

The Cascadia Subduction Zone

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Earth and Water ☉ Heather Tatarek



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Returning

by Susana Vallejo (translated by Lawrence Schimel)

After so long, she could return to Earth; breathe air that smelled of pine, of eucalyptus, of the sea, of rotting algae.... What the hell did rotting algae smell like? She could no longer remember. Scents were forgotten. Or rather, they remained, hidden in some dark corner of the brain. Hidden beside the smell of a roast chicken, of smoked salmon, of a strawberry, or a muffin.

She would return to live within the green. Green fields and green hills. In the house in the village surrounded by hundreds of greens. Would the house in the village still exist? From the kitchen window one could see a string of elms and, beyond them, right there, was the stream. Water.

Crystalline water in movement, crossing the green. God, just thinking about it made her tremble.

She finished packing the samples. All of them perfectly labeled in their own little box with their own chip. The information about each was found in the memory stored within the package itself.

The computers would remain behind. They weighed too much, and it wasn't worth moving them. Only she and that metallic box would return, the case that still had room to store something more. And her replacement would arrive with the ship: a handful of young men or women, eager to learn, to explore the planet, to investigate, to devour a new world. Just as she had been years before. Her replacement would bring with them new equipment, provisions, maybe even a new module to repair the one destroyed by the explosion. And she would return to green Earth on that same ship. Without knowing whether in her village the stream and the elms were still there, or if they'd been swallowed by a new road.

She would return and Toni would already be dead. And Sara and her mother and Stacy and all her friends. Because that was part of space travel. She had already known and accepted it when she decided to volunteer to explore the plan-

et. She already knew what she'd lose, but in exchange she'd greet the future: new technologies, discoveries... And she'd contribute to progress with her studies of xenominerals. Was there anything better than science and research? Something better to contribute to the development of humanity?

She would return to Earth and remain on the Base for a while and then they'd retire her. Just like they'd done with O'Brian. She remembered that mature man who never stopped recounting battles, of talking about his planet and of the times when vehicles used petroleum for fuel. The young cadets laughed at him and his one-track discourses. Now it was her turn. They'd retire her at fifty two—or one hundred thirty four, depending on how one counted. Only she had survived the explosion. And she'd managed to communicate to tell them she was still waiting for them. Alone. Gathering her minerals and samples.

She sighed and breathed in a mouthful of rancid air that had been recycled thousands of times. Air that no longer smelled of anything. She undressed and washed with water being reused for the millionth time. She put on her worn underwear and the old knit sweater, the green one she had brought from earth. The one that warmed her on cold, lonely nights. Now it was too tight, but it reminded her of the green of her field and had become the only green thing on this planet. She put on her spacesuit on top of it and then got into the vehicle to take a last pass through.

The wheels left a track on the dry, dusty sea, and a curtain of fine sand rose for hundreds of meters behind her, reflecting the reddish light of the two suns.

She suddenly stopped and turned back.

The dust floated around and when the particles faced either of the two stars they threw reddish glimmers, ruby, vermillion.... She moved her hand and the sand danced, making spirals.



Returning (cont. from p. 1)

She leaped down from the vehicle. When she touched the ground, new clouds of dust joined the dance and shone in yellowish and golden tones.

She looked toward the gentle hills of the horizon and examined the rocks sculpted by the wind over millennia into whimsical shapes. She knew each and every one of them and had given them names. Their twin shadows danced on the dusty ground beside her own.

That was her favorite place. The landscape for 360 degrees showed nothing human. Just the dry sea, the gentle hills, and the whimsical rock formations. The glimmers, the infinite reds and yellows and oranges. With the first sunset, the sky would begin to burn and would transform into a palate of purples and violets.

What would the air of her planet smell like? How would that breeze feel on her skin?

She pressed the decompression button on her suit. And she removed her helmet. She breathed deep of the gilded air.

It smelled dry, of pyrite and graphite and needles. Of flan and sugar. Of sandpaper and sawdust. Of red iron.

The air caressed her skin with the same gentleness as a lover, that gentleness she'd almost forgotten. It was warm and heavy. It was pinkish and metallic. It caressed her and penetrated through each of her pores. Slowly. Hot. Dry.

She breathed deeply. Dust, golden and red.

The air burned and it tasted of blood.

She began to cry and didn't know if this were because her body was trying to defend itself or from the pain of the loss. And she thought of the green fields and the hills. And of the elms and the creek and the flowing water, in movement, like her thoughts, which whirled outside of her grasp. There was a gap still in the suitcase, and she hadn't packed her green sweater. Green like her red Earth. Always green.

Susana Vallejo is an award-winning Spanish author of science fiction and young adult stories. Her novels include *El Espíritu Del Último Verano*, *Switch in the Red*, and the *Porta Coeli* series. Among her numerous accolades, she's won the Edebé prize and the Ictineu (multiple times), and has been a finalist for the Premio Minotauro and the Premio Jaén de Alfaguara. Born in Madrid, she lives in Barcelona.

Lawrence Schimel is a bilingual (Spanish/English) author and literary translator based in Madrid. His translations of previous stories by Susana Vallejo have appeared in *Strange Horizons* and *Persistent Visions*. Recent genre book translations include *Monteverde: Memoirs of an Interstellar Linguist* by Spanish writer Lola Robles, *Memory* by Argentine writer Teresa P. Mira de Echeverría, and *The Wild Book* by Mexican writer Juan Villoro.





Haunted

Phantom helixes dance,
 circles drawn into spirals by time;
 lines connecting us to
 our ancestors—
 ephemeral chains
 that we can't hear rattling.
 Each of us contains
 the mortal remains
 of ancestors ten thousand years gone.
 We are their lost battles,
 their relics, their burial grounds;
 we are their ghosts,
 haunting one another
 unquietly.

Ceres

Girdled around the
 ecliptic's plane, asteroids
 dance around their queen.
 A stranger, no part
 of their fragmented family,
 she still rules them all.
 With shining blind eyes
 of salt and ice, her gaze
 pierces the abyss,
 defying others
 to define her yet again—
 hiding her secrets.

Reborn in Blood

(Sapphic verse)

Earthen maw that gapes open, ready, and waits
 patiently to be fed with flesh and soul's breath.
 Waters dream in darkness, and through them, we touch
 gods, and thus heed them.

Down into the depths like a star she falls now,
 breaks the surface, body so clean and perfect,
 fitting sacrifice, but now shattered, torn, rent.
 But can she hear them?

Dying, can she perceive what others cannot?
 Passing into stillness and silence vast, she
 must, and be born again into this busy
 world, though the pain wracks.

Copper hands breach mirror-like surface,
 obsidian well, gateway to the spirit realm.
 Gasping, crying out for our aid, she's
 reborn and renewed.

What have old gods whispered in her ears?
 Secrets cloud her eyes, and her broken
 voice can scarce be heard as she speaks truths
 that cannot be borne.

Not for us, the wisdom of ancient
 peoples. Madness fills us up, like old
 blood. And when we wake from it, brass shells
 litter the ground here.

Smell of cordite, incense new and strange, to
 please the gods we woke from their long sleep.
 Blood in black earth, exalting their names.
 Flee the gods' hunger?

Effort vain and fruitless, for they are
 jaguars stalking urban wilds. Blood-scent
 drives them. They will find us, make us
 servants, or perhaps

further sacrifices. We're deer, they're
 perfect predators, who sup human
 life. And now we, like those whose lives passed
 under the jungle's boughs before, must serve.



The Barn-Raising

Directing robotic graders to dig
through the crust to sink the foundation;
red fines rise milky-pink on faint wind,
like tinted talcum powder.

Raising walls, printed from green plastic,
lead sandwiched inside against radiation.
Heavy machines leave tracks like
angry caterpillars around the nascent building.

It still takes human hands to hang the doors,
seal them hermetically against
the thin and frozen atmosphere;
human hands to lay the floorboards,
set the wallboard.

Outside a borer digs deep into
regolith, striking an unexpected aquifer,
sending water up in a white geyser
against the red sky—
half to freeze, half to sublime away.

At length, a trailer backs up
to the airlock, and suited figures
smooth seals into place,
as three frightened cows
and two young calves,
enter their new home,
straw, grown in greenhouses,
scattered on the floor to disguise
strange smells.

Gloved hands clasp, then clap shoulders—
voices on the radio exchange offers of beer.
And around the side of the building,
a figure stops with a can of white paint,
to trace out the twelve-pointed compass rose
of a hex-sign familiar to her ancestors.

Contemplation

This convent once was
a pressure cooker—
repressed passion, denial, faith;
where girls went when unwanted—
when they felt out of place
in a world of marriage—
where widows went,
when they could face no more.

And somewhere
between pain and faith,
sorrow and surcease,
desire and denial,
some found a balance
with which they could live,
contentment in their vows,
poverty, plain living,
contemplation of their god—
sometimes finding him in their
sisters, or in the joy
of giving to others.

Others never found that balance,
found what was denied
more savory for the denying,
found in themselves
deliquescent delight,
distilling dew from fervor—
found a god in each other,
whom they contemplated in
complex configurations
and rituals in the dark.

But the convent's been closed—
years ago, the nuns were all turned out,
young and old, faithful or not.
And now this middle-aged woman
lives in an invalid's house,
only wearing her habit when she
drives the old woman's car
to fetch her groceries.

She's bought herself a big-screen TV,
which takes up half the wall
of her comfortable room—
reassures herself that even
the poorest families have one;
she's still living in poverty
chastity, and service, after all,
as she turns the channel
to Cinemax, so that she can
contemplate her new god
in banal bliss.

Deborah L. Davitt was raised in Reno, Nevada, but received her MA in English from Penn State. She currently lives in Houston, Texas with her husband and son. Her poetry has received Rhysling and Pushcart nominations and appeared in over twenty journals; her short fiction has appeared in *InterGalactic Medicine Show*, *Compelling Science Fiction*, *Grievous Angel*, and *The Fantasist*. For more about her work, please see www.edda-earth.com.



Racketing Spirits
Brownsburg, Virginia, 1825

She careened from kitchen house to dining room,
bare brown feet quick in the frosted yard, crying
of *the old woman with her head tied up*. Nobody's
chasing you, Maria, Dr. McChesney chided, helping
himself to a glistening slash of ham. His daughter
Ellen giggled and pinched Maria under the table.
Mean. Also eight years old but freckled as a biscuit.
Free. Maria cast a chilly eye on her, stepped away
from the fragrance bread makes when you break it.
Nobody's here, she thought, and soon you'll know it.

A few weeks later, charred rocks began to fall, sharp
as fists, scorching hot. They volleyed against the roof,
blackened grass, cowed the family. Bewildered,
the McChesneys sent Maria to nearby cousins.
She strolled the miles so slow she could almost see bloom
come to the Judas trees, till the final rise. Then twitched
and charged, wailing of witchery. She found the Steeles
already stirred, starring the lawn, their backs to her,
as they stared toward a clatter in their house. A peek
showed furnishings piled up like sticks, of a sudden,
in the parlor, cupboard glass smashed by stones
from nowhere. Mr. Steele commanded her back home.

Now the whole county gossiped. Mischief likes
ventriloquy. If Dr. McChesney peered out the door,
earth-clods pummeled him. His sister, Miz Steele,
kept visiting even when rock cut her scalp to the bone.
Almost dear in her dumb persistence. When Maria howled
of being pricked with pins, slapped by invisible hands,
Miz Steele clutched her in whispering skirts and flailed
to beat off an unholy presence. It didn't work.
Nothing worked. Her hands as soft as pudding.

Nobody stopped food from going missing, or
the field hands' tools. Bottles of madeira danced.
Embers jumped from the hearth to bite ankles. The doctor
retreated to his fireless upstairs room, his rows of books
and guilty medicines. In the closet, a skeleton. Whose?

For peace, they sent Maria across water. Not the sea.
The muddy green of the Mississippi, supposed to short
her electricity. Clever spell they conjured, the sale
to Alabama. Some say she fell on the way and died.
Girl with a scar on her head, and what a mouth.

She lasted longer than Ellen, anyhow, who married young
out of the fancy carriage envied by neighbors. Unfolded
those red velvet steps, pranced down, and chronicles
mislaid her. Like Maria, who could negotiate with land itself,
persuade the stones to rise and heat and hurtle
in revolt. There are other powers, better, though
they may not get your name engraved in books. Some say
she acquired them. Returned to haunt the child she'd been,
head tied up in red, to stop the future burning through.



Hairy On the Inside

At four in the morning he speaks
in his sleep, two words creaking
with dream and wind: *knock,*
knock. I hold my breath
and do not reply. Who knows
what walks into us when
the doors swing open?
Every muscle stops clenching
against the weather, minds
stop rehearsing their dreary
scripts, and some breeze is free
to worry the knob, ease
it slowly round, and whirl
through throat's corridor.
Is it playing? Does it want
something? Best to pretend,
I decide in the dark, I'm dead
to the world, or not so much
the world as what haunts
the apparently unconscious
scenery. I pluck at the single
hair that keeps bristling
from my chin. Is it wolf
or hurricane? Is my house
straw, or twig, or brick?

Bad Dragon

To have or be a hinge is arduous.
You wash your hair in the river & some
stranger offers to hold the baby, but no
one wants to hold the baby for as long
as the baby wants to be held. Bad baby
keeps getting heavier, yet if the stranger
drops that aching weight & tries to hop it,
you bite off his head. / Meanwhile, at the seam,
scales chafe the skin of your human neck because
it's not all party, party, being a chimera,
being caught in the middle of change. Fire
surges up your throat at inconvenient hours
& smoking makes you jangly. / The hero stalks up
in a nervous handsome sweat & you say, oh god
just kill me now, this lava tube cave stinks
of money & rage. He is disarmed, almost
charmed, & you bite off his head. / Maybe
there's a way to come back from this. Shed
serpent skin, that crinkly shadow, ghost
of mother-worry. Outgrow a drive to light
up the sky. / The reptile in you wants to want
to doze golden-lidded over a hoard of want,
to stretch her claws & unscroll wings through which
blood writes one arterial phrase. / It is arduous.



Where Dragons Come From

Long after her confinement in the tower, when the briar scratches have healed into the faintest scribble of scars, she realizes she is pissed off. It's not like she was *really* an orphan. Her father sputters that he adored her, but somehow he never noticed her kidnapping by a witch, her drudgery among the cinders, her heart in a box. She asks her friends for succor and they commiserate over flagons of mead, but after all, they shrug, what can *they* do? Stepmothers have all the power in this world.

As she works out what's wrong with that story, her hair grows long again. She returns to fur slippers and her tapestried chamber, but a red change is underway. In her gut, gout of foul smoke swirl from a secret blaze that will never exhaust its fuel. In her mouth swell eggs of fire.

White Noise Machine Now With Twelve Settings!

1. Confidence Deflating
2. Black Dog Vomiting
3. Toilet Trying All Night to Just Swallow It
4. Grim Reaper Tripping Over Own Robes
5. Young People Laughing Carelessly Around Gingerbread House
6. Forest Repressing Wolves
7. Termites Gnawing at Reality's Foundation
8. President Masticating the Constitution
9. Rabbit's Death Cry, or Rabbit Sex, Who Knows, With Spring Peepers
10. Abyss
11. It Makes Kind of a Humming Sound
12. I Wonder If You Can Hear It Too

Lesley Wheeler is the author of four poetry collections, including *Radiolandand* and *The Receptionist and Other Tales*, as well as the speculative poetry chapbook *Propagation*. Her poems and essays appear in *Crab Orchard Review*, *Lady Churchill's Rosebud Wristlet*, *Poetry*, and other journals. She blogs about poetry at lesleywheeler.org and teaches at Washington and Lee University in Virginia.





The Hearth in the Spaceship

“The Shobies’ Story” by Ursula K. Le Guin is available in *The Real and the Unreal: The Selected Short Stories of Ursula K. Le Guin*, Saga Press, 2017, 752 pp., \$19.99 (reprinted from its original appearance in *A Fisherman of the Inland Sea*).

reviewed by Julie Phillips

...as I think about Ursula’s life, and about how to write it, and how to look for the truth of it, I keep coming back to her novelette “The Shobies’ Story.”

This summer I went to a gathering of Ursula Le Guin’s wonderful extended family to ask them about Ursula—and also about themselves, because they are a family very conscious of their shared history and traditions. One of the questions they had for me, as her biographer, was: How do you know, when you’re interviewing people, if a story they tell you is true?

I answered with a long, technical discussion of consulting written documents and comparing with other people’s versions. But truth, as Ursula once wrote, is also “a matter of the imagination,” a question not just of what is said but of how you tell the story. And as I think about Ursula’s life, and about how to write it, and how to look for the truth of it, I keep coming back to her novelette “The Shobies’ Story.”

It was published in 1990, when Ursula was just starting to come back to science fiction. She had stopped writing sf for a while, partly to go in other directions, partly because she felt she “couldn’t continue my hero-tale until I had, as woman and artist, wrestled with the angels of the feminist consciousness.” “Shobies” is a hero-tale in a way, an account of an adventurous space voyage, but from the start it isn’t quite what you might expect. For one thing, the spaceship is not called *Enterprise*, or *Endurance*, or *Endeavour*, but simply *Shoby*, crewed by ten humans who call themselves by its unassuming name.

For another, the crew have no uniforms, no captain, no rank. They are drawn from several of Le Guin’s worlds—Terra, Anarres, Gethen, and Hain—and include two families with small children. At the start of the book the Shobies come together on Hain to build the consensus they will need to operate the ship. The most tactful of them, an imposing,

Hainishwoman in her late fifties named Sweet Today, has a role that “might be called supervising or overseeing if that didn’t suggest a hierarchic function. Interseeing, maybe, or subvising.”

Lidi is the gruff, 72-year-old Terran navigator. The “affective focus of the crew, the ‘hearth’ of it” is formed by four Gethenians, Karth and Oreth and their children Asten and Rig, who are six and four. (This gave Le Guin a chance to do what she had not done in *The Left Hand of Darkness*, imagine a home life for the genderless Gethenians, a few years before she wrote “Coming of Age in Karhide.”) Three more Terrans, Shan, Tai, and Tai’s 11-year-old son Betton, complete their number along with a young Anarresti physicist, Gveter.

It falls to Gveter to explain the principles of the technology they have come together to test: instantaneous travel from one place to another, transilience, or in Anarresti terms, churtening. It is not an easy concept for the crew to grasp, and they discuss it at length.

Don’t call it the churten “drive,” it isn’t a drive, don’t call it the churten “effect,” it isn’t an effect. What is it, then? A long lecture ensued, beginning with the rebirth of Cetian physics since the revision of Shevekian temporalism by the Intervalists, and ending with the general conceptual framework of the churten. Everyone listened very carefully, and finally Sweet Today spoke, carefully. “So the ship will be moved,” she said, “by ideas?”

“No, no, no, no,” said Gveter. [...] His accent did not make his explanations any clearer. He went on about coherence and meta-intervals, and at last demanded, with gestures of despair, “Khow

Grandmother Magma



can I say it in Khainish? No! It is not physical, it is not not physical, these are the categories our minds must discard entirely, this is the whole point!”

Le Guin is having a good time making up fake physics, as she does later with the churten equipment itself, “the controls of which consisted essentially of an on-off switch.” She has even more fun with the design of the ship. She explains that the *Shoby’s* previous crews, “feeling that it might as well be lived in rather than endured, had arranged and furnished it like a very large, very comfortable house.” It has “spacious, high-ceilinged, well-furnished, slightly shabby living rooms and bedrooms,” a “stately staircase with a curving banister, leading from the reception hall up to the library.” In the library is a fireplace, in front of which the crew, on their last night in Ve Port, sit telling stories before bedtime. The ship is a house, the crew a family, their voyage a story. To understand where Le Guin is taking us, it helps to look at an essay she published just before this story: “The Carrier Bag Theory of Literature.”

In writing sf from a feminist perspective, Le Guin didn’t feel she could just regender her protagonists; she wanted to change the kinds of stories she wrote. Her main characters had often been male, isolated, solitary. And yet she lived as part of a family: she shared a house with her husband, she had raised three children, she had grown up in a close family and was aunt to a close-knit clan of nieces and nephews. One way in which she sought to write from a feminist consciousness was by bringing families into her fiction. Her novel *Tebanu*, which looked at the fantasy world of Earthsea from the point of view of a woman formed by her family life, was published the same year as “The Shobies’ Story.”

Her feminist reading included anthropology and other scientific disciplines. It included a book by Elizabeth Fisher that suggested, instead of the “man the hunter” theory of evolution, the possibility that the first cultural object was used

not to kill food but to carry it. Maybe it was not a arrowhead, an ax, or a spear-point, but something less permanent: in Le Guin’s words, “a leaf a gourd a shell a net a bag a sling a sack a bottle a pot a box a container. A holder, a recipient.”

So why should the “narrative arc” be based on the flight of a death-dealing arrow? Why should a novelist be a hunter and not a gatherer? Le Guin wrote, “I would go so far as to say that the natural, proper, fitting shape of the novel might be that of a sack, a bag. A book holds words. Words hold things. They bear meanings. A novel is a medicine bundle, holding things in a particular, powerful relationship to one another and to us.” Can you make an exciting tale out of collecting seeds? It might be hard, she wrote, but “Who ever said writing a novel was easy?”

And what if you redefine technology, too, “as primarily cultural carrier bag rather than weapon of domination”? One side effect, she thought, would be “that science fiction can be seen as a far less rigid, narrow field, not necessarily Promethean or apocalyptic at all, and in fact less a mythological genre than a realistic one.

“It is a strange realism, but it is a strange reality.”

“The Shobies’ Story” is partly an experiment in how much real life this carrier bag of a spaceship will hold. At first glance, the result is a mess. Here we have a randomly assorted space crew testing a drive whose workings make no sense while their kids slide down the banister. It’s not what you expect from a science fiction story. There is too much compromise, there are too many feelings involved; it’s embarrassing. Reading the first half can make you feel like you’re a teenager stuck on a family visit with your parents, forced into a cloying emotional closeness.

But when *Shoby* churten to its destination, a brown lump of an uninhabited planet called M-60-340-nolo, disaster strikes. The navigational instruments stop working. The crew become disoriented. At first they try to behave like proper characters in a science fiction

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Cont. on p. 10



The Hearth in the Spaceship

(cont. from p. 9)

I think "The Shobies' Story" is about writing and the risks of it, how you lose your way sometimes and don't know how to go forward. I think it is also a story about coming back from depression, grief, and trauma, and how it has to do with telling your own story, and being heard.

story, sending down the lander, taking samples. But before long they can't get their stories straight. They can't agree on whether there is a planet. They're not sure there's a ship, either, to keep out the dark between the suns.

Gveter [...] found a word then, the wrong word. "Lost," he said, and speaking perceived how the ship's lights dimmed slowly into a brownish murk, faded, darkened, were gone, while all the soft hum and busyness of the ship's systems died away into the real silence that was always there. But there was nothing there. Nothing had happened. We are at Ve Port! he tried with all his will to say; but there was no saying.

The suns burn through my flesh, Lidi said.

I am the suns, said Sweet Today. Not I, all is.

Don't breathe! cried Oreth.

It is death, Shan said. What I feared, is: nothing.

Nothing, they said.

Then a voice in the nothingness says, "Listen!" Another voice says, "We're here, at the hearth." Oreth lays a fire. As Karth lights it they say together, softly, in Karhidish, "Praise also the light, and creation unfinished."

They were nowhere, but they were nowhere together; the ship was dead, but they were in the ship. A dead ship cools off fairly quickly, but not immediately. Close the doors, come in by the fire; keep the cold night out, before we go to bed.

"The Shobies' Story" is a metafiction, a story about storytelling, and about science fiction. How do you travel across light years in no time? By reading a book. If you write a book you can bring more readers with you. If more people write about those distances you have a genre, a set of tools for telling stories: you have a ship, a crew, an association of worlds to get you there. But if you can't

agree on where you're going, you're in trouble: you're lost if you can't get your stories straight.

The hearth has a special meaning in Ursula's thinking about narrative. She grew up at a house in the Napa Valley with a firepit. Summer nights are chilly in California. Together her family sat around the fire with their backs to the cold while her father told ghost stories and her Aunt Betsy told pioneer tales. Stories keep the cold night out. Stories are a gift that the teller gives to others. The teller's story helps listeners see each other and themselves.

Around the fire in the ship's library the Shobies begin to speak:

Tai gestured at the cave of fire-light around them and the dark beyond it. "Where are we? Are we here? Where is here? What's the story?"

"We have to tell it," Sweet Today said. "Recount it. Relate it. [...] Asten, how does a story begin?"

"A thousand winters ago, a thousand miles away," the child said; and Shan murmured, "Once upon a time..."

One by one they tell what happened, their hopes, their desires, how they journeyed, hazarding all, "because nothing works except what we give our souls to, nothing's safe except what we put at risk."

And gradually as they speak the ship comes to life around them, until at last one of the Shobies completes the story: "They got lost. But they found the way."

So what is it? What's the story? One thing Le Guin said about "The Shobies' Story" is that it's about writing workshops, in which a group comes together to make writing a collective project. I think "The Shobies' Story" is about writing and the risks of it, how you lose your way sometimes and don't know how to go forward. I think it is also a story about coming back from depression, grief, and trauma, and how it has to do with telling your own story, and being heard.

I think about the family, and what they told me, that their shared memo-

"The Shobies' Story" is a metafiction, a story about storytelling, and about science fiction.



ries, and the traditions they honored and kept up, were what kept them together as a family. The stories everyone knows, the in-jokes and the ancient histories, can be woven into a carrier bag—or into a spaceship with a staircase and a library—that brings a family forward into a shared future.

And I think about the work I've been given to do. As genres go, biography is definitely a carrier bag. It has a baggy, shapeless narrative that moves forward in time but doubles back on itself, and that has to contain a lot of tangents and many, often contradictory selves. The truth of biography is often plural, because people are full of contradictions, great writers especially, and the narrative has to be a net large enough to admit more than one version of the story.

What makes it easier is the way that a biography is full of voices. It brings many people together to tell one person's story, and sets that story among all the stories of that person's friends, enemies, lovers, correspondents, collaborators, parents,

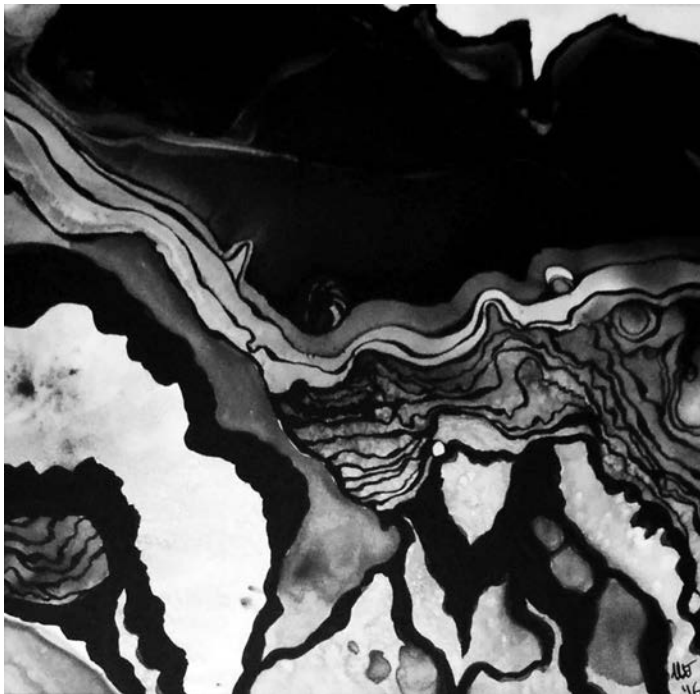
children, grand-nephews. Ursula Le Guin's story is linked with that of a lot of other people, partly because she was so inclusive in her thinking and in her writing. Her family remember Great-Aunt Ursula not only as a storyteller but a person with a gift for listening and making a child feel heard.

The truth about Ursula is not just a matter of cross-checking the records, but of gathering all the different stories into a carrier bag, to carry her back to us in memory. As Nisi Shawl wrote earlier this year, among all the remembrances and tributes for Ursula, "How should we remember Ursula Kroeber Le Guin? Together." Biographical truth is a sack, a ship, a *Shoby*, a collective act of storytelling, in which each person's story contributes to a collective truth that is both real and "a matter of the imagination."

As the Shobies say, after they churten back to Ve Port and try to explain what happened: "Well, it's quite a story...."

The truth of biography is often plural, because people are full of contradictions, great writers especially, and the narrative has to be a net large enough to admit more than one version of the story.

Julie Phillips is researching the biography of Ursula K. Le Guin and is working on a book about writing and mothering. She writes for *4Columns* and is the author of *James Tiptree, Jr.: The Double Life of Alice B. Sheldon*.



LanSandstonedbridge





Dust Lanes

by Karen Burnham

“Three Meetings of the Pregnant Man Support Group,” by James Beamon, *Apex Magazine*, June 2018, edited by Jason Sizemore.

“The Athuran Interpreter’s Flight,” by Eleanna Castroianni, *Strange Horizons*, July 3, 2018, edited by Jane Crowley and Kate Dollarhyde.

“The Steam-Powered Princess,” by Aimee Ogden, *Augur* (1.2), 2018, edited by Kerrie Seljak-Byrne.

Across the history of the genre, hybrids have often been played for horror.... However, hybrid beings can also be the heroes, the ones who bridge gaps no others can—and also suffer and reveal systems of abuse and oppression like no others.

Speculative fiction allows us to explore hybrid beings in depth, be they human/alien, human/machine, human/animal, animal/machine...any combination we can imagine. The question is, when writing about these beings, how are they received and how do we receive them? Across the history of the genre, hybrids have often been played for horror (as in H. G. Wells’ *Island of Dr. Moreau*, 1896). However, hybrid beings can also be the heroes, the ones who bridge gaps no others can—and also suffer and reveal systems of abuse and oppression like no others. Who creates them, and why? Who helps them, and why? Summer of 2018 brought a selection of stories featuring hybridity in various ways, and I’d like to look at how it functions in each and where the authors direct our attention and sympathy.

Let me start with a story of discomfiting alien/human hybridity, “Three Meetings of the Pregnant Man Support Group” by James Beamon in June’s *Apex*. In this story, a support group meets weekly for men who are impregnated by an alien species that has much more advanced tech than humans have. The men sit in public school seats designed for left-handers, since their pregnancy distends their right sides. The gestation lasts longer than human pregnancy: 15 months total. We get a cross section of experience: Aaron is just learning the ropes at four months, the narrator Nick is ten months in, Jamal is in his fourteenth month, and there are two postpartum men. They discuss family alienation and job discrimination. The aliens, the Sko’ickari, have been choosing human males for mates; the process is compared to the parasitic relationship of the green shore crab and the *Sacculina*

barnacle. Nick has his sister for support, but his alien lover Seqanen is leaving to make a nest back on nir planet (Nick will miss “the extra-tingly, mind-blowing interspecies sex”). It becomes clear that the child growing within Nick can respond through him to external stimuli and is already somewhat intelligent, so he sometimes feels like the other men in his group, and his lover, are talking to the fetus inside him, not to *him*—and sometimes it’s the fetus responding back.

Officially the men all “agreed” to this condition when their alien partners “dreamcalled” to them, but in no sense was that *informed* consent about what the process actually involved—this becomes especially apparent when Aaron’s fetus makes him drink out of the toilet and the other men sit with their uncomfortable memories. This control extends to making Nick say “No” even though he wants to say “Yes” when his sister discusses a potential abortion.

Another story where hybridity plays a critical role is “The Athuran Interpreter’s Flight” by Eleanna Castroianni in *Strange Horizons*. Sam-Sa-Ee is a human/alien/machine hybrid, the body of a small “Earthian” girl with the brain of an adult Athuran. With a computer/neurological interface, the idea is that she translates anything she hears faithfully without retaining anything in her memory. She serves her owner, the Envoy, an Earthian businessman who refers to her as a doll—she can’t move on her own and never grows. The potential for abuse is rife, and her owner uses her for purposes other than just translation (there are over a dozen categories of content/trigger warnings on this story, and let me say here how much I appreciate venues

Dust Lanes



like *Strange Horizons* and *Fireside* that provide such warnings).

When the Envoy gets embroiled in a dispute between the Henon (his alien business partners) and the local Athurans over a mining project, things become intense. The Henon have bribed the local officials, but, due to their own taboos/bigotry, they have immense problems dealing with the matriarchal Athurans. The Envoy does not want a legal/public relations disaster on his watch and orders the Henon into an uncomfortable situation. Sam-Sa-Ee starts to remember events from moment to moment, and she starts to dream. In direct negotiations between the Athuran community, the Henon, and the Envoy, Sam-Sa-Ee is able to *choose* not to reveal certain information to her Envoy. Because of her small negotiation, the Envoy plays up to the Athurans in a way that makes the Henon back out of the deal entirely. The Envoy loses everything and Sam-Sa-Ee is left behind—to begin healing with the local community. They have a word for what she is and recognize the Athuran person inside her.

Finally, another story I found quite empowering came from Aimee Ogden in the new Canadian speculative fiction magazine *Augur*. “The Steam-Powered Princess” features in *Augur’s* second numbered issue and centers on the titular character in a fairytale setting. An infertile king and queen ask their court technomancer to create a baby for them. Anathenia grows up a princess, although a steam-powered one that no one can touch without thick gloves. She wishes very much to be a good princess, such as the ones she reads about in books, although she’s not quite sure what that will mean when it comes to the question of marriage. Exercising some of her privilege as a princess, she summons knights for quests. The first one she tells: “I would like to be happy.” A young knight ventures off and brings her an apple from the Tree of Joy. It does little for her, and now she has to pretend to be happy so as not to hurt anyone’s feelings. To the next knight she says: “I would like to learn how to be at peace.” This older

knight brings her a vial of water from a secret, guarded pool. After thanking her, the princess drinks it, but again it has no impact. For her last quest she says “I would like to know how to be brave.”

The grey-bearded knight who arrives offers her an opportunity for adventure, and she jumps at the chance, but as soon as they’re outside the castle walls he abducts her. He essentially dissects her to determine her inner workings, keeping her disassembled in his workshop with other creatures he tries to create. Slowly she and the other half-created creatures develop a language to plot around the false knight. Anathenia sings (quiet) songs of hope and patience, things she learned without any knights’ questing.

Eventually she sees and seizes an opportunity and kills the false knight. While this might have been suicidal, the other creations help her survive. In the denouement “Anathenia cast aside false happiness and false contentment and bravery for its own sake. Sometimes she screamed and wept; sometimes she held her companions when terror or rage seized them. Allowing oneself the chance to feel things, especially ugly things, is a kind of bravery, and one little praised in songs and stories.” Slowly she fixes herself and her companion creations. She makes a life for herself, planting a garden and helping others who come to her at various points in their own journeys. In this tale you can see the coming of age story where the child separates herself from her parents, but also an empowering narrative where a survivor overthrows her tormentor and takes power for herself, power she uses in much more humane ways (despite being officially a nonhuman construct).

In each story here, the POV characters exist in opposition to a system distilled into a person, one which treats them as a thing. On the Sko’ickari home planet, the childbirth system has evolved using non-sapient beasts. Seqanen seems to treat Nick more like a pet than a person, and certainly there is little in the way of interspecies educational efforts to recruit volunteers. Those with the superior technology feel free to treat their “inferiors”

“Allowing oneself the chance to feel things, especially ugly things, is a kind of bravery, and one little praised in songs and stories.”

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Dust Lanes
(cont. from p. 13)

(in this case, human men) in abusive ways. Flipping this around, Sam-Sa-Ee is a human/alien/machine slave in the hands of the human male Envoy. While the Athuran brain was donated by an older female looking to provide her family with a better life, there's no mention that the body donor was medically brain-dead or anything possibly ethical. Instead, the Envoy mentions that they're melding Athuran brains with "what we've thrown away," and he's especially pleased to have his porcelain-skinned doll standing out "among the dark, boring bodies of other translating babies." (Would the story work as well with one of those bodies as host? I hope so.) Obviously the Envoy regards her as his property to do with, in all senses, as he wishes. Anathenia's situation is a little different, since her parents very much desired a daughter and want to treat her as one. However, the mere fact of being steam-powered, too hot to touch and emitting offensive vapors, causes them to hold her, emotionally and literally, at arm's length. From this situation (not too different from other fairytale heroines with distant fathers and unsympathetic stepmothers), she seeks to escape. It is the false knight who treats her as a thing and seeks only to investigate her technology for his own enrichment.

Sam-Sa-Ee and Anathenia are able to exact revenge against the embodiments of their oppressive systems and pursue paths of healing. Sam-Sa-Ee is even able to take down an exploitive colonial project at the same time. Nick is not offered that path—his lover returns to nir planet to prepare a nest for the coming child, and even the prospect of life after giving birth holds little hope: one man in the group committed suicide a few months after delivery, and another describes his postpartum life as simply "Empty." Still, in each of these cases the sympathy (and empathy) of the reader is clearly directed toward the hybrid being, the one with very little "choice" in their situation (although that word comes in for serious interrogation in Beamon's story). Science fiction has always had a tendency to root for the underdog, and while the

definition of who exactly qualifies as an underdog has been a significant battle ground for the last decade or more, the characters in these three stories offer us perspectives on our own humanity: the choices we make, the situations we never would have chosen, and potential paths forward. I'm *very* happy to see paths of healing making it onto the agenda along with the horror, rebellion, and revenge.

Karen Burnham is vocationally an electromagnetics engineer and avocationally a book reviewer and critic. She writes for *Locus Magazine* online and other venues. Her single author study *Greg Egan* is available from University of Illinois Press. She works in the automotive industry in Michigan, where she lives with her family.

Science fiction has always had a tendency to root for the underdog,....the characters in these three stories offer us perspectives on our own humanity: the choices we make, the situations we never would have chosen, and potential paths forward.





Ariadne in Queens

Step down from their soundstage, lady,
 cut the lights, unmantle from the fog,
 and tell me why you want to break your heart
 between a hero and a hard place
 when you could have a satyr?
 The Met knows my credentials—
 a red-figured lekythos
 bright-eyed from the workshop of Hermonax
 in the days of the Delian League,
 only sometimes I knock a hat back over these sharp ears
 and hitch some trousers over this horse's ass
 and take the night air
 in this asphalt wildwood.
 Lady, Andromache looked happier
 eating the ash of Troy's battleground,
 Helen slowly taking up her weaving
 at magnanimous Menelaos' side.
 The best wine-shop I drank in
 burned with Peiraieus,
 but I know a taverna on Ditmars
 does a mean skordalia and a better tsipouro
 and the nymphs of Astoria Park have seen it all.
 I can put the vine-leaves back in your hair
 in no time,
 Dionysos' gasp in your throat
 and no regrets.
 Take a cue from the theater,
 even Euripides knew it—after tragedy,
 the satyr play.

A Vixen When She Went to School

A girl who pitches her tent in the woods of love
 deserves what she gets,
 her father said before
 she came home leading by the hand
 a husband of hawthorn leaves and the smell of foxes
 twirling a cowslip
 like an oar over his shoulder,
 calling his wife by the name of the god of thieves.
 He calls her his changeling,
 gold as the Orient,
 he heaps a bed of bracken on the mosaic floor.
 Ask after the boy she ran through brake and briar
 to win the heart from
 and she shrugs, her husband's wild-grape arms
 girdling her waist.
He did not desire to go, she says
 and strides off, rounding like the moon
 over a silly lovers' wall.

Sonya Taaffe's short fiction
 and award-winning poetry has
 appeared in multiple venues. Her
 recent short story collection is
Forget the Sleepless Shores and her
 2015 poetry collection is *Ghost
 Signs*. She is currently a senior
 poetry editor for *Strange Horizons*.

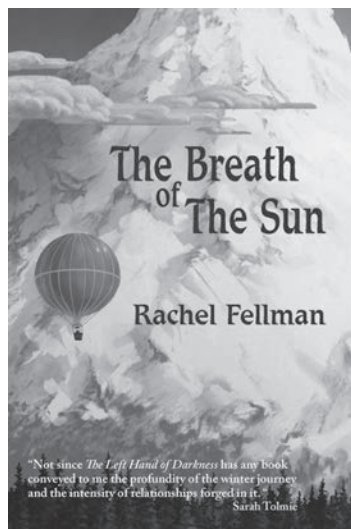


To Climb and Break and Know the Pieces

The Breath of the Sun by Rachel Fellman, Aqueduct Press, August 2018, 256 pp., \$19.

reviewed by Arley Sorg

...the characters in this novel are fascinating and unique, and their relationships are complex and engaging.



At the outset this novel is set up with the “enigmatic figure leads protagonist into adventure” trope. Lamat Paed is a mountain climber and a guide who mainly works as a bar owner for locals and tourists. One evening, garbed in the robes of a holy order, the mysterious Mother Disaine enters her bar. Disaine wants to hire Lamat to help achieve something no ordinary person has ever done: summit the Sublime Mountain. Here, readers familiar with tropes will chime in: “and adventure ensues!”

But the comparison is purely superficial. Those adventure stories tend to focus on the adventure itself, especially plot events and the fun ideas sprinkled throughout: traps, monsters, gadgets, and so on. They are generally less interested in character, except in a very stock sort of way.

The Breath of the Sun uses the adventure trope to get things going, but the journey is the vehicle through which the story delves very deeply into characters and their relationships. Readers who enjoy shallow adventure stories should stay far away. But readers who love narratives about interesting people and the messed up things they do, please come

in. Because the characters in this novel are fascinating and unique, and their relationships are complex and engaging.

Lamat is part of a cultural minority, the remnants of which live in relative isolation. Married off at a young age, when we meet her she’s a middle-aged woman running her ex-husband’s bar in the village, “eight thousand feet up the mountain, just over the knob of its toe.” She has survived a number of unfortunate incidents, including a climbing expedition that left her friends dead. As the story begins she is fairly scarred physically and emotionally, and something of an outcast among her own people.

Disaine is from a religious sect whose focus is scientific experimentation. If the journey here is exploration and adventure, real adventure is found in Lamat getting to know Disaine. Often blunt and usually manipulative, Disaine is full of surprises. She is also scarred, but more severely than Lamat. In contrast to Lamat’s grounded life of routines and regret, Disaine is a wanderer, a determined chaser of dreams, and a tinkerer.

Keep in mind, this is still an adventure novel. *The Breath of the Sun’s* plot beats are not a handful of loosely connected escapes from danger, but climbing the Mountain is a life-threatening prospect. Visceral story-telling makes sure readers feel the threat and the desperation of the undertaking. Even getting to the climb requires that the two women overcome gut-punching obstacles. Plot events are given depth as important moments draw out aspects of character, develop conflict, and further complicate circumstances and relationships.

Narrative devices are utilized with unusual expertise throughout this work. The story is framed as a book Lamat is writing for her lover, Otile, whose occasional footnotes cleverly layer the story. What could have been a heavy handed, obvious tactic is instead a gorgeous em-



bellishment, taking the reader deeper into the intricacies of human nature. Even flashbacks are woven into captivating story arcs.

It's easy to describe this book as literary, but this is still a proud work of fantasy. *The Breath of the Sun* is set in a secondary world. Lamat's people, the Holoh, believe the Mountain is God, and that Asam is the only individual to ever summit the Sublime Mountain. Different cultures express similar ideas in vastly different ways, accompanied by different rules and world views. The narrative never falls into the trap of lengthy passages expounding on the vast reaches of the world. Rather, the concepts and presentation of cultures and beliefs is thoughtful, the world building is fascinating, and the use of different cultures within the world provides exquisite conflict and character exploration.

A conversation might be warranted around notions of cultural appropriation. In reading this book, Sherpas came to mind many times, an ethnic minority with some similar historic events and beliefs to the Holoh's. I don't have answers, and Sherpas are not the only mountain culture in the world. But I would have the same potential questions on reading a fantasy with desert warriors who bear resemblance to Bedouins, or a tale where a magician carries a striking similarity to voodoo stereotypes, especially when written by someone outside those cultures. On the other hand, aspects of the story, especially seen through Lamat's perspective, arguably stand as a polemic against certain types of anthropology, and especially the (outsider's) habit of assumption.

The Breath of the Sun is written in beautiful, thoughtful prose, with the kinds of lines that make you want to repost them to Twitter: "I was a brilliant girl once, and I know that I don't have that kind of power anymore, because it really is taken from you if enough people treat you like you have nothing to add." Great, often beautiful descriptions, wonderful word pairings, captivating characterizations, and occasional meditations on words and language fill these pages. Scenes are vibrant, interactions are remarkable. It's visual, visceral, and worthy of careful reading.

My one criticism might be that there are moments that don't read as a true epistolary might. Sometimes information obviously known to Otile is recounted in a way which makes the narrative seem more for a general audience. This is explained in the sense of the entire work being as much about Lamat processing her experiences for herself as for Otile; or, perhaps, as the work being written for Otile, but in a thorough, "I'm writing a book" (as opposed to journaling) style. Regardless, it broke the magic once or twice.

Despite my very minor criticism and hesitating questions, this is a truly beautiful book. I haven't even covered the stuff about the various explorations of womanhood, or reality and self and truths, or loneliness, or even the stark, brutal realism of the climb itself. This novel will make you reflect, think, and hopefully feel. If you're a writer, you may experience symptoms such as admiration or jealousy. Ultimately, the most important thing I can say about *The Breath of the Sun*: you should read it.

The Breath of the Sun is written in beautiful, thoughtful prose, with the kinds of lines that make you want to repost them to Twitter....

This novel will make you reflect, think, and hopefully feel. If you're a writer, you may experience symptoms such as admiration or jealousy.

Arley Sorg lives in Oakland, CA. A 2014 Odyssey Writing Workshop graduate, he's an associate editor at *Locus Magazine* and does odd jobs for *Lightspeed Magazine*. He's soldering together a novel, has thrown a few short stories into orbit, and hopes to launch more.



The Fierce Fun of a Heroine's Journey

Heroine's Journey, by Sarah Kuhn, DAW Books, July 2018, 384 pp., \$15.

reviewed by Erin Roberts

As is to be expected with the third book in a novel series, Heroine's Journey starts in the middle of a well-established universe with familiar characters. Luckily, main character and narrator Bea is quick to explain where we are and who everyone is....

While it may be true that you shouldn't judge a book by its cover, Sarah Kuhn's novel goes the extra mile to wear its heart on its sleeve—the cover features a giant unicorn head, a small but fierce-looking dog, and three Asian American women who appear to be as powerful as they are determined. This is a cover that promises action, fun, and dynamic female characters, and, for the most part, it delivers. While the book starts slowly, and main character Bea Tanaka is at times equally compelling and frustrating, it's a fun read that picks up as it goes and packs a surprising amount of character depth between wild action scenes, steamy romance, and snarky humor.

As is to be expected with the third book in a novel series, *Heroine's Journey* starts in the middle of a well-established universe with familiar characters. Luckily, main character and narrator Bea is quick to explain where we are and who everyone is (in a demon-plagued San Francisco guarded by superheroines Evie Tanaka, Aveda Jupiter, and their team of supporters), along with what happened to them in previous series installments. In fact, early on it seems as if author Sarah Kuhn is overly conscious of wanting the reader to be completely caught up on the action, which makes the opening chapters feel slower and more reflective than I would have liked; each tidbit about a character's previous exploits or romantic entanglements was more likely to make me want to pick up the earlier books in the series than read on to find out if Bea would become the heroine she desperately wanted to be.

In many ways, this makes perfect sense; Bea herself is a character that I understood better as the book went on, but never fully warmed to. Kuhn does a masterful job of creating a compelling main character who is simultaneously snarky, passionate about following in her older sister's superheroine footsteps, extremely



impulsive, and often short-sighted, but Bea's self-centeredness and blindness to her own shortcomings can be wearying, especially early on. To Kuhn's credit, Bea has more depth than she initially appears to, and seeing her try to cope with the emotional echoes of unresolved past trauma softened my view of her over time. Kuhn takes great care with all the characters and relationships in this book, and I found the depth in those areas to be the true heart of the novel. Still, Bea often made what seemed like obvious misjudgments without learning much from her previous mistakes, and while these missteps drove the plot forward, they also sometimes made me want to take a break from the book and shake some sense into its heroine.

Fortunately, once the book really hit its stride, I was having too much fun to care about how I felt about Bea; the novel zipped back and forth between action scenes that included living carnival rides, porcelain unicorns, weaponized stone sculptures, more than one mind palace battle, and a few steamier-than-anticipated sex scenes. And while occasionally this fast pace became dizzying, with the climax feeling a bit rushed in terms

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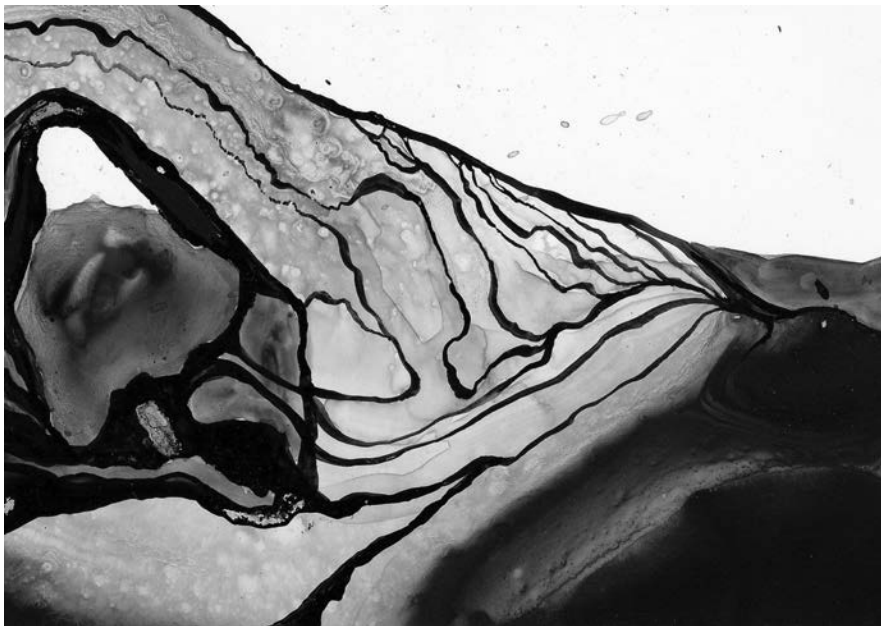
of explanation, even as it was inevitable emotionally, the way that each scene played out was fresh and unique enough that I ultimately cared more about the journey (and the friends met along the way) than the destination.

One final note: One of the things that I appreciated a great deal about *Heroine's Journey* was that its characters represent backgrounds that we don't often see in genre fiction. The main characters are mostly women, are Asian American, come from varying backgrounds within that umbrella, and have a range of sexual orientations. This novel cares about its characters and is often at its strongest when it explores the relationships between them, which it does with a good amount of nuance and depth. Their identities affect who they are and how they see the world, even though they aren't a major driver of the plot in this book.

That's important. One of the reasons that I personally believe in increasing the diversity of who is publishing, who is published, and who is written about is that it allows for a wider range of fiction about characters from non-genre-typical backgrounds. In *Heroine's Journey*, they're mostly kicking butt, taking names, and figuring out how to be better to and with each other. Their story may not be perfect, but it's got heart, and it's a lot of fun to read.

This novel cares about its characters and is often at its strongest when it explores the relationships between them, which it does with a good amount of nuance and depth.

Erin Roberts is a DC-based writer and communicator-for-hire. Her fiction and nonfiction have appeared in *Asimov's*, *Clarkesworld*, *The Dark*, *People of Colo(u)r*, *Destroy Fantasy*, and *Tor.com*. Find her online at @nirele and writingwonder.com.



Landbridge



Taking Up Male-Dominated Space

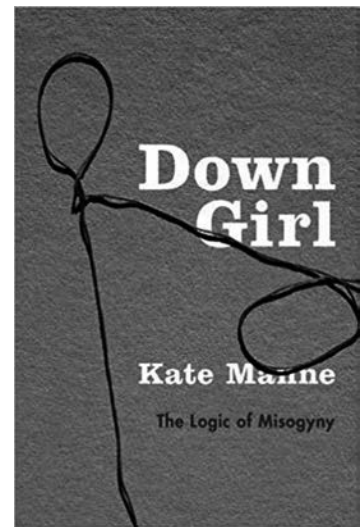
Down Girl: The Logic of Misogyny, by Kate Manne,
Oxford University Press, November 2017, 338 pp., \$27.95.
reviewed by Nancy Jane Moore

...sexism proclaims women incapable of doing an "X" coded as male. When women succeed at doing X, misogyny abuses and shames them in an effort to keep them from doing it.

The title says it all: the purpose of misogyny is to keep women down, to put them in their place. Women are put in their place to provide love, or at least sex, and support to men, not to seek those things for themselves; they are not, as Kate Manne says in describing her own experience with abusive attacks, supposed to take up "male-dominated space without pandering to patriarchal interests and vanities." As with the other creature who comes to mind when someone says "down girl," women are here to be man's best friend. In this powerful and useful book, Manne, a philosophy professor at Cornell University, says that misogyny isn't based on the idea that women aren't human, but rather on the concept that they have a specific human role and they are supposed to remain in that limited position regardless of their humanity. Misogyny is "an inherently *political* phenomenon," based on patriarchal norms; it's not an individual quirk, she argues.

In looking at misogyny from the perspective of moral philosophy as well as from how it plays out in modern life, Manne distinguishes it from sexism. Sexism "has the overall function of *rationalizing* and *justifying* patriarchal social relations," while misogyny exists for "*policing* and *enforcing* its governing norms and expectations." That is, sexism proclaims women incapable of doing an "X" coded as male. When women succeed at doing X, misogyny abuses and shames them in an effort to keep them from doing it.

I find this is a valuable distinction. Sexism, because it is often based on inaccurate ideas about what women and men are capable of or "naturally" good at, is something that can be defeated by arguments based on good science and by the kind of legal changes that have been made in many countries over the past hundred years. Misogyny, however, is



built on culturally defined patriarchal assumptions about what women and men *should* do and is often expressed as an emotional reaction. It is difficult to argue with emotional reactions—especially ones of shame and disgust—and they are effective policing mechanisms among a social species.

In *Down Girl*, Manne provides the reader with a sophisticated look at misogyny, drawing on both philosophical analysis of the concept and examples from our current lives, including the 2016 United States presidential election, the legal and societal response to several high profile rapes, and the killing spree of a young man angry because the women he desired didn't notice him. By showing how misogyny underlies these events—and also by examining the ways people downplayed the misogynistic aspects of them—Manne gives us a deep understanding of how entrenched the concepts of misogyny are in our present culture and how women as well as men accept and apply them.

One example she uses is the debate over women's access to contraception, specifically Rush Limbaugh's abuse of Sandra Fluke, the law student who argued before Congress that women at universities with religious affiliations should still be able to get birth control covered under their health plan. Manne points out that such feminist arguments for contraception and abortion rights

...Manne gives us a deep understanding of how entrenched the concepts of misogyny are in our present culture and how women as well as men accept and apply them.



mean that the prototypical woman wants “to be *provided* with an *antidote* to human giving—and in a way that often highlights her human capacities being deployed in self-development or geared toward financial success, that is, his province.” She characterizes Limbaugh’s abuse as based on the idea that women “expected something from [men] without repaying them in the coin of personal attention.”

Manne points out that one reason for the persistence of the idea that women should repay or give anything to men is that such giving is a valuable part of human life; it includes such “gifts” as “respect, love, acceptance, nurturing, safety, security, and safe haven.” It’s work that needs doing, though that does not make it women’s job to do it—nor does it mean men are automatically entitled to such gifts. When women refuse to do that kind of giving, they are met with the withdrawal of social approval. And if women not only refuse to give respect, love, and the rest, but also dare to ask for those specific things, which are supposed to be only for men, the withdrawal of social approval will be brutal. “[M]isogyny directed toward one woman in public life may serve as a warning to others not to follow her lead, or even to publicly lend their support to her.” Manne provides examples from Hillary Clinton’s political career as illustration, but criticism within the U.S. Senate of several women senators shows that it continues up to the present moment.

Manne’s conclusion is pessimistic. She writes: “All of this is to say that misogyny makes people so irrational, so inclined to engage in post hoc rationalization, and so lacking in that thing that many tout and purport to think crucial, namely personal responsibility (a tricky philosophical concept but the point here is one of consistency) that this has made me pretty pessimistic about reasoning with people to get them to take misogyny seriously.”

She also points out, using the work of Shel Silverstein (most notably *The Giving Tree*), that misogyny is “disseminated by means of popular children’s poems and beloved bedtime stories,” something that

makes her even more pessimistic. I, too, have noticed the many different ways in which gender rules are encoded for us beginning in toddlerhood, when children start noticing (and all too often enforcing) gender differences. Iris Marion Young’s incomparable essay “Throwing Like a Girl” takes apart the misogynistic analysis that underlies a supposedly scientific conclusion that throwing a ball is so masculine that even very young girls, whose physiology is much the same as that of boys their age, are incapable of throwing properly. Young points out that four-year-old girls have already picked up the cues that tell us what girls are supposed to be able to do. Misogynistic culture drilled into children with the “beloved bedtime story” and other commentary—not biology or some kind of mystical “maleness”—trains girls in the “rules.”

It is easy to join Manne in this pessimism. But that’s why it’s important to read books like this one. You may not be able to use them to argue with misogynists around you—though Manne provides some analytical tools that will help—but recognizing misogyny and calling it out gives us power over it. Manne’s own solution to her pessimism is to jump to more radical default assertions: “I have come to feel liberated to point out the obvious: a good portion of the dominant social class have a vested interest in maintaining men’s superiority.”

Reading this book will let us join her in feeling sufficiently liberated to point out all the places where misogyny affects our lives.

Nancy Jane Moore is the author of the science fiction novel *The Weave*, several novellas, and numerous short stories. As someone who never fit comfortably into roles traditionally associated with women, she finds herself reading a lot of books on gender.

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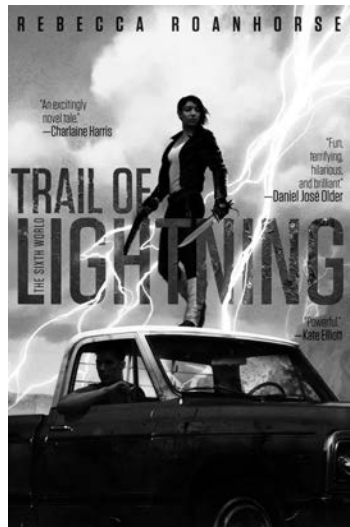


Girl Who Comes Out Fighting

Trail of Lightning, by Rebecca Roanhorse, Saga Press, June 2018, 304 pp., \$27.99.

reviewed by Kathleen Alcalá

A compelling protagonist, we root for Hoskie even as we cannot help but dislike her. And we dislike her because we can identify with her. She embodies our darker instincts for survival and our thirst for the blood of our enemies.



Magdalena Hoskie is a sweet, petite girl who leaves roses and daisies in her footsteps. She is cheerful and obliging, and knows how to bake a cake. Not.

Magdalena Hoskie is morose, standoffish, and usually covered in blood. She is a monster-killer, a particular occupation in the near-future dystopia of Rebecca Roanhorse's new novel *Trail of Lightning*, set in the Navajo Nation. The first sequence in this book allows Roanhorse to show her considerable chops as a writer of action scenes. It ends with a surprise reversal that makes us take a long look at a character who would choose to make her way in the world hunting monsters. We are introduced to a broken-hearted Hoskie as someone who knows she will never have family again, never be able to get close to people, or trust anyone. A compelling protagonist, we root for Hoskie even as we cannot help but dislike her. And we dislike her because we can identify with her. She embodies our darker instincts for survival and our thirst for the blood of our enemies. And she's one of the good guys!

All of this takes place after the arrival of the Big Water, the sudden inundation

that swamps a third of the United States and much of the world when the cumulative effects of global warming take hold. The Navajo Nation, or Dinétah, has erected—through magic and engineering—a wall of shell in the east, turquoise in the south, abalone to the west, and black jet to the north that protects its huge territory from the worst of these effects. Although it is possible to cross this barrier, news from outside is scarce.

One of its bearers is an impossibly handsome young man named Kai Arviso. A native of The Burque, formerly Albuquerque, he finds himself on a permanent vacation from his party life in the city after offending one of the water barons, known in New Mexico during our time as acequeros. With the coming of the Big Water, fresh water is now at a premium, and Water Kings have assumed the role of the drug lords of previous times. Having bedded a water princess against the quaintly archaic expectations of her father, Arviso reluctantly joins his Grandpa Tah in Dinétah. This grandfather is the closest thing Hoskie has to family, and the initial meeting of Arviso and Hoskie is as awkward as one might expect.

The old man, of course, knows things they don't. Both young people have modest superpowers that give them an edge over mere mortals. Yet neither of them is immortal. That status is reserved for the beings of Navajo mythology who now walk the earth, imparting both wisdom and mischief. Roanhorse does a great job of familiarizing the reader with the Navajo universe, using language to carry the weight of kinship and religious patterns without taking too much time on backstory. After the death of Hoskie's family, she is taken in by one of these beings, Naayéé' Neizghání, child of Changing Woman and the Sun. From him she learns her merciless fighting skills. "He calls me 'Chinibaá,' a traditional Diné name that means 'girl who comes out fighting.'"

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After a few months of fostering Hoskie, Neizghání abandons her, leaving the teen even more hurt and confused than before, taunted by others in a clan-based culture for having been left alone again. And yet, she is alive and has one important skill set: the ability to track and kill the monsters unleashed by the Big Water and its accompanying magic.

With the introduction of Grandpa Tah and Arviso, Roanhorse proceeds to chip away at Hoskie's emotional armor.

There are things I like and dislike about this first novel.

One thing I don't like, and this might be a function of my age, is the graphic violence in some of the scenes. This is aggravated by the supernatural powers of the protagonists, who might survive things that would wipe most of us out. Hoskie definitely has a psychotic streak that breaks loose now and then. The reader can see why people would be reluctant to invite her into their homes. After a certain point, the violence tends to distance me from the characters and the plot, much the way videogames and graphic novels show people being killed again and again, so that their deaths become meaningless.

One thing I love is the role reversal Roanhorse introduces between Hoskie and Arviso. Handsome, charming, and with an innate ability to heal both himself and others, Arviso is the perfect foil to Hoskie and her killer instincts. His ability to yield when others would advance allows him to deflect much of the violence generated by a world in chaos and engage in gentle banter with the stoic Hoskie.

There are a couple of great scenes with Ma'ii, Coyote in the guise of a foppish gentleman, who tries to manipulate Hoskie and Arviso for his own purposes, making a couple of passes at Arviso in the process. There is the mandatory bar sequence where everyone, mortals and immortals alike, let their freak flags fly. It's amusing in part because deadly serious, uptight Hoskie must dress up (or down, depending on your point of view) to meet someone there. This scene is followed by the mandatory cage fight.

Another thing I like about Roanhorse's universe is that it fits nicely with the near future environmental dystopia of Paolo Bacigalupi's novels such as *The Windup Girl* and *The Waterknife*. Both authors posit a drastically altered Earth and the adaptability of humans to its requirements. Both, in very different ways, explore what it means to be human.

Roanhorse is not Navajo, but a mix of African American and indigenous bloods, and was careful to consult someone named Begay for cultural correctness.

The relationship of the immortals to the humans in this book remains somewhat elusive and ill-defined. There are a couple of times anomalies that threw me, but this is Indian Country, so I can let it go. A few clichéd phrases, however, could have been caught and eliminated by the editors. They nail the story to our time, rather than allowing the timeless quality this book is so close to achieving.

Much is left unexplored about these characters, including the survival of one or two of them. All are morally ambiguous, resisting the flat descriptions of books that strive for less. This keeps the reader on her toes, never taking it for granted that an ally will remain an ally, or that things or people held dear will be rescued. Sequels are planned for *Trail of Lightning*, and there's a teaser for the second book, *Storm of Locusts*, at the end of the first novel. I predict a wide readership, from indigenous teens to German hobbyists. Roanhorse has already been recognized with a Nebula and a Hugo for her evocative short fiction. Squarely in the flow of the Indigenous Futurism movement, *Trail of Lightning* carries us along in a future that of course includes people of color, rather than leaving us as an add-on to traditional science fiction and fantasy.

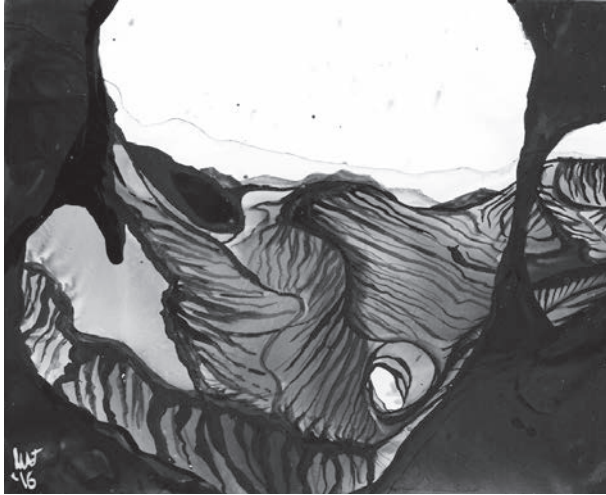
Kathleen Alcalá is the author of six books. She writes, teaches creative writing, and lives in the Northwest. More at www.kathleenalcala.com

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Process Landscapes — Heather Tatarek



Planet X

Landscape, as seen from a distance. My interest in landscape stems from a fascination with the natural world and how various landscapes are formed. While working, I commonly think back to grade school science classes when we learned about how silt forms at river mouths, what causes landslides, the way pressure forces volcanoes, and so much more. I remember creating these miniature landscapes out of whatever materials would render similar results to the natural ones. I loved creating these massive events in such ways that I could carry them in my hands. My artwork today employs a variety of techniques to evoke feelings reminiscent of those natural events.

Working on Yupo, a slick, synthetic substrate, allows me to create landscapes similar to those Mother Nature creates, albeit on a significantly smaller scale. Using heat and cold, air pressure, wind and air shifts, changes in pigment-to-water ratios, dropping, spilling, layering, dragging, scraping, scratching, and brushing, I build up landscapes similar to those shaped by natural processes. These images are fairly flat, but because of the accreted layers, all entwined in several different ways, they have a feeling of three-dimensionality that is not purely a trick of light and dark, cool and warm paints. They do have visible layers

and dimensionality on such a small scale that you can hold something in your hands that was created like a landslide, with small grits of pigment tumbling down into puddles of water, or a river bed receded on a hot day after a flood.

Although I enjoy planetary and moon landscapes very much, all of which have their own history of natural occurrences from methane lakes to meteor strikes, I am beginning to make the shift back to Earth. I am focusing more on how natural forces interact and change our known landscapes. Climate change has been a profound influence on my work, because it has a huge influence on me and on the entire world. Since the issues wrought by climate change are so prevalent, I am focusing on depicting the changes and deploying my materials and techniques to mimic the same devastating forces of nature that now regularly bombard our home planet. My art is in this way based within science and based on actual natural and man-made forces, but my depictions often arise out of my own imagination, whether they are Earthly or other.

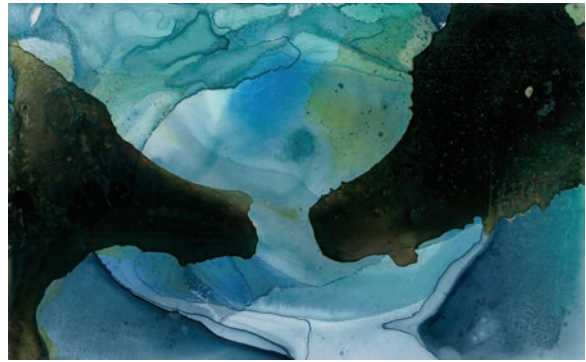
Sometimes my landscapes emerge while I am making them, but often times they are based on places I've been, places I've imagined while reading books, listening to music, or dreams I've had. Sometimes the influence is there, but is so obscure and minimal that at the end of the day it just becomes like background music that plays while I'm working.

Please check out my website www.heatheratatarek.weebly.com for more information and more of my art. I love answering questions about my techniques and Yupo.





Study in Violet



Titan



Meteor Shower



Mars



Ethereal



Red Planet





After Tide



Callisto

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