larger period of time, hopping from one to another). This review was that for me, since it's relatively rare to review two books at once, one fiction and one nonfiction, by the same author. And it's an interesting endeavor, seeing how each informs the other. Even more interesting when one of the books is about the act of reading, or rather, rereading. How metafictional can we get?



My Real Children is the story of Patricia Cowan's parallel lives. Surely it is science fictional, with such a device? But the story subverts that, devoting itself to the minute, most mundane details, until we understand: the smallest, simplest things can send you down one life stream as opposed to another, and the world around you is affected by those choices as well. Walton has created the sort of book that does get reread, where we care about the protagonist and the different lives she's lived, but more than anything about her state now, in an old age home, moving back and forth between lives, unsure what is true and what is dementia.

Does *My Real Children* match the criteria for Walton's ideal relationship with a book? In many ways, yes. But it is also an unobtrusive and subtle book, which makes it easy to overlook among some of the most splendid and eyeball kick-filled wonders offered up by some specimens of the genre. Yet its details linger, the small moments of pain or hope that say so much about the entire life and world in which they appear, and that make it well worth a second read.

I found myself underlining passages because Walton says so many smart things, not just about books or rereading.

Walton has created the sort of book that does get reread, where we care about the protagonist and the different lives she's lived....

Does My Real Children match the criteria for Walton's ideal relationship with a book? In many ways, yes. But it is also an unobtrusive and subtle book....

Cat Rambo lives in the Pacific Northwest. She was co-editor of *Fantasy Magazine* from 2007–2011. She collaborated with Jeff VanderMeer on *The Surgeon's Tale and Other Stories*. Her short stories have appeared in such places as *Asimov's Science Fiction*, *Weird Tales*, and *Strange Horizons*.



Four Improvisations on a Theme

Mark Rich



Dance

Am I ever sure what frame of mind exists, when engaged with paper? Paper rules my creative world. It urges my hand to set a pen's steel nib upon its white or cream surface—which is not an emptiness and only an apparent blankness: for paper exists before the eye, and the eye behind the hand has a drawing mind, a painting mind, which is incapable of seeing a blank, or of drawing a blank. Something exists there, on either side of the teeter-totter, the fulcrum being that delicate steel nib split by a hairline break. That nib gives life to the resulting ink line, while conveying the life within the mind to the surface of the page and revealing what the page held hidden within its apparent emptiness.

I am never sure what frame of mind exists, when I engage with paper. For anything like a mindset, an attitude, a way of thinking is exactly what I cease seeing, during my time interacting with paper, if I am lucky. At least for certain moments of concentrated attention during the process, that frame ceases being there.

I am never sure what frame of mind exists, when I have pen in hand: for the pen itself acquires the equivalent of volition and spirit. We tend to think of the hand that holds and controls the pen. Yet in thinking in this way we are indulging in the fantasy of the master mind that oversees and foresees. The master mind knows every intricacy of muscle-, tendon-, and bone-interaction in that hand, and can predict the end result of a course that begins in synapses, travels through nerves, and continues through actions to move then into a greater world devoid of synapses and nerves—into a world of inked nib-tip and paper and writing surface and

floor and ceiling and light and air—into a world that all the same bears witness to something vitally related to internal workings. A dream world courses into a non-dream world, by this means. Mind, through insensate pen, produces something new—something that inserts a grain of dream into a place that has grown away from its origins.

I am never sure what frame of mind exists, at the moment a random impulse, an impulse “to draw something,” transforms into the focused desire to make appear upon the page the particular image that is forming, that is coalescing, thanks to pen and paper. To think of mind at all may mislead us: for maybe in that moment, the one we cannot pin down, we are brushing off the dandruff-thoughts of the master mind, the mind which thinks it controls that which it cannot. We are immersing ourselves more fully than we know how to do consciously, for moments long or short, in the continuum that is our life. Whether paper calls to pen, or pen to hand, or hand to mind—or final drawing to mind—we cannot know: for the new moment, with its new image, has obliterated the old.

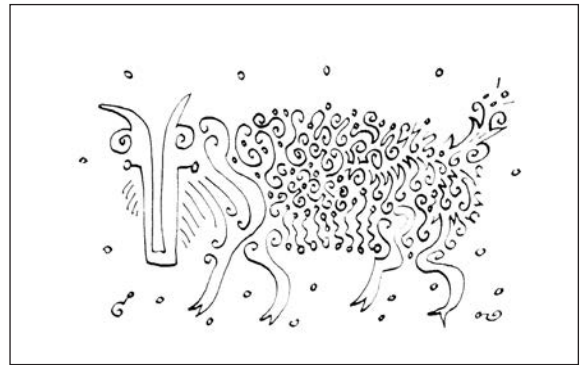


Reach





Cover, *The Magazine of Speculative Poetry*, 2003



Goat



Presence II



Cover, *The Magazine of Speculative Poetry*, 2011



Panopticon





One's Calling



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Man and Master

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