

# Readercon 14

## Progress Report 2

July 12–14, 2002

**Boston Marriott Burlington**

Burlington, Massachusetts 781-229-6565

Hotel rooms: \$97 plus tax *reserve by June 20*

**Guests of Honor**

**Octavia E. Butler Gwyneth Jones**

**Memorial Guest of Honor**

**John Brunner**

Memberships: \$35 until end of June, \$45 at the door

### Greetings from the Readercon Committee

This is a great year to attend Readercon.

Not only do we have awesome Guests of Honor, but we are also thrilled to be hosting the Tiptree Award ceremony again. There's going to be a lot of great stuff going on as usual, and you sure as heck don't want to miss it.

Please be sure to make your hotel reservation soon: June 20<sup>th</sup> is the last day on which the hotel guarantees the convention rate.

— Amy West and Karl Wurst

### Our Guests of Honor

At Readercon we have a tradition of honoring authors who follow their own unique visions. **Octavia Butler** is, of course, one of those writers. Octavia Butler takes many of our traditional science-fiction ideas and themes and turns them not just on their heads but inside out. "Bloodchild"'s placement of the alien not outside of us but within us was such a striking turnabout that it has stayed with me since I read it in high school. Octavia Butler's skill and talent in writing transformed me for that day from an adolescent girl with a mundane life into an adolescent human boy with an alien parasite within me. An experience I wouldn't relive until I became a mother. And then there's *Kindred*, and the *Xenogenesis* novels.

Octavia Butler is a great American writer who can write a beautiful story that challenges you and shakes your perceptions to the ground. She has won Hugos, Nebulas, and is a MacArthur fellow. Readercon is honored with her company this year. Come join us as we honor her this year.

— Amy West

When the Readercon committee chooses a Guest of Honor,

we have the delightful problem of selecting from too many fine candidates. **Gwyneth Jones** stands out, even among these marvelous writers, for her unique approach to intelligent, literary, feminist fiction. Her books are densely written, with a great deal happening on each page, shown from alien viewpoints; with those of the visitors from space not necessarily being the most alien. For example, in *White Queen*, one of the first Tiptree winners, Jones proceeds with a great deal of indirection; her aliens, visiting Earth, show up early as "explorers" on the fringes of a human scene, and it only slowly becomes clear that they are not just odd humans; after all, they're shopping for clean underwear. Throughout the book, humans and aliens consistently misunderstand each other's motivations, projecting their own expectations onto foreign beings. Particularly, this is true for gender roles; hence the Tiptree. The misunderstandings never clear up for the characters—and the reader has the enthralling challenge of working to understand, in their stead, while puzzling out an exciting and complex story. It's a very Readercon sort of pleasure; please share it with us this July.

— Michael Matthew

Memorial Guest of Honor **John Kilian Houston Brunner** (1934-1995) published his first novel, *Galactic Storm* (1951), at age 17. He is particularly remembered for *Stand on Zanzibar* (1968), which won the Hugo Award for Best Novel in 1969, *The Jagged Orbit* (1969), *The Sheep Look Up* (1972), and *The Shockwave Rider* (1975). They each extrapolate a particular dystopian theme: *Zanzibar* addresses overpopulation, *Jagged Orbit* deals with racism, *Sheep* considers pollution, and *Shockwave Rider* anticipates computer viruses and related information technology issues and has been called the first cyberpunk novel.

In addition to writing books, short stories, essays, and

poetry, he edited *The Science Fiction Stories of Rudyard Kipling* (1992). He was also a noted critic of pseudo-science, such as the writings of Erich von Daniken and L. Ron Hubbard. And he was active in the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament in his native England.

He suffered a stroke at the 53rd World Science Fiction Convention in Glasgow, Scotland, on August 24, 1995, and died the next day. A special memorial edition of the convention newsletter included a tribute from Gwyneth Jones.

Brunner's work has been underrated, and we hope to begin to rectify this at Readercon this year. Please join us.

— Ellen Brody

### Tentative Schedule

	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Registration	2pm–9pm	9am–6pm	9am–1pm
Program	3pm–mid	10am–mid	10am–4pm
Bookshop	4pm–7pm	10am–6pm	10am–2pm
Con Suite	3pm–9pm	9am–mid	9am–2pm

### Special Events

Special events at the convention include the Meet the Pros(e) Party on Friday night (where you can create recombinant literature), and the Tiptree Dessert Buffet and Awards Ceremony followed by the latest edition of the Kirk Poland Memorial Bad Prose Competition on Saturday night.

### Tiptree Awards and Dessert Buffet

Save room after dinner, for the sweetness of a dessert buffet and Tiptree Awards Ceremony! We are honored to be hosting the Tiptree awards again this year. We start our Saturday evening programming with a dessert buffet, followed by the James Tiptree Jr. Memorial Award Ceremony. Then we'll clear the dishes and start the Kirk Poland Memorial Bad Prose Competition.

### About the Program

The heart of Readercon is the program. Check our Web site, <http://www.readercon.org/> for descriptions of program items, which will include more titles in our popular "How I Wrote..." series! The current working list of panel descriptions is included later in this P.R., but note that a few of them will end up on the cutting-room floor. There will also be a diverse set of discussions and "Chatauquas" on interesting topics, and of course a full track of author readings.

The Readercon Book Club this year will look at the latest volumes in Ursula K. Le Guin's Earthsea series, *Tales From Earthsea* and *The Other Wind*.

The program consists of two main tracks of panels, a couple of mini-tracks, readings, kaffeeklatsches, and interviews with the Guests of Honor. We plan to start programming around 4pm on Friday, and end at midnight. Our annual Meet the Pros(e) party will start around 9pm.

On Saturday, we'll start around 10am and run two main tracks, two discussion tracks, and two tracks of readings until mid-afternoon. Then we will hold our Guest of Honor interviews, and have a break for dinner. We'll pick things up in the evening with the Dessert buffet, Tiptree Awards Ceremony, and finish Saturday with the Kirk Poland Memorial Bad Prose Competition.

Sunday will start at around 10am, and have two tracks of programming, two tracks of discussions, and two tracks of readings until we shut things down at 3pm. Come to the gripe session at 4pm and let us know what you thought of Readercon!

### Tiptree Bake Sale

To go along with our hosting of the Tiptree Memorial Awards, there will also be a Tiptree Bake Sale. Much of the money funding the Tiptree award is raised at bake sales at conventions around the country, and for the past few years we have had one of the most productive. Come prepared with baked goods and/or healthy appetites! This year look for the bake sale in the Bookshop.

### Writers' Workshop

David Alexander Smith will once again lead a writers' workshop for amateurs and new pros on Sunday morning. To enroll, submit up to 7,500 words of fiction (a self-contained short story, chapters from a novel, or an outline) by **June 28** directly to David at: 112 Avon Hill St., Cambridge, MA 02140 (USA). For more information, call David at 617-338-9484 x215, e-mail him at <[dsmith@recapadvisors.com](mailto:dsmith@recapadvisors.com)>, or write to him at the above address.

### Bookshop

The Bookshop is our dealers' room. Expect a varied selection of new and used books and magazines from small and large publishers. We'll also have a Readercon Café set up in the Bookshop for the Tiptree Bake Sale.

### Policies

- No smoking in programming areas or the Bookshop.
- Only service animals in convention areas.
- No weapons in convention areas.
- Young children who are always with an adult are admitted free; young adults attending programming on their own need a membership.

## Children at Readercon

Welcome to returning and first time ReaderKids! We will be offering our children's program again this year! Thank you for all your suggestions and feedback.

ReaderKids will offer boring-panel-free, supervised playtime for kids ages 4 to 10 during which their parents can enjoy their panels. The children will entertain themselves with various activities including games, construction toys, drawing and coloring, making crafts, and socializing.

The program will run two sessions on Saturday only. Each session will last about two hours, one from 9:45am until 12:00n, the other from 1:45pm until 4:00pm. (Yes, we know you would like more coverage, but we were unable to extend the hours this year. Rest assured, it is high on our priority list!) Cost is \$10 per session per child.

Bathroom-independent children ages 4 through 12 years may participate. Parents of children on the borders of age, or bathroom independence, or with other special circumstances, who are interested in our program may contact Louise Waugh at <Louise@readercon.org>, or at the convention prior to the first ReaderKids program.

Supervising the children will be two adults, both experienced childcare providers, who have cared for children, preschool through 6th grade, for over ten years.

To participate:

- Go to Registration to buy a one-session coupon (\$10) for **each** session that **each** child will attend. You will also receive a colorful wristband.
- Write your name (and/or the name of whoever will be responsible for this child during the con) on the wristband.
- Bring the registered, wristband-wearing child to the room number listed on the coupon.
- Check in with the adults in the room and leave your contact information (pager, cell phone, etc.)
- Say good-bye, enjoy your panels, and return on time to pick up your ReaderKid.

For reasons of safety, children participating in ReaderKids:

- Must be delivered by a parent or other adult (age 18 and up)
- May not leave ReaderKids unless accompanied by an authorized adult

## Hotel

The **Boston Marriott Burlington** will be hosting us for the third time this year. Guest rooms are \$97 per night (plus tax) for single to quad. Call 781-229-6565 by **June 20** to reserve your room. Be sure to mention Readercon so that you get the discounted rate. **Act soon** — Progress Report 1

was in error, and **June 20** is the cutoff date!

## How to Get There

The Burlington Marriott is northwest of Boston, at the intersection of Route 3A and Burlington Mall Road, right off of I-95/128 at exit 33B (Route 3A North). With over 15 restaurants of all kinds and the Burlington Mall within a mile, you don't need a car in order to get decent food or meet random personal needs. The Marriott has plenty of free parking.

### By Car, from the South or West:

Take the Massachusetts Turnpike (I-90) east towards Boston. Take exit 14 and follow the signs for I-95/128 North. Continue with the "Northbound on I-95/128" directions below.

### By Car, from the North:

Take Route 3 South towards Boston. At the junction of Route 3 and I-95/128, take I-95/128 North. Follow the "Northbound on I-95/128" directions below.

Or: Take I-93 South to the I-95/128 South exit (Exit 37A). Follow the "Southbound on I-95/128" directions below.

### By Car, from Boston:

Take I-90 (the Massachusetts Turnpike) West towards Newton/Waltham to exit 15. Take I-95/128 North. Continue with the "Northbound on I-95/128" directions below.

Or for the scenic route, take either Route 2 or 2A to Route 3 North to Burlington. After passing under I-95, turn left at the traffic light. The hotel will be on your left.

### Northbound on I-95/128:

Take exit 33B (for Route 3A North), which is the second exit past the compound exit for the Lowell Connector and Middlesex Turnpike, where the traffic from Rte. 3 South merges in.

At the end of the ramp, merge quickly across to the far left, and make a left onto Burlington Mall Road at the first traffic light. Turn left at the first traffic light to enter the Marriott's parking lot.

### Southbound on I-95/128:

Take exit 33B (for Route 3A North). Go straight through the light at the end of the exit ramp, onto Burlington Mall Road. Turn left at the first traffic light to enter the Marriott's parking lot.

### By Air, via Logan Airport:

Shared van services from Logan are available from **Airporter** (877-899-6161, \$28 for 1 passenger, \$8 each additional) and **Flightline** (800-245-2525, \$32 for 1 passenger, \$44 for 2 or 3, \$58 for 4). It is a good idea to

contact them in advance and make a reservation.

**Taxi fare** from Logan to the hotel is **\$50 to \$60**. You'll find the taxi stands on the Baggage Claim level.

You can take **mass transit** from the airport all the way to the Marriott, but you'll have to take a combination of buses and subway trains. This will cost you less than \$7, but may take as long as 2 hours. Take the #22 or #33 free Massport shuttle bus to the T station. For the fastest connections, take the subway Blue Line inbound to Government Center and change to the Green Line. Go one stop on the Green Line to Park Street and then change to the Red Line outbound to Alewife station. Continue with the "By Mass Transit" directions below.

If you decide to **rent a car**, ask for directions to the Massachusetts Turnpike from your rental pickup spot. (This will probably involve a tunnel of some sort, but which one may vary based on location, time of day, and status of the Big Dig.) Then follow the "By car, from Boston" directions above.

Directions to and from Logan and information about shuttles, taxis, and rental cars can be found at Logan's Web site or by phone at 800-23-LOGAN.

#### **By Air, via Hanscom Field:**

Shuttle America and US Airways have commercial flights to and from Bedford's Hanscom, a small regional airport not far from the hotel. We recommend using a taxi to get between Hanscom and the hotel. You will most likely have to call for a taxi upon arrival. More info is found at Hanscom's Web site:

<http://www.massport.com/airports/hansc.html>.

#### **By Train and Bus, via South Station:**

Amtrak trains and Peter Pan and Greyhound buses come into South Station in Boston, which is also a T station on the Red Line. Take the T outbound to Alewife. Continue with the mass transit directions below.

#### **By Mass Transit:**

Take the Red Line to the end at Alewife station. Change to the #350 bus, which runs hourly (or a little better) every day during the con, from about 7am to about 10pm. Tell the driver that you want to get off at the Marriott, since the hotel may not be visible from the bus. Most runs will drop you off in front of the hotel. You can pick up a bus schedule and route map at Alewife or on the MBTA's Web site. The pick-up spot is on Route 3A, on the far side of Burlington Mall Road from the Marriott.

#### **Useful Web Sites**

<http://www.massport.com/logan/>

<http://www.mbtta.com/>

#### **Parties**

If you are planning to host a party at Readercon, first reserve your room with the hotel, and then you *must* contact us at <amy@readercon.org> so that we can release a room on the party floor to you. Please ask about Parlor Suites and Executive Kings, which are larger than the other guestrooms. Parties held in non-party-floor rooms will be shut down by the hotel. Open parties (parties with an open invitation to all attendees and with an open door) may *not* serve alcohol. Closed parties (parties by invitation only and with a closed door) *must* make corkage arrangements with the hotel.

#### **Volunteers**

Readercon is run entirely by volunteers. We always need lots of help to keep things running smoothly. If you're new to conventions, volunteering is a great way to meet people and have fun.

Besides the warm fuzzy feeling that comes from being useful, volunteers who work between one and six hours are rewarded with special Readercon souvenirs not available to the general public! Anyone who works over 8 hours gets a free membership to next year's con.

Let us know you're interested by sending email to <volunteer@readercon.org>, or check the relevant line on the membership reply form. There will be an informational meeting for all interested volunteers at the con on Friday evening.

#### **How to Contact Us**

You can e-mail us at <info@readercon.org> or write to us at PO Box 38-1246, Cambridge, MA 02238-1246. For updates and more details, such as past programs, check our Web site:

<http://www.readercon.org>.

## PANEL DESCRIPTIONS

(note: some of these will not make it to the final version)

**The Aging of SF.** Judith Berman's "Science Fiction Without the Future" (*New York Review of Science Fiction*, May 2001) raised provocative issues about the relationship of modern sf with the future, issues we hope to cover this weekend in panels inspired by that master extrapolator of near futures, John Brunner. But almost buried in Berman's essay is the ancillary observation that the protagonists of sf stories are increasingly middle-aged or even elderly--like their writers and readers. This lack of youthful characters began as an effect of the graying of the sf community, but now it has arguably become one of the causes, in a destructive feedback loop--less young writing blood means fewer stories of interest to younger readers (it's not just altered chronology that led Peter Jackson to make Frodo the same age as his much younger cousins). Is there anything the sf community can do to counter this trend? Should writers and editors be looking for stories that feature younger protagonists?

**The Aliens Among Us.** "The science fiction convention of the alien attempts to present otherness in unitary terms, so that 'humanity' is uncomplicatedly opposed to the 'alien'; both Jones and Butler focus on the way in which the opposition seeks to suppress the others of both gender and race by subsuming them within a commonsense notion of what it is to be human."--Jenny Wolmark. Let's use this provocative assertion as a jumping off point for discussion.

**Biological Hard SF.** For years biology was relatively neglected by writers of hard sf. But that's changed dramatically in the last decade or so. Has this been strictly a response to the rise of biotechnology, or was sf (as is more often the case) somewhat ahead of the curve? An overview of this burgeoning subgenre and a look at where it's headed.

**The Changing Standards of SF Criticism.** The standards of sf criticism have changed dramatically over time. Once, characters were merely asked to be sympathetic and interesting; now they are expected to be three-dimensional. This emphasis on characterization has been accompanied by a concomitant reduction in the demand for fast pacing. What are the driving forces behind these changing standards? Are the critics reflecting the tastes of writers, editors, and readers, or are they leading them?

**Changing Times, Changing Minds.** Something very interesting can happen when an author creates a fictional series over a long period of time, especially a series with some social or political content (explicit or implicit). Society changes, attitudes change, the author's own mind may change--in response to society, as part of a natural process of maturation, or even as a result of writing the books themselves. What happens to the fiction when a writer discovers that the attitudes underlying the later volumes of a series are no longer the same as when the series was conceived?

**Colonized By The Future.** "I think that SF stories today are more and more beginning to sound like Fables of the Third World: Stories whose protagonists, often human, represent cultures which have been colonized by the future. The future may come in the form of aliens, or the catnip nirvana of cyberspace, or as AIs, or as bio-engineered transformations of our own species: but whatever it touches, it subverts. SF stories of this sort can--depressingly--read rather like manuals designed to train Polynesians in the art of begging for Cargo; but they can also generate a sense of celebration of the worlds beyond worlds beyond our species' narrow path."--John Clute. If we accept that sf is somewhat of a barometer (or leading indicator or driving force) of our culture's attitude towards the future, what does this observation about the flavor of much recent sf tell us--about ourselves and about sf?

**Don't Read Too Much Into This Panel Blurb.** When we read Heinlein's *The Puppet Masters* at age thirteen, we instantly got the irony of the last lines: "Puppet masters--the free men are coming to kill you. \*Death and destruction!\*" After all, how could a race that felt compelled to commit genocide be "free?" Of course, years later we realized that Heinlein meant nothing of the sort. Is reading more into a text than the author intended legitimate, or just an interesting form of misprision? A strong argument can be made that any meaning you can find in a text is fair game, author's intentions be damned. A perhaps equally strong argument can be made that that's just silly.

**Drugs and Creativity.** You don't hear much pro-drug talk these days. Nevertheless, there are still those who that certain drugs aid the creative process. There are others who'll argue (from experience) that such help is always self-deluding. How could it be that drugs actually help the creative process for some people but are destructive for others? Do these two different outcomes correlate to different approaches (unconscious or conscious) to the creative process?

**Ecological Disaster as Foreground and Background.** In the 1960s and '70s the notion of ecological catastrophe was so fresh that whole books, like John Brunner's *The Sheep Look Up*, were written about it. In the years since, we seem to have become inured to the notion; ecological damage is now an almost ubiquitous part of the background of imagined futures, but almost never a central plot element. There is currently a healthy scientific debate about the extent of ecological damage and a corresponding policy debate as to how drastic our response needs to be. Is anyone writing sf that focuses on these concerns? Or have all the foreground uses of ecological disaster been strip-mined? And do the ecological backgrounds of current sf do justice to the range of possible futures?

**Feminist F&SF: The State of the Art, 2002.** Gwyneth Jones has written extensively and provocatively on feminist f&sf. Rather than try and fail to summarize her on-the-record (and, in some cases, ten-year-old) views in three sentences of blurb, we've invited Jones and several other worthy volunteers to discuss the current status and future of feminist sf.

**The Future of Extrapolation.** Despite the legitimate protest that sf is not prophecy, serious extrapolation about the future has always been a viable sf mode. With each passing year, we move deeper into a stretch of time that our past greats attempted to envision. We thus have more of a chance to compare extrapolated and actualized futures. What lessons are we learning? Is the addition of this reflexive element changing the nature of sf extrapolation?

**I Didn't See that Coming: Transparent vs. Visible Plotting.** You might have met fifteen people today, fourteen of whom will prove to be completely irrelevant to your future and one who will change it profoundly. And right now you have no more than an inkling as to who the exception might be. The unpredictability of life is extraordinarily difficult to capture in fiction, because it's the author's job to \*not bother telling us\* about the fourteen meaningless encounters. Almost every event narrated in a novel can thus be assumed--and is usually perceived--by the reader to be relevant to the future. These readerly expectations present a real challenge to the author who wants to create plots as surprising as real life. Much of the flavor of fiction derives from the different ways that authors work around this limitation. And there seem to be two fundamentally different approaches. "Transparent plotting" attempts to capture the flavor of real life by defusing the readerly expectations ("I \*didn't see\* that coming"). Scenes of apparent future relevance are mixed with scenes that appear to provide merely extra color, only there is some misdirection as to which is which. "Visible plotting" revels in the artifice of fiction and \*exploits\* the readerly expectations ("I didn't see \*that\* coming"). Every event turns out to be important, but for different (or additional) reasons than expected. Are these two approaches mutually exclusive, or can they be mixed within the same book? Does every author

gravitate towards one pole, or are there some who can work successfully in both modes? There are correlations of mode to content: some of these are obvious (novels of character are transparently plotted, thrillers are visibly plotted), others less so (transparent plots afford the satirist much more leeway). What are the challenges and rewards of defying the correlations?

"I feel as if six tungsten carbide blocks have converged on my brain from six directions, compacting it into a dense and perfect cube": **Density in Fiction.** Some books are dense. Reading them is not a matter of breezing through, watching a text-driven cinematic experience in one's mind. Each page--maybe each sentence--raises questions, so that one must stop and think, or page back to find some reference. Many of Readercon's favorite writers work frequently in this mode. In Gwyneth Jones's *White Queen*, for example, the private thoughts of the human characters, in a social milieu only a few years hence yet in many respects quite strange, demand as much of the reader's attention as the thoughts of the alien visitors. There is no necessary relation between density and quality--many great books read quite transparently, and some dense books are merely clotted. Are there stories that should be told densely and stories that shouldn't, or is this choice independent of content? What are the secrets of effective dense writing? What pitfalls must be avoided?

**In Defense of "Commodity Fantasy."** Perhaps the greatest strength of fantasy as a genre is its accommodation of unique visions; the fantasies we value most are all (at least until imitated) *\_sui generis\_*. John Clute and others have thus decried the rise of "commodity fantasy," whose purpose is instead to give the reader the same familiar, comfortable experience as books previously read. But doesn't this hold all of fantasy up to an impossible standard? No one, after all, rejects a musical performance, baseball game, or sexual encounter for providing only familiar sorts of pleasures. Isn't it possible to do truly worthwhile work within "commodity fantasy"? Does more commodity fantasy really mean less that's *\_sui generis\_*, or can the two coexist?

**Is God Change?** Let's talk about fictional religions and/or deities that seem to actually "work" for their adherents . . . from the creations of Octavia Butler and Sheri S. Tepper to the fivefold pantheon in Lois McMaster Bujold's *Curse of Chalion*. What does it take to make a religion "work" in fiction? Are those factors that same as those required to make faith "work" in real life? Has reading or writing about religion influenced your own beliefs and practices?

**Meta-Fantasy.** There are several ways a fantasy novel can break (or at least call attention to) the fourth wall between reader and text. A fictional fantasy world can become real (Jonathan Carroll's *The Land Of Laughs*, William Browning Spencer's *Zod Wallop*); the characters may have a sense of themselves playing out a Story (John Crowley's *Little, Big*); the tools of fantasy (writing, storytelling) may themselves be the tools of the characters in the work and integral to the magic. Why does fantasy lend itself so well to meta-fictional effects? Such touches are, in theory, postmodern, but is the goal of meta-fictional effects in fantasy the same or different as in literary postmodernism?

**Psi: The Trope That Refuses to Die.** At a recent symposium at Harvard, some extraordinary evidence for limited precognition was presented: some individuals appear to have a small skin conductance response \*prior to\* a randomly generated burst of white noise. None of the faculty members present could find any methodological flaws. Once upon a time, psi powers like these were arguably sf's second-leading trope (after space travel). We can think of a number of its reasons for its decline, most obviously the death of its great champion, John W. Campbell, Jr., and the rise of skepticism and the continued lack of hard evidence for psi in the real world. And yet the trope is hardly played out. What's the source of our continued fascination with psi? What sorts of things can we uniquely say

about being human in a story featuring psi powers? Would actual scientific evidence for psi change the genre, or has psi speculation always been science fantasy rather than anything resembling hard sf?

**Race in F&SF.** Certainly there have been other literary portrayals of slavery as rich, as challenging to stereotype, and as utterly harrowing as Octavia Butler's *Kindred*. Yet as readers of imaginative literature, we like to think that a novel like *Kindred* goes places, does things, moves the reader in ways that no realist text ever could. Race \*should\* be a topic that speculative fiction excels at exploring. Yet there is no separate entry for Race or Racial Conflict in *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*, and the entry on Politics observes that "the tendency of genre sf has been to ignore the issue or sanctimoniously to take for granted its eventual disappearance." Use of the alien as a metaphor for the person of color is a standard trope of liberal sf, but perhaps race is one topic that demands a literal approach (e.g., Derrick Bell's "The Space Traders"). Arguments that this overall neglect simply follows from the scarcity of sf writers of color may be confusing cause and effect. With the success of the anthology *Dark Matter*, the founding of the Carl Brandon Society, and a slow but steady influx of writers of color, we may finally have reached a day when literature's most powerful mode begins to address society's most intractable problem. What sorts of stories do we want to read? What sorts do we need to write?

**The Real Place of a Book.** We've beaten John Clute's wonderful notion of "the real year" of a book almost to death. But not quite! Every novel, regardless of the year in which it is ostensibly set, has a "real year" whose flavor informs it. It occurs to us that every genre novel, whether it's set on Mars or Middle-Earth, also has a "real place," whether it's New York City or a small town in Iowa. The real place of Michael Swanwick's *The Iron Dragon's Daughter* is the Soviet Union; part of the triumph of Kim Stanley Robinson's *Red Mars, Green Mars, Blue Mars* is the extent to which the real place actually is Mars (via, however, Tibet and Antarctica), and this in fact makes the text more challenging in the same way that setting a book in the real present does. Doubtlessly our survey of travel literature (see below) will help fuel our discussion of the sense of true place in f&sf.

**Size Matters.** The pleasures of reading long and short books can be quite different. Long books can engage us in a way that short ones cannot, but short books provide a unique opportunity for total immersion in their world. What are the market forces driving us towards longer and longer books? Do people no longer value the unique pleasure of finishing a novel in one sitting?

**Someday We'll Look Back At This and It Will All Seem Funny.** Sometimes we write to exorcise personal pain. And often the best way to do that is to find the humor at its heart. How can it be that there's usually something funny hidden within the grimmest of experiences? Why does finding that humor ease the pain? Is it just the sharing with others? Our brave panelists discuss the roots of black humor--both their own and that of other writers--or, as James Thurber (himself a very funny man with a very painful life) once said, they'll get humor down, and break its arm.

**Style vs. Style vs. Style.** "Style . . . properly arises out of content . . . one must therefore, alas, either develop a new one each time out, or opt for the default value of transparent prose."--Norman Spinrad. If Spinrad is right, then the more an author develops a unique, powerful voice, the more limited they become in terms of content--which would be particularly unfortunate for a writer of speculative fiction. Certainly we can all think of writers whose unique voice sometimes comes across as stylistic ossification when it's applied inappropriately. What are the ways out of this dilemma? How do you develop a range of voices?

**Travel Literature.** Another in our series of panels exploring our favorite non-fantastic literature. It's easy to see

why travel literature appeals to fans of f&sf. Panelists and audience members discuss that appeal, and talk about their favorites.

**Vampirism and Addiction.** For decades, vampirism was a metaphor for sexual pleasure. Now that that is overt, what is it a metaphor for? Is vampire fiction, in which the vampire or vampirism is sympathetic, actually a metaphor for addiction, and the pleasures of drugs? What is the relation of vampirism to the abuse/recovery movement? Is the vampire an addict without any need for recovery?

**When They Tell You What You Really Mean.** It sometimes happens that a work of fiction contains real meaning that is unknown to its author. Many writers have had the experience of learning from critics or other readers what their true concerns have been. What's this experience like? How does finding out what your secret themes are affect your future writing? We can imagine it being very good--or very bad.

**Why YA?** As Ursula K. Le Guin once wrote, if a writer chooses to write a book for Young Adults only because she thinks it's "simple" to do so, its audience "will look at it, and they will see straight through it, with their clear, cold, beady little eyes, and they will put it down, and they will go away. Kids will devour vast amounts of garbage (and it is good for them) but they are not like adults: they have not yet learned to eat plastic." When asked (at Boskone 2002) why she wrote YA, Tamora Pierce replied, "When I change somebody's life, it stays changed." Our panelists will discuss the special challenges and rewards--especially the psychic rewards--of writing YA.

**Working Backwards From Effect To Story.** Horror is a genre that's actually named after its effect on the reader. We can think of at least four effects--related to one another--that are specialties of sf: sense of wonder, pleasant confusion, conceptual

breakthrough, and rug-pulled-out / what-you-know-is-wrong. "Recognition" (in John Clute's theory) and "eucatastrophe" (in Tolkien's) are arguably effects that are specialized to fantasy. We have lately been struck by the suspicion that authors sometimes start with an effect in mind and work backwards towards a story that will evoke it ("gee, I feel like writing one of those stories that totally messes with your mind"). How does having an acute sense of the effect you wish to evoke in the reader shape the creative process?

**The 2001 James Tiptree, Jr. Award: The Jury Report.** This year's Tiptree jury discusses Hiromi Goto's *The Kappa Child*, short-listed novels by Sheri S. Tepper, Hugh Nissenson, Joan Givner, and Ken MacLeod, and other worthy gender-role-challenging works from 2001. Read the jury's annotations of the short list online at <http://www.tiptree.org/>.

**2001: The Year in Short Fiction.** Including a look at the state of the magazines (professional and semi-pro).

**The Readercon Book Club.** Ursula K. Le Guin's *Tales From Earthsea* and *The Other Wind*, as the capstone of this extraordinary fantasy sequence. Two consecutive 50-minute sessions.

**The Fiction of John Brunner.**

**The Fiction of Octavia Butler.**

**The Career of Gwyneth Jones.**

## Who Else Is Coming?

Kat Angeli • Toni Anzetti • Eleanor Arnason • Ellen Asher • Lisa A Barnett • Holly Black • Richard Bowes • Ellen Brody • Michael A. Burstein • James L. Cambias • Jeffrey A. Carver • Jeanne M. Cavelos • Stepan Chapman • Fred Chappell • Suzy McKee Charnas • Michael Cisco • Hal Clement • John Clute • Glen Cook • F. Brett Cox • Kathryn Cramer • Don D'Amassa • Tony Daniel • Ellen Datlow • Samuel R. Delany • Daniel P. Dern • Paul Di Filippo • John R. Douglas • Debra Doyle • Thomas A Easton • Scott Edelman • Craig E. Engler • Gregory Feeley • Jeffrey Ford • Jim Freund • Marcel Gagné • Craig Shaw Gardner • James Alan Gardner • David Garland • Greer Gilman • Jeanne Gomoll • Hiromi Goto • Gavin Grant • Glenn Grant • Geary Gravel • Leigh Grossman • Andrea Hairston • Peter Halasz • Elizabeth Hand • Nancy C. Hanger • Ellen Key Harris-Braun • David G. Hartwell • Daniel Hatch • Jeff Hecht • Connie Hirsch • Michael Kandel • Aline Boucher Kaplan • Robert I. Katz • Diane A. Kelly • James Patrick Kelly • John Kessel • Donald Kingsbury • Rosemary Kirstein • John Kilma • Ellen Kushner • K. A. Laity • Lissanne Lake • Fred Lerner • Paul Levinson • Shariann Lewitt • Kelly Link • James D Macdonald • F. Gwynplaine MacIntyre • Barry N Malzberg • Kevin Maroney • Susan Matthews • Terry McGarry • Farah Mendelssohn • Ed Meskys • Yves Meynard • Mary Anne Mohanraj • John Morressy • James Morrow • Pat Murphy • Resa Nelson • Patrick Nielsen Hayden • Teresa Nielsen Hayden • Patrick O'Leary • Rebecca Ore • Paul Park • Ama Paterson • Steven Popkes • Andrew I. Porter • Katya Reimann • Faye Ringel • Madeleine E Robins • Charles C. Ryan • Steven Sawicki • Robert J. Sawyer • Darrell Schweitzer • Melissa Scott • Delia Sherman • David Alexander Smith • Sarah Smith • Wen Spencer • Allen Steele • Ian Randal Strock • Michael Swanwick • Cecilia Tan • Shane Tourtellotte • Uncle River • Eric M. Van • Gordon Van Gelder • Jeff VanderMeer • Peter Watts • Elizabeth Willey

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