



INTERVIEW:

Minister Faust: Writing is not a performance art

By Nisi Shawl '92

Minister Faust is the nom de guerre of Malcolm Azania, an acclaimed African-Canadian activist and radio personality, and the author of Coyote Kings of the Space-Age Bachelor Pad and From the Notebooks of Dr. Brain. Both novels were Philip K. Dick Award nominees; the second received the Carl Brandon Society's Parallax Award. Faust is currently working on The Alchemists of Kush, "the story of two Sudanese boys orphaned by war and forced to wander through violence, fear, and deprivation, until they encounter mystic mentors who try to transform them into leaders. One of those boys lives today in inner-city Edmonton. The other lived 7,000 years ago: Horus, son of Osiris."

Minister Faust will teach the fourth week of the Clarion West Writers Workshop's 2011 session. He was interviewed by Nisi Shawl '92.

You're a radio announcer and a spoken word artist, the former member of a hip hop group, and an acclaimed participant in live poetry readings. How does performance influence your written work?

I can't stress enough how important it is for writers to read their own work aloud to themselves. One of the most



helpful lessons I've learned from doing so much performance (which also includes giving scores of speeches and having taught public school for ten years) is how to be clear and concise.

When we write, it's easy to get carried away, to fall in love with our own endless descriptions of whatever we personally think is amazing: sunsets, flowers, action, aliens, guns, food, sex, shoes.... But when you read your work aloud and discover you've spent five minutes on something, no matter how pretty the words are you have to realize you've gone long.

Another major benefit of that much experience speaking and performing is that I aim for naturalistic phrasing. I get irked by passages such as, "I stand at the waterfall. I gaze out at the mountains," since in real life, a

native English speaker would say, "I'm standing at the waterfall, looking out at the mountains." Why choose a bizarre, distancing, formal phrase when a down-to-earth one is so convenient and immediate? I recommend to all young writers, whether it's dialogue or narration, to write like people actually speak.

And if you have a character who speaks in a truly formal fashion, even in narration, then draw attention to that, since such behavior points to a strange personality or frame of mind.

In a recent interview you named a wide-ranging list of authors who've influenced you: Philip K. Dick, Frank Herbert, and Daniel Keyes, in the SF genre; Alan Moore, Kevin O'Neill, and Frank Miller in comics; Ralph Ellison, John Gardner, Richard Wright, John Steinbeck, and J.D. Salinger in mainstream fiction; Seamus Heaney, the Last Poets, Claude McKay, and Linton Kwesi Johnson in poetry. Gender Police Person wants to know if any women authors interest you.

The absence of women on my list points to a major flaw in my early reading history, when a writer was much more likely to influence my own approach. But I'd definitely say I'm profoundly impressed by Nalo Hopkinson (*Brown Girl in the Ring*), Eden Robinson (*Traplines*), Hiromi Goto (*The Kappa Child*), Danzy Senna (*Caucasia*), Laura Esquivel (*Like Water for Chocolate*), and Jan Wong (*Red China Blues*).

As a writer you set yourself daily goals of hundreds, sometimes thousands of words. Do you revise as you go?

When I'm working on a novel manuscript, I try to write a minimum of four pages a day (2,000 words). Revising can be a helpful way to get the momentum to do the day's work, but for me, revising at that stage is mostly proofreading with minor additions and subtractions. Some people are quite comfortable killing whole sections of a manuscript in progress, but I grieve losses on that scale.

To avoid having to delete large sections, I do extensive planning for every novel manuscript. My notes for my unpublished megabooks sometimes total a few hundred pages. They're at least 100 pages for my latest manuscript, *The Alchemists of Kush*, which when published will be about 350 pages long.

Not everyone likes extensive planning, and Stephen King says it's for hacks. Writing is not a performance art, though—it's a results-oriented art. The only people who truly care how you wrote your book are certain types of fans, and writers seeking to learn from your methods. All television writers and most film writers do extensive planning; a story might be up to half the length of the finished script.

What's good about writing for games? What's not so great about it?

The most satisfying part of writing for video games is seeing artists and level designers turn my ideas into visuals. For ten years (ages 10 - 20), I aimed at being a comic book artist and writer, so seeing people put in hours and years to bring my ideas to simulated 3D life is deeply rewarding.

The part that's not so great is, ironically, also the most valuable: having my work constantly subjected to many, many people's changes. It's hard to take because it means that whatever I love can be (and most of the time is) killed almost immediately. That's beneficial because I've learned a great deal about what "average folks" either are entertained by or think they'll be entertained by. So lessons from writing for video games will be useful in some of the YA series I'm planning right now.

You've described yourself as "Kenyan-Canadian left-wing writer." Can readers perceive your politics through your work? Do you think your writing can achieve political gains?

If readers don't perceive my politics, they aren't paying much attention. That said, some people think they know my convictions and proceed to make a variety of claims about them. They're frequently speaking more about their own fears and prejudices than anything having to do with me.

As far as political gains, I think that barring a few people—such as Ralph Nader, whose books have brought major improvements to the lives of hundreds of millions of his fellow citizens—the best most writers can hope for is to make a lot of people feel less alone (because someone, somewhere has shared their experiences and published them), and to inspire a few ambitious people to turn fictional versions of aspects of a better life into reality.

You mentioned in an interview a few years back that Canadian SF writer Robert Sawyer predicted the death of SF publishing within our lifetimes. Do you believe that will happen? Do you see SF as a ghetto to escape from?

I think SF publishing for adults is in a tough spot right now based on what various people tell me. The best hope for SF adult publishing is SF YA publishing, which apparently outsells adult SF by a ratio of two-to-one. The more young people we can bring into SF, the more will become adults who continue to read in the genre. And many of them will become literature teachers and professors who will assign SF novels.

SF isn't a "bad neighborhood" from which to escape; some of the finest novels in English are SF: Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, really the earliest Star Trek, exploring strange new worlds and seeking out new lifeforms and new civilizations, complete with political commentary; George Orwell's *1984*; Philip K. Dick's *VALIS*. Our biggest barrier is the prejudice of people who think they're too good for SF.

Do you have any advice for 2011

Clarion West students on how to approach the week they'll be spending with you next summer?

Be open. Together we'll try to help everyone improve their weakest skills and investigate their own deepest fears, pains, hopes, and joys, which I believe are the sources of our greatest writing.

If you could go back in time and tell your younger self anything, what would it be?

1. Buy Google stock.
2. Bad things will go away. Good things will get better.
3. Spend more time with friends and family.





From the Chair

THE POWER OF
IMAGINATION
BY KELLEY ESKRIDGE

As I write this, Halloween approaches. I'm looking forward to neighborhood kids showing up at my door in costumes, transformed for a night into superheroes and monsters, pirates and fairies. I'm thinking about the power of imagination.

Imagination is the engine that drives writers and readers. Every daydream and every private fantasy, every moment spent in the head of a character or the world of a story, is a creative act that connects us to ourselves and each other.

This past summer, eighteen students fueled by their own vision of writing and themselves as writers came together with six instructors and the Clarion West staff and community in Seattle. They worked, laughed, cried, risked, and grew. They connected with each other, and with themselves. It was, as it always is, miraculous.

All of us at CW are enormously proud of our 2010 alumni, an astonishingly talented, diverse, and passionate group of writers. We are deeply grateful to our instructors for their energy and wisdom. I'm constantly thankful for Leslie Howle and Neile Graham, our caring and supportive workshop leaders whose hard work makes it possible for so much learning to happen.

And all of us are indebted to everyone who volunteered time, gave money, hosted parties, attended readings, offered transportation or supplies or a warm conversation to encourage a student. Without you, this workshop—

and the possibility of transformation it offers—would not be possible. Your donations helped us meet our \$25,000 challenge grant from Amazon.com, and your continued support will make the workshop possible for a crop of new students in 2011. Thank you all for helping us turn imagination into reality for students every year. Speculative fiction is better because you do. Because of you, stories will be written years from now that will change a mind or change a life.

One of the most exciting ways that our community comes together to support CW is in the Write-a-thon that runs in concert with the workshop. Writers signed up, set goals, gathered support, cheered each other on in our website forum, and wrote novels, stories, flash fiction, and poetry. More than 200 people supported these writers with donations to CW. Alumni organized readings. Family and friends cooked meals and did laundry so people could write. Bloggers spread the word. It was a joyful thing.

Although the workshop is over for the year, we're busy behind the scenes continuing the business of CW. I'm delighted to announce that Davis Fox has joined us as our Interim Executive Director. Davis brings a warm presence and boatloads of nonprofit expertise that will ensure we continue using your gifts of time and money wisely and efficiently. We're hard at work preparing for 2011. We have a fabulous

slate of upcoming instructors: Paul Park, Nancy Kress, Margo Lanagan, Minister Faust, L. Timmel Duchamp, and Charles Stross. We'll begin accepting applications on January 1, 2011. If you're an emerging writer of speculative fiction, please imagine yourself at Clarion West and send us your application. Because imagination is powerful. It transforms us.



Celebrating Old and New Traditions

BY LESLIE HOWLE '84



Our twenty-seventh workshop was the perfect culmination of the first decade of Clarion West in the new millennium, with superb instructors, excellent students, and big stories.

We welcomed Michael Bishop, Maureen McHugh, Graham Joyce, and Ellen Datlow back to Seattle, while Ian McDonald and Nnedi Okorafor, a Clarion graduate herself, were new to CW. These six instructors are not only the *crème de la crème* of the field, but also topnotch teachers who made powerful contributions to the workshop. Our 2010 class consisted of eighteen writers aged 21 to 63, including one from Australia and three from the Puget Sound area. The diverse mix of students and instructors prepared a rich soil for growing fertile imaginations, which resulted in a very productive summer.

Michael Bishop kicked off the workshop with a week of short, themed assignments which were read aloud for blind critique and followed by intense,

constructive discussion. At the end of that exhilarating first week, many of us attended the Locus Awards and the Science Fiction Hall of Fame Awards at the Science Fiction Museum, a CW tradition. This amazing day introduced students personally to some of the current greats in the SF field and inspired them with the memory of Hall of Fame inductees Roger Zelazny, Richard Matheson, and Octavia E. Butler, who was also a frequent CW instructor.

The brilliant, insightful Maureen McHugh returned in the second week for her second round of teaching at CW. Nnedi Okorafor brought a unique perspective, thoughtful critiques, and succinct advice in week three. Next, Graham Joyce delivered a series of small but powerful lectures on narrative structure and astute critiques, followed by great critiques, lectures, and career advice from Ellen Datlow in the fifth week. Ian McDonald closed the workshop by covering stories, novels, and screenplays; he also taught puppetry using a giant black crow and performed a hilarious secret ritual, complete with ceremonial candles and improvised chants.

Thanks to the Amazon.com grant and our usual careful stewardship, we were able to celebrate 2010 with two UK instructors in one summer: Graham Joyce came from Leicester, England and Ian McDonald from Belfast, Northern Ireland. This has never happened before, one of several exciting firsts for CW. In an even more unusual first, during the workshop five students got tattoos incorporating the CW logo and/or initials to memorialize their experience.

Another landmark seems quite appropriate to the new decade: for the first time in over twenty years, we did not rely on Kinko's to copy and deliver manuscripts this summer. Instead, a large portion of the class opted to share and critique their stories electronically and we used an in-house printer for the hard copies we needed. Since this saved time and money, we are fine-tuning the process for next year and looking to buy a workhorse printer. Does anyone have suggestions for a quality, affordable laser printer/copier?

Once again we had a very talented group of students who worked hard, wrote well, and created a culture entirely unique to their group. At least four of this summer's students have already sold stories, and this trend is sure to continue. Many thanks to the wonderful students, instructors, and supporters who helped make Clarion West 2010 memorable, successful, and one of our best.

*We would like to congratulate Leslie for winning the 2010 Last Drink Bird Head Award for *Tireless Energy*, in recognition of her work with Clarion West and Richard Hugo House. The second annual award, which was presented at Capclave in Washington D.C. on October 23, 2010, is named for the charity anthology Last Drink Bird Head, edited by Ann and Jeff VanderMeer, who also selected the award winners.*



Developing News

BY KAREN G. ANDERSON

Making Money: A Grant, a Write-a-thon, and an Auction

You may recognize some of our favorite themes from last fall in this report: a generous Amazon.com challenge grant, a successful Write-a-thon, and plans for another spring auction. In short, it's good news all around.

The Amazon.com matching grant

For the second time, Amazon.com challenged us to raise \$25,000 to secure matching funds from them. Thanks to a wide range of donations, including \$10,000 from the summer Write-a-thon, we met that challenge well in advance of the October 31 deadline.

How are we putting the Amazon.com gift to use? First, by expanding financial assistance to students (always a priority for us). This year we were able to offer more financial assistance than ever before, and we're setting a stretch goal for financial aid in 2011. If you've contributed to Clarion West, you're making it possible for

students to attend who might otherwise not be able to afford it. In addition, we're making a long-term investment in CW by working with professionals who can help us expand our fundraising and solidify our administrative systems. The healthier the organization, the better the workshop experience we can offer to students.

We're deeply grateful to the anonymous benefactor whose suggestion to Amazon.com led to the first challenge grant in 2009. In tough economic times, this money has enabled us to continue to offer students one of the finest writing programs in the world. Thanks to all of you whose contributions have enabled us to meet the Amazon.com challenges and secure this funding.

The Write-a-thon

The 2010 Write-a-thon raised just over \$10,000 in contributions—40 percent of the money required to meet the Amazon.com challenge. This year we had 79 writers and 219 sponsors. A new and popular feature of the Write-a-thon this year was Michael Swanwick's offer to "Tuckerize" people in his fiction; 42 people donated to have him write stories that included their names.

Thanks to these 2010 Write-a-thon participants: Ada Milenkovic Brown, Adrian Khactu, Al Robertson, An Owomoyela, Andrea Hairston, Andy Duncan, Annie Tupek, April Lott, Arinn Dembo, Beka Cavanaugh, Brenta Blevins, Caren Corley, Caren Gussoff, Carol Ryles, Cat Rambo, Christopher Reynaga, D. Lynn Smith, Daniel Marcus, Deb Taber, Doug Sharp, E.C. Myers, Eden Robins, Eileen Gunn, Elizabeth McDowell, Emily C. Skaftun, Erin Cashier, Ethan Jones, Glenn Hackney, Gord Sellar, Greer Woodward, Heather Lindsley, Janet Freeman, Jeff Spock, Jessica J. Lee, Jocelyn Paige Kelly, Julie McGalliard, Justina Robson, Karen G. Anderson, Kate Schaefer, Kelley Eskridge, Ken Crawford, Kij Johnson, Kris Millering, Kristine

Dikeman, Leah Cutter, Louise Marley, Lucas Johnson, Lynette Aspey, Marguerite Croft, Mark Bukovec, Marsha Sisolak, Martha Miller, Michael Ehart, Michael Scott Bricker, Michael Swanwick, Mike Underwood, Nancy Jane Moore, Neile Graham, Nisi Shawl, Pamela Rentz, Phoebe Harris, Rachel Swirsky, Rajan Khanna, Randy Henderson, Raymund Eich, Robin Walton, Rochita Loenen-Ruiz, Sarah Bewley, Sarah Brandel, Sonya Lyriss, Stephanie Burgis, Tinatsu Wallace, Vicki Saunders, Vonda N. McIntyre, and Vylar Kaftan.

The auction at Potlatch

I look forward to seeing many of you at Potlatch 20 in Sunnyvale, California, March 2-6. Potlatch is again hosting the annual Clarion West Benefit Auction, a gala evening event that, in keeping with the potlatch theme, redistributes articles of great value among the community—with CW benefitting from all sales. If you have a unique or distinctive item to donate, something you think might bring out high bidders, please get in touch with Dawn Plaskon at auction@potlatch-sf.org.



Time and Money

BY SUSAN GOSSMAN



As I write this article, I am bleary eyed from staying up late last night to finish Ian McDonald's *The Dervish House*. This is an exciting, beautifully written novel set in 2027 Istanbul. Last summer, while Ian McDonald was in Seattle teaching the workshop, we had a brief conversation about two of my favorite subjects: economics and science fiction. One of the things I enjoy about serving as a board member is having a chance to

meet authors of outstanding speculative fiction.

Since you're reading this article for an update on Clarion West's finances, rather than a book review, here is my latest news.

Despite enduring the worst recession in seventy years, CW continues to be financially stable. Some of the reasons for our stability:

- We manage every dollar in the CW budget like it was our own. We have an obligation to our donors to make sure their money is spent in a careful, responsible way.
- Thanks to our donors and the hard work of everyone involved with fundraising, the Write-a-thon, Amazon.com's matching grant, and our Annual Appeal provide about half of the total cost of running the workshop, readings, and newsletter.
- Finally, our entire focus is to produce a fabulous workshop

experience with high quality students and the best instructors. If our workshop were lousy, then donations would evaporate.

This year the board decided to invest some of our grant money in the addition of three excellent professionals to assist the board with management and fundraising tasks.

With the departure of Kate Schaefer as Development Director, we want to make sure our fundraising efforts continue to be successful. In addition, several years ago Deborah Fisher, the former board chair, discovered that the board and volunteers contributed a total of 1,692 hours of their time to CW. Placing this much dependence on volunteers can result in board member burnout, which this investment will help prevent.

I invite you to contribute your time and/or money to Clarion West. Your participation is critical to our future.



Clarion West Class of 2010
Week Four,
Instructor Graham Joyce

Back Row L to R: *Tod McCoy, K.C. Ball, Michael Alexander, Andrew Romine, Jack Graham, (Luke the dog) Erik Owomoyela*

Middle Row L to R: *Tracie Welser, Stephanie L. Scudder, Cassandra Clarke, Abbey Chung, Lauren Dixon, Stephanie Denise Brown, Adam Brymora*

Front Row L to R: *Jude-Marie Green, John Nakamura Remy, Graham Joyce (Instructor) Frank Ard, Nicholas Pidgeon, Sandra M. Odell*

We're continuing our series of articles on careers for fiction writers with Diana Sherman's description of an average workday at a video game development studio. — Editor

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A VIDEO GAME WRITER, PART ONE

BY DIANA SHERMAN '02



I'm going to take you to work with me.

You've probably heard of or played an MMO (Massively Multi-player Online game): possibly *World of Warcraft*, *Star Wars the Old Republic*, or *City of Heroes*. That last one was made by the video game company where I work, Cryptic Studios.

Our players log in from all over the world, at all hours of the day, and they play together. A huge part of the appeal is that they can interact with potentially hundreds of other players while they go on adventures, slay dragons, and save the world. This presents different challenges than a single or two-player game would; I'll go into that more later.

I'm the writer on *Neverwinter*, which comes out of one of the most popular *Dungeons & Dragons* (D&D) settings,

The Forgotten Realms. The game won't be released until late 2011 and it isn't, quite, going to be an MMO. Instead, it's going to be a cooperative RPG (Role Playing Game)—which is new for us.

Let's get the day started

I get to work, usually late, with my hair sopping wet and my stomach empty. But then, so does half of everyone else at the company—except for the wet hair. Most of the people here are guys and most of them have short hair which dries a lot faster, so it's not obvious when one of them just rolled out of bed fifteen minutes ago.

No one minds this. We're a game studio, and these are developer hours. Just like our audience, we stay up late into the night shooting zombies, saving princesses, or building civilizations. This is why no one schedules meetings before 10:30 a.m.

The all-team meeting for *Neverwinter* is at 11, leaving just enough time for breakfast before we all pile into the nearest conference room. There's barely standing room for the whole team; there are about thirty-five of us in the room.

The executive producer starts off the meeting by going over the notes from the latest playtest: "We have a lot of great new content. Combat is flowing more smoothly, and the dialogue is way better. Everyone agreed on that." I exchange a look with one of the level designers; we worked our butts off on that dialogue, so that's a relief.

"But everyone was confused about the story." Uh-oh.

Then the producer takes over. He tosses up a Powerpoint with all of our tasks for this milestone broken down by team. Character Art is working on faces, which explains why, when I tried to log in my fighter-elf chick the other day, her entire face was a blob of navy blue. Environment is working on sky files for the city so it no longer feels like it's floating in the vacuum of space (which is cool, but not appropriate so much for D&D). Powers will be working on rewards tables, which determine what kind of reward the player gets when they complete specific tasks. There's a lot of math involved in this. Content,

unsurprisingly, is going to be working on making the story clearer.

The art lead pulls up some slides and we end the meeting looking at the new faces and concept art for the final dungeon. We "ooh" and "ahh" (really, the faces look much better). Then it's off to our cubes to get to work.

I pull up the latest version of the game and log in. When I reach the character selection screen, I discover that "female" is grayed out—Art has yanked females altogether until they're finished with the overhaul. So I name my burly fighter guy Natasha, and move on.

I run through the zone, comparing the playtest feedback to what I'm seeing. As I go, I'm "aggroed" by a big group of undead (the term comes from the same root as aggression). While Natasha gets the stuffing kicked out of him, I pull up the developer menu and grant him invincibility and, while we're at it, the power to kill things with his mind. Well, not exactly that, but I do have the ability to click on an enemy and have it just collapse.

I go through the zone and I see why people were confused. Remember that whole "not quite an MMO" thing? Since we're still dealing with a persistent world of the sort commonly used in MMOs, our NPCs (Non-Player Characters, which are controlled by the game) always have to be in the same area. While you may have already saved Johann the Wolfboy from sure death at the hands of the Accountants' Guild, your buddy who logged in forty minutes later hasn't yet. But he has to be in the same world you're in, as do a bunch of other people you don't even know, so when you come back an hour later, Johann the Wolfboy is surrounded by accountants again and you, as the player, are wondering why he didn't high tail it out of there while the getting was good.

Also, our NPCs are all saying the same things. Five different guys tell you the history of the Accountants' Guild, but they're all a bit vague about it. This is the other challenge of persistent worlds: there's no way for us designers to predict what the player will do first. I can't know if you're going to talk to Johann at the corner of First and

Candycane Lane, or if you're going to come in the Western Gate where you'll meet Mary the Flower-seller who needs help finding peonies, or if you're going to sneak in through the secret passage from the Puppy Smugglers' den. I can't give away too much, for fear of ruining the story; I can't count on it being linear.

There are certain stories where that's fine. If aliens are attacking the city from above and you need to save people from a burning building, linearity doesn't matter quite so much. It's fine if all the people you pull from the building are saying "I don't know what happened! Suddenly everything was on fire!"

On the other hand, if the story is that the Accountants' Guild is trying to find the lost code to the sacred vault to control all the magic in the world and force everyone to learn forensic

accounting, but one lone rebel stole the secret and passed it on to someone else before dying tragically of a hangnail, well... I'm not necessarily going to want to tell you about the Accountants' Guild's plans, not immediately. I do want you to know that they're the bad guys and they're terrorizing poor innocent people like Johann the Wolfboy. And I won't reveal at the outset who that lone rebel was. I want you to figure these things out. Being able to use linear story telling would make it a lot easier.

This is, of course, a simplification.

At which point, a chat window suddenly pops up on my screen. It's the French guy from Localization reminding me about lunch and our twice-weekly walk. Which is a good thing, because we probably need a break.



Petrey Scholarship Award Administrators Debbie Cross and Paul Wrigley with 2010's recipient Cassandra Clarke and Petrey Fellow Instructor Ian MacDonald.



We'll find out what Diana had for lunch and learn more about the rest of her day when her article concludes in the Spring 2011 newsletter.

We'd like to feature more articles on "nontraditional" writing careers and opportunities for speculative fiction writers, such as games, blog posts, reviews, audio dramas, screenplays, media tie-ins, etc. If you have experience in such a venue and are interested in contributing a future article about it to The Seventh Week, please contact the editor at eugene_myers@clarionwest.org.

Clarion West Writers Workshop

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CW People

STUDENTS, INSTRUCTORS, & VOLUNTEERS CHECK IN

[Editor's note: For this issue, alumni were invited to share the tools that aid their writing. If you have a suggestion for a future newsletter topic, please send it to eugene_myers@clarionwest.org.]

Students

1972

Brian Herbert and I have a book, *Stormworld*, coming out in early November. Also, Eraserhead Press will be publishing a collection of my work titled *Mr. Magic Realism*, (thank you!) to be released at BizarroCon (early November). I, along with my partner, Roberta Gregory, gave a presentation with my work *Mountains of the Night* and hers, *Follow Your Art: Roberta's Comic Trips*, at the Elliott Bay Book Company in late August.

After some unexpected delays, the second book in my Spiritual Trilogy, *Magic of Wild Places*, is hopefully coming out in mid-December. The anthology *Like Water for Quarks* is alive and well with projected release at NorWescon. Other news: still having health issues related to lead poisoning and detoxing, but generally better, especially since mid-August, in spite of setbacks here and there. Nice to be getting a life again!

– Bruce Taylor

1984

On the main topic, I'm still pretty low-tech. I do all my plotting on index cards and yellow legal pads, and I'm probably one of the last writers around who is still submitting his novels in WordPerfect, although I really do intend to switch to Word one of these days...

On the writing front, I have a new story in *The Green Hornet Chronicles*, which just came out this week, and my next *CSI* mystery, *Shock Treatment*, is

due out in November. At the moment, I'm hard at work on a novel based on the *Warehouse 13* TV show, while my agent tries hawking my first original novel. Here's hoping it finds a good home soon!

– Greg Cox

Occasionally I come across snippets out there in the ethersphere which ask, more or less, what the hell happened to Bruce Fergusson who wrote those fantasy novels and will he ever write another one?

It's tempting to pin my disappearance on the Federal Witness Protection Program (for the crimes of dabbling in another genre and excessive use of flashbacks) but the truth is this: I took some time off as a single father to raise two sons who are now out of the nest, in college and law school. But I'm back now in the Six Kingdoms, setting of my first two published novels, *The Shadow of His Wings* and *The Mace of Souls*, both bought and edited in the days of yore by David Hartwell.

The new book, *Pass on the Cup of Dreams*, picks up where *Mace* left off, and will be finished by the first of the year, to be followed by *Kraken's Claw* and more Six Kingdoms novels, as yet untitled, after that.

Also next year I aim to have a new website up and running and get my non-fantasy stuff out there, one way or the other: *The Piper's Sons* (published by Dutton years ago amidst an agent controversy—always wear your seatbelt, Clarionites); and the as-yet-unpublished novels, *Run of Stones* and *Two Graves for Michael Furey*.

It's great to see that some CW buddies, Patrick Swenson and Greg Cox, are still going strong. But where are my Julia's breakfast confederates, Scott Stolnack and Richard Clement?

– Bruce Fergusson

1990

I'm pleased to announce that my novel *Slaughterhouse High: A Tale of Love and Sacrifice*, which was too mixed-genre for Dell Abyss and too nontraditional for Leisure Books, has been published by the spirited folks at Eraserhead Press as

a trade paperback. Earlier titles which may ring a bell with some of you are *Ice Ghoul Daze* and *Deadolence*: Shirley Jackson's "The Lottery" meets *Prom Night* slasher flicks. Amazon has sample pages. Enjoy!

– Robert Devereaux

1992

I'm now Reviews Editor for *The Cascadia Subduction Zone*, a literary quarterly from Aqueduct Press. Our inaugural issue appears in January 2011, with a poem from Ursula K. Le Guin. Each issue's going to be printed first, then appear online a few months later. Cool people writing about cool books.

I sold that Michael Jackson-inspired story "Pataki" to *Strange Horizons*. The Sandy Denny novelette, "Something More" (which I've also described as "a sort of complement to *Kindred*"), will be available at WisCon 35, where I am going to be the Guest of Honor! Holy Mother of All Living Beings! Me, as a GOH at the convention I care most about in the entire world! WisCon 35 is May 26 through May 30, 2011. Please come. Please.

As for the question in question, increasingly I find that a high-speed internet connection helps me write. This is an issue on retreats at Centrum, where I must walk ten minutes—ten minutes!—from my apartment to a place where I can look up how many tons of coal a two-funneled steamship used per day on transatlantic voyages in 1895. My wip, a steampunk novel set in the Belgian Congo, requires lots of research, and my writing process necessitates getting one bit fairly close to right before I move on to the next. Also, I save each day's work by emailing it to myself. I'm disciplined enough not to waste my online minutes reading *The Onion's* site, so yeah, I want my intertubes.

– Nisi Shawl

1996

My second space history book, *When Biospheres Collide*, is being published this fall by NASA History Division. It is about searching for life without

infecting the planet being explored.

– Michael Meltzer **2000**

1999

Earlier this year, my first novel, *Mindscape*, won the Carl Brandon Parallax Award for 2006. (It took them a while to get that out.)

I published two essays: “Stories Are More Important than Facts: Imagination as Resistance in Guillermo del Toro’s *Pan’s Labyrinth*” in *Narrative Power: Encounters, Celebrations, Struggles* edited by L. Timmel Duchamp, and “Romance of the Robot: From *R.U.R* & *Metropolis* to *WALL-E*” in *The WisCon Chronicles: Volume 4* edited by Sylvia Kelso.

An excerpt from my novel-in-progress, *Will Do Magic For Small*



Change, appeared in *80! Memories & Reflections on Ursula K. Le Guin*, edited by Karen Joy Fowler and Debbie Notkin. My new novel, *Redwood and Wildfire*, is coming out in February 2011 and I will be traveling all over the country doing a musical reading/performance with Pan Morigan.

I will be the guest scholar at ICFA in March 2011 and receive the IAFSA Distinguished Scholarship Award, 2011.

Here is a picture of me and Ama Patterson (also CW '99) at a play in New York.

– Andrea Hairston

My story “Suicide Club” recently appeared in *Sybil’s Garage* No. 7; this publication has changed over to an anthology format so it’s available from Amazon and other bookstores in addition to the publisher. It’s a very short story, but perhaps a little less than subtle in showing my political colors.

In non-writing news, my husband, Paul Abell, became an American citizen (he’s British and Canadian) in November 2009, and a few months ago was hired on as a civil servant at NASA Johnson. This past summer he was part of the ground recovery team in Australia for the Japanese Hayabusa asteroid sample-return capsule, which was very

exciting.

I still work full-time as a community college librarian, and this fall taught a one-credit library research course for the first time. I’m also taking graduate literature and writing courses from Western New Mexico University, an affordable distance program that I’ve found highly enjoyable.

– Amy Sisson

2001

Patrick Samphire ('01) and I are living in Wales now, in a town with a ruined castle and several coffeeshops—my

personal ideal! Our little boy is about two years old now, talking more and more and already obsessed with books.

By far my biggest writing news is that the first book in my middle grade



Regency fantasy trilogy—*A Most Improper Magick*—was published in the UK this summer! It’s also going to be published in the US in April 2011 under the title *Kat, Incurrigible*.

I’m learning all about Publication Crazyness (and have finally forced myself to stop looking at Amazon rankings!), but it’s also been incredibly fun. If anyone’s curious about it, I’ve posted the first three chapters on my website. (www.stephanieburgis.com)

As far as a writer’s toolkit, the one website I found invaluable when I was agent-hunting was www.agentquery.com. Really, really helpful!

– Stephanie Burgis

2004

Shannon and I bought a house, so we’ve been absolutely and completely swamped. But lots of great things happening for me. I’m progressing well on my novel, which I plan to complete by December 7. In 2010, I’ve published fiction in *Lightspeed*, *Black Static*, and *Beneath Ceaseless Skies*, among other places. And we love the new house and can’t wait to settle in!

– Vylar Kaftan

2005

The story I was writing when I got Leslie's call inviting me to CW, "My Father's Eyes", recently appeared in *Sybil's Garage* No. 7. Though I wrote it just before the workshop, the lessons I learned there and in my subsequent writing group, Altered Fluid, helped improve it. Another story, "All the Lonely People", should be published in an upcoming issue of *Shimmer*.

I recently launched two new websites. I redesigned my professional author site into a WordPress blog at ecmyers.net, and a friend and I have created The Viewscreen at www.theviewscreen.com, where we have archived our "Star Trek Re-Watch" reviews from Tor.com and continued our analysis with the disappointing third season. We may expand it to cover other television shows and news, so please check it out and let us know what you think!

Work continues on my young adult novels. I recently finished a (very) rough draft of a contemporary book tentatively titled *Untwinned*, and am about to begin the fourth draft of my alternate history, *Who We Used to Be*.

I'm planning to relocate to Philadelphia from New York City soon to join my girlfriend, who just started at Temple University School of Medicine, so if any Clarionites live in the area and would like to get together, or have any job leads for a gently-used digital media coordinator or technical writer, please drop me a line at emyers@gmail.com or connect with me on LinkedIn at www.linkedin.com/in/ecmyers.

– Eugene Myers

2006

My book *The Horror! The Horror!*, an anthology of banned horror comics from the early 50s with commentary by me, will be released (or will have been released by the time this newsletter comes out) on or about November 1 from Harry Abrams publishers. So far people who have looked at it seem to be enjoying it. *Publishers Weekly* listed it as a potential holiday gift graphic novel and Geoff Boucher of the L.A. Times will be doing three blogs on different

themes in it. Meanwhile, I have been turning some of the material I worked on at Clarion West '06 into a novel.

– Jim Trombetta

2009

My story "Last of the Monsters" appeared in *Strange Horizons* (strangehorizons.com) on October 11.

– Emily C. Skaftun

2010

Jude-Marie Green ('10) has joined me as coeditor of *10Flash* magazine, now in its second year of publication. *10Flash* is a quarterly online magazine dedicated to genre flash fiction—science fiction, fantasy, horror, suspense, crime capers and slipstream. Each issue offers up ten flash fiction stories written around a common theme. The stories are written by established and emerging authors in the flash fiction market and they are free to interpret the theme in any manner—and in any of the genres—they choose.

– K.C. Ball

I'm hard at work on a novel based on a workshoped short story, and my micro-submission "Parsimonious Owl" will appear in Ann and Jeff VanderMeer's upcoming *The Thackery T. Lambshead Cabinet of Curiosities*. I also revamped my website at www.thisisnotanowl.com and you can follow me on Twitter @traciewelser.

A little something for the writer's toolkit: Procrastination and distraction are my worst enemies when it comes to writing, and I've discovered a simple, helpful method for beating them back. It's called the Pomodoro Technique. Yes, I know "pomodoro" means "tomato," but this has almost nothing to do with time management. The technique is available in a free download (just Google it). While the method is presented in a somewhat complex way, I've boiled it down to this:

1. Buy a kitchen timer (it can look like a tomato or not).
2. Make a list of prioritized writing tasks you'd like to accomplish (for instance, outlining, ideation, drafting, revising, editing).

3. Ask yourself, how long might these tasks take, or how much time can I devote to it?
4. Draw a rectangle on a sticky note next to a task you think will take less than twenty-five minutes. Draw more rectangles for longer tasks, and think of each rectangle (called a "Pom") as a block of twenty-five minutes.
5. Pick a task and set the timer (you guessed it) for twenty-five minutes. If at any time during the Pom you become distracted, by a ringing phone, a sudden craving for ice cream, a really cool YouTube video, resist! Just jot the distraction on the sticky note and come back to it during a break, or assign the distraction its own Pom.
6. When the timer goes off, cross off the Pom and take a five-minute break.
7. Repeat.
8. After four breaks, take a thirty-minute break.

I was motivated to accomplish quite a bit of writing, particularly drafting, using this system. Surprisingly, my family respected the timer more consistently than my repeated requests to be left in peace.

– Tracie Welser

Instructors

Work is appearing this fall in four anthologies: *What to Read in the Rain from 826 Seattle*, an as-yet-untitled Day of the Dead anthology from Elektrik Milk Bath Press, *Night Lights* from Humanities Washington, and the *Norton Anthology of Latino Literature*. I haven't actually laid eyes on any of these, mind you, but they are supposed to be out there somewhere. I also participated online and in person in "The Novel Live!" with other members of Seattle 7, a writers group. There may be some remnants left at www.thenovellive.org. This will result in the publication of a serial novel next spring. All for literacy programs.

Last week I took the train to Albany, Oregon, where the director of Calyx

Books picked me up and whisked me off to decorate an altar for Frida Kahlo. Thursday was the Calyx Glitterati, an



annual fundraiser, and I read four short pieces as part of the event. Attached is a photo of me a la Frida.

Finally, some madness possessed me to enroll in an MFA program at the University of New Orleans. This is mostly online, with two forays to San Miguel de Allende, Mexico, stopping to see relatives along the way. Since they are moving the program to Edinburgh, Scotland, I will try to graduate before then, this spring.

I teach fiction at the Northwest institute of Literary Arts on Whidbey Island, and I will teach at the Mendocino Writers Conference this summer.

– Kathleen Alcalá, student '86, instructor '02

I won my fifth Hugo Award for editing, and *Haunted Legends*, a new anthology coedited with Nick Mamatas, was

published by Tor in September.

– Ellen Datlow, '91, '96, '01, '06

Send in your updates for the Alumni News section of the Clarion West website! Recent publications, upcoming readings, interviews—if you have writing-related news, we want to hear about it. E-mail your latest news to cwAlumniNews@gmail.com. Please use the subject "Alumni News," and be sure to include the year you attended CW.



Potlatch 20

potlatch n. (1) A ceremonial feast among certain Native American peoples of the northwest Pacific coast ... at which the host distributes gifts requiring reciprocation [Chinook & Nootka: patshat, to make a potlatch gift].

(2) A gathering where readers and writers of speculative fiction meet on common ground

March 4 - 6, 2011

Sunnyvale, California (San Francisco/San Jose Bay Area)

www.potlatch-sf.org

Potlatch is an all-volunteer, non-profit, literary convention that offers panel discussions, a writers' workshop and a dealers' room. Our single-track program encourages participation and discussions about reading and writing science fiction and fantasy. Saturday evening features an auction benefiting the Clarion West Scholarship fund.

Potlatch 20 will be held at the Domain Hotel in Sunnyvale, California, with an excellent variety of restaurants in walking distance, and a great room rate of \$89. The membership rate is currently \$55 through November. You can register via Paypal on the website or by mail.

Book of Honor: *Earth Abides* by George R. Stewart

At Potlatch, it's our tradition to choose a book to honor and discuss. This year we've chosen *Earth Abides*, one of the first near-future post-holocaust science fiction novels. Once upon a time, writers from outside the science fiction community made great contributions to the field. Two of the best such works appeared in 1949. Everyone knows Orwell's *1984*, but few today have read -- though many have heard of -- *Earth Abides*. Yet it's an equally notable story that has never lost its punch. Stewart was an English professor at U.C. Berkeley, and also the author of *Storm* and *Names on the Land*. These are all books about how people, geography, and technology relate to each other -- in short, on human ecology.

Potlatch will feature discussions of this book and much more. We invite you to join us.

Potlatch 20 Membership Registration Form

First Name _____
 Last Name _____
 Badge Name _____
 Address _____

 City, State, Zip _____
 E-mail _____

Please check if you are interested in:
 Volunteering Participating in the program
 Dealers' room Writers' workshop

We will not share your personal information with any organization other than Clarion West/Potlatch.

Item	Price	Qty	Amount
Membership	\$55*	_____	_____
Youth (ages 7-17)	\$25	_____	_____
Child (6 and under)	Free	_____	_____
Total	\$	_____	_____

Send to: Potlatch 20, c/o Lyn Paleo
 P.O. Box 3400, Berkeley, CA 94703

*Until 11/30. Afterwards, check at potlatch-sf.org

Make checks payable to: Potlatch 20/Clarion West

Check here if you do not want your name listed on our website and in our program book.