



## **Lightspeed Magazine, June 2015: Queers Destroy Science Fiction! Special Issue**

*Seanan McGuire (Editor) , John Chu (Contributor) , Bonnie Jo Stufflebeam (Contributor) , Chaz Brenchley (Contributor) , Rose Lemberg (Contributor) , Geoff Ryman (Contributor) , Amal El-Mohtar (Contributor) , Susan Jane Bigelow (Contributor) , more... Nalo Hopkinson (Contributor) , Nicasio Andres Reed (Contributor) ...less*

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LIGHTSPEED is an online science fiction and fantasy magazine. In its pages, you will find science fiction: from near-future, sociological soft SF, to far-future, star-spanning hard SF--and fantasy: from epic fantasy, sword-and-sorcery, and contemporary urban tales, to magical realism, science-fantasy, and folktales.

Even in science fiction, supposedly the genre of limitless possibility, where everyone is invited to the adventure, heterosexual, heteroromantic, and cisgendered are considered the default, to the extent that everything else is "deviation," and must be eyed with suspicion.

LIGHTSPEED was founded on the core idea that all science fiction is real science fiction. The whole point of this magazine is that science fiction is vast. It is inclusive. Science fiction is about people, and queer people, no matter how they identify [Gay, lesbian, bisexual, demisexual, asexual, pansexual, intersex, transgender, genderfluid, genderqueer--anyone who fits within the QUILTBAG], are a big part of that. They always have been. They're just sometimes harder to see. So, in the interests of visibility and breaking stuff, Queers Destroy Science Fiction! will show you just how wide the spectrum of sexuality and gender identity can really be.

This special all-queer issue features original science fiction short stories from John Chu, Kate M. Galey, Bonnie Jo Stufflebeam, Chaz Brenchley, Felicia Davin, Rose Lemberg, Jessica Yang, K.M. Szpara, Amal El-Mohtar, Tim Susman, and Susan Jane Bigelow. Plus, we have original flash fiction from E. Saxe, Charles Payseur, Claudine Griggs, Stephen Cox, Eliza Gauger, Erica L. Satifka, Gabrielle Friesen, Gabby Reed, Shannon Peavey, Sarah Pinsker, Bogi Takács, and JY Yang, and reprints by RJ Edwards, AMJ Hudson, Raven Kaldera, Rand B. Lee, and Geoff Ryman. All that, and we also have our usual assortment of author and artist spotlights, along with our latest book review column and an assortment of nonfiction features, plus more than twenty personal essays from writers about their experiences being queer reading and writing science fiction.

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Special Issue Seanan McGuire (Editor) , John Chu (Contributor) , Bonnie Jo Stufflebeam (Contributor) , Chaz Brenchley (Contributor) , Rose Lemberg (Contributor) , Geoff Ryman (Contributor) , Amal El-Mohtar (Contributor) , Susan Jane Bigelow (Contributor) , more... Nalo Hopkinson (Contributor) , Nicasio Andres Reed (Contributor) ...less

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## **From Reader Review Lightspeed Magazine, June 2015: Queers Destroy Science Fiction! Special Issue for online ebook**

### **Marco says**

Lightspeed is a very well-known science fiction and fantasy magazine. Even in science fiction, supposedly the genre of limitless possibility, where everyone is invited to the adventure, minorities are often underrepresented. Last year Lightspeed started the "destroy science fiction" series, a yearly program focusing on underrepresented minorities to give them a voice, and to see what they have to offer and to contribute to the genre. In 2014 they focused on sci-fi and women. This year (2015) they focused on queer authors and themes. Next year they will focus on people of color. While sci-fi is considered by many the more open of the literary genres, heterosexual, heteroromantic, and cisgendered are considered the default, to the extent that everything else is "deviation," and must be eyed with suspicion. But all science fiction is real science fiction. Science fiction is vast, and incredible fascinating in all its facets. It is inclusive. Science fiction is about people, and queer people, no matter how they identify [Gay, lesbian, bisexual, demisexual, asexual, pansexual, intersex, transgender, genderfluid, genderqueer.. anyone who fits within the QUILTBAG], are a big part of that. They always have been. They are just sometimes harder to see. So, in the interests of visibility and breaking stuff, Queers Destroy Science Fiction! will show you just how wide the spectrum of sexuality and gender identity can really be. This special all-queer issue features original science fiction short stories from many award winning authors includin John Chu, Kate M. Galey, Bonnie Jo Stufflebeam, Chaz Brenchley, Felicia Davin, Rose Lemberg, Jessica Yang, K.M. Szpara, Amal El-Mohtar, Tim Susman, and Susan Jane Bigelow. The issue also include an interesting assortment of author and artist spotlights, interviews, nonfiction features, plus more than twenty personal essays from writers about their experiences being queer reading and writing science fiction.

A very interesting read, looking forward reading the next "destroy" issue.

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### **Fantasy Literature says**

We love this.

Reviewed in our Short fiction Monday column:  
<http://www.fantasyliterature.com/reviews/>

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### **Reid says**

A while back I ran across a Kickstarter campaign to record and distribute a bunch of stories as an audiobook, and the name of the collection was to be Queers Destroy Science Fiction! How could I not sign on?

My reward, once the campaign was successful, was a download of the collection, which I just finished listening to. What a treat. Not every story is a gem, of course (never has there been an anthology that was genius from start to finish), but there are only one or two true clunkers. Most are extremely well-done and have fascinating takes on what it is to be queer (in all the many ways one can be queer) in a futuristic or alternate universe.

Perhaps the most alluring part of this collection is that, for the most part, the queerness of the characters is taken as a given and the story unspools without any specific reference to the effect of their sexual or gender orientation. This impulse leads, I believe, to a sense of inclusiveness that can inform our societal acceptance of those who do not fit our narrow definitions of "normal". On the other hand, there are several stories that do directly address the political, social and sexual norms that dominate our society. It is a satisfying and well-balanced mix.

Overall, this is a highly recommended collection. No matter what your personal orientation, I think you will find this a delightful read.

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### **Tim Childree says**

SO. FREAKING. GOOD. From the short fiction to the flash fiction to the reprints to the nonfiction to the essays, this is an exceptionally-well-curated collection that is worth every penny and every minute you spend on it.

You can get all of the "\_\_\_ Destroy" collections (or preorder unreleased ones) at <http://www.destroysf.com/>

Once my reading queue shrinks a little bit, I'll definitely be picking all of the other collections up.

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### **Jasper says**

originally posted at: <http://thebookplank.blogspot.com/2015...>

A while back I read the short story Pockets from Amal El-Mohtar which was a very cool story and I have been keeping my eye out for another story to appear from her and this month in the special issue of Queers Destroy Science Fiction! from Lightspeed Magazine wherein another one of her stories appeared: Madeleine.

I read the story once and didn't really know what to make of it (feelings wise). I read it again and just reading the first few sentences I understood the hidden beauty of the story. In the recent short fiction review I read more lighthearted stories, with Madeleine Amal El-Mohtar delves deeply into an emotional front.

The story focuses on Madeleine who lost her mother to the disease of Alzheimer. Since Alzheimer has a degree of running in the family, Madeleine has chosen to sign up for an experimental drug procedure. Since the medication is experimental, some side effects are still unknown. Madeleine starts to experience strong flashback of her mother and sees another girl in them. A girl similar in her age to which she bonds. Her doctor however claims that these flashback are no side effects and that it would be better for Madeleine if she would be examined at the hospital. But as the flashbacks become more frequent, it becomes clear to Madeleine that the woman is real. And that this woman means much more to Madeleine than she had even dared to think.

With Madeleine Amal El-Mohtar has produced a very strong and provocative story, that will make you view

things different. What I have been able to read of Amal El-Mohtar's short fiction, shows to it is diverse, tackles a wide range of subject. It's a treat to read.

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You can read the story for free [here](#)

### **Ari says**

I'm kind of disappointed in this anthology actually, there were only two stories that stood out to me, and I skipped through a few others because I just couldn't get into them.

The two stories I really liked were:

- (Influenced Isolated, Make Peace) by John Chu; and
- Trickier With Each Translation by Bonnie Jo Stufflebeam.

Both were very early in the anthology, so maybe they raised my expectations and I'm being unfair on the rest? I don't know.

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The collection of essays were all worth a read.

### **Sheila says**

A grieving Madeleine volunteers for a clinical trial. But the drug has side effects - flashbacks at odd times, increasingly vivid and increasingly to unfamiliar times. It is here that she meets Zeinab and finds companionship. But Zeinab claims it is Madeleine who is her imaginary friend rather than vice versa. SPOILER ALERT - at the end one is left wondering whether the two trial volunteers are experiencing reality together or not

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### **~~Poulomi Sylphrena Tonk\$~~ says**

Good, short read. I came across this while scrounging for some short story to pass time. Better classified as under psychological genre than science fiction.

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### **Amy says**

4.5 stars, not quite as amazing as Lightspeed's Women Destroy Science Fiction, but only by a hair. Some of my favorites of the original fiction: John Chu's "Influence Isolated, Make Peace" and Amal El-Mohtar's "Madeleine." From the Flash Fiction: "Rubbing is Racing" by Charles Payseur, "Helping Hand" by Claudine Griggs, and Sarah Pinsker's "In the Dawns Between Hours."

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## Bridget McKinney says

Read the original review at SF Bluestocking

Last year, *Lightspeed* invited women to destroy SF; this year the LGBTQ+ community gets their turn. It's glorious, and it kicked off this month with a massive special issue of *Lightspeed*.

At over 500 pages (according to my epub of it), *Queers Destroy Science Fiction!* is a weighty piece of work, and it's clear that it's been conceived and crafted with deep caring and exquisite attention to its purpose. Most importantly, a real (and successful!) effort was made to be inclusive of the entire QUILTBAG acronym, and the more than two dozen personal essays included in the issue are must-read content for this reason. If you're not queer, they offer a great variety of different perspectives to learn from; if you are queer, there's a multitude of stories to identify with. Either way, if you have a soul something here will speak to you.

The fiction included is well chosen, which is characteristic of the publication in general, and there is a good mix of work included. My favorites, in no particular order except the one I read them in:

**"Trickier With Each Translation" by Bonnie Jo Stufflebeam** - a bit of a time traveling super hero love story

**"The Tip of the Tongue" by Felicia Davin** - a story about reading and government control that has given me a new nightmare

**"Plant Children" by Jessica Yang** - a sensitively written romance about plants and family

**"Nothing is Pixels Here" by K.M. Szpara** - a story about hard choices

**"Two by Two" by Tim Susman** - a story about the end of the world and how we might face it and who we will face it with

**"Melioration" by E. Saxe** - about the power of words

**"Helping Hand" by Claudine Griggs** - an astronaut survival story

**"Bucket List Found in the Locker of Maddie Price, Age 14, Written Two Weeks Before the Great**

**Uplifting of All Mankind" by Erica L. Satifka** - exactly what the title says, but sad and beautiful (I love the conceit of telling a story through a found piece of ephemera.)

**"A Brief History of Whaling with Remarks Upon Ancient Practices" by Gabby Reed** - exactly what the title says, but also sad and beautiful

**"In the Dawns Between Hours" by Sarah Pinsker** - about why or why not and when to use a time machine if you can

**"Letter From an Artist to a Thousand Future Versions of Her Wife" by JY Yang** - another story that is exactly what the title says, but *also* sad and beautiful (If you can't tell, sad and beautiful are two of my favorite attributes in short fiction, and I'm also a sucker for clinically descriptive titles.)

**"CyberFruit Swamp" by Raven Kaldera** - definitely the most graphically sexual story in the collection (and be sure to read the author spotlight on Raven Kaldera)

**"The Sound of His Wings" by Rand B. Lee**

**and "O Happy Day!" by Geoff Ryman** - Both of these stories deal with obvious Nazi metaphors and totalitarian futures, but with vastly different approaches and two very different ways of integrating queerness into the narrative.

In nonfiction, aside from the truly wonderful personal essays, there's also a nice piece on Robert A. Heinlein's influence and an excellent interview with David Gerrold. This, however, leads to my only real

complaint about the issue, which is that the David Gerrold interview is extremely poorly formatted. I thought it might just be the epub version of the magazine, but it appears that the online version of the interview is similarly difficult to read because with no quotation marks, italics, or block quoting it's hard to tell what parts of it are David Gerrold's statements and what parts are Mark Oshiro's commentary.

At just \$3.99, *Queers Destroy Science Fiction!* is a great value, and I highly recommend purchasing it. *Queers Destroy Horror!*, a special issue of *Nightmare* will be out in October, followed by a *Queers Destroy Fantasy!* issue of *Fantasy Magazine* in December. And in 2016, *Lightspeed* will be doing *POC Destroy Science Fiction!* with guest editor Nalo Hopkinson.

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### **J.B. says**

I can't recommend it enough. A great balance of SF exploring LGBT+ themes and issues, and cracking stories with characters who "just happen to be" queer. A great collection for any fans of genre fiction.

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### **Sara says**

Time to make some notes about this one, so I can let my mother borrow it!

### **Original Shorts Section**

pg. 69 "We let a man name himself after his children, after a country not relevant to any of them, not true to any story of their lives. We assert that names are changeable, assignable at whim, and then we attach unalterable value to them."

pg. 273 "The Tip of The Tongue" by Felicia Davin, reminds me of *Fahrenheit 451*  
pg. 86 Felicia Davin bisexual Western MA scifi writer (TBC?)

pg. 87 "How to Remember to Forget to Remember the Old War." by Rose Lemberg" brilliant, checkout more of her work

pg. 95 "Plant Children" by Jessica Yang (POC author), creepy good, some lovely prose passages  
pg. 103 "The yam leaves ever hardy, continued to live on. If yam leaves were people Qiyan though, they would be boisterous uncles who wore suspenders over stained undershirts. and spat fat globs of phlegm on

the side of the road."

pg. 105 "Nothing is Pixels Here" by K.M. Sparza (<http://www.lightspeedmagazine.com/fic...>), interesting use of Virtual Reality, exploration of trans issues

pg. 115 author bio for K.M. Sparza, local to Baltimore, Masters in Theological Studies from Harvard

pg. 116 "Madeline" by Amal El-Mohtar, memory, therapy, loss, allusions to Proust

pg. 116 artist Orion Zangara

pg. 130 author bio

pg. 131 "Two By Two" by Tim Sussman, queers, some kind of apochlypse?, alt history, family the CSA (Confederate States of America)

pg. 145 author bio

pg. 157 Susan Jane Bigelow trans women author, local to Northern CT (TBC), libertarian?

## **Flash Fiction Section**

pg. 167 <http://www.nerds-feather.com/>

pg. 168 "Helping Hand" by Claudia Griggs , interesting space opera esque.

pg. 172 bio, Writing Center Director at Rhode Island College and writes on transsexuals (TBC)

pg. 173 "The Lamb Chop" by Stephen Cox, interesting alien, transgressive love between 2 queer dudes since once is alien and one is not (aliens control earth?)

pg. 177 bio

pg. 178 "Mama" by Eliza Gauger, beautiful prose, strange flash fiction

pg. 180 "Bucket List..." by Erica L. Satifka, concept bucket list before the singularity, bi women with gender queer spouse

pg. 189 author bio of Gabby Reed, didn't particularly like their story in the anthology but nevertheless seems intriguing, queer, bisexual Filpin@-American writer, poetry, story in Beyond: the Queer Sci-Fi & Fantasy Comic Anthology (which I really must read)

pg. 194 "In the Dawn Between Hours." by Sarah Pinsker. sweet romantic time travel story with lesbians!

pg. 197 author bio, lives in Baltimore

pg. 198 "Increasing Police Viability." by Bogi Takács, interesting take on security apparatus,

pg. 201 "Bayes Theorem" (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bayes%20Theorem>)

pg. 201 author bio, poetry writer

## **Reprint Fiction**

pg. 215 blog Queer Book Club

pg. 215 podcast HARK! A Holiday Music Podcast

pg. 215 webcomic Riot Nrdd

pg. 216 "Red Run" by AMJ Hudson, life switching

pg. 227 author bio, track down her piece "Motherland."

pg. 228 "CyberFruit Swamp" by Raven Kaldera, (I know him), interesting but a bit dated, color chain to identify what you are and are looking for (pg. 229), trans terminology

pg. 240 author bio. Raven could be on a queer scifi and fantasy panel at TBC!

pg. 241 "The Sound of His Wings" by Rand B. Lee

pg. 242 "the sike and the simp," pg. 253 more terminology

powers, mutants and non mutants (like Xmen or Heroes), themes of identity, originally published 1982

pg. 263 Author bio

pg. 264 "O Happy Day." by Geoff Ryman lesbian separatism, men killed except gay men who are used to kill the other men, concentration camps, surveillance, interesting from a history of genre specific, but stupid reductive gender existentialism. still moving in places.

pg. 292 author bio

### **Excerpt of...**

Skin Folk (I wanted to like this more than I did)

pg. 300 bio

### **Author Spotlights**

pg. 314 Bitter Waters and Being Small by Chaz Brenchley

pg. 317 Rose Lemberg talks about her concern in her writing with what happens when water is over, also the impact of trauma

pg. 319 mentions Sciegentasy

pg. 320 mentions story "Grandmother-nai Leylit's Cloth of Winds." in magazine Beneath Ceaseless Skies and "The Book of How to Live" in Start a Revolution

and finally "Geometries of Belonging" (also in Beneath Ceaseless Skies)

pg. 327 Be on the look out for Docile, "a science romance set in a near future Baltimore City." by K.M. Szpara

pg.329 Find and read "The Green Room" by Amal El-Mohtar

pg. 331 T.V. show to try "Blakes 7" and the accompanying podcast (<https://downandsafe.wordpress.com/>).

pg. 342 book recs by R.J. Edwards

Nevada

A Safe Girl to Love

pg. 344 books recs by AMJ Hudson

Everything Begins and Ends at the Kentucky Club

pg. 349 author spotlight by Rand B. Lee mentions East Wind Community

pg. 351 look out for Centaur Station

pg. 351 Reviewer to watch out for their own work (Arley Song)

## Artist Gallery

Orion Zangara (pg. 357)

Isabel Collier (pg 357)

Steen (pg. 357)

pg. 362 Afrofuturism in Aailyah music video "We Need a Revolution

pg. 364 agapeic romance

## Book Reviews, June 2015: Friendship, Chosen Family and Queer Communities by Amal El Mohtar

pg. 365 Archivist Wasp, YA without a love triangle! primary relationships friendships

pg. 366-367 Karen Memory, diversity not forced or unusual, Mary Robinette Kowal's principle of "subtract homogeneity for the sake of realism"

## Other Nonfiction

pp. 370-377 Interview with David Gerrold, The Martian Child: A Novel About a Single Father Adopting a Son, also his nonfiction essay take down of Orson Scott Card's homophobia (<http://joemygod.blogspot.com/2013/07/...>) and on Hugos

I still need to read The Man Who Folded Himself!

"That's how I feel about human beings. We're all different, we're all interesting, and we're all monsters too, each of us in own way. I've had the 'privileged of meeting of lots of people, weird, beautiful, sane, crazy, damaged, recovering, sad, ambitious, foolish --- and even a couple of sociopaths as well. And that stuff rubs off. (I have no idea what part of me rubs off onto other people."

LGBT people as monsters

influential books on him City of Night, The Front Runner, Venus Plus X

His experience with Star Trek TNG and Star Trek New voyages

Moonstar Odyssey

The Martian Child: A Novel About a Single Father Adopting a Son

Interview by Mark Oshiro

pg. 378 book mentioned The Stars Change

pg. 382 Jennifer Cross, black queer feminist nerd Outside the Box and Writing Ourselves Whole

pg. 383 "Not Android, Not Alien, Not Accident: Asexual and Agender in Science Fiction" by Cedar Rae Duke

pg. 386 Star Trek TNG episode "The Outcast" commentary on

pg. 388 bio

pg. 389 "Diversity in the Ghetto: The Marginalization of Modern Activism in Traditional Fandom" by Pablo Miguel Alberto Vasquez

pg. 391 bio

pg. 393 "Queers in a Strange Land." by Amber Neko Meador

essay on Robert A. Heinlein

pg. 397 bio, film "Night of the Living Catgirl", Other Selves: A Journey of Gender, Fiction, Discovery, and Hope

## Personal Essays

pg. 408 Sandra Odell's essay mentions Hiromi Goto, Charlie J. Andrews, and Nisi Shawl among others

pg. 413 An Owomoyela asexual author

pg. 415 Mark Oshiro (see above) mentions The Left Hand of Darkness which I totally still need to read

pg. 417 "Science Fiction Has Always Been Queer" by Sigrid Ellis

pg. 418 bio, Queers Dig Time Lords

pg. 419 "Halfway in the Pool" by James L. Sutter

bisexual representation

pg. 422 "All That Glitters" by Jill Seidenstein

pg. 424 bio, twitter @outseide

pg. 428 Jerome Stuart, Be on the look out for his novel "One Nation Under Gods." website on religion in science fiction (<https://tesseracts18.com/>)

pg. 429 The Fall of the Kings, answer for "when did you first recognize yourself in a science fiction or fantasy novel?"

pg. 432 "All Your Fic Are Belong to Us." Wonderfully snarky essay

pg. 434 bio, novella "The Lady Who Plucked Red Flowers Beneath the Queen's Window."

pg. 435 "Go Bisexual Space Rangers, Go!" by Cecilia Tan (TBC)

homosexuality in John Varley

group marriages in Diane Duane

pg. 438 "Drama Kid" by Cecil Baldwin

pg. 439, bio, narrator of "Welcome to Nightvale"

pg. 442 "Confessions of a Queer Curator" by Lynne M. Thomas

Smithie!

librarian (<http://libguides.niu.edu/sciencefiction>)

recommends Swordspoint, Stratford Man series

pg. 444 bio, SQUEECAST

pg. 445 "Where Now Must I Go To Make A Home" by Hal Duncan

escapism v. rescuism

"A little escapism's no bad thing but what I've found in SF is something better dubbed *rescuism*, I think.

Utopias, dystopias and heterotopias exploring the capacities of cultures for glorious deviance from the normative."

pg. 448 "Destruction is What Creation Needs." by Sunny Moraine

"Science fiction for me has always been about the erosion of constraints. it's always been about flexibility, transformation. It's always been about building, but also about *movement* within and outside of that building. It's always been about constructing something and then smashing it apart to see what happens. It's been about questioning everything. *Changing* everything, if it's possible to do so."

pg. 448 bio, live just outside D.C. (TBC), Line and Orbit, A Brief History of the Future: collected essays, Website

pg. 448 Sam Miller novelette We Are the Cloud

writer of color Lisa Bolekaja "work through shit just 2 feel comfortable putting sentences on paper. Some days 1 sentence is a a miracle."

pg. 448 bio

pg. 452 Lisa Morton recommends Starfarers

pg. 454 bio, lives in D.C. (TBC)

pg. 457 Alyssa Wong, Website

pg. 461 must read Joanna Russ

pg. 462 Everett Maroon, trans, The Unintentional Time Traveler

pg. 466 Minions of the Moon

Christopher Barzak

pg. 468 "A World of Queer Imagination" by Bonnie Jo Stufflebeam

talks about Willow on Buffy

and "Inventory" by Carmen Maria Marchado

pg. 469 bio of essay writer

pg. 474 "Queers Digging and Destroying" by Michael Damien Thomas

probably my favorite of the bunch of personal essays. biphobia within hetero and queer communities

pg. 476 author bio

### **Special Issue Staff bios (pg. 495)**

Seanan McGuire aka Mira Grant

Steve Berman

Sigrid Ellis

Mark Oshiro

Wendy N. Wagner

Cecil Baldwin

Arley Sorg (linked elsewhere in review)

Sandra Odell (linked elsewhere in review)

Jill Seidenstein (linked elsewhere in review)

Rahul Kanakia

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## Kalin says

I definitely liked this anthology better than *Queers Destroy Fantasy!* . It felt more diverse and fleshed out.

My notes as I read:

~ Amal El-Mohtar's book reviews were passionate and compassionate: a winning mixture. They almost won me over to try Elizabeth Bear's *Karen Memory*. (Almost, because, well, I'm not adding anything to my To-read list before I bring it down to 90- entries. Ah, wish me luck.)

~ Cedar Rae Duke's essay "Not Android, Not Alien, Not Accident: Asexual and Agender in Science Fiction" addresses an issue that I'm very interested in. Given that in the debate about sexuality, I glide, not so much along the "female ~ male" or "hetero ~ homo" axes, but along the "gender-pronounced ~ gender-free" one, any exploration of characters (and people) for whom sexuality isn't a leading factor fascinates me. I suppose this also explains the overall non-sexual feel of my own writing ... and why some readers get frustrated with it. (view spoiler)

~ There're many kinds of pettiness that people can inflict on one another. In my recent dealings with a querulous subset of Bulgarian fandom, I've experienced my share of them, but Michael Damien Thomas's essay "Queers Digging and Destroying" introduced me to excesses beating anything I could imagine. My heart goes out to him and his family and indeed anyone who gets such a treatment, for such reasons. Our squabbles are sheer silliness compared to that horror. May we all grow out of it sooner.

~ Although the main idea of Felicia Davin's "The Tip of the Tongue" was familiar, the tone was warm and gentle. And the story featured the best kissing scene I've read in ages.

Gentle and warm. :)

~ Jessica Yang's "Plant Children" is what I'd call a "mood piece," a story that may go nowhere but makes you relish the ride. (Much like my own "Festive" tale in the Heroes and Villains cycle. Like--you know--life. ;)

It was gentle too. And funny. And it tugged at my heart, the way all subdued, unspoken emotion does.

~ Amal El-Mohtar's "Madeleine" was the third story to boost my faith in the strength of the human spirit and warm me up. (Although "calm me down" is perhaps more appropriate, given the state I was in before I began reading it.)

And its Author Spotlight contains a lovely summary of the need for anyone to "destroy" any genre:

**You also participated in *Women Destroy Science Fiction!*. For you, what does it mean to destroy science fiction?**

It means grinding into a fine powder the conviction that I'm not smart or educated enough to write hard SF. It means obliterating the fear that men I respect will roll their eyes at my attempts. It means facing up to the fact that men who would do that don't deserve my respect,

and that indeed men for whom I care deeply rooted for and supported me throughout the process. It means standing up, shoulder to shoulder, with women and queer people and people of colour against the fiction that things are fine as they are, that nothing needs to be changed or addressed, that our voices are sufficiently loud at a whisper.

~ Susan Jane Bigelow's "Die, Sophie, Die"--about a game critic getting harassed on the Internet after poking fun at sexism in a video game--struck me hard because I've just found out about Gamergate. (And I didn't know that Zoe Quinn, of *Depression Quest*, was one of the targets.) I ... don't know what to say. So I'll revert to what I said earlier:

May we all grow out of this sooner.

~ Shannon Peavey's "Nothing Goes to Waste" is funny and sad and strange and familiar ... it has all the elements that make a flash piece memorable.

~ Bogi Takács's "Increasing Police Visibility" demonstrates another way to write memorable flash fiction: focusing on an idea that will set us thinking.

So, *what* will be the percentage of false positives at airport terrorist checks?

~ Another important reminder in Sigrid Ellis's essay:

There's no such thing as a queer story. That's stereotyping, that's profiling, that's marginalization.

Except, of course, that all sorts of stories are queer.

To be queer is to defy easy definition. Which is also what science fiction does. It defies what is known, what is safe. Science fiction extrapolates and explores. It pushes the edges of the known. Science fiction takes us to live in other people's bodies, in minds and hearts alien to our own.

There is no possible way that queers can destroy science fiction. Science fiction is already, has always been, queer.

~ Raven Kaldera's "CyberFruit Swamp" was the naughtiest, most over-the-top under-the-table (view spoiler) experience of the lot. I cringed and grinned, often simultaneously, throughout the ride. :)

~ Among the essays, there's not a single one I disliked. Even if they weren't literary masterpieces, their honesty always touched me. The one that touched me the most is Jerome Steuart's "When We're Not There, We're Not Here," not only with its raw sincerity, but also with the reminder that we're not just "this" or "that": we can be a little of "this" now, a bit more of "that" later--and many others in between.

Yay, we contain multitudes. ;)

~ While I hated the dystopian, concentration-camp premise of Geoff Ryman's "O Happy Day!", I appreciated the exploration of two rare subjects. One: that you can go to extremes no matter which side of the wall you're standing on. Two: that a prison guard is just as imprisoned by the box as any prisoners inside; that you need

to communicate across the walls in order to give boxes a chance to blow open.

~ I was similarly torn about Rand B. Lee's "The Sound of His Wings": the paranoid nature of its eternal conflict repelled me, but the characters and the writing ... my, the writing.

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### **Maija says**

I finally read the personal essays from the back of this special issue, which means I finished it! I've been reading this on and off ever since it was published, so I've forgotten a lot of the stories. I did prefer the Queers Destroy Fantasy! special issue, though (surprising no one).

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### **Amogha says**

"She wonders at how change comes in like a thief in the night, dismantling our sense of self one bolt and screw at a time until all that's left of the person we think we are is a broken door hanging off a rusty hinge, waiting for us to walk through."

I can't help but nod at how true this statement is. Dealing with change is something we constantly battle with, all the while being perplexed each and every time. We never learn, do we?

The narrative of story alternates between two different styles just as the topic of the story dapples in two different versions of memories - One version that projects the memories from the past in all its vividness and other, the kind that erodes with each wave that washes ashore. How will a woman deal with both of these.

The setting of the story is well chosen - a woman who signs up for a Alzheimer's clinical trial as a coping mechanism to deal with the death of her Alzheimer's afflicted mother. The drugs from the trial drop her into a cauldron of her childhood memories, giving her a chance to relive the best moments. She looks for triggers to open doors to her memories, to dive into hallucinations projected by her past. But somewhere in her memories, she meets a person, she has never met in her life before. A companion that she longs for in such desolate times. While her counsellor is convinced that she has imagined a non-existent person to deal with her loneliness, even as the line between her projected hallucinations and reality start blurring, Madeliene wants nothing more than being lost in the bliss of camaraderie and love, possibly.

Though I could easily guess who this person might be, this is a story worth reading for the evocative picture that the writer paints. The following paragraph on grief reveals the kind of potential this writer has and I would gladly read more stories by the writer.

Grief, thinks Madeleine now, is an invasion that climbs inside you and makes you grow a wool blanket from your skin, itchy and insulating, heavy and grey. It wraps and wraps and wraps around, putting layers of scratchy heat between you and the world, until no one wants to

approach for fear of the prickle, and people stop asking how you are doing in the blanket, which is a relief, because all you want is to be hidden, out of sight. You can't think of a time when you won't be wrapped in the blanket, when you'll be ready to face the people outside it — but one day, perhaps, you push through. And even though you've struggled against the belief that you're a worthless colony of contagion that must be shunned at all costs, it still comes as a shock, when you emerge, that there's no one left waiting for you.

Worse still is the shock that you haven't emerged at all.

Rating : 4.5/5

Note : Read this as part of BB's Flash Readathon, August.

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