

INTERVIEW

Andrea Hairston: Making Meaning and Finding Patterns

BY NISI SHAWL '92



ANDREA HAIRSTON

Self-described “drama queen” Andrea Hairston is the Louise Wolff Kahn 1931 Professor of Theatre and Afro-American Studies at Smith College. She has received multiple NEA Foundation grants and the 2011 IAFA Distinguished Scholarship Award. Andrea’s kaleidoscopic first novel, *Mindscape*, was a finalist for both the Philip K. Dick and the James Tiptree, Jr. awards, and it won the Carl Brandon Society’s Parallax Award. In March, Aqueduct Press published her engrossing second novel, *Redwood and Wildfire*.

Andrea is a graduate of Clarion West’s 1999 workshop. She was interviewed by Nisi Shawl, CW ’92.

You’ve written plays, novels, short stories, academic essays, poetry—am I missing a form? How do they all influence each other? Are your academic essays

deeply dramatic? Do your novels have footnotes and lots of research behind them?

I also write screenplays.
I like making meaning and finding patterns. So whatever I have to say finds

**a novel is
lonelier
than a play**

the best form—a paper, a novel, a poem, a play. Writing is a performance, a way to make meaning out of all that I know at the moment. Each performance offers meaning and insight. So a poem affords me marvelous precision and economy, gets me close to the essence, to a jewel-like clarity. A play is big and loud and

rambunctious. It’s a blueprint for lots of voices, lots of creativity, a blueprint for an experience that changes each time the audience sits down to witness it. A novel is a bit lonelier than a play—but then you don’t have to negotiate meaning with all those other people. You do the set, lights, costumes, act all the parts, and direct! CONTROL! Papers are like that too, and in a paper you don’t have to argue with characters who have minds of their own.

In your latest novel, *Redwood and Wildfire*, you write about a hoodooing African American woman; your previous novel, *Mindscape*, tells of powerful extraterrestrials ruling the Earth. Do you believe in magic or science?

For me science is magic, and I am a believer. ►►

► I think we're in a bizarre era—science is simultaneously revered and reviled. Many people are hostile to scientists and their approach to the world. I get why, but it is distressing.

I think the notion that science must exclude the so-called irrational is also quite distressing. The notion that emotions are inferior to thoughts and indeed can be separated out from thinking is a destructive one. We need our passions to think clearly. We cannot banish this intrinsic component from the process of making meaning, of generating our realities, of discovering new truth and insights. We live in the stories we invent. That is quite a magical process. Pseudo-objectivity has been a dangerous, oppressive weapon. All the scientists I know are passionate even as they strive to understand their position in the universe.

On your website you state that you love words “almost as much as numbers.” Which numbers do you love, and why?

I particularly like the imaginary numbers. If you square an imaginary number you get a negative number: $i^2 = -1$. I believe Descartes came up with the name “imaginary” for these numbers as a put down—the way some people view fantasy as less valid than mimetic realism. But imaginary numbers turn out to be excellent expressions of quantum mechanical phenomena or electrical engineering states. Reality expands to include our fantasies!

Does speaking and thinking in another language help you to write more fantastically? How?

I've always loved languages. Each offers you the wisdom of the ancestors—all those poets and adventurers, scientists and artists, who collected their truth and passed it on. Each language offers special insights on the world—Weltanschauung in German—literally, “world on looking.” With each language I come to know a different world and I find more Andrea to be. So I have studied German, Latin, French, and Spanish. Mathematics is also a language. The more languages I have, the more I can imagine, the more I can conjure, the more I can challenge myself to find the other worlds that are lurking around the one I take for granted in my day-to-day.

You're preparing for a touring series of readings/performances of your novel *Redwood and Wildfire*. The tour will be complete by the time people read this, but what are you planning for them to see?

I do a dramatic reading of three sections of the novel. Pan Morigan has composed music for lyrics written by Aidan Wildfire, one of its main characters. Pan

you have to believe that the hungry predators in the audience won't eat you alive

got a banjo last fall and learned to play it for the tour, since the banjo is Aidan's instrument. She sings Aidan's songs between the pieces that I perform, and adds music underneath me. At the New York Review of Science Fiction Reading, she got folks in the audience to sing along with her!

You were the Scholar Guest of Honor at 2011's International Conference on the Fantastic in the Arts. The theme was “The Fantastic Ridiculous,” focusing on humor in imaginative literature. What are your thoughts on that theme? What did you talk about in your Guest of Honor Speech?

To be funny you must be serious; you have to trust that falling off the cliff won't kill you; you have to believe that the hungry predators in the audience won't eat you alive; you must know when the bomb goes off and the dust clears, you'll be standing somewhere with a puzzled look on your singed face, head cocked, wondering—did that really happen?

At ICFA, I talked about the power of satire and its kinship with the fantastic.

Satire and SFF are jazz storytelling, riffing on the known/seen to expose the unseen, laying bare the invisible for our delight and edification.

When you attended Clarion West in 1999, you were already a full professor at Smith College and had written, translated, and presented plays, performance pieces, and poetry internationally. With all that going for you, what made you want to come to CW?

I decided in 1995 that I wanted to write SFF novels. What I wanted to write about demanded this particular form. But I was a drama queen—I knew how to tell a story on stage or screen; I knew how to turn a phrase, how to work dialogue and action. I came to CW so that I could get help transforming my drama queen self into a novelist. I wanted to get to know other fiction writers. I wanted to experience their processes. I wanted to hear what all these great artists and editors had to say about writing. I wanted to think about nothing but writing for six weeks.

It worked. I made friends for life. I heard wise and wicked critique every day—of my work for sure, but of work I read and thought about, too. I got to see how people read as well as how people wrote. Glimpsing how readers respond to stories is a precious gift.

One of your CW instructors, Octavia E. Butler, called what she wrote “save-the-world fiction.” Can your writing save the world?

Octavia's writing certainly saved me! She offered me that “way out of no way.” She showed that the impossible is possible, and that's a mind-blowing experience. You read her and you are never the same. Saving the world is a big effort. We need lots of folks working on that. So I hope I am doing my part.

Based on your own experience, do you have any advice for 2011's CW students?

1. Don't give up—just take a break now and then and keep on coming back.
2. Get your team together and stay hooked up with one another.
3. Go on out and live life! Experience the world. Risk yourself. ♦



From the Chair

BY KELLEY ESKRIDGE

It's a busy time at Clarion West. As we approach the beginning of the workshop, I'm once again full of admiration for the skill, hard work, and dedication of everyone involved. And I'm delighted to report that our team now includes Davis Fox as Executive Director. Davis has been working with us as Interim Executive Director since October, and we're already benefiting from his leadership and fundraising experience, his knowledge of the Seattle nonprofit scene, and his strategic perspective. Please look for him at CW readings and parties this summer, and welcome him to our community.

I've been thinking a lot lately about community, and the old adage that it takes a village to raise a child.

Writer Michael Ventura, in his terrific essay "The Talent of the Room" (<http://tinyurl.com/7wks11-01>), says, "Writing is something you do alone in a room." The room can be anywhere, he goes on to say, and that's true: for many, the room is a coffeehouse, a park bench, a laundrette while the washing machine chugs in the background, a desk under the eave of a small bedroom. For six weeks each summer, CW becomes the room for eighteen writers and the six instructors who serve as their teachers and guides.

Rooms are important. We all need space to write. But my own experience of being a writer, and my experience as CW's Board Chair, shows me that it takes a

community to make that room. It takes a community to raise a writer.

You are the community. You are a writer yourself, or the spouse or sibling or parent of a writer. You are a writer's friend. You are a reader. You are a bookseller, a blogger, a library card holder, a person who gives books to children. You're an editor or agent or reviewer. You're an alumnus or alumna of CW who encourages others to take the leap of applying to the workshop. You're an employer who figures out how to give a writer six weeks off work to attend. You host parties on behalf of CW. You attend the parties and make the students feel welcomed into one of the best speculative fiction communities on the planet. You volunteer your time to help make the

it takes a community to raise a writer

workshop or the reading series happen. You donate.

Together, we are the CW community, preparing to welcome eighteen new writers into our ranks. We're deeply excited about the 2011 students and instructors. So much talent and passion! And we applaud their courage and commitment—it's an uncertain time to be a writer. The economic climate demands that most artists support themselves in other ways; time and space to write are scarce resources when people are focused on paying for food and shelter. The publishing industry is in enormous transition, with both more opportunity and more competition—more complexity for writers to navigate and more choices to make. Sometimes it feels like the room is getting smaller, or that the door is locked. That's where community matters: when we can make space and open doors for each other.

In that spirit, we've been listening to our community of alumni who have been asking for more ways to be involved. Our first step is the launch of the Alumni Scholarship Fund, specifically designed to

give CW graduates the chance to make a direct difference in the life of another writer. Every dollar contributed by a CW graduate to the Alumni Scholarship Fund will be used for financial assistance to incoming students each year. Every dollar makes it more likely that any writer accepted to the workshop can attend.

We're also starting to spread the word about the 2011 Write-a-thon. You'll see us on Facebook, talking on blogs, and opening up the Write-a-thon section on the CW website. If you're a writer, please participate! If you're the friend, family, or fan of writers, please tell them about the Write-a-thon. If you know people who want to make a difference in a writer's life, ask them to consider supporting a Write-a-thon participant with a donation to CW.

CW is a room with space for hard work and big dreams: a room where people can learn new skills, embrace multiple perspectives, and face the tough challenges that are part of being a writer. That room is strong and safe and sustainable because of you, the CW staff and board, alumni, instructors, volunteers, and donors. Thank you for being a community where so many writers find a home. ♦



Developing News

BY DAVIS B. FOX

It's been a pleasure being part of the Clarion West community since last October. During that time, I've worked with CW board members, volunteers, and staff to learn all about this excellent organization. Success speaks for itself: with a distinguished, twenty-seven-year history and one of the most sought-after programs of its kind in the U.S., the people who have sustained CW for nearly three decades have a lot to be proud of. As CW's new executive director, it's my job to collaborate with our community to make sure we sustain our success into the future.

Based on a fall retreat and a recent meeting of our board, we're looking ahead with optimism. We are planning to bring new people onto the board with the skills necessary to make CW an even stronger organization. We're also exploring the possibility of expanding our programming into the academic year while offering more opportunities to a greater number of writers.

On the development front, we're taking a more active role in fundraising, making alliances with local and national foundations and corporations to ensure we remain a financially viable nonprofit.

one of the most sought-after programs of its kind

But along with all of our new plans, we remain committed to our core programs: the annual summer workshop for eighteen aspiring writers and the Reading Series to showcase the work of our instructors.

As always, our CW community remains our strongest asset. With nearly 500 alumni; ongoing generosity from our institutional funders; and hundreds of loyal friends who contribute time, money, and ideas to CW year in and year out; we look forward to the coming years with great confidence. ♦

Clarion West Writers Workshop

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- Nisi Shawl
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- Leslie Howle | *ex officio*
- Neile Graham | *ex officio*

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“My only source of income is a part-time teaching position.”

“After paying rent and student loans, I only have \$200 left over each month for groceries.”

“I spend 60% of my monthly income on rent.”

These are comments from this year’s scholarship applications. Each year, I am reminded of the difficulties many students have raising the \$3,200 tuition/room-and-board fee, and paying for the airplane ticket necessary to attend Clarion West—especially when some of them give up their income for six weeks. This year, we distributed a record \$18,000 in scholarships to students, largely thanks to the individuals and organizations that funded named scholarships. Still, we did not come close to helping everyone who applied for a scholarship.

The amount we charge for tuition/room-and-board only covers about 42% of our total expenses, so we must raise money to fill the gap. Frankly, it would be easier to increase tuition/room-and-board rather than pursue our aggressive fundraising goals, but we’re trying to buck the alarming national trend of allowing income to shut people out of higher education by keeping CW affordable to all talented, emerging writers.

Due to the kindness of our donors, we raised more than enough money to cover costs in 2010. Timing also contributed to the surplus: funds we planned to spend last year are being spent in 2011.

This year’s budget reflects the Board’s decision to pay professionals to lay the groundwork for future fundraising efforts, transform some of our great ideas into reality, and improve CW’s operations. To accomplish these goals, we are shifting some tasks previously performed by an overworked board to Davis Fox, now our permanent executive director. The budget

also supplements named scholarships with money from our general funds and increases the honorarium paid to instructors.

We are very fortunate to have a

keeping CW affordable to all talented emerging writers

dedicated community of volunteers and generous, dependable donors. Without their contributions of time and gifts, large and small, many very talented and creative writers could not afford to attend CW. ♦



Time and Money

BY SUSAN GOSSMAN

Summary Financial Report 2010

Income	
Unrestricted donations	26,080
Scholarship donations	14,831
Matching funds	5,915
Petrey Fellowship	1,800
Amazon Challenge Grant	25,000
Grants	3,466
Tuition/dorm costs paid by students	57,520
Tuition/dorm costs paid by scholarship	-17,000
Other	2,155
Total Income	119,767
Expenses	
Readings	852
7th Week	3,285
Administration	25,072
Workshop	61,085
Fundraising	5,508
Total Expenses	95,802
Annual profit/loss	23,965



Springing Ahead and Looking Back

BY LESLIE HOWLE '85

drawing by Tina Connolly '06



It's spring in Seattle as I write this. One sunny day was warm enough to convince the daffodils it was time to bloom, but as far as the Clarion West Workshop goes, it definitely feels like April. Neile and I have been finalizing students for this year's class and completing other tasks. We may be living on a steady diet of rain and more rain right now, but summer and the workshop are only ten weeks away and there's still a lot to do.

We are very grateful to Norwescon, the largest Northwest SF convention, for their contribution of full student scholarships in 2010 and 2011. If you know of any other conventions that contribute part of their profits to charities, please let them know we have students in need; scholarships, even partial ones, are deeply appreciated.

I'm excited that our first Friday night party for Paul Park will double as the kick-off event for Locus's Science Fiction Awards Weekend. I hope to see some of our former instructors and students at this great event, and later this year at the

World Fantasy Convention in San Diego. The class of 2008 is having their reunion there and we will once again organize a gathering of CW alumni, so stay tuned to the forums on the CW website as we get closer to October. Maybe we can pull together another late-night game of "Thing" like last year's.

CW continues to enrich and inspire me. I am gratified by the way we all work together to build an environment of trust and support so students feel free to take chances, face challenges posed by the instructors, and make the best use of criticism. The alumni, volunteers, board members, and instructors who have generously given of their time and/or money to support the workshop rock my world. Truly, it's been a gift to be part of this unique and amazing experience.



LUKE AND CHIP DELANY

It's been said that the SF community is probably the most tightly-knit community in literature. Our pros are welcoming and accessible and people are often mutually supportive. I felt this truth most deeply last January when I lost my dog Luke to cancer.

The first few times I brought Luke with me to the workshop in 2001, students were delighted; when you leave home, family, and pets behind for six weeks, an affectionate, entertaining dog can be a great stress reliever. Over the years, Luke's fan club grew and he became a CW mascot. But I never knew how much he was appreciated until he passed away and the e-mails and cards started pouring in.

Luke was an empathic, joyful, loving, hilarious little guy who provided comfort, entertainment, and friendship to everyone from CW students and instructors to nurs-

ing home shut-ins as a therapy dog. He was 11 years old, and he left us on 1/11/11.

There is a happy ending to this story. The nursing homes were so upset by Luke's loss, they begged me to train another hypo-allergenic poodle as a therapy dog. There was no way I could afford one, but when MaryAnn Harris heard there was an appropriate puppy available she decided that cost shouldn't be an issue. She started a fundraiser with a PayPal Pup Fund and posted it on my Facebook page. Ellen Datlow, Charles de Lint, and others posted it on their pages as well. By the time the new puppy was eight weeks old, I had close to enough to pay for him. I am touched and grateful.

I love this community, and have delighted in hearing about your lives after the workshop ends via class list serves,



LUKE, CHARLES DE LINT, AND MARYANNE HARRIS

Facebook, e-mails, and this newsletter. Thanks for bearing with me for using this space to thank those of you who shared comforting words and photos and drawings of Luke during those first dark months. I can't tell you how lovely it was to hear how much Luke cheered and comforted some of you during the workshop.

The next time you are in Seattle, I hope you'll come meet the new pup. He belongs to the community and I mean to share him! His name is Raffi, short for Rafael/Raphael—not sure how I should spell it, but I dreamt the name and it seemed appropriate for a therapy dog. I've signed up for classes at the Service Dog Academy, so we'll soon be off and running. Thank you again for your continued friendship and support, and all best to all of you. ♦



A Day in the Life of a Video Game Writer, Part 2

BY DIANA SHERMAN '04

We're continuing our series of articles on careers for fiction writers with part two of Diana Sherman's description of an average workday at a video game development studio. You can read the first part in the Fall 2010 issue at www.clarionwest.org/The_Seventh_Week.—Editor

I'm afraid I'll have to refrain from describing my lunch, or the walk in the creek behind work. Because the day gets a lot more exciting after lunch.

AFTER LUNCH

Our Design Lead calls a Content meeting. We all file in, giving each other worried looks, and then he tells us, "We're changing the game."

You'd like to think this sort of thing happens infrequently in the gaming industry. You'd like to think it's all carefully planned from the start, and everything is just a matter of orderly progression. And it is, sort of.

Games are often planned out in detail, much like outlining a novel or story. But they change for a number of reasons: sometimes the people working on them change; the market changes; the beta feedback forces designers to reconsider; the budget gets cut or, on regrettably rare occasions, increased. And sometimes, they just change because you get to know your game better as it grows, which is, again, much like writing a novel or story.

"So we're making *Puppies & Ponies, the Game* now?" I joke.¹

"No, *Puppies & Ponies & Unicorns!*" my level-designer friend says, and we all laugh.²

"No," the Design Lead says, "We're going to make it more co-op. More linear storytelling. But we're going to keep some persistent zones. Instead of eighty percent persistent and twenty percent instanced, we're going to do it the other way. Eighty percent instanced."

We all exchange glances, and then the questions start flying fast and furious.

I've already covered the issues of a persistent world³, so let's look at instances. Instances are game events that happen

only for you and your teammates. No other players are going to wander through as you're burning down the Accountants Guild—that's all you and your buddies. Other people will do that same mission, but it won't be in the same game space. It will be in a different instance. We also can make permanent changes in instances, but it does make the game less social.

So? you might ask. *Doesn't that make storytelling easier? Doesn't that make the game easier?* The answer is... "Not really."

We have to completely re-tool our storyline. Instead of giving the players the option to enter the city through the Western Gate and meet Mary the Flower-seller or come in through the Puppy Smugglers' den, players can *only* come in through the Western Gate and meet Mary. But... we already have story involving the Puppy Smugglers' den. Does that mean we have

and then he tells us we're changing the game

to cut it? But if we cut it, then it won't make any sense later when you run into Johann the Wolfboy and he asks for your help saving all the puppies.

Then there's the co-op issue. We want our players to group up. We want people to log on and play together as a party. In a persistent world, that's pretty easy to do. The content is always the same. However, in an instanced world, it changes. You and your buddy Billy-Bob may want to play together, but you're three levels ahead of him. So, do you play at his level (which ►►

1. The unlikely combination of these two adorable creatures embodies the very essence of good. It's an internet thing. —Ed.
2. Unicorns make everything funnier. "Rainbows" would also have been an adequate substitute. If you don't get it, you probably had to be there at the time. —Ed.

3. In the Fall 2010 issue of *The Seventh Week*. —Ed.

▶ you've already passed) or yours (which skips over large chunks of story he hasn't seen and requires equipment he doesn't have)? How do we make that viable? That, fortunately, isn't my job. However...

The Design Lead looks at me and says, "You get to find a way to make all of the content we already have fit together."

So it's back to my desk, but not to go in-game and edit. In fact, most of the work I did this morning isn't relevant anymore. Instead, I get to figure out a linear progression for our storyline that makes sense of not only the main quests, but all the little side quests we had tossed in there for fun that don't really fit into the overarching plot. I already know, before I even get started, that there are going to be pacing problems because of this. I need to keep the tension of the main storyline about Johann the Wolfboy and the evil Accountants Guild high, even while players are off picking peonies with Mary, which means that I need to find a way to make picking peonies essential to forwarding Johann's plot.

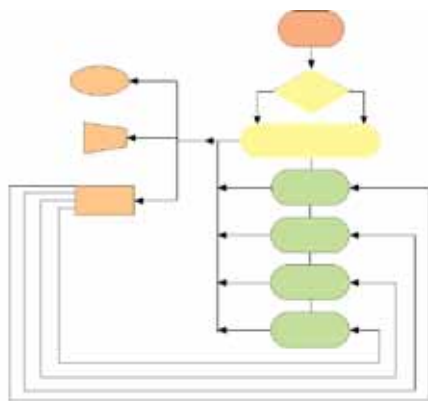
Maybe Mary the Flower-seller has in-

maybe you have to distract the vampiric hedgehogs

formation about Johann's long lost father, who was secretly kidnapped and tortured by the Accountants Guild, but she won't tell you unless you help save her business. But her normal fields have been cursed by a wayward Accountant, so you have to help her find new fields or lift the curse. Or maybe you have to distract a group of vampiric hedgehogs while Mary picks

her peonies. Or maybe all three of those things are possibilities, but you get different rewards depending on which ones you choose to complete.

Fortunately, there is Visio. (If you haven't used Visio yet, I recommend it. I do all of my outlining and planning in Visio, now). I get engrossed moving story



sections around and looking through character notes, so that I don't notice the time passing until I get a text from my boyfriend asking me if I'm coming home. It's 7 p.m.

So I leave Mary and Johann lost in the Swamps of Slightly Blighted Hope, and who knows when the Puppy Smugglers are going to show up. But I have the first three hours of the game mapped out, and I'm feeling good about the new direction.

And that's a fairly typical day. ♦

We'd like to feature more articles on "nontraditional" careers and opportunities for 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.

CW People

STUDENTS,
INSTRUCTORS, AND
VOLUNTEERS
CHECK IN

[Editor's note: For this issue, alumni were invited to share the best and worst writing advice they've received. If you have a suggestion for a future newsletter topic, please send it to eugene_myers@clarionwest.org.]

STUDENTS

1972

Like Water for Quarks, an anthology “at the nexus of SF & magic realism,” debuted at Norwescon in April. Edited by me and Elton Elliott, former editor of *The Science Fiction Review*, the anthology contains work by Ray Bradbury, Ursula K. Le Guin, Brian Herbert, William F. Nolan, Patrick Swenson, Kevin J. Anderson, Connie Willis, Robert Sawyer, and many others writing some of the finest work in imaginative literature today. Copies can be purchased at www.mvp-publishing.com.

Like Water for Quarks, “at the nexus of SF & magic realism”

My second book in a spiritual trilogy, *Magic of Wild Places*, will be coming out in late May 2011, with the final book, *Majesty of the World*, to be published in winter/spring 2012. And a second printing of *Mr. Magic Realism* will come out late this spring/early summer from Eraserhead Press.

And if all goes well, two more books may be released by the end of the year.

Bruce Taylor



GREG COX

1984

The bad news is I had to skip Norwescon this year due to pressing deadlines. The good news is, of course, that I have deadlines. My *Warehouse 13* novel, based on the TV show, is coming out this June, and I'm finishing up a YA steampunk for Simon & Schuster. After that, I'm scheduled to dive into yet another *Star Trek* novel. For the record, this will be my twelfth *Trek* book, not counting various short stories and novellas. An even dozen at last. I'm looking forward to getting back to the *Enterprise* again...

Best advice? Probably when David Hartwell told me that if I was really serious about writing I should move to NYC and immerse myself in the SF publishing world. Along with applying to CW, it was the best career move I ever made.

Worst advice? Nothing immediately comes to mind, which clearly means I'm in denial about something!

Greg Cox

1985

It's been a long time since I've posted any personal news, so here's the last decade in review. It's been turbulent in some respects. On the positive side of the ledger, since leaving my more-than-full-time job at the Science Fiction Museum/Experience Music Project, I've been writing more than I have in years. When Octavia Butler

suddenly passed away, conversations we'd had about social justice inspired me to work with a diverse group of low-income, disadvantaged youth, teaching them arts and technology. The job doesn't pay well, but I love it. We just finished a radio show on hunger that is airing on NPR, and I'm very proud of these kids. I've kept my hours part-time in the past few years to

just finished a radio show on hunger that is airing on NPR

try to build and prioritize a regular writing habit. Thanks to some of our local alum, I've been fitting in regular coffee shop writing dates, which really help! I haven't completed either novel yet, but I like what's happening in both and feel encouraged that I will eventually finish them.

I am still running the “SF in Seattle” series of Fantastic Fiction readings and workshops. I've been doing these for three or four years now and it's been terrific. Once a month, a different author—usually flown in from out of town via donations and fundraising—reads at the University Book Store on a Friday night and then teaches a daylong writing workshop at Richard Hugo House, which co-presents the workshops. Connie Willis was here in March and Jeff Ford is coming to town this month. These workshops provide a great opportunity to both learn and network. Often CW alumni take advantage of these workshops and people who attend the Fantastic Fiction workshops have learned about CW, with the result that several have applied and been accepted.

On the negative side of the ledger, 2000 to 2010 was full of change and loss. I was helping to care for my father when he passed away and it was a wrenching experience. My stepmother, who is like a mother, moved back to North Carolina, and then my mother quietly passed away in a nursing home. I ended my relation- ➤

► ship with the guy I'd been with. I quit my ED job of twelve years at the beginning of the decade and left the SF museum in the last quarter. I became more politically active, did some work for Richard Hugo House, and got involved in various local arts projects. But somehow none of these changes were as hard to roll with as they might have been because I had the support of family, friends, and one small dog with a big heart. In 2001, CW gained that dog as a mascot, and he left us on 1/11/11 at 11 years old. Still boggled by the numbers; still processing his loss. I want to extend my thanks to all of you who knew and loved Luke. I know he enjoyed his time with all of you.

Leslie Howle

1986

It's been quite a while since I last updated. I continue to run Fairwood Press, putting out five-to-six book titles a year. Last year saw the publication of *The Best of Talebones*, featuring the best of fourteen years worth of *Talebones* magazine. Titles also came last year from Ken Scholes, Jay Lake, William F. Nolan, Devon Monk, and Ray Vukcevic. In 2011, I'll have the long-awaited anthology *End of an Aeon*, edited by Bridget and Marti McKenna, as well as book projects by Laura Anne Gilman and Daryl Gregory. Since deciding to close down *Talebones* at the end of 2009, I've been writing more, finishing a novel that is looking for a home, and working on a new one. The end of 2010 saw an acceptance of a short story to the anthology *Like Water for Quarks*, which debuted in April. It's the first short fiction I've sold since I made the bold foray into magazine publishing way back when.

My writers' retreat that takes place in early March, the Rainforest Writers Village, just finished its fifth year. Due to popular demand, I ran two sessions of the retreat back-to-back this year.

I'm in my eleventh year of teaching at Auburn Riverside High School (my twenty-sixth year overall). How time flies! My son, Orion, is in third grade and is doing well. Since his diagnosis of Asperger's Syndrome two summers ago, he has come



ROBERT DEVEREAUX

a long way learning strategies to help him, particularly in the school setting.

David Hartwell, one of my instructors, thought I'd be selling stories a year or so after CW, and that maybe even down the road I might make a living at it. (This was BEFORE I started *Talebones*!) One piece of advice he told me was that I should always, no matter what, let people see my work for input. Obvious advice, and yet so true for most of us.

Worst advice? Years ago, a published writer told me to multiple submit EVERYthing to EVERYone.

Patrick Swenson

1987

I am an Associate Professor of English at California State University, Fullerton (where Philip K. Dick's papers, as well as Frank Herbert's and Avram Davidson's, are stored). I get to teach some classes in science fiction, fantasy, and horror, as well as my main work on Romanticism. I do scholarly work on fantastic literature, including books and articles. I have a scholarly book, *Critical Discourses of the Fantastic, 1712-1831*, coming out from Ashgate, perhaps later this year. I have published fiction over the years, but have been caught up in everything else. I am back to working on some longer fiction and hope to be seeing that come out soon.

David Sandner

1990

This past year, I've had the good fortune to hook up with Eraserhead Press in Portland, who are bringing out new trade editions of all my OOP work as well as new work. So far they have released *Slaughterhouse High* (formerly known as *Ice Ghoul Daze* and *Deadolence*) and a 60K-word story collection entitled *Baby's First Book of Seriously Fucked-up Shit*. Summer: *Walking Wounded*. Next winter will see re-releases of *Santa Steps Out* and *Santa Claus Conquers the Homophobes*, plus the third and possibly final Santa Claus novel, not yet titled. I've also begun to produce Kindle editions of several books. The monthly checks are quite nice to see!

Robert Devereaux

I'm deep into the second draft of my 240,000-word Old Weird Planetary Romance, *The Cold Heavens*, inspired by C.L. Moore, Leigh Brackett, the Austrian fantasist Gustav Meyrink (a character in

**if you can't
make it good,
make it short**

my book), Fritz Lang, and G.W. Pabst. It's a sort of magic-lantern show of World War I, set in a planetary environment derived from Northwest Smith, Eric John Stark, and *The Threepenny Opera*, with the battles of the Somme, Anzac, and Flanders transposed onto a pulp-interplanetary scale. Expect obscure references to Walther Rathenau, Allgemeine Elektrizitäts-Gesellschaft, and Musil's *Man Without Qualities*, and a Martian metropolis inspired by Weimar Berlin. There will be no zeppelins.

My novel *One Who Disappeared*, with an introduction by Brian Stableford, is due out from PS Publishing in April or thereabouts. I delivered this in 2007 and eagerly await its appearance in print.

With the generous help of Christopher Paul Carey, Sandra Bennett, and Therese Littleton, I'm preparing a subtly-expanded ►►

▶ edition of my first novel, *Ceres Storm*, along with its massive unpublished sidequel, *Yan Tan Tethera*, for release on Kindle and other e-book platforms. I'm also re-cutting my last book, *October Dark*: tightening its plot, darkening its tone, purging excess sentiment. I hope to issue it before Halloween.

Otherwise, almost all of my time has been taken up by my Dad, who suffered a stroke in October.

My favorite writing advice is something said by Gene Wolfe during class: "If you can't make it good, make it short."

David Herter

1992

I've been enjoying the response to my first fantasy novel, *Immortal Quest: The Trouble with Mages* (Edge SF, Sep 2010). I got a very nice review from *Publishers Weekly*, which can be seen on the book's Amazon.com site and elsewhere, and I had fun doing readings locally at the University Bookstore

Gardner Dozois told me my writing was "slick, but empty"

and up in Vancouver BC at V-Con. It's been a great ride!

More recently I sold a mystery novel to up-and-coming regional press Rhemalda Publishing, which is due out in Spring 2012, tentatively titled *Seattle Sleuth*. It's an historical mystery set in 1921.

I just posted about writing advice recently on my blog (<http://mizmak.blogspot.com/2011/02/lessons-learned.html>). A summary of that post:

During my one-on-one meeting with Gardner Dozois, he told me my writing was "slick, but empty" (Ooh, how I hated that!) and that I needed to learn how to write from the heart. I came away seething. I would show him that he was wrong! After CW, I went right out and sold two

slick but empty short stories. So there! And then came ten years of nothing.

Eventually I woke up and realized that the ever-insightful Mr. Dozois had been not only right, he'd been incredibly right. My writing was facile, and facile only entertains folks for a moment. It doesn't last. I spent a good long while searching out this thing called "writing from the heart," and eventually I found it, and my first published fantasy novel, *Immortal Quest*, is the result. The book has a lot of humor in it, though it also has a lot to say about love, friendship, death, and memory. I owe Gardner Dozois a great deal. Hope folks will check out my writing-centered blog at: <http://mizmak.blogspot.com/>

Alexandra MacKenzie

I have been very busy, and I hope to stay that way.

I went to Boston in January to present four Carl Brandon Society Awards. I went to Eastern Washington in February and danced. I went to Florida in March and recorded my first podcast with Jim Kelly and John Kessel, for Locus's Karen Burnham.

I'm the Reviews Editor for Aqueduct Press's new literary quarterly, *The Cascadia Subduction Zone*. That is fun.

I'm this very minute done editing *WisCon Chronicles 5: Writing and Racial Identity*, a terrific book full of graphic novel excerpts, poetry, photos, essays, an interview by Eileen Gunn, and an original story by Terry Bisson. That's coming out in May along with *Something More and More*, a collection of my work celebrating my Guest of Honor status at WisCon 35. I think May is also when Suvudu will post the interview with me they just did.

In April, *Strange Horizons* (will have) published a new story of mine, "Pataki", in two parts. Also an interview by Joselle Vanderhooff. Also an essay I just finished called "Race, Again, Still". I have two reprints appearing soon: "To the Moment" in Paula Guran's vampire anthology *The Recent Undead*, and "The Pragmatic Princess" in *Fantasy Magazine*. I have submitted three novels to publishers in the last year. I'm embiggening one of them.

What is going on with the other two? I don't know.

The worst writing advice I ever got wasn't really damaging, just irrelevant. Octavia E. Butler exhorted me and everyone else to write every day. Doesn't work like that for me, though. Sometimes I have to

write about what you fear

do other stuff to get money faster. I don't lose my lust for writing simply because I call a halt for a day or so, however. Nor do I forget how writing goes. Maybe if I was someone else...

The best writing advice I ever got was also from Octavia. "Write about what you fear," she told me. She was correct. Powerful emotions make for powerful stories.

Nisi Shawl

1996

I had a successful heart procedure operation (to fix a rapid heartbeat problem) in December and am amazed that such a procedure exists, that didn't exist fifteen years ago, and that science fiction keeps becoming reality. The doctor wasn't even in the same room. I was home the next day.

Elizabeth McDowell

My news is that I was GoH at Swancon, the Australian National SF Con, in April. My Quantum Gravity book series is now all published, by Orion here in the UK and Pyr in the U.S. An anthology of short stories is also coming out at Swancon. So doing quite well thanks ;)

Most useful writing advice: write what you want to write, not what other people think you ought to write (and the latter category includes EVERYONE ELSE). This is monstrously difficult as it entails being rejected, misunderstood, misrepresented, and ignored rather too often. But anyway, you still have to do it, and the other way around where you write what they tell you is exactly the same only with ▶▶

► much less satisfaction up front.

Worst writing advice: show, don't tell. I may have interpreted this one too rigorously but I ended up, and still often end up, writing obscurely as a result (see my editorial letters) because I thought that if I said anything directly about my characters, their thoughts and motivations, then I

worst writing advice: show, don't tell

was telling and that was BAD. Stories are things that are told. They're not lightly-suggested, potentially-interactive objects with disguised meanings and hidden motivations constructed for people who ran out of cryptic crosswords. A few unkind people might suggest that some literary fiction is like that but I couldn't possibly comment. All I know is, there is a time to show and a time to tell and if in doubt, tell. You can fancy it up, hide, re-time, expand, disguise, embellish, and fuss with it later on. This will hardly ever happen.

Oh, and find some friends to make a support/whinge group with whom you can be honest about your feelings in this very, very frustrating and infuriating business. Priceless.

All best wishes to everyone :)

Justina Robson

2000

I'm hardly writing at all these days, but had two flash pieces accepted by Boxfire Press (a new publisher) recently, and just learned that my poem "On Keeping Pluto a Planet" has been nominated for the 2011 Rhysling Award.

Greg Beatty

2001

Stephanie Burgis '01 and I have teamed up to offer "Magick Jewelry for Ages Ten to Fifteen," several pieces of jewelry based on her Kat Stephenson books. The first piece is a pendant of a Magick book featured in the novel, *Kat, Incurable*, which can be purchased in my Etsy store. Each new de-



WENDY BRADLEY

sign from Emily Mah Jewelry Designs will first be reviewed and approved by Stephanie before it is offered to the public.

Kat, Incurable is the first of a trilogy being published by Atheneum Books in the U.S. and Templar Books in the UK. It has already been released in the UK under the title *A Most Improper Magick*, where it has been selected by the Reading Agency for its 2011 Summer Reading Challenge, run through 95% of public libraries in the UK. The series heroine, Kat Stephenson, is a twelve-year-old girl who lives in Regency England and has a deep, dark family secret. Her mother was a scandalous witch who made little effort to hide her magical abilities. Mama died when Kat was still a baby and all that remains of her legacy are some personal items, including two magic books and a golden compact mirror that shows an extraordinary and supernatural affinity for Kat. With it comes a magical calling unlike anything Kat has ever dreamed of.

To find out more about Stephanie's work and my jewelry designs, please visit www.stephanieburgis.com and www.emilymah.etsy.com.

Emily Mah Tippetts

2003

My 2011 project is to collect 100 rejections.

I sent out my first story to *Asimov's* on the last day of CW in 2003, but since then you could count my submissions on the fingers of one hand. Because every time someone rejected one of my stories, my tendency was to think it proved I was a Bad

Writer and maybe a Bad Person, and then it would take me another six months to a year to get up the self-confidence to try again.

So this year I'm not going to worry about rejections: rejections are good! Rejections mean I *score*.

You can follow my progress at <http://tinyurl.com/7wks11-02> and sponsor me in aid of the Archer Project homelessness charity at <http://tinyurl.com/7wks11-03>.

Wendy Bradley

2004

My only recent publication of note was "teh after11fe" in the M-brane SF 2020 *Visions* anthology. The anthology has not

getting paid to build a vast SF universe

been widely reviewed, but the story has garnered a lot of positive comments. Yay.

In order to keep myself writing I have been doing workshops with other Anglophone writers based in Europe. The group is called Villa Diodati and meets twice a year for four-day mini-Clarion weekends. Notables include Ruth Nestvold, Ben Rosenbaum, Aliette de Bodard, Sara Genge... An excellent event both technically and socially, it also ensures that I write at least two stories per year.

In fact I have been writing enormous amounts, but always for the video game industry. The latest release was *R.U.S.E.*, a World War II strategy game that came out in September 2010. Later this year, Ubisoft will publish *Might & Magic Heroes 6*, which has been written and rewritten innumerable times over three years. I'll be very curious to see what the final product looks like.

The bigger news on the game front, however, is that I am part of a brand shining new start-up game development studio. We're so new we don't even have a website, and just signed a lease for offices on March 15. I am now getting paid to build a vast SF universe, and the project looks very promising. Risky, but promising. More on that as it unfolds....

Jeff Spock



► 2005

My alternate history story “Nadirah Sends Her Love” was published in the February 2011 tragedy-themed issue of *Crossed Genres*. It appeared in both the online magazine and *Crossed Genres*’ first print quarterly. I also joined a panel of North Carolina writers and read from the story at the NC Speculative Fiction Night at Quail Ridge Books in Raleigh on April 15th. The reading and reception featured area authors and was a launch event for the newest print issues of *Bull Spec* and *Crossed Genres*.

Ada Milenkovic Brown

I’m happy to report my most recently published story, “Introduction to *Joyous Cooking*, 200th Anniversary Edition” (*F&SF* July/August 2010), was a finalist for the 2011 Micro Award, and my first published story, “Just Do It” (*F&SF* July 2006, drafted during Week 4), was reprinted in John Joseph Adams’ new anthology, *Brave New Worlds*.

In addition to the usual in-progress writing projects, I’ve started a long-term collaboration with fellow SFF writer Al Robertson. Contrary to Mr. Robertson’s desire, the wedding cake was not a full-

no army of bridesmaid battlebots

sized remote controlled Dalek, and I had to forego an army of bridesmaid battlebots, but otherwise we’re very happy with the story so far.

Heather Lindsley

I had kind of an amazing couple of months at the end of 2010 and the beginning of 2011. In chronological order: I got engaged to my girlfriend of six years, Carrie. We began dating shortly before I went to CW, which made it hard for me to disappear to the West Coast for six weeks, but she’s always been incredibly supportive of my writing. She was also surprisingly understanding when I came back from the



ADA MILENKOVIC BROWN



HEATHER LINDSLEY '05 AND AL ROBERTSON
Photo by Shana Cassidy

workshop all fired up to spend less time with her because I had to start treating my writing *really seriously*.

Just before Christmas, my super agent, Eddie Schneider at JABberwocky Literary, sold my first novel to Lou Anders at Pyr. *Fair Coin* is a young adult book which blends fantasy and science fiction, and it should be out next year. Those of you who have sponsored me in the Write-a-thon may remember that I wrote the rough draft over the summer of 2007.

January was off to a terrific start when I got a new job as a Development Writer for a nonprofit hospital in Philadelphia. A few hours after I got *that* offer, Eddie called to tell me we had an offer on *Quantum Coin*,

also from Pyr. (I wrote that sequel in the 2008 Write-a-thon.)

As you can imagine, things have been ridiculously busy as I settled into a new apartment, a new job, and a new city—all

a two-year mission to analyze every episode of *Star Trek*

while starting to plan a wedding. I’m having difficulty carving out the time to work on my books, but I’m making slow progress and working out a routine. I also hope to connect with the Philadelphia SFF community when I have some spare time again.

My friend Torie and I also wrapped our *Star Trek* Re-Watch in March, completing what ended up being a two-year mission to analyze every episode of the original series. We’re about to continue the reviews with the animated *Star Trek* from Filma-tion, so it’s a good time to check them out at TheViewscreen.com.

The best writing advice, which I’ve heard from many writers but finally took to heart when Octavia E. Butler repeated it on my first day at CW, is simply, “Persistence.” This will get you through everything: writing, revising, querying agents, submitting to publishers, and so on.

The worst writing advice was from my seventh grade English teacher, who insisted we had to outline before writing. It has helped me on some books, but it certainly isn’t a rule for all writers.

Eugene Myers

Recently I’ve had work appear in *Apex* (“Close Your Eyes”), *Beneath Ceaseless Skies* (“Love, Resurrected”), *Intergalactic Medicine Show* (“A Frame of Mother of Pearl”), *Lightspeed* (“Long Enough and Just So Long”), and fellow CW ’05er Ann Leckie’s online magazine, *Giganotosaurus* (“Karluvian Fale”). One story, “Swallowing Ghosts”, which appeared in *Daily Science Fiction*, was a CW Write-a-thon story ►►

► from 2010 written while sitting in on the classroom one day. Forthcoming work will appear in *Abyss & Apex*, *Bull Spec*, *Daily Science Fiction*, *Fantasy Magazine*, and *Ten-Flash Quarterly* (edited by CW grads K.C. Ball '10 and Jude Marie Green '10).

My article, "Speculative in Seattle", appeared in *Seattle Woman Magazine* in February and featured mentions of CW and many of its teachers and alumni. Several of my blog posts have been reprinted on the SFWA blog and io9.com. I've been doing some reviews for *Rise Reviews* and *Publishers Weekly*, as well as freelance writing for the website HelloSeattle.com, which I've found a good excuse for exploring the city and its surrounding area.

Upcoming cons include Penguicon as a "Nifty Guest," Norwescon, Crypticon, the Locust Awards, SteamCon, and World Fantasy. Next year I'll be the Editor GoH at MidSouthCon. Our local CW-centric writing group, the Seattle Branch of Horrific Miscue, is planning a joint reading at Inner Chapters this June—watch Facebook for more details!

I've been enjoying teaching classes on blogging and writing F&SF at Bellevue College, and this summer will be teaching those again, along with a one-day workshop on writing flash fiction. Wayne is doing well and enjoying life at SmileBox.

Cat Rambo

2006

Late 2010 was an exciting time for me—I had a baby and sold two books. Nick is our first child, and it's been fun but exhausting!

The two books have been less exhausting so far, but that will probably change as I get more immersed in the sequel. My rockstar agent, Ginger Clark, pitched *Iron-*

steampunk *Jane Eyre*, with fairies

skin as "steampunk *Jane Eyre*, with fairies," and it sold to Melissa Frain at Tor Books. It is currently slated for Fall 2012, and the sequel will follow in 2013.

One of my favorite pieces of advice is the idea that every scene should do multiple things—advance the plot, show

characterization, etc. This has been very useful in revising. I think: okay, I need to make this bit of worldbuilding clear, show that relationship developing, and have more screen time for this character. So what's a scene that will do all three? Then it's like a puzzle. I like puzzles.

The worst piece of advice was when another writer went through my ms, circled every instance of the word "had," and gave it back to me saying that good writers never use "had." That was it. We were both beginning writers, but I still felt it was the least useful critique I'd ever—ahem—had.

Tina Connolly

2007

My news is that my agent, Howard Morhaim, sold *The Pillars of Hercules*, an alternative history/steampunk novel set in the age of Alexander the Great to Nightshade Books... I'll keep ya posted. Hope all's well!

David J. Williams

2009

My story "A Witch's Heart" appeared in the April 2011 issue of *Realms of Fantasy*. This was my CW application story, and my first pro magazine sale.

My story "A Shelter for Living Things" appeared in the anthology *2020 Visions* from M-Brane Press (ed. Rick Novy). As part of the 2010 CW Write-a-thon, I offered as an incentive to my highest donor to include anyone they wanted as a character in one of my stories. The winner asked for his dog Leo, his lazy farting bulldog, to be included. The "Shelter" story was a perfect fit, and thus Leo the farting bulldog has achieved immortality.

I continue to write as a nonfiction columnist for *Fantasy Magazine*. And I have finished writing a YA fantasy novel and will begin seeking an agent soon.

Randy Henderson

I'm happy to report that my Week Six story, "Sister Jasmine Brings the Pain", placed second in the IGMS awards. Another CW story, "The Strange Case of Madeleine H. Marsh (Aged 14 1/4)", was published in *Realms of Fantasy's* April issue.

Siobhan Carroll

My story "Apology for Fish-Dude" was published in *Ideomancer* Vol. 10 Issue 1 (www.ideomancer.com).

Emily C. Skaftun

2010

As with any interesting life, the downs sometimes outnumber the ups, and the best you can hope for is that they average out in your favor when all is said and done.

I continue to make time to write, and rely on my local library for a quiet place to focus on my work and not the housework. I'm currently working on what may blossom into a novel; time and tenacity will tell. I'm also excited at the chance to collaborate on a short story with one of my CW classmates. I also write an irregularly regular review column for *10Flash Quarterly*.

My short story "For Fear of Little Men" came out in Horror Bound Magazine Publications' trade paperback anthology *Fear of the Dark*, and my flash piece "Just Be" appeared in the March 2011 issue of *Ideomancer*. In the coming months, you can read my work in *Bards & Sages Quarterly*, *Scape*, *10Flash Quarterly*, as a cover story for *Fantastique Unfettered*, *Andromeda Spaceways Inflight Magazine*, and *Space & Time Magazine*, or listen to it at *The Drabblecast* and *Pseudopod*.

The best writing advice I've ever received: "Sit your butt down and write."

The worst: "You wrote this as a joke, right? You didn't actually expect anyone to publish it. That would be a mistake."

Sandra M. Odell

Since graduating from CW last summer, I've been busy with a variety of projects. My story (and first sale) "Take it Off", from the *Rigor Amortis* anthology, was named an honorable mention in *Best Horror of the Year*, Volume 3 (edited by Ellen Datlow), and I have a new story appearing in the anthology *Broken Time Blues*, debuting in August. I had a nonfiction piece on visual effects in *Lightspeed Magazine* in February, I blog about cocktails (the Booze Nerd) at *The Functional Nerds*, and I keep a personal blog at andrewpennromine.com.

Some of the most useful advice I've received about writing is to be persistent. There are going to be good days and bad days, but don't let that stop you. Keep going.

Andrew Penn Romine

► INSTRUCTORS

I have a novel, *The Uncertain Places*, coming out from Tachyon Press in June. It's contemporary fantasy—"contemporary fantasy" meaning, in this case, fantasy in the present day, not fantasy with women falling in love with vampires (not that there's anything wrong with that). It's about a strange family living in Napa Valley, and a young man who falls in love with one of them. I also have two short stories coming out, "Little Vampires" from *Realms of Fantasy* in April (their dark fantasy issue) and "Paradise Is a Walled Garden" from *Asimov's Science Fiction* in August, which I guess can be described as Arabic steampunk.

As for writing advice: the best advice I ever heard was that if you want to be a writer you have to write. That means sitting down every day and staring at the computer screen or piece of paper. It's difficult advice for people who want some kind of shortcut, and I have to say I don't always follow it rigorously myself.

The worst advice was from Stephen King's book *On Writing*, where he goes on and on about cutting your adverbs. I can

I just didn't get what adverbs had ever done to him

see where too many adverbs can be annoying, but I don't like the idea of getting rid of any tool in the toolbox, and sometimes you just have to use an adverb. All his other advice, though seemed spot-on to me—I just didn't get what adverbs had ever done to him.

Lisa Goldstein '94

I am a founding member of Book View Café, a writers' co-op of published novelists who are bringing their backlists into print as ebooks. My Book View Café Bookshelf lives at <http://tinyurl.com/7wks11-04> and a list of my e-books can be found in the BVC eBookstore



HYPERBOLIC JELLYFISH

(<http://tinyurl.com/7wks11-05>). My books at BVC include *Dreamsnake* (winner of the Nebula, the Hugo, the Locus Award, and the Pacific Northwest Booksellers Award for best novel) and *The Moon and the Sun* (winner of the Nebula Award and optioned for movies by the Henson Company and Pandemonium Pictures).

I invented Basement Full of Books (books available by mail directly from their authors) before the Interwebs existed. When it got too big to run by e-mail, Jeffrey Dwight of SFF Net gave it a permanent home (<http://www.sff.net/bfob/>).

My own books from BFoB are listed in the Autographed Books section of my website (<http://vondanmcintyre.com>).

When I am not living my life on the internet, I crochet, and create beaded sea creatures and featherless boas, some of which are on display in The Institute for Figuring's Hyperbolic Crochet Coral Reef (<http://tinyurl.com/7wks11-06>). More pretty pictures can be found on my website.

Sometimes I get tired of living my life on the internet or via Droid and go out to the Olympic Peninsula where I can see trees, water, and albino slugs, or to SE Oregon where I can see the Milky Way. Neither place has a phone, TV, or radio reception, and in both places my cell phone thinks it's a rock.

Vonda N. McIntyre, Clarion '70, CW instructor '84, '90

I've been working to get my out-of-print fiction up for sale on the net for eReaders, the best part of which is actually having serious input on cover art—even if the

"covers" are bitty little things on the computer screen. It's a fascinating process—including the chance to do some necessary revisions (and the temptation to get mired in revising the whole book, which in the end usually comes out pretty much like the original book, but less edgy and fast). What makes me happiest so far is getting the nonfiction book about my old dad (a Greenwich Village painter) out again—

use the ending that gives your reader a pay-off for the emotional investment they've made

My Father's Ghost is still the title, and it's a ghost I'm glad to see up and about again. YAs are up next.

Speaking of revenants, I have a new story in *Teeth* (out in April), Ellen Datlow's collection of vampire tales for *Twilight* readers who need to know that there's more to the undead than palely loitering in a funny haircut (story is "Late Bloomer"). Right now, I'm working on setting up a vacation trip in Canada, before airfares get any worse.

Best advice I ever got: "Use the ending that gives your reader a pay-off for the emotional investment they've made in the characters, not the shocking twist that nobody sees coming because it doesn't belong there—it's just you showing off."

Worst advice? "Rewrite *Motherlines* from beginning to end, with male characters this time—there's no story, without men!"

Both comments from professional editors, on completed manuscripts. I took the good advice. I rejected the bad advice, and sure enough, that book took two years to sell—to the editor who had given me the good advice, as it happens.

Suzy McKee Charnas '84, '86, '97

► My fantasy afterlife novel, *Jim and the Flims*, comes out from Nightshade in June, and my memoir, *Nested Scrolls: A Writer's Life*, from Tor in December, with an earlier, limited edition of the memoir also coming from PS Publishing. I found a way to work into my novel a variant on the chant to the muse that I used with my class at CW in 2009. Lest we forget, the original chant went, "Time, saucers, sex and goo / Elves, mutants, robots too / Muse of strangeness old and new / My blank pages call to you." In *Jim and the Flims* it becomes a prayer to the goddess of the afterlife world known as Flimsy: "Time, jivas, space and goo / Yuels, zick-zack, kessence too / Flimsy goddess old and new / My blank future calls to you." Transrealism in action.

The best advice on writing I ever read—and I don't remember who said it, perhaps it was John Varley—was something to the effect that: "If you get a completely crazy idea for a twist on a scene, an idea you don't think you dare use...go with it!" The Worst Advice, which came from any number of boilerplate how-to-write articles is this: "Don't think of starting work on the novel



RUDY RUCKER

until you have a complete and detailed outline, and then stick to the outline!" Of course it's useful to have an outline, but it's folly to imagine you can really know how things are going to end up once you're five or ten chapters in. I revise my outline constantly as I go along. As for sticking to an outline, see the best advice!

Rudy Rucker, '09

Time, jivas,
space and goo
Yuels, zickzack,
kessence too
Flimsy goddess
old and new
My blank future
calls to you.

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. ♦



LUKE AND FANS

