

# **READERCON 34**

## **Program Guide**

**Guests of Honor:**  
**Cecilia Tan and P. Djèlí Clark**  
**Memorial Guest of Honor:**  
**Charles R. Saunders**

**July 17-20, 2025**  
**Boston Marriott Burlington**  
**Burlington, MA**

# READERCON 34 • Burlington MA • July 17-20 2025

**THU 8:00 PM** 60 minutes

Create / Collaborate

• **Apocalyptic and Anti-Apocalyptic Fiction** • *Tom Doyle*

The 1990s saw the dramatic rise of apocalyptic fiction like the *Left Behind* series, sometimes labeled Christian science fiction. During the same period, a counternarrative within science fiction and fantasy became popular: the anti-apocalyptic story, which took its structure from the Christian plotline but avoided the usual tragic outcome in a humanistic manner: e.g., in the book *Good Omens*. Tom Doyle will discuss the common forms and implications of these conflicting narratives, and look at where they are now.

**THU 8:00 PM** 30 minutes

Empower / Embrace

• **Reading: Ken Schneyer** • *Ken Schneyer*

Solo reading featuring author Ken Schneyer.

**THU 8:00 PM** 60 minutes

Salon G/H

• **Understanding Originals Through their Responses** • *Rebecca Fraimow, Melissa Bobe (M), Greer Gilman, Michael Dirda*

An expected result of discovering books in conversation with each other is that reading the older book illuminates hidden aspects of the newer one. But what of the reverse case, when reading the response tells you something new about the original? Panelists will discuss the deeply satisfying experience of appreciating originals through the responses to them, including examples they've seen, what they learned from them, and how this shaped their experience of both books.

**THU 8:00 PM** 60 minutes

Salon I/J

• **Dungeons & To Be Determined: A Fully Improvised Tabletop RPG** • *The Dungeons and TBD Cast*

Ever try to learn how to play a roleplaying game like D&D? How about making someone else learn, when YOU decide the rules and choose the adventure for them? The Boston-based crew that creates the award-nominated live-action play Blittle League of superpowered tweens is at your mercy as rules change, motivations mutate, and setting unsettle due to audience whims and whimsy. Watch as they spin an unforgettable yarn from unpredictable threads. You make the rules, we play with the consequences.

# READERCON 34 • Burlington MA • July 17-20 2025

**THU 8:30 PM** 30 minutes

Empower / Embrace

• **Reading: Mark Painter** • *Mark Painter*

Mark Painter reads an excerpt from his unpublished YA time-travel fantasy, titled *No Time Like The Present*.

**THU 8:30 PM** 30 minutes

Envision / Enliven

• **Reading: Laurence Raphael Brothers** • *Laurence Raphael Brothers*

Solo reading featuring author Laurence Raphael Brothers.

**THU 9:00 PM** 60 minutes

Create / Collaborate

• **How I Wrote *Someone You Can Build A Nest In*** • *John Wiswell*

John Wiswell, author of the multiple award-nominated *Someone You Can Build A Nest In*, discusses how he wrote his debut novel, including his approach to character construction, plot construction, pacing, and voice. Risks of attendance include jokes, but probably not being devoured and scavenged for parts.

**THU 9:00 PM** 30 minutes

Empower / Embrace

• **Reading: F. Brett Cox** • *F. Brett Cox*

F. Brett Cox reads a selected short story, either forthcoming or recently published.

**THU 9:00 PM** 30 minutes

Envision / Enliven

• **Reading: Tom Doyle** • *Tom Doyle*

Solo reading featuring Tom Doyle.

# READERCON 34 • Burlington MA • July 17-20 2025

**THU 9:00 PM** 60 minutes

Salon G/H

• **What Time Loops Reveal** • *David G. Shaw, Ian Randal Strock, Mark Painter, Ken Schneyer (M), Marianna Martin PhD*

The time loop is a favorite premise in science fiction, fantasy, and, increasingly, romance. What is the nature of its appeal, and has it been growing over time or does it only feel that way? What are the different fun variations on the theme, what does the fascination with going over and over until you *get it right* say about our society, and how many times have you read this description now? Are you sure?

**THU 9:00 PM** 60 minutes

Salon I/J

• **The Body (of Work) Keeps the Score: Writing as Therapy** • *Sophia Babai, Scott Edelman, Noah Beit-Aharon, Barbara Krasnoff (M), Melissa Bobe*

“Kill your darlings” is a common bit of writing advice. But how about killing your demons? Writing effectively often requires channeling emotional responses and personal memories, so it can also liberate them and be a cathartic experience for the writer. This panel will discuss works where the author was definitely working through some stuff, as well as the experience of using writing to exorcise one’s inner antagonists.

**THU 9:30 PM** 30 minutes

Empower / Embrace

• **Reading: Katherine Crichton** • *Katherine Crichton*

Solo reading featuring author Katherine Crichton.

**THU 9:30 PM** 30 minutes

Envision / Enliven

• **Reading: Sunny Moraine** • *Sunny Moraine*

Solo reading featuring Sunny Moraine.

# READERCON 34 • Burlington MA • July 17-20 2025

**FRI 10:00 AM** Registration, Information, and Con Suite open

**FRI 11:00 AM** 60 minutes

Create / Collaborate

• **Making Readercon Happen** • *Noah Beit-Aharon (M), Rae Borman, Lisa Goldstein, Thom Jones-Low*

Like any conference or convention, Readercon has a lot of moving parts that may not be evident from the outside. Come to hear our panel of organizers explain the process of making Readercon happen, to ask any questions you may have about anything from logistics to mission statements, and to find out how you too can contribute to the health and operation of our favorite literary conference.

**FRI 11:00 AM** 30 minutes

Empower / Embrace

• **Reading: Stephanie Wytovich** • *Stephanie Wytovich*

Stephanie Wytovich reads a mixture of poetry and flash fiction.

**FRI 11:00 AM** 30 minutes

Envision / Enliven

• **Reading: Anne E.G. Nydam** • *Anne E.G. Nydam*

Author Anne E.G. Nydam reads from *Bittersweetness & Light*, a collection of luminous, varied SFF short stories and poetry (and art) that looks for joy and shares reasons for hope.

**FRI 11:00 AM** 60 minutes

Salon F



• **The Fantastical Shtetl, and Other Wanderings** • *Sacha Lamb, Gennarose Nethercott, Benjamin Rosenbaum, Stephanie Feldman (M), Barbara Krasnoff*

Imaginative literature rooted in Jewish folklore has seen a recent revival, from novels such as Wecker's *The Golem and the Jinni*, Novik's *Spinning Silver*, Lamb's *When the Angels Left the Old Country*, and Nethercott's *Thistlefoot*, to games like Rosenbaum's *The Ghost and the Golem* and Goldberg & Rethal's *Doikayt* TTRPG anthology. Why have these long-slumbering stories found themselves urgently awoken right here, right now, in our present moment? What do the new tales share with those that came before?

# READERCON 34 • Burlington MA • July 17-20 2025

**FRI 11:00 AM** 60 minutes

Salon G/H

• ***The Last Dangerous Visions Finally Appeared. And . . . ?*** • Scott Lynch, Gary Wolfe (M), Gregory Feeley, Randee Dawn, Tom Doyle

First scheduled to appear in 1972, Harlan Ellison's *The Last Dangerous Visions* has finally been published, in altered and updated form, thanks to the editorial work of J. Michael Straczynski. The first two "Dangerous Visions" volumes were landmarks in their time, but what is to be made of this volume, and what will it mean to younger readers, or for that matter to those readers who have been waiting over 50 years for it?

**FRI 11:00 AM** 60 minutes

Salon I/J

• ***The Works of Charles R. Saunders*** • Tom Greene (M), Scott H. Andrews, P. Djèlí Clark, Dave Ring

Our Memorial GoH, Charles Saunders (1946 - 2020), is best remembered as a pioneer of *Sword and Soul*, fantasy fiction growing out of African legends and myths. His novels and short stories featuring the indomitable warrior Imaro are set in a fictional land, Nyumbani (Swahili for "home"), that shows its heritage clearly. Inspired by the historical warrior women of Dahomey, he created Dossouye, a female adventurer who starred in her own film, *Amazons* (1986), for which Saunders wrote the screenplay. Working as a journalist for the Halifax Daily News, he also documented in four works of non-fiction the history and lives of the African community that took root in Canada following the Revolutionary War. Our panel will discuss the career and life of this fantasy innovator.

**FRI 11:30 AM** 30 minutes

Empower / Embrace

• **Reading: Ellen Kushner** • Ellen Kushner

Ellen Kushner reads from *City Year* (working title), her forthcoming novel within the Swordpoint series.

**FRI 11:30 AM** 30 minutes

Envision / Enliven

• **Reading: Elizabeth Hand** • Elizabeth Hand

Elizabeth Hand reads from her forthcoming novel, *Unspeakable Things*.

# READERCON 34 • Burlington MA • July 17-20 2025

**FRI 12:00 PM** 60 minutes

Create / Collaborate

• **Sustaining the Small Press Ecosystem** • *Neil Clarke, Catherine Lundoff, Claire Houck/Nina Waters (M), Julie C. Day, Leon Perniciaro*

Small presses are often held up as the life blood of the genre, providing creative outlets for work that isn't a great fit for the Big Five, space for new voices, a jumping off pad for some careers, a gentler landing for others. And many of these things are true to different extents. But the attrition rate is enormous and the obstacles to success are daunting. So what do small presses bring to the table, what are some of the obstacles that they face, and Is there a way to support a healthier publishing ecosystem in the field?

**FRI 12:00 PM** 30 minutes

Empower / Embrace

• **Reading: David R. DeGraff** • *David R. DeGraff*

Solo reading featuring author David R. DeGraff.

**FRI 12:00 PM** 30 minutes

Envision / Enliven

• **Reading: Greer Gilman** • *Greer Gilman*

Greer Gilman reads from *Lightwards*, her third Cloudish novel.

**FRI 12:00 PM** 60 minutes

Salon F



• **Unexpectedly Relevant SF** • *Sheila Williams, Constance Fay, Benjamin Rosenbaum, Sarah Pinsker, Marianna Martin PhD (M)*

Sometimes, SF writers try to predict the future; other times, it's an accident. What do you do when a story or book you wrote seems to be inspired by a current event that hadn't happened yet when you were writing it? Are there books you've read that gave you a spooky feeling of prescience? Ones you'll always link to an event they definitely weren't written about (e.g. *Station Eleven* and COVID)?

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**FRI 12:00 PM** 60 minutes

Salon G/H

• **Fiction in Surprising Places** • *Chris Rose (M), Mur Lafferty, Gennarose Nethercott, Katherine Crichton, Jeff Hecht*

Some writers make stories a perk of their Patreon. Some paste new fiction into Amazon product reviews. Michael Swanwick writes a story on leaves every autumn, and puts it up on his webpage. Panelists will discuss the delight of finding fiction in unexpected places, as well as the motivations for, approaches to, and pros and cons of publishing fiction in nonstandard venues.

**FRI 12:00 PM** 60 minutes

Salon I/J

• **The International Imagination in a Time of Nationalism** • *R.W.W. Greene, Will McMahon (M), Sarah Smith, Matthew Mercier*

The U.S. government has in recent months cancelled NEA grants to a slew of small presses, particularly those with a focus on international translation. Many of the affected publishers regularly put out science fiction, fantasy, and imaginative literature from around the world, and will now have to cut down their lists. Panelists will discuss favorite recent works in translation, the influence of translations on the Anglophone field, and how readers can support small presses doing this critical work.

**FRI 12:30 PM** 30 minutes

Empower / Embrace

• **Reading: T.X. Watson** • *T.X. Watson*

Solo reading featuring T.X. Watson

**FRI 12:30 PM** 30 minutes

Envision / Enliven

• **Reading: Ian Randal Strock** • *Ian Randal Strock*

Solo reading featuring Ian Randal Strock.



# READERCON 34 • Burlington MA • July 17-20 2025

**FRI 1:00 PM** 60 minutes

Create / Collaborate

• **What Hath the Billionaires Wrought?** • *Victor Manibo, Natalie Luhrs, Jeff Hecht (M), Vandana Singh, Will McMahon*

Are billionaires taking science fiction too seriously as they try to shape the future? Adam Becker suggests this in his book *More Everything Forever: AI Overlords, Space Empires, and Silicon Valley's Crusade to Control the Fate of Humanity*. It's been long noted that the tech billionaire class seems unable to tell dystopian science fiction from a blueprint, but what impact has this phenomenon had on science fiction itself? Is there a way to make your fiction billionaire-proof?

**FRI 1:00 PM** 30 minutes

Empower / Embrace

• **Reading: dave ring** • *dave ring*

Solo reading featuring dave ring.

**FRI 1:00 PM** 30 minutes

Envision / Enliven

• **Reading: Delia Sherman** • *Delia Sherman*

Solo reading featuring Delia Sherman.

**FRI 1:00 PM** 60 minutes

Salon F



• **Why the Fantastical is Fantastic for Musicals** • *Noah Beit-Aharon, Barbara Krasnoff (M), Romie Stott, John Chu, Jessica Levai*

*Hadestown, Wicked, Into the Woods, and Cats* are all fantastic and fantastical hit musicals on the stage, while *Dr. Horrible's Sing-Along Blog* and *EPIC: The Musical* hit it big online. What, if anything, specific to the form of musicals makes them a good fit for speculative fiction? What are the less well-known genre musicals? And what can we learn from a failure like *Spider-Man: Turn Off the Dark*?

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**FRI 1:00 PM** 60 minutes

Salon G/H

• **Coherency in Storytelling** • *Richard Butner, Kate Nepveu (M), Ken Schneyer, W.B.J. Williams*

When Alison Bechdel sent her mother a copy of her frank memoir, *Are You My Mother?*, her mother's summary judgement was, "Well, it coheres." Most writing advice is based on the assumption that coherence of narrative is a paramount value in storytelling, but is that assumption borne out? Are there works of fiction that don't cohere, but in ways that still satisfy?

**FRI 1:00 PM** 60 minutes

Salon I/J

• **The Works of P. Djèlí Clark** • *Rob Cameron, Victoria Janssen, Leon Perniciaro, Tom Doyle, Andrea Hairston (M)*

Our Guest of Honor P. Djèlí Clark rounded out his first decade as a published author with a Nebula and a Locus for his fantasy police procedural novel, *The Master of Djinn*, and both those awards plus a British Fantasy Award for his monster-hunting novella *Ring Shout*. His short story "How to Raise a Kraken in Your Bathtub" is short-listed for the Hugo this year. As a History professor at University of Connecticut, he investigates the pathways leading from West African storyteller/poets (griots, a.k.a. Djèlí) to the American abolitionist movement. Help us celebrate the works of our honored guest!

**FRI 2:00 PM** 60 minutes

Create / Collaborate

• **Bisexuals in Science Fiction: Still Hip After All These Years?** • *Charlie Jane Anders, R.W.W. Greene, Cecilia Tan, Vandana Singh, Andrea Hairston (M)*

Bisexuality has been associated with futurism in both the U.S. and U.K. for over a 100 years, with each generation since the 1920's going through a phase where bisexuality was considered the "new, hip" sexual identity—and bis were accused of only doing it to be avant garde. Bi characters have been an SF trope since at least the 1940s, so is bisexuality still "trendy," or can we finally lay that idea to rest and have representation for its own sake, not to indicate society "moving forward"? Who's doing that best?

**FRI 2:00 PM** 30 minutes

Empower / Embrace

• **Reading: A.C. Wise** • *A.C. Wise*

Solo reading featuring A.C. Wise.

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**FRI 2:00 PM** 30 minutes

Envision / Enliven

• **Reading: Chris Rose** • *Chris Rose*

Solo reading featuring Chris Rose.

**FRI 2:00 PM** 60 minutes

Salon F



• **Biting the Other: The Transforming Racialization of Vampires** • *Sophia Babai, P. Djèlí Clark, Stephanie Wytovich, Tom Greene (M), Gennarose Nethercott*

The Western vampire story began (un)life as a borrowing from Eastern European folklore that more or less immediately turned into commentary on Eastern Europeans themselves. But for years now, authors of color have played with the racial undertones of the vampire story, transforming the tale into something entirely new. This panel will discuss the journey of the vampire across racial politics, and what that journey tells us about both vampires and ourselves.

**FRI 2:00 PM** 60 minutes

Salon G/H

• **All Stories Are Really About \_\_\_\_** • *John Clute, W.B.J. Williams, LJ Cohen, Karen Heuler, Stephanie Feldman (M)*

Conflict, change, love, consumption, human nature, and so on: commentators throughout history and across the internet have argued that All Stories are Really About (this one thing they spend all their free time thinking about). Surely one of them must be right, and in this panel our panelists will sort out which one it is, once and for all.

**FRI 2:00 PM** 60 minutes

Salon I/J

• **Continuing a Long-Delayed Series** • *Jim Freund (M), Scott Lynch, Mur Lafferty, Ellen Kushner*

The announcement of a long-delayed series continuation may prompt feelings of both anticipation and apprehension. What are series that have done this well or poorly, interestingly or instructively? A long series always evolves over time; is it much different when there's a longer gap between releases?

**FRI 2:00 PM** 60 minutes

Suite 830

• **Kaffeeklatsch: Caitlin Rozakis** • *Caitlin Rozakis*

Kaffeeklatsch with Caitlin Rozakis

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**FRI 2:00 PM** 60 minutes

Suite 830

• **Kaffeeklatsch: Elizabeth Hand** • *Elizabeth Hand*

Kaffeeklatsch with Elizabeth Hand

**FRI 2:30 PM** 30 minutes

Empower / Embrace

• **Reading: A.T. Greenblatt** • *A. T. Greenblatt*

Solo reading featuring author A.T. Greenblatt.

**FRI 2:30 PM** 30 minutes

Envision / Enliven

• **Reading: Beto O'Byrne** • *Beto O'Byrne*

An interactive solo reading with Beto O'Byrne.

**FRI 3:00 PM** Bookshop Opens

**FRI 3:00 PM** 60 minutes

Autographer's Table

• **Autograph Session: Ellen Kushner** • *Ellen Kushner*

Autograph Session with Ellen Kushner

**FRI 3:00 PM** 60 minutes

Autographer's Table

• **Autograph Session: Cecilia Tan** • *Cecilia Tan*

Autograph Session with Cecilia Tan

**FRI 3:00 PM** 60 minutes

Create / Collaborate

• **Unveiling MAYA: A New Mythology** • *Sonakshi Mittal, Anand Gandhi, Zain Memon*

Do myths shape our civilization? As our world grows more complex, old myths struggle to illuminate and guide our course. The ancient maps, with their “here be dragons,” obscure more than they reveal. Visionary filmmaker Anand Gandhi and celebrated game designer Zain Memon present MAYA: an epic narrative universe unfolding across books, games, and films.

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**FRI 3:00 PM** 30 minutes

Empower / Embrace

• **Reading: Sarah Smith** • *Sarah Smith*

Solo reading featuring author Sarah Smith.

**FRI 3:00 PM** 30 minutes

Envision / Enliven

• **Reading: Gillian Daniels** • *Gillian Daniels*

Solo reading featuring Gillian Daniels.

**FRI 3:00 PM** 60 minutes

Salon F



• **Empire and Complicity** • *Kate Nepveu, Alexander Jablovkov (M), Constance Fay, Tom Greene, Carl Engle-Laird*

On an episode of the Coode Street Podcast, Emily Tesh discussed how recent authors (including herself, Yoon Ha Lee, Arkady Martine, and Tamsyn Muir) have turned the space opera into an exploration not merely of classic themes of empire and rebellion, but of much more complex questions of complicity. We see characters who not only revolt against the evil empires they inhabit, but also contend with their own roles in building and maintaining empire, and the ways in which the evil empire has benefited them personally. What works have best threaded this needle, and what does this trend in storytelling tell us about our current literary moment?

**FRI 3:00 PM** 60 minutes

Salon G/H

• **Horror and the Weird** • *Michael Cisco, Emmett Nahil, Marguerite Sheffer, Lark Morgan Lu (M), Ian Muneshwar*

It's not uncommon to see "horror fiction" and "weird fiction" discussed as if they are interchangeable, and yet, though there is significant overlap, the Weird need not be horrifying. How is Weird fiction defined in 2025, and who is writing it? What causes that sense of reality shifting into the strange and sublime that distinguishes the best Weird fiction?

# READERCON 34 • Burlington MA • July 17-20 2025

**FRI 3:00 PM** 60 minutes

Salon I/J

• **Writers Who Translate, Translators Who Write** • *Ekaterina Sedia, John Chu, J.M. Sidorova*

The art of translation involves a plethora of rhetorical skills that serve well for original composition as well: aesthetic word choice, poetical compression, fluid and rhythmic patterning, and fidelity to voice whether that of another author, or of the voice inside one's head. No surprise, then, that translators often author fiction of their own. Author-translators will discuss how these two forms of creativity inform and influence each other, and whether they ever interfere with each other instead.

**FRI 3:00 PM** 60 minutes

Suite 830

• **Kaffeeklatsch: Cameron Roberson** • *Rob Cameron*

Kaffeeklatsch with Cameron Roberson

**FRI 3:00 PM** 60 minutes

Suite 830

• **Kaffeeklatsch: Elizabeth Bear** • *Elizabeth Bear*

Kaffeeklatsch with Elizabeth Bear

**FRI 3:30 PM** 30 minutes

Empower / Embrace

• **Reading: Noah Beit-Aharon** • *Noah Beit-Aharon*

Noah Beit-Aharon reads from the libretto of his fantasy opera, *The Changelings*.

**FRI 3:30 PM** 90 minutes

Envision / Enliven

• **Broad Universe Rapid-Fire Reading** • *Randee Dawn, BrightFlame, Marianna Martin PhD, Anne E.G. Nydam, Catherine Lundoff, LJ Cohen*

Broad Universe is an international non-profit organization dedicated to promoting, encouraging, honoring, and celebrating women and historically excluded and marginalized genders writing, editing, and publishing in science fiction, fantasy, horror, and other speculative genres.

**FRI 4:00 PM** 60 minutes

Autographer's Table

• **Autograph Session: Scott Edelman** • *Scott Edelman*

Autograph Session with Scott Edelman

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**FRI 4:00 PM** 60 minutes

Autographer's Table

• **Autograph Session: Max Gladstone** • *Max Gladstone*

Autograph Session with Max Gladstone

**FRI 4:00 PM** 60 minutes

Create / Collaborate

• **Crafts as Magic, Magic as Craft** • *Natalie Luhrs, Chris Rose, Stephanie Wytovich, Greer Gilman, Scott H. Andrews (M)*

To those of us who have never learned such skills ourselves, all manner of crafts from cooking to pottery and from fiber arts to woodwork can seem like magic. In what ways is it illuminating to talk about crafts and magic in terms of each other? What stories have made good use of crafts as magic or magic as craft?

**FRI 4:00 PM** 60 minutes

Empower / Embrace

• **Reading: Cecilia Tan** • *Cecilia Tan*

Solo reading featuring author and Guest of Honor Cecilia Tan.

**FRI 4:00 PM** 60 minutes

Salon F



• **Tragic Endings and the Catharsis of a Bad Time** • *John Clute, Emmett Nahil, Delia Sherman, Shariann Lewitt, Tom Doyle (M)*

The protagonist has no mouth and must scream, Othello believes Iago, and some days we can't--or don't want to--imagine Sisyphus happy. Why do stories that end in despair have such enduring appeal? How can writers of deeply unhappy endings achieve their goals, given that readers usually expect happy endings? And what stories are so bleak that they wrap around to being comforting?

**FRI 4:00 PM** 60 minutes

Salon G/H

• **The Year in Speculative Fiction** • *Sophia Babai (M), A.C. Wise, Charlie Jane Anders, Rich Horton*

A panel of reviewers discusses favorite speculative titles published since last year's Readercon, in all lengths and genres, as well as what trends and themes have emerged over the past year, and possibly some predictions about what awaits us in the year ahead.

# READERCON 34 • Burlington MA • July 17-20 2025

**FRI 4:00 PM** 60 minutes

Salon I/J

• **When the Law Lags Behind** • *Mark Painter, B. Diane Martin, John O'Neil, David R. DeGraff (M)*

Law relies on the slow accumulation of precedents to formulate its prescriptions, but hi-tech prefers to "move fast and break things," including the law itself. While pubescent hackers storm our government agencies and generative AI "hallucinates" citations in legal briefs, let's discuss how laws get written to regulate technology, how we can imagine that process playing out differently, and what happens if (when?) laws governing tech produce unintended consequences.

**FRI 4:00 PM** 60 minutes

Suite 830

• **Kaffeeklatsch: Gary Wolfe** • *Gary Wolfe*

Kaffeeklatsch with Gary Wolfe

**FRI 4:00 PM** 60 minutes

Suite 830

• **Kaffeeklatsch: Victor Manibo** • *Victor Manibo*

Kaffeeklatsch with Victor Manibo

**FRI 5:00 PM** 60 minutes

Autographer's Table

• **Autograph Session: Mur Lafferty** • *Mur Lafferty*

Autograph Session with Mur Lafferty

**FRI 5:00 PM** 60 minutes

Autographer's Table

• **Autograph Session: Charlie Jane Anders** • *Charlie Jane Anders*

Autograph Session with Charlie Jane Anders



# READERCON 34 • Burlington MA • July 17-20 2025

**FRI 5:00 PM** 60 minutes

Create / Collaborate

• **Remembering Barry Malzberg** • *Scott Edelman, Gregory Feeley (M), Jim Freund, Rich Horton*

Barry Malzberg (1939 - 2024) was a man of multiple aspects: a disparager of hack science fiction who could churn out a novel in a weekend, an acerbic observer of humanity's manifest destiny in space who still won and accepted the first John W. Campbell Award. He was also a frequent Readercon panelist and a good friend to many who attend. Come with your memories of Barry and help discuss what he meant to us and our community.

**FRI 5:00 PM** 60 minutes

Salon F



• **Cozy Horror Fiction: Putting the Comfort in Discomfort** • *Will Ludwigsen, John Wiswell, Sarah Pinsker, Tracy Majka, Caitlin Rozakis (M)*

At Readercon 33, we discussed the proliferation of cozy SFF--but what of cozy horror? What qualifies horror as cozy, and what purpose does such fiction serve that was not being met by more traditional horror writing? Is there something about our current cultural moment that has made a space for cozy horror where none previously existed?

**FRI 5:00 PM** 60 minutes

Salon G/H

• **Is the Quest Fantasy Dead?** • *Scott Lynch, Robert V.S. Redick (M), Lyndsay Ely, Ian Randal Strock, P. Djèlí Clark*

The quest novel seems to have fallen out of fashion in epic fantasy. What happened? Was it killed by vast, multiple-POV series like *A Song of Ice and Fire* and the *Malazan Book of the Fallen*? Rendered obsolete by video games? Is its departure an illusion, and it's still alive and kicking in some form? What aspects of the quest structure retain narrative usefulness or appeal, and what are its limitations?

# READERCON 34 • Burlington MA • July 17-20 2025

**FRI 5:00 PM** 60 minutes

Salon I/J

• **The Purposes of Memorable Insults in Sci-Fi and Fantasy** • *Victoria Janssen, Anne E.G. Nydam, Ellen Kushner, Storm Humbert (M), Charles Allison*

Some of the most quotable lines in science fiction and fantasy are zingers. Wit can do a lot to build a character, a world, and a universe, and has the ability to either support or undermine reader expectations. This panel aims to explore and elaborate on the use of wit--and especially takedowns--in literature, exposing how a verbal jab can serve as more than just a punchline.

**FRI 5:00 PM** 60 minutes

Suite 830

• **Kaffeeklatsch: dave ring** • *dave ring*

Kaffeeklatsch with dave ring.

**FRI 5:00 PM** 60 minutes

Suite 830

• **Kaffeeklatsch: Allison King** • *Allison King*

Kaffeeklatsch with Allison King

**FRI 6:00 PM** 60 minutes

Autographer's Table

• **Autograph Session: LJ Cohen** • *LJ Cohen*

Autograph Session with LJ Cohen

**FRI 6:00 PM** 60 minutes

Create / Collaborate

• **Genes, genomes, language, story: a common thread** • *J.M. Sidorova*

In this updated talk from Readercon 25, Author and molecular biologist J.M.

Sidorova discusses parallels between language and biology, evolution and function of words and genes. What evolutionary trends do we see in the language of social media, and what can be gained from viewing stories and storytelling through a lens of genome function?

# READERCON 34 • Burlington MA • July 17-20 2025

**FRI 6:00 PM** 60 minutes



Salon F

• **"Nice Review You've Got There..."** • *Sacha Lamb, Andrea Martinez Corbin (M), Michael Dirda, Ian Muneshwar, Gregory A. Wilson*

On the Hugo-winning blog Lady Business, book blogger Renay noted that negative and even mixed reviews of books have become rare, thanks in large part to the potential unpleasantness and dogpiling that can ensue when authors and fans become upset by negative reviews. Can the revival of blogs and newsletters foster a comeback of critical commentary, or has our social media culture doomed us to "good vibes only" book reviews from here on out? What can fandom do to encourage critical work that's occasionally, you know, critical?

**FRI 6:00 PM** 60 minutes

Salon G/H

• **Writers Without Internal Monologues** • *Max Gladstone, R.W.W. Greene, John Murphy, Romie Stott (M)*

What is the writing experience like for those of us who do not have a voice in our heads that describes what we're doing (and, perhaps, why)? When we don't think in words, how do we make the words flow? What other writing challenges can be posed by a lack of internal narration, and what strategies and techniques have different writers developed in response?

**FRI 6:00 PM** 60 minutes

Salon I/J

• **Future Boston at 30** • *Sarah Smith (M), Steven Popkes, Alexander Jablovkov*

David Alexander Smith's shared-world anthology of the future history of Boston from 1990 to 2100, which was published 30 years ago and is being republished this year, posited revolutions, alien occupations, and an encroaching Atlantic all threatening our beloved city. The anthology had its start right here at Readercon, from participants turned contributors like Sarah Smith, Alex Jablovkov, and Stephen Popkes. Come hear how they mapped out the future perils of Beantown, how their stories match up to the reality, and what might come next.

**FRI 6:00 PM** 60 minutes

Suite 830

• **Kaffeeklatsch: A. T. Greenblatt** • *A. T. Greenblatt*

Kaffeeklatsch with A. T. Greenblatt

# READERCON 34 • Burlington MA • July 17-20 2025

**FRI 6:00 PM** 60 minutes

Suite 830

• **Kaffeeklatsch: Jeff Hecht** • *Jeff Hecht*

Kaffeeklatsch with Jeff Hecht

**FRI 7:00 PM** Bookshop closes

**FRI 7:00 PM** 60 minutes

Create / Collaborate

• **Modernizing the Arthurian Myths** • *Rebecca Fraimow, Elizabeth Bear (M), Shariann Lewitt, Lila Garrott*

Arthurian legends have been retold with trains, newspapers, street gangs, coconuts, spaceships, post-apocalyptic boarding schools, time-and-space-distorting election machines, and Connecticut Yankees. Panelists will describe their favorite modern takes on the traditional Arthuriana, consider what the retelling brings to the story, and debate whether the base material is intrinsically timeless, intrinsically weird, or merely well-known enough to be easily messed with for giggles.

**FRI 7:00 PM** 60 minutes

Salon F



• **Making the Monster** • *Erin Roberts, John Wiswell, Emmett Nahil (M), Ian Muneshwar, Marisca Pichette*

What makes a good fictional monster? What separates the characterization of monster-as-antagonist from that of monster-as-misunderstood-beast? We'll talk about some of the most creative examples in horror and other fiction, and the functions they serve in the stories where they appear.

**FRI 7:00 PM** 60 minutes

Salon G/H

• **Moving from Traditional Publishing to Self-Publishing** • *Cecilia Tan, Sarah Smith, Jedediah Berry, Steven Popkes, Victoria Janssen (M)*

It's becoming increasingly common to hear of authors whose self-published work was so successful that they were picked up by a traditional publisher. But what of the authors who have gone the other way, by turning their backs on traditional publishing and going into self-publishing? Panelists will survey the varying reasons for making this transition, how authors have navigated it, and what this might say about the state of publishing overall.

# READERCON 34 • Burlington MA • July 17-20 2025

**FRI 7:00 PM** 60 minutes

Salon I/J

• **Sense of Wonder, Sense of Conviction** • *Victor Manibo, Caitlin Rozakis (M), Andrea Martinez Corbin, Max Gladstone, Ken Schneyer*

In his 1960 WorldCon guest of honor speech, James Blish argued that genre science fiction was not more popular and influential because readers seek “not the sense of wonder, but the sense of conviction... the feeling that the story is *about something* worth your adult attention.” Too much science fiction, he thought, was content to offer only “comfort and safety”; yet “good science fiction is neither.” How does this assessment hold up today, particularly given SFF’s dominance of popular culture?

**FRI 7:00 PM** 60 minutes

Suite 830

• **Kaffeeklatsch: Sarah Pinsker** • *Sarah Pinsker*

Kaffeeklatsch with Sarah Pinsker

**FRI 7:00 PM** 60 minutes

Suite 830

• **Kaffeeklatsch: Mur Lafferty** • *Mur Lafferty*

Kaffeeklatsch with Mur Lafferty

**FRI 8:00 PM** 60 minutes

Create / Collaborate

• **How to Fight a Fairy Tale: Retellings in the Age of Romantasy** • *Melissa Bobe, Randee Dawn (M), Delia Sherman, Anne E.G. Nydam, Shariann Lewitt*

Using Jenny Hamilton’s article of the same name as a jumping off point, this panel will contend with the assertion that “The trouble with structuring a book around a fairy tale is that fairy tales make no sense--but books have to.” Are both points of this claim essentially true, or do fairy tales make more sense--and books perhaps less--than Hamilton implies? Do we share her hopes about where the subgenre of fairy tale retellings is headed?

# READERCON 34 • Burlington MA • July 17-20 2025

**FRI 8:00 PM** 60 minutes

Empower / Embrace

• **Reading: Rebecca Fraimow & Elizabeth Porter Birdsall •**

*Rebecca Fraimow and Elizabeth Porter Birdsall*

Rebecca Fraimow and Elizabeth Porter Birdsall read a forthcoming co-written story, "Dead Drop"

**FRI 8:00 PM** 60 minutes

Suite 830

• **Kaffeeklatsch: Victoria Janssen •** *Victoria Janssen*

Kaffeeklatsch with Victoria Janssen

**FRI 8:00 PM** 60 minutes

Suite 830

• **Kaffeeklatsch: Romie Stott •** *Romie Stott*

Kaffeeklatsch with Romie Stott

**FRI 9:00 PM** 60 minutes

Create / Collaborate

• **Levels of Interiority •** *Will McMahon (M), Cecilia Tan, Erin Roberts, Max Gladstone*

There's been a discussion lately about bad books being written so "cinematicallly" that they have no interiority at all, giving the reader no more understanding of character motivations than if they were viewed on a screen. Is it possible to write a good book with no character interiority, such as a deeply withholding first person narrator? How have expected levels of interiority, or ways of signaling interiority, changed over time or across genres? And what stories could be improved by less interiority?

# READERCON 34 • Burlington MA • July 17-20 2025

FRI 10:00 PM 15 minutes



Salon F

• **Cordwainer Smith Rediscovery Award** • *Rich Horton*

FRI 10:15:00 PM 60 minutes

mask optional

Salon F

• **Meet the Pros(e)** • *Henry Wessells, A. T. Greenblatt, W.B.J. Williams, Gregory Feeley, William Alexander, Julie C. Day, Karen Heuler, Lyndsay Ely, Arula Ratnakar, Laura Antoniou, Gary Wolfe, Rande Dawn, Storm Humbert, Greer Gilman, Tom Doyle, Richard Butner, Matthew Kressel, Leigh Perry, Ian Randal Strock, Will McMahon, Caitlin Rozakis, Victor Manibo, Victoria Janssen, Scott Edelman, Gennarose Nethercott, Benjamin Rosenbaum, Robert V.S. Redick, J.M. Sidorova, R.W.W. Greene, Delia Sherman, Marguerite Sheffer, Allan Dyen-Shapiro, Sarah Pinsker, Allison King, Natalie Luhrs, Carl Engle-Laird, Sarah Smith, John Murphy, Jeff Hecht, Barbara Krasnoff, Sheila Williams, Elizabeth Hand, Matthew Mercier, Melissa Bobe, Jedediah Berry, Mark Painter, Neil Clarke, Leon Perniciaro, Alexander Jablovkov, Ken Schneyer, Shariann Lewitt, Andrea Hairston, LJ Cohen, Ellen Kushner, Rob Cameron, Jim Freund, Anne E.G. Nydam, dave ring*

At the Meet the Pros(e) party, program participants are assigned to tables with a roughly equal number of conferencegoers and other participants, and then table placements are scrambled at regular intervals so that everyone gets to meet a new set of people in a small-group setting. Think of it as a low-key sort of speed dating where you need never be the sole focus of anyone's attention, and the goal is just to get to know some cool Readerconnish people. **Please note that this event will include a bar and is mask-optional, unlike most other programming.**

FRI Midnight Con Suite Closes

SAT 8:30 AM Con Suite Opens

SAT 9:00 AM Registration and Information open

SAT 10:00 AM Bookshop Opens

SAT 10:00 AM 60 minutes

Autographer's Table

• **Autograph Session: Henry Wessells** • *Henry Wessells*

Autograph Session with Henry Wessells

# READERCON 34 • Burlington MA • July 17-20 2025

**SAT 10:00 AM** 60 minutes

Create / Collaborate

• **The Joys (and Perils?) of Reading Deeply** • *Rebecca Fraimow, Gregory A. Wilson, Delia Sherman, Lark Morgan Lu (M), Barbara Krasnoff*

In general, people are more likely to read widely (some books by many authors) than deeply (many books by one author). Panelists will discuss the joys, rewards, and even downsides of going deep with a particular author, series, or subgenre — and what led them to it.

**SAT 10:00 AM** 30 minutes

Empower / Embrace

• **Reading: John Chu** • *John Chu*

John Chu reads a selection from upcoming works in Uncanny and/or Tor.

**SAT 10:00 AM** 30 minutes

Envision / Enliven

• **Reading: Benjamin Rosenbaum** • *Benjamin Rosenbaum*

Solo reading featuring author Benjamin Rosenbaum.

**SAT 10:00 AM** 60 minutes

Salon F



• **Coming of (Old) Age Narratives** • *Catherine Lundoff, Lyndsay Ely, Elizabeth Hand (M), Fonda Lee, Vandana Singh*

It's more common to see older protagonists in speculative fiction now than it was in years past, a development that we cannot attribute to authors themselves aging-- after all, the "trend" of authors getting older has been present for thousands of years! What other factors might be contributing to the increase in aging protagonists, and how might we expect (or desire) genre fiction to continue developing in this regard?

**SAT 10:00 AM** 60 minutes

Salon G/H

• **Recycling, Reusing and Renewing Stories** • *Marisca Pichette (M), A. T. Greenblatt, Max Gladstone, Gwynne Garfinkle, P. Djèlí Clark*

At last year's Readercon, Max Gladstone said that he modeled his *Craft Sequence* on Samuel R. Delany's principle that the answer from one book in a series should become the problem of the next book. Some authors like to take multiple runs at the same story premise. What other ways do authors revisit their own work, what uses can that serve, and what are the pitfalls?



# READERCON 34 • Burlington MA • July 17-20 2025

**SAT 10:00 AM** 60 minutes

Salon I/J

• **Worldbuilding Office Hours** • *Erin Roberts, Katherine Crichton, Rob Cameron, John Murphy, David R. DeGraff (M)*

Does your story need a geophysical reason for your alien species to have developed flight but not the wheel? Do you need a newer ansible (enough with the quantum entanglement already)? How likely is bilateral symmetry, anyway? Stop handwaving, and ask our panel of garrulous scientists to brainstorm solutions!

**SAT 10:00 AM** 60 minutes

Suite 830

• **Kaffeeklatsch: Sarah Smith** • *Sarah Smith*

Kaffeeklatsch with Sarah Smith

**SAT 10:00 AM** 60 minutes

Suite 830

• **Kaffeeklatsch: Marguerite Sheffer** • *Marguerite Sheffer*

Kaffeeklatsch with Marguerite Sheffer

**SAT 10:30 AM** 30 minutes

Empower / Embrace

• **Reading: Robert V.S. Redick** • *Robert V.S. Redick*

Robert V.S. Redick reads from *Siege*, the last book in *The Fire Sacraments* epic fantasy trilogy.

**SAT 10:30 AM** 30 minutes

Envision / Enliven

• **Reading: Andrea Kriz** • *Andrea Kriz*

Andrea Kriz reads her flash fiction story, forthcoming at Lightspeed Magazine, "Update on Rules for the Spatiotemporal Use of Campus Spaces," as well as from her short story collection, *Learning to Hate Yourself as a Self-Defense Mechanism* from Interstellar Flight Press.

**SAT 11:00 AM** 60 minutes

Autographer's Table

• **Autograph Session: Elizabeth Bear** • *Elizabeth Bear*

Autograph Session with Elizabeth Bear

# READERCON 34 • Burlington MA • July 17-20 2025

**SAT 11:00 AM** 60 minutes

Autographer's Table

• **Autograph Session: Sacha Lamb** • *Sacha Lamb*

Autograph Session with Sacha Lamb

**SAT 11:00 AM** 60 minutes

Create / Collaborate

• **Architecture of the Imagination** • *David V. Griffin*

From Tolkien's Bag-End to Shirley Jackson's Hill House and from the streets of *Blade Runner* to the Emerald City of Oz, genre fiction and film have made use of architecture as far more than mere backdrop. Brutalism, Art Deco and the Gothic Revival have, as sources of inspiration or terror, been themselves a part of the action. Join architecture critic David V. Griffin for an illustrated look at some of genre's most astounding literary and cinematic settings.

**SAT 11:00 AM** 30 minutes

Empower / Embrace

• **Reading: Scott Lynch** • *Scott Lynch*

Solo reading featuring author Scott Lynch.

**SAT 11:00 AM** 30 minutes

Envision / Enliven

• **Reading: Will McMahon** • *Will McMahon*

Solo reading featuring Will McMahon.

**SAT 11:00 AM** 60 minutes

Salon F



• **The Allure of Orpheus and Eurydice** • *Kate Nepveu, Tom Doyle (M), Constance Fay, Greer Gilman*

The tragedy of Orpheus and Eurydice -- the lover who visits Hades to rescue his love, only to falter at the end -- has inspired artists for millennia. We'll look at why the story has resonated for so long, favorite adaptations and whether Orpheus could ever NOT look back.

# READERCON 34 • Burlington MA • July 17-20 2025

**SAT 11:00 AM** 60 minutes

Salon G/H

• **Ghosts vs gore: styles of horror** • *Joey Zone, Emmett Nahil, Matthew Mercier, Ian Muneshwar, F. Brett Cox (M)*

The horror genre raises a broad tent, and beneath it live wildly divergent approaches to the art of fear. At one end stand stories of ghosts and the strange, so subtle that the reader may wonder if anything supernatural even occurred. At the other end, extreme horror and splatterpunk are painted with blood. What draws creators and readers to these opposing styles? What does it say about us, and what of writers like Readercon 30 GoH Stephen Graham Jones who blend the two styles to create all-of-the-above horror?

**SAT 11:00 AM** 60 minutes

Salon I/J

• **Dhalgren at 50** • *Ian Randal Strock, Gregory Feeley (M), Jim Freund, Ann LeBlanc, Elizabeth Hand*

Samuel R. Delany's sprawling novel *Dhalgren* appeared in 1975 and has never been out of print since. Chronicling the coming-of-age adventures of "the Kid" (or "Kidd", or just "kid") in the ever-shifting city of Bellona, it challenges its readers by revealing more and more about its characters and setting in ways that force them to re-think everything that came before. Let's discuss this 50-year-old masterpiece, one of the most enormously influential novels in the history of science fiction.

**SAT 11:00 AM** 60 minutes

Suite 830

• **Kaffeeklatsch: Sheila Williams** • *Sheila Williams*

Kaffeeklatsch with Sheila Williams

**SAT 11:00 AM** 60 minutes

Suite 830

• **Kaffeeklatsch: John Clute** • *John Clute*

Kaffeeklatsch with John Clute

**SAT 11:30 AM** 30 minutes

Empower / Embrace

• **Reading: Scott Edelman** • *Scott Edelman*

Solo reading featuring Scott Edelman.

# READERCON 34 • Burlington MA • July 17-20 2025

**SAT 11:30 AM** 30 minutes

Envision / Enliven

• **Reading: Jessica Levai** • *Jessica Levai*

Jessica Levai reads from her novellas, *The Night Library Of Sternendach: A Vampire Opera In Verse* and *The Glass Garden*.

**SAT 12:00 PM** 60 minutes

Autographer's Table

• **Autograph Session: Jessica Levai** • *Jessica Levai*

Autograph Session with Jessica Levai

**SAT 12:00 PM** 60 minutes

Autographer's Table

• **Autograph Session: John Wiswell** • *John Wiswell*

Autograph Session with John Wiswell

**SAT 12:00 PM** 60 minutes

Create / Collaborate

• **Diaspora in Speculative Fiction** • *William Alexander, Fonda Lee (M), Andrea Hairston, P. Djèlí Clark, Rebecca Fraimow*

The genres that make up speculative fiction include many, many authors from diaspora cultures. How does this inform the way diaspora is portrayed in speculative fiction, and how does the fiction itself inform authors' and readers' relationships to their respective cultures? Panelists from a variety of diaspora cultures will discuss the ins and outs of diasporic fiction.

**SAT 12:00 PM** 30 minutes

Empower / Embrace

• **Reading: Randee Dawn** • *Randee Dawn*

Randee Dawn reads from *The Only Song Worth Singing* and her upcoming (in September) novel *Leave No Trace*.

**SAT 12:00 PM** 30 minutes

Envision / Enliven

• **Reading: Matthew Kressel** • *Matthew Kressel*

Matthew Kressel reads from his novel, *Space Trucker Jess*.

# READERCON 34 • Burlington MA • July 17-20 2025

**SAT 12:00 PM** 60 minutes

Salon F



• **Queer Romance in Speculative Fiction** • *Sophia Babai, Marisca Pichette (M), Catherine Lundoff, Benjamin Rosenbaum, Carl Engle-Laird*

Speculative fiction makes room for a wide-ranging exploration of social and cultural norms, including romantic norms. What does queering those norms look like in speculative worlds? Panelists will discuss writing and reading queer romance in speculative works, what it means for a romance to be queer within the world of the text, and what it means for a romance to be queer in the world of the author without transgressing cultural norms within the text.

**SAT 12:00 PM** 60 minutes

Salon G/H

• **What Works in Flash Fiction** • *Allan Dyen-Shapiro, Laurence Raphael Brothers (M), Marguerite Sheffer, Jeff Hecht, Lark Morgan Lu*

As the short story differs from the novel not only in size but also in kind, so too does the flash piece differ from the short story. What works in a piece of flash fiction that you could never get away with in 5,000 or 75,000 words instead of 500? How are the processes of writing, revising, publishing, and reviewing flash fiction distinct from those of longer works, and, well, why is flash so much fun?

**SAT 12:00 PM** 60 minutes

Salon I/J

• **The Works of Cecilia Tan** • *Victoria Janssen (M), Charlie Jane Anders, Laura Antoniou*

Our Guest of Honor, Cecilia Tan, has a publication history that spans Asimov's, Absolute Magnitude, Ms. Magazine, Penthouse, and Best American Erotica, among others. Writer and editor of science fiction and fantasy, especially as they intersect with erotica and romance, she is also the founder of Circlet Press, an independent publisher that specializes in speculative erotica. Her own writing earned a Lifetime Achievement for Erotica in 2014 from Romantic Times magazine. She also contributes to America's other pastime, baseball, in her role as Publications Director for the Society for American Baseball Research (SABR). Come hear our panel discuss Cecilia's many talents and accomplishments.

**SAT 12:00 PM** 60 minutes

Suite 830

• **Kaffeeklatsch: Max Gladstone** • *Max Gladstone*

Kaffeeklatsch with Max Gladstone

# READERCON 34 • Burlington MA • July 17-20 2025

**SAT 12:00 PM** 60 minutes

Suite 830

• **Kaffeeklatsch: Neil Clarke** • *Neil Clarke*

Kaffeeklatsch with Neil Clarke

**SAT 12:30 PM** 30 minutes

Empower / Embrace

• **Reading: Sarah Pinsker** • *Sarah Pinsker*

Solo reading featuring author Sarah Pinsker.

**SAT 12:30 PM** 30 minutes

Envision / Enliven

• **Reading: Richard Butner** • *Richard Butner*

Solo reading featuring author Richard Butner.

**SAT 1:00 PM** Bookshop closes for lunchbreak

**SAT 1:00 PM** 60 minutes

Create / Collaborate

• **Divination in the Writing Process** • *Cecilia Tan, Mur Lafferty, Stephanie Feldman (M), Jedediah Berry, Stephanie Wytovich*

Tarot, dice, tea leaves--regardless of your feelings about divination in the non-fictional world, they're always as applicable as you want them to be in worlds you control. How do authors use divination tools or other forms of mysticism to guide or inform their writing practices? What kinds of effects do you get from different methods?

**SAT 1:00 PM** 30 minutes

Empower / Embrace

• **Reading: Gregory A. Wilson** • *Gregory A. Wilson*

Gregory A. Wilson reads from *Shade and Shadow*, a novel in progress.

**SAT 1:00 PM** 30 minutes

Envision / Enliven

• **Reading: Melissa Bobe** • *Melissa Bobe*

Melissa Bobe reads a dark fairy tale, retelling either the "Pied Piper of Hamelin" or "Rapunzel" (audience choice!).

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**SAT 1:00 PM** 60 minutes

Salon F



• **The Author as Public Persona** • *Claire Houck/Nina Waters, Lyndsay Ely, Charlie Jane Anders, Max Gladstone, Marianna Martin PhD (M)*

In a recent Publishing Rodeo episode, the famously anonymous author Chuck Tingle argued that being an author is at least somewhat a public engagement, and that writers should not shirk that duty or shrink from that relationship. How can authors, from frontlisters to backlisters to self-publishers, navigate their careers as public figures? What responsibility do authors have to their audience, their society, and themselves?

**SAT 1:00 PM** 60 minutes

Salon G/H

• **The Molotov Cocktail Approach to Plotting Stories** • *Sophia Babai, Caitlin Rozakis, Robert V.S. Redick, Charles Allison (M), Shariann Lewitt*

On *The Good Place*, the character Jason Mendoza famously advocated Molotov cocktails as the solution to problems: "I'm telling you, Molotov cocktails work. Any time I had a problem, and I threw a Molotov cocktail, boom! Right away, I had a different problem." What other speculative fiction characters take this approach to life? What are the benefits to using the Molotov cocktail approach as a method of plotting? And what characters would we really like to hand a Molotov cocktail to, just this once?

**SAT 1:00 PM** 60 minutes

Salon I/J

• **The Female Man at 50** • *Gregory Feeley, John Clute, Barbara Krasnoff (M), Sarah Smith, Lila Garrott*

Joanna Russ's pioneering novel *The Female Man* appeared in 1975, as a paperback original SF novel. Coolly received upon its reception, it has become a modern classic of science fiction. We will discuss its place in Russ's canon, and in the canon of feminist science fiction as a whole.

**SAT 1:00 PM** 60 minutes

Suite 830

• **Kaffeeklatsch: Fonda Lee** • *Fonda Lee*

Kaffeeklatsch with Fonda Lee

# READERCON 34 • Burlington MA • July 17-20 2025

**SAT 1:00 PM** 60 minutes

Suite 830

• **Kaffeeklatsch: Randee Dawn** • *Randee Dawn*

Kaffeeklatsch with Randee Dawn

**SAT 1:30 PM** 30 minutes

Empower / Embrace

• **Reading: Shiv Ramdas** • *Shiv Ramdas*

Solo reading featuring Shiv Ramdas.

**SAT 1:30 PM** 30 minutes

Envision / Enliven

• **Reading: LJ Cohen** • *LJ Cohen*

LJ Cohen reads from her most recent release, *Litany For A Broken World*.

**SAT 2:00 PM** Bookshop reopens after lunchbreak

**SAT 2:00 PM** 60 minutes

Autographer's Table

• **Autograph Session: Victor Manibo** • *Victor Manibo*

Autograph Session with Victor Manibo

**SAT 2:00 PM** 60 minutes

Create / Collaborate

• **The Fatal Attraction of Generative AI** • *Erin Roberts, David G. Shaw (M), Ekaterina Sedia, John O'Neil, Lark Morgan Lu*

Another year, another Worldcon scandal, another example of people who should definitely know better falling for GenAI's promise to save time and effort. Building on panels from Readercons 32 and 33, this panel will discuss the structural factors that drive people and organizations to employ this technology even when they recognize it as unreliable and ultimately self-destructive.

**SAT 2:00 PM** 30 minutes

Empower / Embrace

• **Reading: Storm Humbert** • *Storm Humbert*

Solo reading featuring Storm Humbert.



# READERCON 34 • Burlington MA • July 17-20 2025

**SAT 2:00 PM** 30 minutes

Envision / Enliven

• **Reading: Matthew Mercier** • *Matthew Mercier*

Matthew Mercier tells true stories in the style of *The Moth* about his time as caretaker for the last home of Edgar Allan Poe, stories that helped inspire his novel *Poe & I*, but were too strange or outrageous to make it into the book.

**SAT 2:00 PM** 60 minutes

Salon F



• **Book Bans: How To Fight Them** • *Sacha Lamb (M), Gwynne Garfinkle, Rob Cameron, William Alexander, Allan Dyen-Shapiro*

Book bans are an ongoing problem for writers and readers in the United States, and we can only expect them to get support from a federal government that has itself removed books from shelves. Groups like Authors Against Book Bans have been mobilizing to stand against these attacks on free speech. This panel will provide information on book bans and offer strategies for fighting them.

**SAT 2:00 PM** 60 minutes

Salon G/H

• **Let's Do the Time Loop Again** • *John Chu, Carl Engle-Laird, Alexander Jablovkov, Ann LeBlanc, Andrea Kriz, David R. DeGraff, Andrea Martinez Corbin (M)*

The time loop is a favorite premise in science fiction, fantasy, and, increasingly, romance. What is the nature of its appeal, and has it been growing over time or does it only feel that way? What are the different fun variations on the theme, what does the fascination with going over and over until you *get it right* say about our society, and how many times have you read this description now? Are you sure?

**SAT 2:00 PM** 60 minutes

Salon I/J

• **Optimism in Horror** • *Joey Zone, John Wiswell, Kit Mayquist, F. Brett Cox, Gillian Daniels (M)*

Conventional wisdom would presume that horror and optimism rarely if ever blend, but does this prove true in practice? Don't many major works of horror have happy—or, well, happy-ish—endings? Is survival enough of an uplifting conclusion, or does a happy ending require the triumph of the protagonist? Even when evil appears set to return for the sequel? What role does optimism play in underscoring but not undermining the unease that horror supplies?

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**SAT 2:00 PM** 60 minutes

Suite 830

• **Kaffeeklatsch: Laura Antoniou** • *Laura Antoniou*

Kaffeeklatsch with Laura Antoniou

**SAT 2:00 PM** 60 minutes

Suite 830

• **Kaffeeklatsch: Scott H. Andrews** • *Scott H. Andrews*

Kaffeeklatsch with Scott H. Andrews

**SAT 2:30 PM** 30 minutes

Empower / Embrace

• **Reading: WBJ Williams** • *W.B.J. Williams*

Solo reading by author W.B.J. Williams

**SAT 2:30 PM** 30 minutes

Envision / Enliven

• **Reading: Will Ludwigsen** • *Will Ludwigsen*

Will Ludwigsen reads from his novella, *A Scout Is Brave*.

**SAT 3:00 PM** 60 minutes

Autographer's Table

• **Autograph Session: P. Djèlí Clark** • *P. Djèlí Clark*

Autograph Session with PP. Djèlí Clark

**SAT 3:00 PM** 60 minutes

Autographer's Table

• **Autograph Session: Sarah Pinsker** • *Sarah Pinsker*

Autograph Session with Sarah Pinsker

**SAT 3:00 PM** 60 minutes

Create / Collaborate

• **Unpredictably Topical Panel** • *Lyndsay Ely, Rob Cameron, Romie Stott (M), A.C. Wise*

Some happenings in the genre world can be predicted in advance, but sometimes a new development or controversy will erupt overnight and everyone will suddenly want to talk about it. This panel will discuss genre developments so recent that they weren't on our radar yet when we were writing panel descriptions. Who can say what those will be? Not us!

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**SAT 3:00 PM** 30 minutes

Empower / Embrace

• **Reading: Gwynne Garfinkle** • *Gwynne Garfinkle*

Gwynne Garfinkle reads from her new collection of short fiction, *Sinking, Sinking* (2024, Aqueduct Press).

**SAT 3:00 PM** 30 minutes

Envision / Enliven

• **Reading: Lila Garrott** • *Lila Garrott*

Lila Garrott reads from the novel-in-progress, *Nor Are We Out Of It*.

**SAT 3:00 PM** 60 minutes

Salon F



• **Cartography and the Imagination** • *Fonda Lee (M), Anne E.G. Nydam, Greer Gilman, Jedediah Berry, Robert V.S. Redick*

There are few conventions more ubiquitous in fantasy novels than the map at the beginning of the book. Often, as Diana Wynne Jones memorably put it in *The Tough Guide to Fantasyland*, "you must not expect to be let off from visiting every damn place shown on it." A map can be used to give a sense of place, to make a promise to the reader about which locations will become relevant, even to conceal or misdirect. This panel will discuss how maps can both illuminate an imagined world or conceal it's dark edges.

**SAT 3:00 PM** 60 minutes

Salon G/H

• **The Blurred Line Between Prediction and SF** • *Laurence Raphael Brothers, Andrea Hairston (M), Constance Fay, Julie C. Day, Arula Ratnakar*

We all predict the future all the time, while buying the week's groceries, saving for retirement, and so on. Professionally, there are futurists, trend forecasters, investors, economists, loan officers, people in R&D, people who are really into the stock market, sports bettors, and others for whom prediction is a way of life. How much of the futurist's skillset overlaps with or informs fiction writing? Is it helpful or unhelpful? What's the line between writing science fiction and doing what all of us do as part of being alive?

# READERCON 34 • Burlington MA • July 17-20 2025

**SAT 3:00 PM** 60 minutes

Salon I/J

• **Neurodivergent Approaches to Story** • *Sophia Babai, Ekaterina Sedia, LJ Cohen (M), Claire Houck/Nina Waters*

People have a tendency to understand and process our world through story, whether it's the stories we tell ourselves or how we relate our lives to stories we read and heard as children. People don't always approach fiction the same way as each other, however, and those of differing neurotypes can have very different approaches to both reading and writing fiction. How do these approaches differ, what common pieces of writing advice are best seen as meant for neurotypical ears only, and what less commonly-discussed methods have worked better for neurodiverse writers?

**SAT 3:00 PM** 60 minutes

Suite 830

• **Kaffeeklatsch: Scott Edelman** • *Scott Edelman*

Kaffeeklatsch with Scott Edelman

**SAT 3:00 PM** 60 minutes

Suite 830

• **Kaffeeklatsch: John Wiswell** • *John Wiswell*

Kaffeeklatsch with John Wiswell

**SAT 3:30 PM** 30 minutes

Empower / Embrace

• **Reading: Max Gladstone** • *Max Gladstone*

Solo reading featuring author Max Gladstone.

**SAT 3:30 PM** 30 minutes

Envision / Enliven

• **Reading: Michael Cisco** • *Michael Cisco*

Solo reading featuring author Michael Cisco.

# READERCON 34 • Burlington MA • July 17-20 2025

**SAT 4:00 PM** 60 minutes

Salon F



• **GoH Interview: Cecilia Tan** • *Cecilia Tan, Charlie Jane Anders (M)*

Charlie Jane Anders interviews Readercon 34 Guest of Honor Cecilia Tan

**SAT 5:00 PM** 60 minutes

Salon F



• **GOH Interview: P. Djèlí Clark** • *P. Djèlí Clark, Rob Cameron (M)*

Cameron Roberson interviews Guest of Honor P. Djèlí Clark

**SAT 6:00 PM** Registration and Information close

**SAT 6:00 PM** 60 minutes

Create / Collaborate

• **Speculative Poetry & Flash Fiction Open Mic** • *Christina M. Rau (M)*

An open mic for speculative poetry and flash fiction (or story excerpts, but it's more fun if the complete work is performed). Limit of 4 minutes per performer.

**SAT 6:00 PM** 60 minutes

Empower / Embrace

• **Storyteller Group Reading** • *Julie C. Day (M), Marisca Pichette*

A group reading from the Tanith Lee tribute anthology *Storyteller*, which includes stories from Mike Allen, CSE Cooney, Maya Deane, Andy Duncan, Rocío Rincón Fernández, Theodora Goss, CL Hellisen, Getty Hesse, Alaya Dawn Johnson, Starlene Justice, Amelia Mangan, Michael Yuya Montroy, Marisca Pichette, Nisi Shawl, KT Wagner, and Martha Wells.

**SAT 6:00 PM** 30 minutes

Envision / Enliven

• **Reading: Andrea Martinez Corbin** • *Andrea Martinez Corbin*

Solo reading featuring author Andrea Martinez Corbin.

# READERCON 34 • Burlington MA • July 17-20 2025

**SAT 6:00 PM** 60 minutes

Salon G/H

• **Erotica, Horror, and the Fear of Visceral Fiction** • *Cecilia Tan, Catherine Lundoff, Laura Antoniou, Gillian Daniels (M), Ian Muneshwar*

Erotica and horror: two genres guaranteed to make certain moms mad when they find the book hidden in your bedroom. Two genres that every other has tried (at least at times) to put down as shlock or trash. Why? What is it about literature that evokes strong visceral physical reactions from the reader that garners such opposition? (And is “paranormal romance” their love child?)

**SAT 6:00 PM** 60 minutes

Salon I/J

• **Where Have All the Shared Worlds Gone?** • *Ellen Kushner, Sarah Smith (M), Katherine Crichton*

The 1980s saw a number of prominent shared worlds, with multiple writers contributing stories--particularly short stories--set in the same world. Other than *Wild Cards*, edited by George R. R. Martin and Melinda M. Snodgrass, these have largely fallen by the wayside. What made shared worlds work well, when they did? Why did they vanish? Has their niche been filled by other things? And how are they different from public domain canons like the Cthulhu Mythos?

**SAT 6:00 PM** 60 minutes

Suite 830

• **Kaffeeklatsch: R.W.W. Greene** • *R.W.W. Greene*

Kaffeeklatsch with R.W.W. Greene

**SAT 6:00 PM** 60 minutes

Suite 830

• **Kaffeeklatsch: Ann LeBlanc** • *Ann LeBlanc*

Kaffeeklatsch with Ann LeBlanc

**SAT 6:30 PM** 30 minutes

Envision / Enliven

• **Reading: Karen Heuler** • *Karen Heuler*

Solo reading featuring author Karen Heuler.

**SAT 7:00 PM** Bookshop closes.

# READERCON 34 • Burlington MA • July 17-20 2025

**SAT 7:00 PM** 60 minutes

Create / Collaborate

• **Language and Linguistics in SF: The Good, The Bad and The Ugly** • *John O'Neil*

All science fiction (well, almost all) depends on speculating about, and perhaps contradicting, known science. However, what many writers "know" about linguistics ain't necessarily so. In this talk, linguist John O'Neil discusses SF books and stories that handled linguistic issues well...and some others. We'll also look at five things some languages do that will shock you, and make some suggestions for when you're asked by Hollywood to construct a language for next summer's blockbuster.

**SAT 7:00 PM** 30 minutes

Empower / Embrace

• **Reading: Mur Lafferty** • *Mur Lafferty*

Solo reading featuring Mur Lafferty.

**SAT 7:00 PM** 30 minutes

Envision / Enliven

• **Reading: Jeff Hecht** • *Jeff Hecht*

Jeff Hecht reads "The Future of Mars Colony 2" from *Nature Futures*, Aug 2, 2024.

**SAT 7:00 PM** 60 minutes

Salon G/H

• **We Need to Talk About Gaiman** • *Storm Humbert, Noah Beit-Aharon, Natalie Luhrs, Randee Dawn (M), R.W.W. Greene*

The revelation that Neil Gaiman is a serial predator shook the speculative fiction universe, but SFF has been rocked by such scandals since at least the days of Marion Zimmer Bradley. Is there something about SFF literary circles that gives predators particular cover? What can be done within our communities to flag predatory behavior and prevent future predation?

# READERCON 34 • Burlington MA • July 17-20 2025

**SAT 7:00 PM** 60 minutes

Salon I/J

• **Un-Kafkaesque Bureaucracies** • *Laurence Raphael Brothers, Shiv Ramdas, Steven Popkes, Victoria Janssen (M), J.M. Sidorova*

In fiction, bureaucracies are generally depicted as evil in its most banal form, yet many of the actual bureaucracies that shape our lives exist to protect us from corporate greed. How can--and should--we tell other stories about bureaucrats and bureaucracies, particularly as the U.S. stands on the precipice of disastrous deregulation? And might fantasies of bureaucracy (such Addison's *The Goblin Emperor* and Goddard's *The Hands of the Emperor*) be the next cozy subgenre?

**SAT 7:00 PM** 60 minutes

Suite 830

• **Kaffeeklatsch: William Alexander** • *William Alexander*

Kaffeeklatsch with William Alexander

**SAT 7:00 PM** 60 minutes

Suite 830

• **Kaffeeklatsch: Arula Ratnakar** • *Arula Ratnakar*

Kaffeeklatsch with Arula Ratnakar

**SAT 7:30 PM** 30 minutes

Empower / Embrace

• **Reading: Allan Dyen-Shapiro** • *Allan Dyen-Shapiro*

Allan Dyen-Shapiro reads from *The Day We Said Goodbye to the Birds*, an eco-SF novelette that he published with Rampant Loon Press in June 2025 with themes of environmental racism and scientists' social responsibility.

**SAT 7:30 PM** 30 minutes

Envision / Enliven

• **Reading: Shariann Lewitt** • *Shariann Lewitt*

Shariann Lewitt reads from her 2020 story, "Hide and Seek."

**SAT 8:00 PM** Con Suite closes (for a party setup)



# READERCON 34 • Burlington MA • July 17-20 2025

**SAT 8:00 PM** 60 minutes

Create / Collaborate

• **The Endless Appetite for Fanfiction** • *Victoria Janssen, Claire Houck/Nina Waters, Laura Antoniou, Kate Nepveu (M)*

In an article of the same name (<https://www.fansplaining.com/articles/endless-appetite-fanfiction>), Elizabeth Minkel discussed how “2024 was the year [fanfic] truly broke containment--everyone seemed to want a piece of the fanfiction pie, leaving fic authors themselves besieged on all sides.” Attempts to steal and monetize fanfic proliferated, as did reviews treating living authors as distant and unreachable. What do these trends say about larger changes in attitudes toward stories and creators? How can fans of all kinds nurture supportive connections to authors?

**SAT 8:00 PM** 30 minutes

Empower / Embrace

• **Reading: William Alexander** • *William Alexander*

William Alexander reads from his novel *Sunward*, forthcoming from Saga Press in September.

**SAT 8:00 PM** 30 minutes

Envision / Enliven

• **Reading: Barbara Krasnoff** • *Barbara Krasnoff*

Solo reading featuring author Barbara Krasnoff.

**SAT 8:00 PM** 60 minutes

Salon F



• **The Shirley Jackson Awards** • *P. Djèlí Clark, Cecilia Tan*

In recognition of the legacy of Shirley Jackson’s writing, and with permission of the author’s estate, The Shirley Jackson Awards, Inc. presents awards for outstanding achievement in the literature of psychological suspense, horror, and the dark fantastic. The Shirley Jackson Awards are voted on by a jury of professional writers, editors, critics, and academics. The awards are given for the best work published in the preceding calendar year in the following categories: Novel, Novella, Novelette, Short Fiction, Single-Author Collection, and Edited Anthology. The full list of this year’s nominees can be found at <https://www.shirleyjacksonawards.org>

# READERCON 34 • Burlington MA • July 17-20 2025

**SAT 8:00 PM** 60 minutes

Salon G/H

• **Profitability and Survival for Indie Genre Magazines** • *Matthew Kressel, Scott H. Andrews (M), Neil Clarke, Leon Perniciaro, Lila Garrott, Romie Stott*

Beneath Ceaseless Skies editor Scott H. Andrews' 2024 Guest of Honor speech at WFC Niagara raised an important question: why is the labor contributed by the editors and staff of indie genre magazines is so undervalued, and what can be done to change that? The work that goes into sustaining these venues often gets disregarded as "labor of love," even as genre organizations place great emphasis on increasing rates of payment to authors. How can we create a viable genre ecosystem that doesn't rely on devaluing anyone's labor?

**SAT 8:00 PM** 60 minutes

Salon I/J

• **Shredding vs Archiving Drafts** • *Scott Edelman, Randee Dawn (M), Natalie Luhrs, Karen Heuler*

Some writers want nothing to survive of their written work after death save the final drafts of the stories they love, and so they destroy letters, journals, early drafts. Other writers want the world to witness their process and box everything up for future archivists. This panel will engage proponents of both sides of the spectrum in dialogue and help the audience decide whether to cherish their early own work or turn it into confetti.

**SAT 9:00 PM** Con Suite reopens (Boskone/Philcon party)

**SAT 9:00 PM** 180 minutes

mask optional

Salon F

• **BSFW Karaoke Party** • *Bradley Robert Parks, Rob Cameron*

A karaoke party hosted by the Brooklyn Speculative Fiction Writers.

**SAT Midnight** Con Suite Closes

# READERCON 34 • Burlington MA • July 17-20 2025

**SUN 8:30 AM** Con Suite Opens

**SUN 9:00 AM** Registration and Information open

**SUN 10:00 AM** Bookshop opens

**SUN 10:00 AM** 60 minutes

Create / Collaborate

• **The Art of the SF Book Cover** • *John Clute, Henry Wessells*

Since its inception, the British Library, the national library of the UK, has stripped dust jackets off books in its holding and discarded the unwanted wrappers, losing an essential piece of their cultural and artistic significance. In *The Book Blindness*, science fiction historian and theorist John Clute details the “annals of vandalism” at the British Library, with a focus on works lost (and found). John Clute and antiquarian bookseller Henry Wessells give a joint presentation on this subject, with extra time for Q&A.

**SUN 10:00 AM** 30 minutes

Empower / Embrace

• **Reading: J.M. Sidorova** • *J.M. Sidorova*

Solo reading featuring author J.M. Sidorova.

**SUN 10:00 AM** 60 minutes

Salon F



• **Fictions of Climate Apocalypse** • *Allan Dyen-Shapiro, Marguerite Sheffer, Marisca Pichette, Stephanie Feldman (M), Leon Perniciaro*

How are speculative fiction writers approaching the environmental crisis facing humanity, and what are those approaches accomplishing? We'll look at movements in the speculative fiction community, from apocalyptic fiction to solarpunk, and discuss the roles of grief, hope, speculation, and nostalgia in these works.

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**SUN 10:00 AM** 60 minutes

Salon G/H

• **Take Your Novel to Work** • *Leigh Perry, Sarah Pinsker, Melissa Bobe, Marianna Martin PhD, Ken Schneyer (M)*

In the genre of fanfic known as "take your fandom to work," favorite characters are placed in the author's work environment, often resulting in delightfully concrete and minute details about ecological field research or running a bodega or being a summer camp counselor. How do stories of everyday vocation enhance the experience of reading and writing fiction, and what works of speculative fiction take best advantage of the granular details of work life? What can bringing characters to work tell us about both the characters and the work itself?

**SUN 10:00 AM** 60 minutes

Salon I/J

• **The Works of Clare Winger Harris** • *F. Brett Cox, Rich Horton*

Credited as the first woman in science fiction to publish under her own name, Clare Winger Harris (1891 - 1968) began her publishing career with her only novel, *Persephone of Eleusis: A Romance of Ancient Greece* (1923), which was inspired by her travels through Greece and Palestine. Switching to science fiction, she wrote a dozen stories from 1926 to 1933 for the classic pulps (Amazing Stories, Weird Tales, Science Wonder Quarterly), and was an early proponent of female protagonists. She rapidly became one of Gernsback's more popular authors, with tales such as "The Fate of the Poseidonia." Her final story, "The Vibrometer", appeared in a fanzine put together by two high-schoolers, Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster, of later DC Comics fame. Come discuss this winner of the 2024 Cordwainer Smith Rediscovery Award.

**SUN 10:00 AM** 60 minutes

Suite 830

• **Kaffeeklatsch: Remembering Barry Malzberg** • *B. Diane Martin*

Kaffeeklatsch hosted by B. Diane Martin, for gathering to remember Barry Malzberg.

**SUN 10:00 AM** 60 minutes

Suite 830

• **Kaffeeklatsch: P. Djèlí Clark** • *P. Djèlí Clark*

Kaffeeklatsch with P. Djèlí Clark

# READERCON 34 • Burlington MA • July 17-20 2025

**SUN 10:30 AM** 30 minutes

Empower / Embrace

• **Reading: Fonda Lee** • *Fonda Lee*

Solo reading featuring author Fonda Lee.

**SUN 10:30 AM** 30 minutes

Envision / Enliven

• **Reading: John Murphy** • *John Murphy*

Solo reading featuring author John Murphy

**SUN 11:00 AM** 60 minutes

Autographer's Table

• **Autograph Session: Fonda Lee** • *Fonda Lee*

Autograph Session with Fonda Lee

**SUN 11:00 AM** 60 minutes

Autographer's Table

• **Autograph Session: Constance Fay** • *Constance Fay*

Autograph Session with Constance Fay

**SUN 11:00 AM** 60 minutes

Create / Collaborate

• **We Demand Stories About U.S. Policy** • *Rob Cameron, BrightFlame, Rachel Gutin, Beto O'Byrne, Bradley Robert Parks, A. T. Greenblatt*

**We Demand Stories** is Brooklyn Speculative Fiction Writers' limited series salon. AI, eco-fiction, near future space exploration, post-Tolkien (postcolonial) world building, and death: BSFW takes on these topics and more with writers and academics who can broaden our understanding beyond the fear-driven news feed. After very brief readings from panelists, this salon invites the audience to join in a uniquely formatted conversation about U.S. policy. What are the many ways it affects the stories we're telling now, or want to talk about in the future?

**SUN 11:00 AM** 30 minutes

Empower / Embrace

• **Reading: Henry Wessells** • *Henry Wessells*

Henry Wessells reads from *The Elfland Prepositions* (2025) and from *Another Green World*.

# READERCON 34 • Burlington MA • July 17-20 2025

SUN 11:00 AM 60 minutes



Salon F

• **The Role of Whimsy in Fantasy** • *Andrea Hairston (M), Caitlin Rozakis, Charles Allison, Gennarose Nethercott*

There was a time when the fantasy genre was quite self-consciously whimsical in style, from *The Once and Future King* to the little ditties that leaven *The Lord of the Rings*. Yet such whimsy feels far less common in modern adult and YA fantasy -- so did it truly go away, or has it merely taken a different form? What is the role of whimsy in modern fantasy, and should we feel nostalgic for the bygone days of deliberate silliness, or are we better off saying good riddance?

SUN 11:00 AM 60 minutes

Salon G/H

• **Rod Serling: Centenary of Birth, 50th Anniversary of Death** • *Scott Edelman, Randee Dawn (M), Jim Freund, P. Djèlí Clark, Mark Painter*

Join us as we celebrate the 100th anniversary of the birth, and 50th of the death, of Rod Serling, the pioneering fantasist of American television. Starting with radio in the 1940s as an actor and writer, Serling moved swiftly to writing for television. With his own production company, he created *The Twilight Zone* (1959-1964), an enduring anthology series that spawned a magazine, a movie, and 3 revivals. Gather with our panel as they explore the range of Serling's works, "a wondrous land whose boundaries are that of the imagination."

SUN 11:00 AM 60 minutes

Salon I/J

• **The Body (of Work) Keeps the Score: Writing as Therapy (2)** • *Matthew Kressel, Elizabeth Bear (M), Gregory A. Wilson, Marguerite Sheffer, Kit Mayquist*

"Kill your darlings" is a common bit of writing advice. But how about killing your demons? Writing effectively often requires channeling emotional responses and personal memories, so it can also liberate them and be a cathartic experience for the writer. This panel will discuss works where the author was definitely working through some stuff, as well as the experience of using writing to exorcise one's inner antagonists.

SUN 11:00 AM 60 minutes

Suite 830

• **Kaffeeklatsch: Gregory Feeley** • *Gregory Feeley*

Kaffeeklatsch with Gregory Feeley

# READERCON 34 • Burlington MA • July 17-20 2025

**SUN 11:00 AM** 60 minutes

Suite 830

• **Kaffeeklatsch: Storm Humbert** • *Storm Humbert*

Kaffeeklatsch with Storm Humbert

**SUN 11:30 AM** 30 minutes

Empower / Embrace

• **Reading: Allison King** • *Allison King*

Allison King reads from her debut novel, *The Phoenix Pencil Company*.

**SUN 12:00 PM** Bookshop closes for lunchbreak

**SUN 12:00 PM** 60 minutes

Create / Collaborate

• **The Scientific Romance** • *John Clute, Michael Dirda*

The early divergence of American and British science fiction may best be witnessed in the works of UK authors in the 1930s and '40s that have been called "scientific romances." Unlike their pulp cousins in the US, these works lack the optimistic outlook of young square-jawed heroes out to conquer the galaxy. Instead, they offer anxiety about rogue scientists armed with Ultimate Weapons out to blackmail the world to either peace or servitude. In this presentation, famed fantastika theorist John Clute will discuss this less-recognized strand of SF.

**SUN 12:00 PM** 30 minutes

Empower / Embrace

• **Reading: Ann LeBlanc** • *Ann LeBlanc*

Solo reading featuring Ann LeBlanc.

**SUN 12:00 PM** 60 minutes

Salon F



• **Beyond the Bio: Weird Jobs & the Worlds They Inspired** • *Cecilia Tan,*

*Gennarose Nethercott, Katherine Crighton, Matthew Kressel, Matthew Mercier (M)*

Author bios love to boast of quirky occupations: "Shrimp boat captain," "puppeteer," "former professional hot dog eater," etc. Hear panelists' real-life occupational (mis)adventures, what--if anything--they learned, and how some became grist for their fiction... plus, you might get to share some of your own!

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**SUN 12:00 PM** 60 minutes

Salon G/H

• **Content Warnings: Pros, Cons, and Purposes** • *Gillian Daniels (M), Claire Houck/Nina Waters, Gwynne Garfinkle, Melissa Bobe, Romie Stott*

Many romance novels have started including content notes or warnings, which advise readers of potentially sensitive plot elements or themes, such as grief, murder, and self-harm. Content notes appear far less frequently in SFF novels, whereas some venues for speculative short fiction have been including them for years. Panelists will share examples of particularly effective--or ineffective--content notes, while surveying the reasons for their rise in romance and the potential applicability of those reasons to long-form speculative fiction.

**SUN 12:00 PM** 60 minutes

Salon I/J

• **The Next *Great Gatsby*?** • *R.W.W. Greene (M), Ellen Kushner, Kate Nepveu*

At Readercon 33, Max Gladstone mentioned that *The Great Gatsby* flopped upon publication--and therefore was cheap to send to American soldiers abroad in WWII, which resulted its revival. He asked the audience to imagine how great a world would be in which, for some reason, copies of Sarah Caudwell's *Thus Was Adonis Murdered* were suddenly everywhere. What other books ought to be suddenly ubiquitous?

**SUN 12:00 PM** 60 minutes

Suite 830

• **Kaffeeklatsch: Michael Cisco** • *Michael Cisco*

Kaffeeklatsch with Michael Cisco

**SUN 12:00 PM** 60 minutes

Suite 830

• **Kaffeeklatsch: Leon Perniciaro** • *Leon Perniciaro*

Kaffeeklatsch with Leon Perniciaro

**SUN 12:30 PM** 30 minutes

Empower / Embrace

• **Reading: Charlie Jane Anders** • *Charlie Jane Anders*

Charlie Jane Anders reads a section from *Lessons in Magic and Disaster*, which comes out in August, and possibly from a super-secret other thing.

**SUN 1:00 PM** Bookshop reopens



# READERCON 34 • Burlington MA • July 17-20 2025

**SUN 1:00 PM** Registration and Information close

**SUN 1:00 PM** 60 minutes

Create / Collaborate

• **Harry Potter and the Undeath of the Author** • *Cecilia Tan, Natalie Luhrs, Rob Cameron, William Alexander, Gillian Daniels (M)*

"The death of the author" is a well-worn concept about who, author or audience, owns the meaning of an author's work. Such arguments take on a different valance, however, when the author is not only alive and well but using the funds and power accumulated by their creation as leverage to take extremely public and reactionary political action. When the price of engagement with a work is empowering its living author to publicly abuse others, how can we plausibly claim that the author is dead and our engagement is ours alone?

**SUN 1:00 PM** 30 minutes

Empower / Embrace

• **Reading: Ellen Brody** • *Ellen Brody*

Ellen Brody continues her quarter-century-long tradition of reading work by the Readercon Memorial Guest of Honor. This year we are honoring Charles R. Saunders.

**SUN 1:00 PM** 60 minutes

Salon F



• **"After the Revolution"** • *Erin Roberts, Fonda Lee, Max Gladstone, Will McMahon, Charles Allison (M)*

The phrase "After the revolution" can be a rationale for abandoning principles for expediency, a promise for a better world after the fighting is done, or a setting fraught with questions about how to rebuild and whether the prize was worth the price. Join us to explore the tensions, potentials, and ambiguities of the phrase in imagined worlds and in our lives today.

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**SUN 1:00 PM** 60 minutes

Salon G/H

• **Cross-Discipline Writing** • *J.M. Sidorova, Allison King, Jeff Hecht, Gregory A. Wilson, Andrea Kriz (M)*

Many authors are, also, vocational writers. How does experience in technical writing, journalism, legal drafting, academic prose, copy writing and other more professionalized forms of writing inform the creation of fiction, poetry, screenplays, and other more aesthetically focused work? How does skill and experience with creative writing affect or inform professionalized writing practices?

**SUN 1:00 PM** 60 minutes

Salon I/J

• **Speculative Egypt** • *Jessica Levai, Sophia Babai, P. Djèlí Clark, Tom Doyle (M)*

There has been a recent resurgence of fantasies set in Egypt, from Guest of Honor P. Djèlí Clark's *Dead Djinn* universe to S.A. Chakraborty's *Daevabad* trilogy and beyond. What might have triggered this renewed interest--or did it never go away in the first place? How have contemporary looks at a speculative Egypt diverged from those of the past, and how do authors handle what were once religious beliefs and figures in ways that appreciate those origins?

**SUN 1:00 PM** 60 minutes

Suite 830

• **Kaffeeklatsch: Julie C. Day** • *Julie C. Day*

Kaffeeklatsch with Julie C. Day

**SUN 1:00 PM** 60 minutes

Suite 830

• **Kaffeeklatsch: Ken Schneyer** • *Ken Schneyer*

Kaffeeklatsch with Ken Schneyer

**SUN 1:30 PM** 30 minutes

Empower / Embrace

• **Reading: Andrea Hairston** • *Andrea Hairston*

Andrea Hairston reads from *Mindscape* and/or her upcoming novel *The Redemption Center is Closed on Sundays*.

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**SUN 2:00 PM** Con Suite closes

**SUN 2:00 PM** 60 minutes

Create / Collaborate

• **Exquisite Corpse Speculative Poetry** • *W.B.J. Williams, LJ Cohen*

In this take on the Exquisite Corpse parlor game, attendees will split into groups and take turns writing lines of poetry, with only the most recent entry visible each time. Groups will then present their collective works to the rest of the room.

**SUN 2:00 PM** 30 minutes

Empower / Embrace

• **Reading: Gennarose Nethercott** • *Gennarose Nethercott*

Author Gennarose Nethercott reads from her recent book *Fifty Beasts to Break Your Heart and Other Stories*, or, technology permitting, puts on a macabre crankie/puppetry show illuminating standalone chapters from her novel *Thistlefoot*.

**SUN 2:00 PM** 60 minutes

Salon G/H

• **Live Storytelling for Beginners** • *Matthew Mercier*

Everybody has a good story inside of them, but telling that story--and telling it well--is nearly always the challenge. This Live Storytelling workshop will teach you how to brainstorm a (true!) story idea from your own life, develop an opening few lines that will hook the audience, and fill in the right details to tell your story entertainingly in less than five minutes.

**SUN 2:00 PM** 60 minutes

Salon I/J

• **Book Club: The Fortunate Fall by Cameron Reed** • *Ann LeBlanc, Kate Nepveu (M), Marianna Martin PhD, Lila Garrott*

Newly reprinted under the author's current name, *The Fortunate Fall* by Cameron Reed is a post-cyberpunk novel about brain modification, being queer in an oppressive society, the media, species extinction, and the possibility of changing human nature. In 2010, Jo Walton called it "one of the most important books of the last 20 years." We'll discuss what made this novel groundbreaking in 1996, what makes it still fresh and relevant today, our favorite lines that aren't the beginning and ending, and the throwaway worldbuilding detail that most caught our attention.

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**SUN 2:00 PM** 60 minutes

Suite 830

• **Kaffeeklatsch: Melissa Bobe** • *Melissa Bobe*

Kaffeeklatsch with Melissa Bobe

**SUN 2:00 PM** 60 minutes

Suite 830

• **Kaffeeklatsch: Andrea Hairston** • *Andrea Hairston*

Kaffeeklatsch with Andrea Hairston

**SUN 2:30 PM** 30 minutes

Empower / Embrace

• **Reading: Marisca Pichette** • *Marisca Pichette*

Solo reading featuring Marisca Pichette.

**SUN 3:00 PM** Bookshop closes

**SUN 3:00 PM** 60 minutes

Salon G/H

• **Readercon 34 Feedback Panel** • *Thom Jones-Low, Merryl Gross, Rae Borman*

Opportunity for attendees to provide constructive feedback about what worked well at Readercon this year and offer suggestions for how to improve the Readercon experience in the future.