

The Seventh Week

clarion west writers workshop • spring 2018

There for Each Other

An Interview with Indrapramit Das

*A graduate of the 2012 Clarion West Six-Week Summer Workshop, Indrapramit Das has made waves in the literary ocean with his rigorous yet humanist short fiction appearing in *Clarkesworld*, *Asimov's*, *Strange Horizons*, and *Tor.com*, and his Lambda Award-winning debut novel *The Devourers*. In the interview below he answers questions from Nisi Shawl (CW '92).*

7W: Are you part of a movement?

ID: I see myself as part of multiple movements. Because I'm Indian, I'm part of a new generation of international writers breaking into non-realist literature centered in the West, a movement of writers fighting back against marginalization, appropriation, systemic bigotry, etc. by telling stories outside the narrative status quo. Similarly, I'm part of a movement within India of writers creating a body of Indian speculative fiction, working towards gaining an equal footing with Indian literary fiction, which is... well, an uphill battle. Because I'm writing stories that meld genres, I'm also part of a growing movement of fiction crossing genre lines that's also tied into (for better and worse) the mainstreaming of "geek culture" into a kind of ur-mythology for these incredibly strange and turbulent times.

7W: How did attending Clarion West affect your work? Was the effect what you expected?

ID: It filled me with this life-changing confidence that came from being in the proximity of so many amazing writers,



editors, readers, and people who love art, particularly art that imagines beyond the confines of accepted realities. It showed me that if I put my mind to it, I can put out a good story draft in the space of one night. It showed me a community I could feel a part of. It gave me a new group of lifelong friends who are also writers. We help each other, we support each other, and it's invaluable.

I can't say I went into Clarion West with any particular expectations other than that it would be a great workshop to produce work and develop my craft, which it was, but the way it seemed to split my life as a writer asunder and rebuild it was, indeed, unexpected.

7W: How did you prepare for the six weeks of the summer workshop? Any tips for those about to participate?

ID: I honestly don't think I really prepared in any way, other than to skim through the materials Clarion West sent us prior to the workshop. I was fairly blasé (though excited and proud to have gotten in) about it all, just thinking of it like an intensive

class instead of a life-changing experience packed into just under two months.

My advice is — take care of each other, and be open to making friends, because a close-quarters stay-in with eighteen people over six weeks can lead to both intense love and bonding as well as conflict and tension. This also means respecting the introverts among you; if someone indicates that they're not so into hanging out in groups, take that hint and make them feel like they belong in other ways, like stopping by their room to ask if they need anything (some coffee or tea, perhaps?), or just checking in periodically without being intrusive. If the class feels like they're there for each other, they'll learn better, and work better.

Push your limits, go outside your creative comfort zone. Try to write new stories each week, and try to write stories you wouldn't otherwise write, stories you're afraid of writing because you think you're not good enough, or they're too weird or ambitious. Clarion West is the time to see what you're capable of and expand your capabilities, because you're in an environment where you can workshop these drafts without worrying about much else. The point is not to get everyone to love each draft you produce (or to sell it immediately), it's to understand how to write better stories.

Finally — if you're good with company and meeting new people, don't miss the Friday parties. They're a wonderful opportunity to meet all kinds of fascinating, interesting, and talented people in the genre fiction community within Seattle — and who knows, you might even meet some of your longtime faves (I did) and get to have a conversation with them. It's a great way to unwind after the intensity of a workshop week.

7W: Your debut novel *The Devourers* is glorious and beautiful, harsh and tender, nasty and delicious. Is the world you live in also full of such heights and depths, such stark contrasts?

► The world I live in, Earth, is indeed full of such tremendous contrasts, but to narrow it down: I grew up in India, where such contrasts are even more jarring. We live with the disgraceful caste system, which makes itself known in the way we (the middle and upper classes in India) treat the people “below” our station — to this day it’s entirely the cultural norm to have separate utensils for them, and to not allow them to sit on “our” furniture.

You also have beggars and people in abject poverty living on pavements even in the most busy, commercial areas, right next to hotels and condos and malls and, yes, [expletive]* Trump Towers. You’ve got people and stray dogs using the streets as toilets and garbage repositories all over Kolkata, which I suppose explains why I’m so comfortable writing about bodily fluids and excrement in relation to our fear of our own bodies (which has shocked many a reader more than the blood and gore). That “dirt” signifies the animal other, and I tried to reckon with that in *The Devourers*. In India, if you don’t know how lucky you are to have running water and a clean, flushing toilet to take a [expletive]* and a [expletive]* in, you’re living with your head in the sand.

7W: What is it you wish that the non-writers in your life knew about supporting you and other writers?

ID: That we need people to buy (or read) our work. I mean, if someone’s writing isn’t your thing, that’s fine, and if you can’t afford to buy all your friends’ creative work, that’s entirely understandable too. But it’s rather dispiriting (charitably put) when family members (or friends, but it’s usually family members in my experience) ask for free copies of your book for “when you get famous” — implying that they only want it for potential value, not to read it. The creative arts are seen as a punchline by the same kind of people who aren’t willing to pay for art from their artist friends/family.

7W: You received the Octavia E. Butler Memorial Scholarship when you attended Clarion West. Talk a bit about your encounters with Butler’s work and what her life and writing mean to you.

ID: My first encounter with Octavia E. Butler’s work was, perhaps aptly, at Clarion

West, where we all read her famous short story “Bloodchild.” Indian libraries and bookstores didn’t have a wide variety of sci-fi and fantasy books when I was growing up, and definitely no Butler. I’d only heard of her through my reading on the history of genre fiction. I decided the workshop was time to change that, since she was responsible for my being there. “Bloodchild” deals with themes I tend to return to: the consequences of symbiosis (or parasitic bonding) or communication with alien species, what those imagined consequences might say about us as a species and how we’ve interacted with other life on our own world, and even more acutely, with our fellow humans in the world on the basis of perceived difference and othering, as well as explorations of sexuality, power, and fear through imagined paradigms. I loved the story. It inspired me to write “muoka’s Child” in one night, right before my deadline for submitting a story (I believe, in our second week). My story sold to *Clarkesworld* on first submission. The euphoria I felt that night, writing that story in what felt like the wake of a legendary writer who fought all manner of oppressive systems to become one of the most acclaimed and respected storytellers in her field, may not be easily matched, but it lingers and inspires me still.

You can read more about my relationship with Octavia E. Butler and her work in the essay collection *Luminescent Threads: Connections to Octavia E. Butler*, edited by Alexandra Pierce and Mimi Mondal. Many of the essays are by Clarion and Clarion West alumni who benefitted from the Butler Scholarship, like me.

7W: Are there living authors whose work excites and inspires you?

ID: So many! I can’t imagine a world where I’m not excited by the artists in it. To prevent rattling off names forever, I’ll point out a few recent reads that have left me crackling with transferred creative energy: Rivers Solomon’s *An Unkindness of Ghosts*, Carmen Maria Machado’s *Her Body And Other Parties*, JY Yang’s Tensorate novellas, Saad Z. Hossain’s *Djinn City* (there are issues I have with this book, but I also love it, and think Hossain is doing fabulously heady, entertaining, distinctly South Asian

SFF), Kamila Shamsie’s *Home Fire*, Hari Kunzru’s *White Tears*, Stephen Graham Jones’ *Mongrels*, Tashan Mehta’s *The Liar’s Weave* (which, full disclosure, I edited), Vikram Paralkar’s *The Wounds of the Dead*, and Deepak Unnikrishnan’s *Temporary People*. Really looking forward to reading Victor LaValle’s *The Changeling* (I adore his writing), which is on my Kindle.

And there are so many books I don’t yet have but am dying to read — Sam J. Miller’s *Blackfish City*, Rebecca Roanhorse’s *Trail of Lightning*, Nina Allan’s *The Rift*, Joshua Whitehead’s *Johnny Appleseed*, Karin Tidbeck’s *Amatka*. Fellow Calcuttan Mimi Mondal has some stories coming out on Tor.com this year, I believe, which is delightful; I’ve been waiting to see more fiction from her. I recently read P. Djeli Clark’s brilliant “The Secret Lives of the Nine Negro Teeth of George Washington” in *Fireside Fiction*, which makes me very eager to read his upcoming booklength work. Cassandra Khaw is one of the finest prose stylists and imaginations currently working, and I still haven’t read any books by her, only beautiful short stories. I mean, I could literally go on forever. We’re in a time of unprecedented literary fecundity despite the turmoil and flux in the publishing industry — so many writers from so many places and cultural backgrounds, so many genres bleeding into each other. I love it.

7W: Have you run into any prejudice against you and your work?

ID: I’ve been relatively lucky in that regard, but you can’t be a nonwhite writer operating in Western publishing without facing bigotry, because it’s baked into the system. When my agent was submitting *The Devourers*, we did get replies that said that the novel was great, but too Indian to sell, that it required too much background knowledge of Indian myth and history (it requires no more or less knowledge of India than *A Game of Thrones* requires prior knowledge of the myth and history of Westeros), and so on. I don’t think those editors were consciously white supremacist, but they were expressing deeply entrenched biases.

When I was doing my MFA, I had a thesis adviser who held a contest for my

cont. on page 8 ►►

*Unexpurgated interview available at <https://www.clarionwest.org/das-interview-2018/>

The Workshop's Busy Season



Workshop Director Neile Graham



Workshop Administrator Jae Steinbacher



Workshop Specialist Huw Evans

It's a thrilling time of the year. We've just invited 18 fantastic new writers to attend Clarion West this summer. Making those invite calls — it never gets old. This year we'll be welcoming talent from Brazil, Croatia, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Nigeria, the UK, and all over the USA. Oddly enough, though, after three years of having several students per class from the Puget Sound area, this year we won't have any! But hey, if the past is any precedent, a few of them might become locals ere long. In any case, it's a delight to imagine these new folk, all around the world, organizing their lives to be able to come spend their summer in Seattle, with one another and with Daniel Abraham, Ken MacLeod, Yoon Ha Lee, Karen Lord, Karen Joy Fowler, and Ellen Datlow.

The application season has been particularly exciting this year. George R.R. Martin's announcement of his new Worldbuilder Scholarship for Clarion West was picked up by press from all over the world (Brazil, Mexico, Portugal, Spain, the UK, Germany — we even got an email query for more info from a reporter at *Der Spiegel*), and the timing was perfect, long enough before the application deadline to boost numbers to a near-record high. So we are especially grateful to our wonderful team of readers who read so many applications so quickly. And huge thanks, of course, to George for funding the scholarship and thus opening the Clarion West world to yet another student who might not otherwise be able to attend.

It's also been a transitional season, as our new workshop administrator, Jae, has been taking over Huw's duties, learning — and improving upon — the myriad quirks and details of the applications process. She has been working with Neile and is being ably trained on our systems and communications by outgoing administrator, Huw, who has stayed on hand to assist. Expert technical backing has been in the perpetually adept hands of Kate Schaefer, CW's database programmer, who has poured heart and soul into the invisible mechanics that make so much of what we do possible — not just the application process, but the Write-a-thon too!

Speaking of which... that's right folks, it's not too soon to start thinking about how you want to participate in the 2018 Write-a-thon. What will be your writing goals as you follow along with the summer

workshop class? To what magnificent feats of wordsmithery will you commit? How far will your sentences soar, as your writerly wings fan the fires glowing in the hearts of generous donors the world-round? We can hardly wait to read all about it!

The One-Day Workshops continue to be a vibrant place where people wanting to hone their skills can check out Clarion West for six hours of focused instruction and writing exercises. Writers of all skill levels are welcome to join in the fun. We have been privileged this winter to have workshops by long-time Clarion West teachers like the eminent Kij Johnson and Eileen Gunn, as well as by new instructors such as writer and editor Wendy Wagner. Recent workshops also included Nisi Shawl's intensive "Description and Diversity in Speculative Fiction," and our final One-Day Workshop of the spring, the tantalizingly titled "Break the Rules!" taught by the inimitable Rachel Swirsky. **Stay tuned, because we'll be announcing our autumn line-up soon.**

Finally, an update on some important — vital! — developments for the Summer workshop. For many years now, due to the constraints of charming but classically dated buildings that have housed our workshop, we've been unable to accommodate students who use wheelchairs or for whom stairs are difficult. This is a painful shortcoming for the workshop, as inclusivity is core to our values. We have therefore formed a new committee to identify accessible venues. We do not have a definitive timeline for this (it will not be 2018), but we do have the collective will and a core group of determined individuals working to accomplish it. If you have ideas you want to share with the committee, please email info@clarionwest.org. ♦

Letter from Our Executive Director



Dear Friends,

Over the last year, Clarion West has surprised me at every turn. From the talented writers that come to the workshop to the support and intensity of the instructors who come to teach them, this community is truly a treasure, and I am so thankful to be a part of it. Our mission to bring new voices to speculative fiction is more important than ever as we find ourselves at a strange crossroads in time, where social policies are taking a dangerous turn for the worse, the loss of environmental safeguards is the number one threat to human life, space travel has not lived up to our expectations — and yet emerging technologies are further along than anyone ever imagined. With your help, we will continue to take writers from every background and voice to help tackle important questions about the human condition today, and how we might envision it in the future.

Clarion West aims to help emerging writers by connecting them with the skills, community, and opportunities to be heard. I'm pleased to share with you the priorities we identified during our recent strategic planning retreat. We were not at all surprised to note the common thread of **upholding excellence in our programs while building on our ability to support diversity in all its forms, ensure accessibility for all of our programming, and advance alumni support.** To ensure that we meet our goals over the next three years, we have created two new committees on the board, the Programs Committee and the Accessibility Committee.

I know you share our enthusiasm for tackling these issues. We hope our efforts will make a big difference for many of our participants and increase the richness and value of our programs., but we'll need your help in making these commitments

a reality. By supporting Clarion West, you are helping to celebrate the field of speculative fiction while encouraging people from every background, gender, and identity from all over the world to think critically about social needs, science, technology, art and more. Clarion West empowers writers to achieve more and write the stories that matter. With our annual intensive workshop, year-round programming and community outreach, we offer opportunities to unite the speculative fiction community and help it grow.

How can you help?

Visit our donation page to support our work. <https://www.clarionwest.org/donate>

1. Spread the word! We need your help to ensure that our workshops and outreach efforts reach readers and writers all over the world.
2. Join the **Write-a-thon!** The Write-a-thon is our biggest annual fundraiser and helps support our staff, programs, and outreach events. The 2018 Write-a-thon will run from June 17-July 28 and registration will begin June 1.
3. Volunteer. We have a number of volunteer activities year-round. You don't have to be in Seattle to help us meet our goals! Email us at director@clarionwest.org to learn about volunteer opportunities.

As always, thank you for your ongoing support of Clarion West, we couldn't do it without you!

Sincerely,
Marnee Chua ♦

In Memoriam

Founder JT Stewart (CW '73) shares this excerpt of a poem-in-progress:



URSULA K. LE GUIN 1929 – 2018



MARY ROSENBLUM 1952 – 2018

We've just recently lost some major movers and shakers in the science fiction community. Ursula K. Le Guin and Mary Rosenblum, in particular, belonged especially to the Clarion West family.

In response, many of our alumni have sent in poems and excerpts in their memory.

Note to Ursula K. Le Guin

I.
On growing old
you once said
“the names go first”

perhaps perhaps
but not yours
not yours

This note w/ out postage
cannot be folded copied
seduced by carrier birds

This note conjures itself
from inside out
not from top to bottom

This note sidesteps time

II.
Shall we gather at the river
the Snake River in Oregon
in the valley of Chief Joseph's
beloved Wallawa Mountains

Should we dip our fingers
in the cold waters
touch the petroglyphs
the Nez Perce carved

Yes

Watch my spirit self
summon my ancient
Native American kin
from these stones
these waters

Watch me
Watch me

Behold all this
from a summer
annual writing workshop
the Fishtrap Gathering
in Wallawa Lake, Oregon
where / when
you recommended me
as a teacher

III.
So
Ursula K. Le Guin

what you gave us
remains

So
from you
now as a werewoman
on the moon
your wish prevails

Keep on
keep on giving us
your voice
your wit
your wisdom

'Nuff said

Colleen Anderson (CW '87) writes:

Ursula taught us at Clarion West in 1987. Later, Vancouver, BC held its first Writers Festival and Ursula came as a guest. A few of us who were Clarion West alumni joined up with other writing friends and took her to dinner. She was never too famous to talk with others, whether great or small. Years later, I was corresponding with her in regard to a possible interview (which never happened), and she still remembered me. Considering all the people she must have known, I was again touched. Ursula was as generous as she was brilliant and forthright. Her poem “Crown of Laurels” is still one of my all-time favorites.

Another poem, this one from Cynthia Ward (CW '92):

On the Death of Ursula K. Le Guin

Like the death of a mountain, a friend tells
Nisi.
The shifting of tectonic plates, I think.
The submergence of a continent.
Continents remain,
And isles unnumbered.
The world is changed always.

Excerpts from Kathleen Alcalá's (CW '87) essay “Balance”:

The New Yorker recently published an article by Siddhartha Mukherjee about



► the decline of his father in old age. He used the term “homeostasis,” wherein the body is able to maintain a stable internal environment, even when faced with changing external conditions. As his father’s body began to fail, it lost this ability, and his father began falling down.

Though I studied with Ursula, I was not that close to her... but I do have one story that only writer Molly Gloss witnessed.

One year, we were all teaching at the Flight of the Mind Writers Conference, held somewhere on the wild McKenzie River. It was a lovely conference, and I am still in touch with a number of writers who attended. However, I was trying to meet a deadline for my third novel, and suffered from lack of sleep. In this fog, walking back to our cabins in the dark one night, I began to disparage sheep as unintelligent. I might even have used the word “stupid,” because I had once considered keeping sheep for wool when we lived in a small town in Western Colorado. But I had read a book on sheep husbandry and convinced myself that they required too much attention or they would drown in a ditch.

After considering my case, Ursula and Molly slowly began to refute me as too harsh on the poor animals. Finally, Ursula stopped and fixed me with her steady brown gaze and said, “I’ll speak for the sheep.”

And this about sums up Ursula’s relationship with the world. Ever ready to speak up for the maligned, the weak, the seemingly lesser creature, she was not going to let me go to bed thinking I was superior to a sheep. To her, we all held our ground in creation, each a necessary part of the whole.

If Ursula had any religious inclinations, it was this: That the universe is of a whole, and we must constantly strive to maintain a balance within it, like the homeostasis of Mukherjee’s article. We are active participants in this balance, and need to be ever compassionate, ever vigilant, making sure that even the softest voice can be heard.

Sonia Lyriss (CW ‘92) writes:

I had recently graduated from Clarion West, and was beginning to be published. At a convention, I saw Ursula K. Le Guin

sitting alone. My chance! I approached. Heart pounding, I blathered adoration. She listened patiently, then asked me about myself.

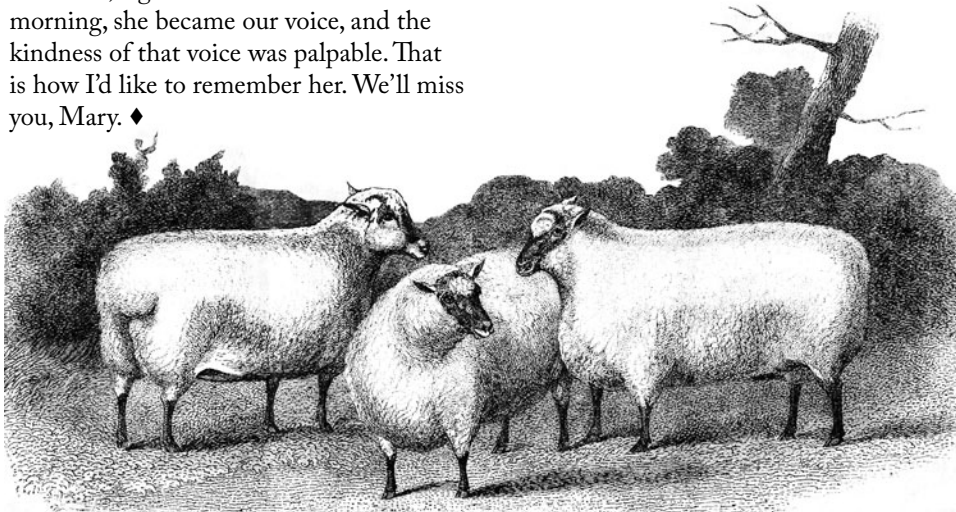
After we spoke, I realized that I had seen something extraordinary: though she was surely beset regularly by fawning fans such as myself, she was both kind and gracious. Could I do less? I resolved to follow her example, and began that very afternoon, when someone approached me in a similar fashion.

Across my life, Ursula shaped me with her writing, but this particular lesson I learned from her directly: kindness.

Safe journey, beloved author and distant mentor. Thank you.

And finally Indrapramit Das (CW ‘12) writes about Mary Rosenblum:

Mary was my class’s first instructor at Clarion West. She ushered us into our workshop, and she couldn’t have been better at it. I still remember her sturdy, comforting presence, how she seemed both parental and professional at the same time, how she knew how to bring calm to a bunch of writers fairly buzzing with excitement. I remember her first assignment for us — to write a real memory from our lives, and then develop it into a story. So simple, yet such a fantastic exercise, and easily used as a piece of writing advice too. In our first class at Clarion West, she read out the “memories” anonymously, and in her almost cheery delivery of even the darkest or saddest memories, she gave us all, new and nervous, confidence that we were, for those six weeks, a gestalt of voices. On that first morning, she became our voice, and the kindness of that voice was palpable. That is how I’d like to remember her. We’ll miss you, Mary. ♦



Clarion West Writers Workshop

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Treasurer's Report



Treasurer Miriah Hetherington

Some of you might recognize me from Clarion West events and local writing retreats. As of March, I'm the new CW treasurer. (Luckily for me, the previous treasurer Yang-Yang Wang is still on the board as board chair!) My recent volunteer experience includes six years as board treasurer for a nonprofit promoting the Gaelic language. I'm excited to be a part of the Board and inspired by the Clarion West mission.

2017 was another good year for Clarion West. As treasurers before me have reported for the last several years, Clarion West has a healthy amount of assets and no liabilities. As of year-end, cash and investments totaled \$218,820.

CW's investments, comprising about one-third of total assets, have done well thanks to the skillful supervision of our volunteer investment manager, Susan Gossman. In 2017 we used investment earnings to provide additional scholarship funding, and we anticipate continued support for students where needed most.

The financial committee has been working hard to prepare Clarion West

for its first financial audit or review, an important step for any maturing nonprofit organization. By ensuring that we follow best practices overall, we'll be ready when we can afford the expense of an independent audit.

Workshop tuition covers about one-third of our total costs, and we rely on our supporters to make up the difference. By increasing staff hours and benefits, Clarion West continues to transition toward its goal of being run by paid staff. This long-term investment in our organization will help us improve the quality of our programs. However, this means short-term expenses are increasing. Operating revenue and scholarship funding continue to be priority concerns. Despite financial challenges, Clarion West is in a good financial position to increase staffing, expand our programs, and explore partnerships with other similar-minded organizations.

I hope you will continue to support Clarion West and the next class of emerging speculative fiction writers. Upcoming fundraising efforts include our annual Write-a-thon, and individual appeals to support scholarships, instructorships, and operating costs.

Thank you for your support and for the privilege of serving as your treasurer. ♦

	2017 Actuals	2018 Budget
Income		
Corporate Donations Unrestricted	12,741	15,200
Corporate Matching	4,677	3,000
Individual Giving Unrestricted	18,089	15,000
Write-A-Thon	20,548	20,000
Scholarships	36,250	45,725
Instructorships	14,955	19,700
Special Events	8,385	11,677
Grants	10,500	10,200
Six-Week Workshop Income	45,085	38,375
One-Day Workshops	14,035	15,000
Online Workshops	n/a	1,800
Dividend & Interest	2,605	2,550
Total Income	187,870	198,227
Expenses		
Outreach and Promotion	12,528	18,012
Six-Week Workshop	88,929	97,730
One-Day Workshops	8,362	9,800
Online Workshops		2,100
Administration	58,071	63,058
Fundraising	6,791	11,781
Total Expenses	174,681	202,480
Surplus	+13,189	-4,253

► *Das, cont.*

classmates to mimic my unfamiliar (to him) accent, and I laughed along because that's how abuse of power works. Who wants to be the killjoy, right? He was, after all, our professor, and the bestselling author buying us beers and promising us favors. I should mention this man was fired, and I do have confidence that the Creative Writing program at that institution is moving forward, and I respect the present faculty there greatly. But the old boys' club needs to burn, everywhere.

This answer wouldn't be complete without mentioning the acceptance and

Nothing will
change if
we don't
speak up.

help of so many editors, agents, publishers, fellow writers, fellow artists, and friends in the "West" who have actively fought against systemic prejudices to bring my work to readers, to make me feel welcome, to help me and other marginalized creators. I will forever be grateful for that.

I respond to prejudice by writing the stories a cisnormative, heteropatriarchal world doesn't want to recognize. By boosting others who are marginalized and creating art. By calling out prejudice whenever I can. Nothing will change if we don't speak up. ♦

Farewell, Goodbye, Hello



Board Chair Yang-Yang Wang

In January, I was somehow elected board chair — for those of you who are unfamiliar with nonprofits, that makes me the boss. Of all things. Which button am I supposed to stay away from again?

Over the last year, we've had a lot of changes in our community, and before the tone of this article shifts too much, I'd like to touch on the tragic losses of Ursula K. Le Guin, Mary Rosenblum, and Kate Wilhelm earlier this year. Ursula and Mary inspired so many of our writers, and this newsletter contains some of their remembrances. We'd also love for you to submit any stories or remembrances to communications@clarionwest.org.

Our board of directors has had some turnover, and I'd like to acknowledge the many wonderful board members who retired this past year. To Karen Anderson, Jeffrey Lemkin, Felicia Gonzalez, Elizabeth Bourne, and Ned Hayes: thanks for all the blood, sweat, and fish! Today's Clarion West is in terrific shape due to all your efforts and I hope to see you at future events!

Long-time communications maven and time-wizard Kris Millering also left the staff. Thanks for years of exceeding expectations and all the adorable cat photos!

We've added several outstanding new board members. They are, in no particular order:

- Miriah Hetherington is our new treasurer. She was also a gut-puller on a salmon ship and attended the Dalai Lama's 2016 birthday celebration in his hometown of Dharam Salah.

- Misha Stone went to a college of 300 students, hosts drag shows and live karaoke, and was named after ice skater John Misha Petkevich.
- Rashida/Jasmine/Eddy Scholz has three first names, was a yoga instructor, and turns into a gremlin if fed after midnight. She attended Clarion West in 2005.
- Geetanjali Dighe started doing the SETI@home project 18 years ago. She continues to participate whenever she can. She attended Clarion West in 2013.

New staff members were also encountered in the tall grass:

- Jeremy Sim succeeds Kris Millering as our communications specialist. He once rode a bike across Spain and is a top-level white mage in Final Fantasy XI. Ask him about his heals. He attended Clarion West in 2011.
- Jae Steinbacher is our new workshop assistant. She/they excels at baking and stealing your cat's love with a whisper. She attended Clarion West in 2014 and is my birthday twin.

We're directing this renewed enthusiasm towards examining every aspect of the organization and tackling priorities like increased accessibility, new programming, and audit-readiness. Buy me a drink and I'll tell you more. Or just buy me a drink. ♦