



SUMMER 2023 EDITION

Welcome to the Speculative Fiction Writers' Newsletter. Follow along with our members who publish in many of the speculative fiction sub-genres including: science fiction, fantasy, horror, dystopian, weird west, fairy tales and more. Get to know our writers and our works. We also share our favorite tips, sites and info in the speculative fiction genre and more...

MEET OUR MEMBERS

Bonnie McCune



Coloradan Bonnie McCune has been writing since age ten, when she submitted a poem about rain rushing down the gutter to the Saturday Evening Post (it was immediately rejected). This interest initiated a passion for writing of all types. Her mania is fiction, and her pieces have won several awards.

However, like almost everyone, once she reached adulthood, she had to make a living. Her interest in the written word facilitated her career in nonprofits doing public and community relations and marketing. She's worked for libraries, directed a small arts organization, and managed Denver's beautification program. Simultaneously, she's been a free-lance writer with publications in local, regional, and specialty areas for news and features.

Her civic involvement includes grass-roots organizations, political campaigns, writers' and arts' groups, and children's literacy. For years, she entered recipe contests and was a finalist once to the Pillsbury Bake Off. A special love is live theater. Had she been nine inches taller and thirty pounds lighter, she might have been an actress. She has a husband, two adult children, and three grandchildren, all of whom are book-mad. For reasons unknown (an unacknowledged optimism?) she occasionally believes one person can make a difference in this world.

Her credits include:

- Three novels and two novellas, women's fiction, published by several small publishers.
- Numerous short stories, articles, and poems.

- Flash fiction, “King of the Class”, about young love gone right, Every Day Fiction. July 11, 2022 everydayfiction.com/king-of-the-class-by-Bonnie-McCune
- “The Girl Who Loves the Boy Who Loves the Girl Who Plays the Cello,” describing the circuitous path romance can take, The Sunlight Press thesunlightpress.com/2021/05/20/the-girl-who-loves-the-boy-who-loves-the-girl-who-plays-the-cello/
- Speculative fiction short story, “Final Report from the Land of Red-Headed Children,” Third Flatiron, anthology, Things With Feathers: Stories of Hope Winter 2021. thirdflatiron.com/2021_TF_WP/?page_id=11

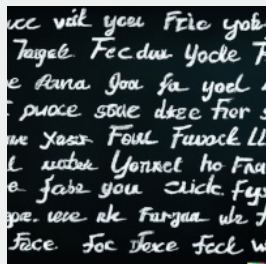
She currently is working on an apparently never-ending science fiction political novel, *Emancipation*. Begun in about 1975, it should approach a combination of Das Kapital and Brave New World, if she ever finishes it.

Visit her at BonnieMcCune.com, where you also can read her blog “Ordinary People, Extraordinary Lives,” or elsewhere, such as: Bonnie@BonnieMcCune.com twitter.com/bonniemccune facebook.com/AuthorBonnieMcCune linkedin.com/in/BonnieMcCune instagram.com/authorbonniemccune

FEATURED ARTICLE

Language in Science Fiction

by Paul Martz



One look at the schedule for Norwescon (Seattle, April 6-9) told me I had some tough choices to make. Without a time machine, I’d have to miss many fascinating sessions. But I could not skip Language in Science Fiction, paneled by authors David D. Levine, Erica L. Satifka, and Joseph Malik.

While *Star Trek* required a full language for the Klingon race, your work-in-progress may need a subtler approach, such as the vibrating web language of the spiders in Adrian Tchaikovsky’s *Children of Time*, or the chemical messages of plants in *Semiosis* by Sue Burke. The panelists discussed many more examples, too numerous to list.

The real fun began with the discussion of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, or linguistic relativity. The intermingling of language, culture, and psychology will strengthen any work of fiction. What does your fictional language tell the reader about your alien culture? A lack of irregular verbs might demonstrate societal refinement—or absolute submission to law. Cultures in a drought-stricken dystopian future might employ multiple words for water to differentiate character and quality. I’m confident that the time-fluid aliens of Ted Chiang’s *Story of Your Life* would have much more to say on Sapir-Whorf.

Maybe your fictional language lacks the verb “to be.” Overuse of this passive verb can weaken your writing, and you should avoid it anyway. Bonus points if you noticed its absence in this article.

Which leaves one important question. When a culture cannot passively exist, can members of it still enjoy Hamlet?

SPEC FIC BECOMES SCIENCE FACT



SpaceX's Starship Launches and Explodes: SpaceX's Starship, the mega-rocket from Elon Musk's space-exploration company, exploded last week after its first attempted orbital launch. But the rocket wasn't the only thing left in pieces. Photos show SpaceX's Starship rocket blew a crater into its launchpad during its launch and flung concrete chunks hundreds of feet during takeoff and scattered debris. The rocket exploded minutes after lifting off, after failing a crucial flight maneuver, on April 20. The damage raises questions about when Starship will be able to attempt another orbital launch. [npr.org/2023/04/21/1171202753/spacex-starship-launch-explosion-cheer-success](https://www.npr.org/2023/04/21/1171202753/spacex-starship-launch-explosion-cheer-success)

Sci-fi Magazine Overwhelmed by Hundreds of AI-generated Stories: Clarkesworld, a science fiction magazine, has banned new story submissions after receiving hundreds of low-quality AI-generated pieces. The magazine's founding editor, Neil Clarke, says the problem has been created by people promoting surprisingly capable AI language models such as ChatGPT as a way to earn money from fiction publishing – despite the poor quality of the AI stories. www.newscientist.com/article/2360672-sci-fi-magazine-overwhelmed-by-hundreds-of-ai-generated-stories/

Astronaut Hibernation Testing in Ten Years: Per the European Space Agency, putting astronauts into hibernation, a state they call 'torpor', is a potentially feasible way to help astronauts travel the great distances through space needed to reach even our closest galactic neighbors. Early trials have already induced a state of torpor in non-hibernating animals, and the ESA believes with fine-tuning, trials on humans could begin within the next ten years. www.space.com/astronaut-hibernation-trials-possible-in-decade

LIVE WELL AND PROSPER

- Spec Fic member author L.V. Ditchkus recently shared her writing experience with a group of Montessori students in Salida, Colorado. The youths wrote stories for her to read in advance and she provided feedback and writing advice to the class. Afterward, Director Jill Lewis expressed her appreciation. "I cannot thank you enough for the wonderful and amazing feedback you gave to our students a few weeks ago. It was amazing and incredibly refreshing and so very positive. Each student just glowed after hearing the responses. Thank you so much!"
- Bonnie McCune contributed a blog to the Spec Fic website. She says, "I used to believe I didn't like fantasy fiction. I'd mentally scoff at the concept, believing it was comprised of writing based on fairy tales, or concepts so unrelated to real life no rational adult or serious writer could possibly want to indulge in it." specficwriters.com/fantasy-reconsidered/
- Author L.V. Ditchkus will be talking about her award-winning Sasquatch Series and her writing journey at the Salida Regional Library (405 E St) from 4:30 PM - 6:30 PM on Friday, June 23, 2023 at their Author Fair. She will also appear at Salida Books (109 North F Street) during Art Walk in Salida, Colorado, on June 24 from 11:00 AM to 6:00 PM.

Salida Art Walk is a weekend celebration of art in Salida, CO, with

more than 30 artist venues (e.g., painters, fabric artists, book binders, circus performers, and more) that open their doors to visitors for demonstrations and fun.

- Speculative Fiction Writers members Paul Martz and Linda (L.V.) Ditchkus have teamed up to co-edit the 2024 Rocky Mountain Fiction Writers (RMFW) anthology. The timely theme, *Colorado's Changing Climate*, reflects the rising prominence of climate change in fiction.

RMFW members have plenty of real-life experience to influence their submissions. Paul and Linda have both had close calls with climate-driven wildfires. But whether it's a 23-year drought, the latest 1000-year flood, or golf ball-size hail, Coloradans live climate change everyday.

Submissions should be 2000-6000 words, contain no identifying information, and be in standard manuscript format. You must be an RMFW member to submit. Submissions close June 15, so submit your story today.

rmfw.org/anthology-submission-guidelines/

BOOK REVIEW



The Left-Handed Booksellers of London

Review by Matthew Cushing

Garth Nix explores Earth in a slightly-alternate 1983 London for his latest fantasy *The Left-Handed Booksellers of London*. The story follows Susan, a young woman looking for her father—a man she has never met. With only a few memories from her mother and a list of possible surnames, Susan finds a mobster who might have some information, but when she arrives to talk to him, he has just been killed by the stylish and handsome Merlin.

Merlin is a left-handed bookseller (the fighting kind) who, along with right-handed booksellers (the intellectual kind), belongs to an extended family of magical beings who study ancient texts and wield artifacts to police the mythic and legendary Old World when it intrudes on the Modern World. With overtones of *The Librarian* or *Warehouse-13*, Nix has overlaid a realm of fantasy and magic with the veneer of 1983 London—and some spots between the two are a little weak, allowing magical baddies to pass between.

Merlin is on his own quest to find which magical villain killed his mother and soon discovers that his search largely overlaps with Susan's. Together, they retrace old police investigations, discover shoddy work, and uncover new leads that take them over to the Old World. With exciting action, colorful characters, and shots of humor, *The Left-Handed Booksellers of London* is a fast and entertaining read.

Nix has also released a sequel, *The Sinister Booksellers of Bath*, which again teams Merlin with Susan when they discover a sorcerous map which leads them back into the magical Old World.

Garth Nix is a master of fantasy, having written sixteen books, half of them taking place in his fantastic Old Kingdom—a place on the other side of a great magical wall where charter magic governs how things work and not all creatures remain dead. His original trilogy of *Sabriel*,

Lirael, and *Abhorsen* follow the exploits of the Abhorsen, a necromancer who uses a bandolier of bells to travel into the nine layers of death and control the spirits who live there or escape to the land of the living. It is one of my favorite fantasy stories.

Both his Booksellers series and Old Kingdom series are highly recommended.

SCI-FI DICTIONARY



Blue pill (n), a drug that allows one to remain ignorant of reality.

Red pill (n), a drug that reveals esp. unpleasant truths of the real world.

sfdictionary.com

Thanks For Reading!

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