

Readercon 31 Program

Friday, August 13

(1) Friday - 6:00 PM

Main Track 1 • **Opening Ceremonies / The Cordwainer Smith Rediscovery Award**

(2) Friday - 7:00 PM

Main Track 1 • **Worldbuilding with Idiomatic Expressions** • *E. C. Ambrose, John Chu, LJ Cohen, Benjamin Rosenbaum, Romie Stott*

In Italy, a reliable person is "as good as bread," while in Korea, they have "a heart as fine as brocade." Panelists will discuss using idiomatic expressions for worldbuilding and character development, including ways to accurately and respectfully employ idioms from cultures other than one's own, methods of creating new idioms, and the perils of assigning an overly definitive origin or sweeping meaning to an idiom.

(3) Friday - 7:00 PM

Main Track 2 • **The Legacy of Ballantine Books** • *Patrick Nielsen Hayden, Teresa Nielsen Hayden, Allen Steele, Gary Wolfe, The Joey Zone*

From its founding in 1952, Ballantine Books put significant genre works such as *The Space Merchants* (1952) and *Fahrenheit 451* (1953) into print. Its gorgeously adorned Ballantine Adult Fantasy series, started in 1969, fostered rediscovery of many foundational works of modern fantasy (*Lud-in-the-Mist*, *The King of Elfland's Daughter*) along with contemporary originals (*The Last Unicorn*). It brought the authorized edition of *The Lord of the Rings* to America. What debt does SF/F owe to power couple Ian and Betty Ballantine, and how does their legacy persist today?

(4) Friday - 7:00 PM

Main Track 3 • **Children of the Daughter of the Night: Descendants of Tanith Lee** • *KT Bryski, Gemma Files, Nicole Kornher-Stace, Yves Meynard, Sonya Taaffe*

The fiction of Tanith Lee slyly and subtly glides along and over the margins, enchanting rather than enlisting its fans. Tracing her influence can be a challenge; her fiction is liminal, syncretic, frequently funny, and occasionally preposterous, and a great many authors have been inspired by one or more of those aspects. This panel of Lee devotees will trace the literary taproots and tendrils that drink from her work.

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(5) Friday - 7:00 PM

Readings • **Ellen Brody Reads Vonda N. McIntyre**

Ellen Brody reads Readercon 31 Memorial Guest of Honor Vonda N. McIntyre's short story "The End's Beginning."

(6) Friday - 7:00 PM

Kaffeeklatsches • **Shiv Ramdas**

(7) Friday - 7:30 PM

Readings • **Jeffrey Thomas**

Jeffrey Thomas reads the short story "Scorpion Face."

(8) Friday - 8:00 PM

Main Track 1 • **The Relief of Horror** • *Sarah Langan, Ian Muneshwar, Ursula Vernon, Tim Waggoner, Kaaron Warren*

In a [2014 interview](#) with *BuzzFeed News*, Wes Craven stated, "You don't enter the theater... to be afraid. You enter the theater... to have the fears that are already in you... dealt with and put into a narrative." What kinds of relief do horror stories grant us? What does it mean to feel seen in a dark story?

(9) Friday - 8:00 PM

Main Track 2 • **Against "Discovery"** • *Michael J. DeLuca, Allan Dyen-Shapiro, Jeff Hecht, Darcie Little Badger, Terence Taylor*

Many works of SF/F about "discovery" would be recognizable to the creators and consumers of late Victorian adventure novels: a heroic (usually white and male) protagonist enters a strange place and either subjugates it or is transformed by it. But this centuries-old narrative rooted in colonialism erases both the marginalized members of expeditions and the native inhabitants to whom the place isn't strange at all. How can the "discovery" story be expanded, exploded, or replaced with other takes on novelty and liminality?

(10) Friday - 8:00 PM

Main Track 3 • **What I've Learned Establishing a Micro-Publishing Imprint** • *J.D. Horn*
J.D. Horn recently established Curious Blue Press and published its first title, *Good Southern Witches*, in April. In this talk, he will share what he's learned about working with IngramSpark, Bowker, and Amazon; holding open submissions; acting as the editor after a

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decade of being on the author side, including the influence of this editorial turn on his own writing; and holding onto his vision with multiple engaged shareholders.

(11) Friday - 8:00 PM

Readings • Broad Universe Rapid Fire Reading

Broad Universe is an organization that supports women and non-privileged gender authors of speculative fiction. Each member will read a short piece from their work. It's like the weather in New England: If you don't like what you're hearing, just wait a minute!

(12) Friday - 8:00 PM

Kaffeeklatsches • AJ Odasso

(13) Friday - 9:00 PM

**Main Track 1 • The Impossible Action-Adventure Comedy • Laurence Raphael
*Brothers, Randee Dawn, Jim C. Hines, Sarah Jean Horwitz, Alex Shvartsman***

Speaking about *Men in Black*, director Barry Sonnenfeld said, "The concept of an action-adventure comedy is an oxymoron. Almost without fail, the comedy kills the reality of the action, or the action has to stop for some sort of funny line... If the action is too scary or too gross or graphic, it kills the comedy. It's a very hard line." To what extent does this hold true for written work? What are examples of successful action-adventure comedies in speculative literature, and what makes them tick?

(14) Friday - 9:00 PM

Main Track 2 • Automata for the People • Jeffrey Ford, Ken Houghton, Nikhil Singh, W.B.J. Williams

For millennia, people have dreamed of created beings that are humanoid but not human. They show up around the world: automated guardians in Buddhist legend, mechanical inventions in the Arab world, and artificial golden women in Greek myths. Automata have been objects of fear, desire, and power, used by tyrannical rulers as tools both in myth and in real life. What new literary possibilities are available when we anchor ourselves in the lineage of the technological imagination? How do ancient stories and settings provide a useful lens for present anxieties about drones, androids, and artificial intelligence?

(15) Friday - 9:00 PM

Main Track 3 • I See You So Close: On Ghosts, Empathy, and Imagination • M. Dressler
In this dynamic presentation and performance, Gothic novelist M. Dressler embarks on a journey through the mind and desires of a ghost named Emma Rose Finnis, an Irish

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servant girl who died in 1915 but now asks to be listened to, and even more: she insists that the dead should be not just honored or pitied, but embraced and fully imagined. Based on her work in the Last Ghost series, Dressler guides her listeners through the life, death, and will of a young, long-dead woman who has a powerful message for those of us still living: "Let no one," Emma Rose says, "tell you what form you can take."

(16) Friday - 9:00 PM

Readings • **Steven Popkes**

Steven Popkes reads excerpts from *Danse Mécanique* and *House of Birds*.

(17) Friday - 9:00 PM

Kaffeeklatsches • **E. Lily Yu**

(18) Friday - 9:30 PM

Readings • **Paul Witcover**

Paul Witcover reads an excerpt from *Lincolnstein*.

Saturday, August 14

(19) Saturday - 10:00 AM

Main Track 1 • **Welcome to (Virtual) Readercon** • *Rachel S. Borman, Rose Fox, B. Diane Martin, Chelle Parker*

It's not just your first time at a virtual Readercon—it's everyone's! Convention staff will explain how Readercon has been adapted to the virtual format and take questions via Discord to help everyone navigate this challenging and exciting change.

(20) Saturday - 10:00 AM

Main Track 2 • **Tomorrow's Queer Communities Today** • *Inanna Arthen, Samuel R. Delany, Meg Elison, Sacchi Green, Keffy R.M. Kehrl*

Queer communities have popped up in SF/F stories from Tom Reamy's "San Diego Lightfoot Sue" to A.M. Dellamonica's "The Cage," but they're still uncommon even in tales of the far future. One reason may be that queer people are still figuring out what queer community looks like in the present, with the internet making virtual communities possible while old-school gay bars and bookstores struggle to stay in business. How can speculative fiction support the evolution of queer community by imagining new shapes it

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might take, and also support readers who are desperate to see not only themselves but their friends and found family in SF/F?

(21) Saturday - 10:00 AM

Main Track 3 • **What's Cool About the Vikings** • *Jess Nevins*

Interest in the Vikings has been consistent since the early 19th century, but the literary and archaeological innovations of the past 30 years have revolutionized our knowledge of them. The old stereotype of barbaric Scandinavian raiders with no culture other than pillaging and slavery has been destroyed. What's taken its place is recognition of a complex society of surprisingly progressive beliefs and behaviors. The "new" Vikings—not the Vikings of pop culture and pop history—have a great deal to recommend themselves to writers of speculative fiction. Drawing on the past three decades of scholarship, historian Jess Nevins will discuss the real Vikings and why they were cool.

(22) Saturday - 10:00 AM

Readings • **Paul McAuley**

Paul McAuley reads the short story "The First" and an excerpt from *War of the Maps*.

(23) Saturday - 10:00 AM

Kaffeeklatsches • **Elizabeth Wein**

(24) Saturday - 10:30 AM

Readings • **Casey Berger**

Casey Berger reads an excerpt from *First Light*.

(25) Saturday - 11:00 AM

Main Track 1 • **Reading Fantasy Through a Motif Index Lens** • *Katherine Crichton, Stephanie Feldman, Jeffrey Ford, Karen Heuler, L. Penelope*

Folklorists use motif indexes to catalog and analyze folk tales from around the world. The existence of TV Tropes suggests the need for new motif indexes that fit new forms of literature, but we can also apply folklore motif indexes to 21st-century fantastical fiction. Which motifs have had staying power for hundreds of years, and what other expected or unexpected patterns do we find? What does treating fiction as folklore bring to the reading experience?

(26) **Saturday - 11:00 AM**

Main Track 2 • **Critical Theory and Speculative Fiction 101** • *Jeanne Cavelos, Michael Cisco, Tom Greene, Eugene Mirabelli, Lesley Wheeler (she/ her)*

The term *critical theory* gets tossed around quite a bit in speculative fiction parlance, but attempts to engage with what it actually means can put people to sleep. Why is it important to be familiar with work related to critical theory, including movements such as genre theory, queer theory, narrative theory, and ecocriticism? Panelists will dip their toes in the shallow end of this very deep pool and provide an introduction to some of critical theory's major works, ideas, and flaws, and how they pertain to reading SF/F.

(27) **Saturday - 11:00 AM**

Main Track 3 • **How I Wrote *Burning Girls and Other Stories*** • *Veronica Schanoes*

Veronica Schanoes's first collection, *Burning Girls and Other Stories*, gathers stories of women whose passionate anger, love, and hope are rooted in history and folklore. She will discuss the threads linking her stories and some of the real-world tales that inspired them.

(28) **Saturday - 11:00 AM**

Readings • **Fierce Joy Fiction Fun Club**

Zig Zag Claybourne and Patty Templeton are tired of being tired. They wanna have a dang good time, and want you to, too. Join 'em for weird tales edged in humor and the unexpected.

(29) **Saturday - 11:00 AM**

Kaffeeklatsches • **Ursula Vernon**

(30) **Saturday - 12:00 PM**

Main Track 1 • **Lots of Planets Have a South: Exploited and Impoverished Regions in Speculative Worldbuilding** • *David Bowles, Anna Kashina, Manish Melwani, Robert V. S. Redick, Karl Schroeder*

In the call for papers for the book *Speculative Souths*, editors Amy Clukey, Erich Nunn, and Jon Smith suggest a provocative topic: "The construct of U.S./Global/Planetary 'Souths' on Mars, Venus, and beyond (such as... the icy southern polar settlements of Kim Stanley Robinson's Mars trilogy, the agricultural terrains of *The Expanse*)." This panel will interrogate what authors absorb unconsciously from living in a world divided conceptually (and stereotypically) into a wealthier, healthier North and a poorer, struggling South, and how that's reflected in fantastical and futuristic worldbuilding.

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(31) Saturday - 12:00 PM

Main Track 2 • **Everything I Need to Know, I Learned Reading SF/F** • *Lauren Beukes, José Pablo Iriarte, [Kathy Kitts](#), D. Wes Rist, Elsa Sjunneson*

Comics can teach us how to get rid of the mold in our sinks, cyberpunk stories have genuinely useful programming advice, fantasy novels inspire culinary successes in the kitchen or over a campfire, and any genre story might contain unexpected wisdom about how to understand one's own mind or repair a damaged relationship. Our panelists will share the real-life skills they've picked up while devouring speculative fiction, and celebrate the joys of sneaking valuable life skills into works of entertainment.

(32) Saturday - 12:00 PM

Main Track 3 • **Yesterday's Kitchen of Tomorrow** • *David G. Shaw*

[This USDA informational film](#) from 1949 describes a "step-saving kitchen" of tomorrow. From today's vantage point, which ideas still make sense? Which perpetuate family, economic, and gender stereotypes? A homemaker, a cook, and an architect—which will be at least two persons—will answer these questions and raise a few of their own.

(33) Saturday - 12:00 PM

Readings • **December Tales**

Nicole D. Sconiers, JD Horn, Glen Hirshberg, and Kate Maruyama read from the forthcoming ghost story anthology *December Tales*.

(34) Saturday - 12:00 PM

Kaffeeklatsches • **Megan Whalen Turner**

(35) Saturday - 2:00 PM

Main Track 1 • **I'm In: Infiltration Techniques for Writers** • *John P. Murphy, Kate Nepveu, Kestrell Verlager, Elizabeth Wein, [Fran Wilde](#)*

How can characters get into spaces they aren't supposed to be, whether physical or virtual? What makes these scenes feel plausible? Panelists will analyze the literary possibilities in various infiltration techniques—including those that rely on technical skills (such as lockpicking or hacking) and those that rely on social engineering—and suggest useful reference works and successful fictional depictions.

(36) Saturday - 2:00 PM

Main Track 2 • **The Works of Jeffrey Ford** • *Rob Cameron, Emma J. Gibbon, [John Langan](#)*

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Sarah Pinsker, Paul Witcover

GOH Jeffrey Ford is an author and educator who bends and blends the boundaries of fantasy, science fiction, and mystery to create dark fantasies and surrealist tales. In the 40 years since his first genre publication, he has published 10 novels and over 100 short stories, many compiled in his six collections. His work has won or been shortlisted multiple times for every major American SF/F award and several in other countries. He's also an experienced professor and lecturer on writing and early American literature. His writing has been described as "whimsical," "narratively ambitious," "filled with magic, curses, and dangerous technology," and "dark and subtle," all at once. Join us to discuss and celebrate the works of this longtime member of the Readercon community.

(37) Saturday - 2:00 PM

Main Track 3 • **Hidden Pasts: Old Democracies and the Cycle of Forgetting** • *Romie Stott*

In ridiculing the fantasy tendency to have the protagonist suggest a full liberal democracy to replace a tyrannical king, it's easy to fall into the opposite trap of continuous social progress. Partial democracy (though not full suffrage) has been as normal in the past as autocracy has. Romie Stott will dish up a sampler platter of some past nation-level semi-democratic government systems that can be incorporated into fantasy and science fiction stories.

(38) Saturday - 2:00 PM

Readings • **Ursula Vernon**

Ursula Vernon, also known as T. Kingfisher, reads from an untitled work ("The Floating House Thing").

(39) Saturday - 2:00 PM

Kaffeeklatsches • **Marissa Lingen and John Wiswell**

(40) Saturday - 2:30 PM

Readings • **Matthew Cheney**

Matthew Cheney reads the short story "Quitting Dreams," co-written with Jeffrey Ford.

(41) Saturday - 3:00 PM

Main Track 1 • **Git Along, Little Hippos: Writing the New, Wilder West** • *Max Gladstone, Darcie Little Badger, Jess Nevins, Nikhil Singh, Jean-Louis Trudel*

Recent speculative stories set in the 19th-century American West have updated the

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western's romanticized images of exploration and first contact with a nuanced understanding of the history and perspectives that traditional westerns erase. But the more real pain appears in these stories, the further they get from pulpy adventure fun. How can authors defy the harmful conventions of the past while still giving readers what they want from a western?

(42) Saturday - 3:00 PM

Main Track 2 • **The Works of Carol Emshwiller and Rick Raphael** • *Richard Butner, Matthew Cheney, Gregory Feeley, Michael Kandel, Shariann Lewitt*

Described by Ursula Le Guin as "one of the strongest, most complex, most consistently feminist voices in fiction" and by former SWFA President Cat Rambo as "one of the greats of short story writing," Carol Emshwiller was known for her powerful, incisive voice and avant-garde ideas. A Philip K. Dick Award and Nebula Award winner, her work was short-listed for the Nebula Award multiple times, and she was presented with a lifetime achievement World Fantasy Award in 2005. Journalist Rick Raphael began his foray into science fiction with the publication of his 1959 short story "A Filbert is a Nut" in *Astounding Stories* (now *Analog*). Despite a comparatively small body of work, he established a considerable reputation in the field, and his stories have been reprinted in numerous collections and anthologies. According to the *Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*, Raphael "was at his best when describing, in positive terms, the life of those who must deal professionally with a technological world." Join us in celebrating the lives and careers of these two undeservedly obscure greats, the 2019 and 2020 Cordwainer Award recipients.

(43) Saturday - 3:00 PM

Main Track 3 • **BARCC Active Bystander Training**

In "Building Your Bystander Toolkit: Effective Strategies for Online and Offline Intervention," L. Co of the Boston Area Rape Crisis Center explains how to safely step in when someone might need help. All tools taught in the active bystander training follow BARCC's empowerment model, which seeks to give agency and power back to the person being targeted, rather than dictating their choices for them.

(44) Saturday - 3:00 PM

Readings • ***When Things Get Dark***

Contributors to the forthcoming all-original anthology *When Things Get Dark: Stories Inspired by Shirley Jackson* will read from their work, hosted by editor Ellen Datlow.

(45) Saturday - 4:00 PM

Main Track 1 • **The Eminence of Style** • *Jeffrey Ford, Glen Hirshberg, Tracy Majka, Ursula Vernon, John Wiswell*

Almost 100 years after William Strunk, Jr., published *The Elements of Style*, GOH Ursula Vernon tweeted, "At some point... I stopped reading books for the plots. I am really only interested in the writing style and to a very lesser extent, the world." Strunk and Vernon mean two different things by *style*—or do they? Panelists will dissect the craft of style, the joys and pitfalls of both rigorous and experimental styles, and how voice intersects with guidelines such as Strunk's famous "Omit needless words."

(46) Saturday - 4:00 PM

Main Track 2 • **The People Can Still Fly: Black Heroes in Folklore Retellings** • *Rob Cameron, Andrea Hairston, Megan Pindling, Sumiko Saulson, Terence Taylor*

Folklore from Africa and the African diaspora can be a rich source for fantasy fiction; race-bending can bring new dimensions to familiar European folk and fairy tales.

Panelists will share their favorite folklore-inspired works with Black heroes, particularly those by Black authors, and explore the ways that African and Afro-diasporan tales have influenced their own work.

(47) Saturday - 4:00 PM

Main Track 3 • **Sexy Monsters Across Literature: From Gilgamesh to the Gothic** • *Charles Allison, PJ Brown*

The subgenre of the monster-erotic is as least as old as literature itself—beginning with the Epic of Gilgamesh and continuing well into the gothic horror era. Gilgamesh's monstrous behavior kickstarts the plot of the epic, the hairy-man Enkidu is made human through amorous adventures before becoming besties with Gilgamesh, and the goddess Inanna doesn't take rejection well. From this ur-tale, Charles Allison and PJ Brown fast-forward to the 19th and 20th centuries to examine the simple question: What if we slept with the monsters?

(48) Saturday - 4:00 PM

Readings • **E. Lily Yu**

E. Lily Yu reads the short story "An Account, by Dr. Inge Kühn, of the Summer Expedition and Its Discoveries."

(49) Saturday - 4:00 PM

Kaffeeklatsches • **Joe Haldeman**

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(50) Saturday - 4:30 PM

Readings • **Catherynne M. Valente**

Catherynne M. Valente reads an excerpt from *The Past is Red*.

(51) Saturday - 6:00 PM

Main Track 1 • **Ursula Vernon Interviewed by Mur Lafferty**

(52) Saturday - 7:00 PM

Main Track 1 • **Jeffrey Ford Interviewed by Andy Duncan**

(53) Saturday - 8:00 PM

Main Track 1 • **Improbable Research Dramatic Readings** • *Marc Abrahams, Robin Abrahams, C.S.E. Cooney, Sara Dion, Rose Fox, David Kessler, Sonya Taaffe*

Highlights from Ig Nobel Prize-winning studies and patents are presented in dramatic mini-readings by luminaries and experts (in some field).

Sunday, August 15

(54) Sunday - 10:00 AM

Main Track 1 • **L'État, C'est Quoi? Social Organization in SF/F** • *Terri Bruce, Ian R. Macleod, Kathryn Morrow, Kestrell Verlager*

Let's talk about modes of social organization in science fiction and fantasy: nations, kingdoms, empires, anarcho-syndicalist communes, hives, necromantic capitalism, and more. How do shifts in real-world politics change how we read speculative fiction's use of both real and imagined forms of government? Why is it so hard to make up truly novel social systems, and what does that tell us about how we perceive human (and inhuman) nature?

(55) Sunday - 10:00 AM

Main Track 2 • **The Emotions of Dystopia** • *Scott Edelman, Aliza Greenblatt, Bracken MacLeod, Sabrina Vourvoulias, Holly Lyn Walrath*

Dull and even miserable affect and emotion have been hallmarks of the dystopia genre since 1984 and *Brave New World*, with joy depicted as fleeting and pleasure considered hollow or fake. But in the real world, emotional responses to hardship vary from person

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to person and from culture to culture. Panelists will probe and challenge the cultural and aesthetic basis for the supposed authenticity of unmitigated bleakness in dystopia and consider other emotional tones that dystopian stories might explore.

(56) Sunday - 10:00 AM

Main Track 3 • **Ancestral Past and Anchored Future: Toward a Mexican American Futurism** • *David Bowles*

Mexican American author and scholar David Bowles traces the evolution of culturally-specific futurist stories by Mexican American writers of speculative fiction, drawing from his own work and that of others—as well as critical assessments of the movement—to suggest the major tenets and trends of a mestizo (hybrid) futurism he calls by the Nahuatl name Nican Huehcatlahtolli.

(57) Sunday - 10:00 AM

Readings • **José Pablo Iriarte**

José Pablo Iriarte reads the short story "Life in Stone, Glass, and Plastic."

(58) Sunday - 10:00 AM

Kaffeeklatsches • **teri.zin**

(59) Sunday - 10:30 AM

Readings • **M. Christian**

M. Christian reads the short story "Ichi-go, Ichi-e."

(60) Sunday - 11:00 AM

Main Track 1 • **The Unevenly Distributed Future Is Here, and It Sucks** • *Mike Allen, Christopher Brown, Nicole Kornher-Stace, Matthew Kressel, Francesco Verso*

We live in a cyberpunk dystopia: social media delivers surveillance and misinformation while selling our attention to the highest bidder, artificial intelligence is rewiring our brains, cryptocurrency is killing the planet, and the largest tech companies are both mega-rich and mega-powerful. How might we analyze early and recent cyberpunk in light of developments in technology, geopolitics, the global economy, and the climate crisis? And how can cyberpunk evolve now that reality's caught up with it?

(61) Sunday - 11:00 AM

Main Track 2 • **Gothic Fiction's Love Affair with Toxic Relationships** • *Julie C. Day, M.*

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Dressler, Kit Mayquist, Vivian Shaw, Farah Rose Smith

Gothic fiction has a long history of dramatically tortured relationships. These can emphasize the emotional isolation that's common in horror or play up the tension of threats coming from loved ones. What else do terrible and terrifying relationships bring to a story, and why do we love to read about them? This panel will discuss the appeal of the mad, bad, and dangerous-to-know in monstrous and mimetic gothic fiction, whether they're locked in the attic or lurking outside a window on a rainswept moor.

(62) Sunday - 11:00 AM

Main Track 3 • **How I Wrote *A Song for a New Day*** • *Sarah Pinsker*

Sarah Pinsker's hopeful near-future musical dystopia *A Song For A New Day* came out in September 2019. It anticipated the Covid-19 pandemic so well that in her Nebula Award acceptance speech, she said, "Please make my novel fiction again." She'll discuss writing a novel in song format, the secret soundtrack in the table of contents, and how her music career informs both her topics and her prose.

(63) Sunday - 11:00 AM

Readings • **Connie Wilkins (aka Sacchi Green)**

Connie Wilkins, also known as Sacchi Green, reads the short story "The Bridge."

(64) Sunday - 11:00 AM

Kaffeeklatsches • **Jeffrey Ford**

(65) Sunday - 12:00 PM

Main Track 1 • **The Works and Life of Vonda N. McIntyre** • *Nicola Griffith, Victoria Janssen, Robert Killheffer, Barbara Krasnoff*

Described by the *Guardian* as "foremost among a legion of new female science-fiction authors in the early 1970s," MGOH Vonda N. McIntyre sold her first short story in 1969 and was one of the first successful graduates of the Clarion Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers' Workshop in 1970, launching a career that would span the next four decades. During that time, she became only the second woman to win a Nebula Award and the third to win the Hugo Award for Best Novel. Before her death in 2019, she wrote 16 novels (five of them *Star Trek* tie-ins), published a collection of her early short fiction, edited two anthologies, won a second Nebula, and founded the Clarion West Writers Workshop. Join us to celebrate the life, work, and legacy of this speculative fiction icon.

(66) **Sunday - 12:00 PM**

Main Track 2 • **A Sense of Place** • *Andy Duncan, John Langan, John P. Murphy, Graham Sleight, Patty Templeton*

Both GOH Ursula Vernon and GOH Jeffrey Ford write stories that are deeply rooted in particular locales, both real and imagined: small towns and wildernesses, islands and deserts, homes that feel truly lived-in. This panel will highlight the ways this sense of place influences Ford and Vernon's work, including through the development of rich characters and the blending of the real and the fantastical or folkloric.

(67) **Sunday - 12:00 PM**

Main Track 3 • **Archive Recording: Carol Emshwiller** • *Jim Freund*

In this recording from 2008, Carol Emshwiller reads her short story "Killers."

(68) **Sunday - 12:00 PM**

Readings • **Samuel R. Delany**

Samuel R. Delany reads from the essay "Beatitudes."

(69) **Sunday - 12:00 PM**

Kaffeeklatsches • **Amal El-Mohtar**

(70) **Sunday - 12:30 PM**

Readings • **Cecilia Tan**

Cecilia Tan reads the short stories "Sacred Heart" and "Brass Tacks."

(71) **Sunday - 2:00 PM**

Main Track 1 • **Everywhere a Threshold** • *Gillian Daniels, Amal El-Mohtar, Erin Roberts, Geoff Ryman, T.X. Watson*

Fantasy has always drawn energy from the border between quotidian Here and numinous There, out beyond the fields we know. But we can no longer assume we share the same Here. The shrinking of the globe has brought many of us into contact with worldviews that are profoundly different from the ones we know, in addition to uncovering unexpected commonalities. How does fantasy handle this tectonic shift? What are the works that navigate, nimbly or otherwise, this multiplicity of Heres and Theres and the blurring of the borders among them?

(72) Sunday - 2:00 PM

Main Track 2 • **Women on the Margins of (Alternate) History** • *Aliette de Bodard, Gwynne Garfinkle, Andrea Hairston, Ada Palmer, Lesley Wheeler (she/her)*

In the 2019 *Atlantic* article "Was Shakespeare a Woman?", Elizabeth Winkler writes, "Stories about women's lost and obscured achievements so often... [reveal] a history different from the one we've learned." Kameron Hurley's 2013 essay "'We Have Always Fought': Challenging the 'Women, Cattle, and Slaves' Narrative" observes, "It's often hard to sort out what we actually experienced from what we're told we experienced, or what we *should* have experienced." How might fictional histories explore realities that feel unreal because people are taught that the untrue is true? When the historical research writers depend on is itself biased, how can inadvertent erasures and obscurations be avoided? And what makes narratives about women feel like what should have happened, or like what did happen?

(73) Sunday - 2:00 PM

Main Track 3 • **Elements of Horror in Toni Morrison's Use of Magical Realism and African American Folklore** • *Sumiko Saulson*

Sumiko Saulson will examine the work of Toni Morrison through the lens of horror, discussing its specific connection to the American Gothic and Southern Gothic horror subgenres, and will examine her use of magical realism and African/African American folklore to evoke imagery and consistent with the horror genre in *Beloved*, *Sula*, *Song of Solomon*, and *The Bluest Eye*.

(74) Sunday - 2:00 PM

Readings • **Martin Cahill**

Martin Cahill reads the short story "Audition for the Fox."

(75) Sunday - 2:00 PM

Kaffeeklatsches • **Akua Lezli Hope**

(76) Sunday - 2:30 PM

Readings • **A.T. Greenblatt**

A.T. Greenblatt reads the short story "The Family in the Adit."

(77) Sunday - 3:00 PM

Main Track 1 • **Old Woman's War** • *C.S.E. Cooney, Sally Wiener Grotta, Kate Maruyama, Michael Swanwick*

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In [a 2019 essay in *Nature*](#), Sylvia Spruck Wrigley wrote about the dearth of older female characters in science fiction, the treatment of the few who do exist, and how those trends reflect the ageism, sexism, and other biases of the here and now. How can we change this dynamic? What can science fiction learn from fantasy, which often includes wise and powerful older women—and why hasn't science fiction borrowed those ideas and characters already?

(78) Sunday - 3:00 PM

Main Track 2 • **The Works of Ursula Vernon** • *Sarah Beth Durst, Ruthanna Emrys, Natalie Luhrs, Adrienne Martini, [Kate Nepveu](#)*

GOH Ursula Vernon, sometimes writing as T. Kingfisher, is a prolific author and artist whose work spans multiple genres and mediums. First known for her digital and mixed-media anthropomorphic art, she launched the webcomic *Digger* in 2003. Since then, she's written 21 children's books (mostly split between the Dragonbreath and Hamster Princess series), four books of fairytale retellings, nine fantasy novels, two horror novels, and a pile of short stories. She's won numerous awards for her art and writing, including two Hugos and a Nebula, and been a finalist for many more. Her stories are fun, memorable, and often incredibly poignant, consistently full of wit, humor, and great heart. Join us as we welcome her to Readercon and celebrate her impressive body of work.

(79) Sunday - 3:00 PM

Main Track 3 • **The Future of Sex** • *M. Christian*

Speculative fiction imagines scientific and technological advances in every context—except sex, where it's often been noticeably reluctant to even acknowledge present-day gadgets and habits. In this informative and entertaining talk, longtime science fiction and erotica author M. Christian will propose thought experiments, share news on recent breakthroughs in the intersection of sex and technology, and discuss how writers can embrace these developments thoughtfully and with respect.

(80) Sunday - 3:00 PM

Readings • **Jeffrey Ford**

Jeffrey Ford reads the short story "Monkey in the Woods."

(81) Sunday - 3:00 PM

Kaffeeklatsches • **Ellen Datlow**

(82) **Sunday - 3:30 PM**

Readings • **Malka Older**

Malka Older reads the short story "Sturdy Ladders and Lanterns."

(83) **Sunday - 4:00 PM**

Main Track 1 • **Grappling with Imperialism's Traumas** • *Aliette de Bodard, Anil Menon, Sherwood Smith, Sonya Taaffe, [teri.zin](#)*

In [a 2019 interview](#) for the *Barnes & Noble Sci-Fi & Fantasy Blog*, Zen Cho suggested that white Westerners who write SF/F tales of rebellion against empire are trying to shake off guilt about benefiting from real-world empires. Many white Western readers seek out those stories for the same reason. But underdog daydreams do little to confront or process the traumas wrought by imperialism. What are better options, for writers and readers?

(84) **Sunday - 4:00 PM**

Main Track 2 • **Content Tags: Implementation, Accommodation, and Ancillary**

Art • *Katherine Crichton, Gillian Daniels, Foz Meadows, AJ Odasso, Megan Whalen Turner*

The increased prevalence of content tags has led to growing questions around implementation. Useful for accommodation, content tags are also deployed on dynamic platforms such as AO3 to warn, advertise, and joke, becoming extra-diegetic material that is enjoyable on its own terms while providing meaningful context for the work. Still, there is a divide between those who want them and those who find them objectionable. How do content tags enhance and complicate reader experience, and what are emerging best practices that bookstores or publishers could adopt?

(85) **Sunday - 4:00 PM**

Main Track 3 • **Speculative Poets in Conversation** • *Akua Lezli Hope, Wendy Van Camp*

Akua Lezli Hope and Wendy Van Camp will discuss the many faces and facets of speculative poetry.

(86) **Sunday - 4:00 PM**

Readings • **Geoff Ryman**

Geoff Ryman reads an excerpt from *Animals*.

(87) **Sunday - 4:00 PM**

Kaffeeklatsches • **Samuel R. Delany**

(88) Sunday - 4:30 PM

Readings • **James Morrow**

James Morrow reads an excerpt from *Those Who Favor Fire*.

(89) Sunday - 6:00 PM

Main Track 1 • **Tabletop RPGs and Collaborative Storytelling** • *Martin Cahill, Melissa Caruso, N.S. Dolkart, Liz Gorinsky, Gregory A. Wilson*

The connection between fantasy literature and D&D is no secret, but with the proliferation—and destigmatization—of narrative role-playing games, speculative fiction authors of all stripes have become increasingly willing to draw connections between work and play. How can both writers and readers engage with the tropes, concepts, and ideas of TTRPG design to better inform their relationships with speculative fiction?

(90) Sunday - 6:00 PM

Main Track 2 • **Darmok and Jalad and Merriam and Webster** • *Leah Bobet, John Chu, Francesca Forrest, Greer Gilman, Sarah Smith*

At the "Decolonizing the Imagination" panel at Readercon 30, Cadwell Turnbull observed that linguistics as an academic field is restricted and distorted by underrepresentation of marginalized groups. How does that affect the ways languages, including constructed ones, are used in speculative fiction? What can authors do to overcome biased notions of what makes a language sound "magical" or "alien"?

(91) Sunday - 6:00 PM

Main Track 3 • **Build a Better Monster: Techniques for Creating Original and Terrifying Monsters in Your Fiction** • *Tim Waggoner*

Horror author Tim Waggoner will dig into what makes someone or something a monster, ways to use monsters in fiction, different ways to put fresh spins on old tropes, and much more.

(92) Sunday - 6:00 PM

Readings • **C.S.E. Cooney**

C.S.E. Cooney reads an excerpt from *Saint Death's Daughter*.

(93) Sunday - 6:00 PM

Kaffeeklatsches • **Robert V.S. Redick**

(94) Sunday - 6:30 PM

Readings • Sabrina Vourvoulias

Sabrina Vourvoulias reads an excerpt from the novella *Plena Cucuy*.

(95) Sunday - 7:00 PM

Main Track 1 • The Shirley Jackson Awards

The Shirley Jackson Awards recognize outstanding achievement in the literature of psychological suspense, horror, and the dark fantastic. Jackson (1916–1965) wrote classic works such as *The Haunting of Hill House*, *We Have Always Lived in the Castle*, and "The Lottery." Readercon's guests of honor will emcee the ceremony, granting awards to the best works published in 2020 as selected by a jury of professionals in the field.

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