

05:51:46.000 --> 05:51:52.000

Good point. Good point. Okay, it is 3 o'clock. So hello everyone, let's get started.

05:51:52.000 --> 05:52:14.000

This session is introduction to. Eleanor. Arnison works and reception. I'm going to do a little bit of housekeeping, which means that we'll get the behavioral guidelines in the chat.

05:52:14.000 --> 05:52:36.000

Pretty soon and I also want to remind you good point that someone else made that this is recorded and that by participating in the Q&A and discussion that you are giving consent to be recorded and for that recording to go on the digital archive.

05:52:36.000 --> 05:52:43.000

So as far as our introduction is concerned. David Lander is a retired staff member from the University of Minnesota libraries and used to be a graduate student.

05:52:43.000 --> 05:53:02.000

English at Minnesota in his spare time. Studying with a number of distinguished. scholars and, in fantasy and sci-fi both.

05:53:02.000 --> 05:53:07.000

Authors and scholars. So I will leave it to you David.

05:53:07.000 --> 05:53:12.000

Okay, thank you.

05:53:12.000 --> 05:53:19.000

I thought when I would that I would be doing more of an introduction to Eleanor and her works.

05:53:19.000 --> 05:53:26.000

Than anything else and then I thought I could have a summary of all of the stuff that had been published on her because I didn't think there was that much.

05:53:26.000 --> 05:53:33.000

It turns out there's a little more than I knew and probably a lot more than Eleanor know.

05:53:33.000 --> 05:53:48.000

And in any case, what I've ended up doing is going back to some of the earliest stuff, much of which is actually on a web page that we have had up for Eleanor for years from the Rivendell group of them at the Peaks Society, our local discussion group.

05:53:48.000 --> 05:53:54.000

I'm gonna read from some stuff that's been there, but very deep enough that you've probably never seen it.

05:53:54.000 --> 05:54:00.000

And I also edited it a little bit for this. And then I'm going to move on to a little bit of.

05:54:00.000 --> 05:54:08.000

Something else. And then I thought, oh gee, everybody has these pictures that they show. I don't really have anything like that.

05:54:08.000 --> 05:54:12.000

I don't even quite know how to do that. And although I have these apps that I never use.

05:54:12.000 --> 05:54:30.000

So then I thought, well, I'll just put up some pictures. And the picture there that you can see is the cover of Last Holy Hearth number 8, which was our ribbon del newsletter and that illustration was drawn by one of my coworkers at the Biomedical Library.

05:54:30.000 --> 05:54:36.000

After I gave him a copy of one of Eleanor's stories and he went home and had a dream.

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And the upshot of the dream was he woke up and drew the character that had come to him in the dream.

05:54:43.000 --> 05:54:52.000

And that actually turns out to be almost a starting point here for for this. I'm going to read you an Arnison note by Ruth Berman.

05:54:52.000 --> 05:55:01.000

And that we published along with that in and published it's just a local newsletter, fan.

05:55:01.000 --> 05:55:10.000

From Last Only Hearth Number 8, August of 1981. Eleanor Arnison's writing is an unsettling mixture of the beautiful and the loony.

05:55:10.000 --> 05:55:17.000

Her characters bring a kind of clear sighted insanity to their problems that is both absurd and plausible.

05:55:17.000 --> 05:55:23.000

For instance, the clinging gothic heroine of the house by the sea who misses her most recent lover.

05:55:23.000 --> 05:55:32.000

And then quoting from the story. Those were dark months. Even the merry antics of my troglodyte tumblers couldn't cheer me.

05:55:32.000 --> 05:55:40.000

The house seemed cold and drafty, though it had excellent central heating. I took up embroidery to help pass the time, took television courses in Amerindian cooking and flower arranging and try to get the family library in order.

05:55:40.000 --> 05:55:50.000

Nothing helped. And this is Ruth speaking in her own voice again. Query, is that funny out of context?

05:55:50.000 --> 05:55:57.000

I don't know. When I first read the house by the sea, I didn't think any of it was funny.

05:55:57.000 --> 05:56:06.000

I could tell that it was intended to be funny, but the dripy heroine was an unpleasant person and I couldn't seem to find her horrible plight distant enough to be funny.

05:56:06.000 --> 05:56:21.000

When I read it a few months later, it seemed to have undergone a sea change. The The heroine was just as unpleasant, but the exposure of Gothic sensitivity as exasperating instead of endearing had turned into the central comedy of the story.

05:56:21.000 --> 05:56:27.000

More often, in addition to being bizarrely reasonable, the characters are fair-minded nice people.

05:56:27.000 --> 05:56:36.000

For instance, the author of the story in the story of the warlord of Saturn's moons, who is worried by her attraction to her stories hero.

05:56:36.000 --> 05:56:42.000

It's never wise to get too involved with your characters. Besides, I'm not his type.

05:56:42.000 --> 05:56:58.000

I could of course kill him off, but this solution, while popular among writers, is unfair. Or even the neurotic dragons in the swordsmith who rudely by the standards of Narri, a sane dragon, undertake to settle someone else's moral dilemma.

05:56:58.000 --> 05:57:07.000

They come up with an unacceptable solution. One of the 2 in conflict must die. But a reader can't help help admiring their passion for justice.

05:57:07.000 --> 05:57:09.000

Anyway, this one can't.

05:57:09.000 --> 05:57:18.000

OK, now I'm back to my own voice. The first thing I read by Eleanor Arnison was either her novel, *The Sword Smith*, or her sort story, *The House by the Sea*.

05:57:18.000 --> 05:57:24.000

I undertook reading her work because she had agreed to be a guest at a Rivendell discussion of her novel.

05:57:24.000 --> 05:57:33.000

The novel seemed to me to be a first novel, kind of an objectless quest, made up of episodic adventures that didn't really go anywhere except for the heroes search for South.

05:57:33.000 --> 05:57:38.000

I didn't think too much more about it. The short story on the other hand was one of the funniest I'd ever read.

05:57:38.000 --> 05:57:39.000

I was practically rolling out of my seat on the bus ride home from the public library where I had gone to get issues of *orbit*.

05:57:39.000 --> 05:57:51.000

So I could read stories, at which point I also discovered Gene Wolf and Kate Wilhelm, but that's another story.

05:57:51.000 --> 05:58:04.000

I must have met Eleanor at a couple of the writers groups meetings, which Ruth, Eleanor, and Al Kufald had started, but hadn't connected her with the person that Ruth had suggested that we invite to the Rivendell meeting to talk about her new fantasy novel.

05:58:04.000 --> 05:58:12.000

Later, I remember her reading from the book which would become The Monster's Daughter. Which is as yet unfinished.

05:58:12.000 --> 05:58:17.000

Anyhow, when we had our Rivendell discussion with Eleanor, she said several things which I've always remembered.

05:58:17.000 --> 05:58:25.000

One was talking about the Icelandic sagas and her readings of them, which she saw as underlying her novel.

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Suddenly, the novel took a more distinct shape for me, and even though I hadn't read the sagas, I suddenly understood the swordsmith in a new way.

05:58:31.000 --> 05:58:40.000

It was not at all a random quest story or at least no detail was any more random than it needed to be.

05:58:40.000 --> 05:58:52.000

Parts which had seemed fine to me suddenly knit in my understanding to something much more impressive, a whole that was about the post-war seventys in the US, as well as a fantasy story featuring a pro crusty type host.

05:58:52.000 --> 05:59:02.000

And in sufferable and doomed fair-haired hero type. And an unlikely protagonist, a lame Smith who wants only to beat swords into ploughshares.

05:59:02.000 --> 05:59:17.000

But is continually ordered to do the reverse. He is accompanied by a weird alter ego, saddled by bag-sized talking lizard, supposedly a dragon who mostly only talks when they're alone and yet who cannot be I'm wholly imaginary.

05:59:17.000 --> 05:59:28.000

After all, they soldjourn with a much larger adult-sized dragons who are excellent plumbers a bit later in the book and Narri does say other things occasionally and bites one or 2 people along the way.

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The other thing that I want to mention was that she was very serious about her fiction but wanted to have serious fun and humor and didn't care much about a big audience.

05:59:37.000 --> 05:59:48.000

She aspired to an audience like Thomas Love Peacocks. Always a few devoted readers, or at least reliable readers, if never a large audience.

05:59:48.000 --> 05:59:57.000

Let me go back to 1,980 and quote from the discussion summary that I wrote up in last homely hearth of our November, the nineteenth 78 discussion.

05:59:57.000 --> 06:00:05.000

Someone commented on style in the swordsmith, nearly all of the sentences are simple or compound sentences.

06:00:05.000 --> 06:00:11.000

There are very few complex sentences. Yet the rhythm of the sentences keeps them from monotony.

06:00:11.000 --> 06:00:20.000

Eleanor explained that she had taken a course in medieval Icelandic. And that her prose style was affected by reading the sagas.

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I thought this explained a lot about the strange mood of the story when someone commented on the sagas saying they are very grim accounts of blood feuds.

06:00:27.000 --> 06:00:36.000

So and so killed. What's his name and what's his name's brother took revenge by killing so-and-so whose sister's son revenged him by killing what's his name's brother, etc.

06:00:36.000 --> 06:00:42.000

Eleanor went on to explain that she had been trying to write the story from Limper's point of view without ever entering his thoughts.

06:00:42.000 --> 06:00:51.000

This is sometimes a difficult technique to manage. It reminded Tess of the film *The Eyes of Laura Mars*, which is filmed from Laura's perspective.

06:00:51.000 --> 06:00:59.000

Limper's story is like a dream. Eleanor was trying to rely on her subconscious for the development of the plot.

06:00:59.000 --> 06:01:09.000

The swordsmith was in many ways an unpleasant book to write because the method she used to draw upon her subconscious and make it dream like was difficult and sometimes unpleasantly surprising.

06:01:09.000 --> 06:01:24.000

Like pulling one's own teeth. Reaction to the laconic withdrawn Smith. Her second novel, *The Honshaw Inheritance*, which at this point was not published when I wrote this, but later appeared as to the resurrection station.

06:01:24.000 --> 06:01:33.000

Was almost the opposite and a lot of fun to write. She consciously tried to break the rules for writing novels and to make it as absurd as possible.

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The book starts out as a gothic on another world, then halfway through it moves to earth.

06:01:38.000 --> 06:01:42.000

When the giant rats appear.

06:01:42.000 --> 06:01:51.000

The novel she was working on by this point was very boring to write. Though people have assured her that it is not so to read.

06:01:51.000 --> 06:02:07.000

Its working title was either the furry people story or a woman of the Iron People. And it sounds like a book that may be more likely to be appreciated by science fiction publishers, though Elinor still doesn't seem to care about being financially successful or especially selling her stories.

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She grew up the daughter of an artist historian with the idea that great artists just aren't financially successful and that to be a really good artist almost precludes such success.

06:02:16.000 --> 06:02:23.000

Money is negatively associated with great artists. Though she didn't go so far as to insist that the 2 never go together.

06:02:23.000 --> 06:02:29.000

In connection with a reference to Thomas Love Peacock, this may be illuminating. She thought of him because of his uniqueness.

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He was a somewhat quirky writer that did what he did well. No one else has imitated him and he continues to appeal to a small but enthusiastic group who appreciate his work.

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Apparently to Elinor, that sort of success is more important than being able to live off of writing.

06:02:45.000 --> 06:02:51.000

For that matter, Peacock lived on his earnings as an official of the British East India Company, not on his writing.

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Overall, I'm afraid this report fails to adequately portray the captivating person who writes such curious stories.

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If she sometimes is rather moralistic about a writing and other people's writing, this is a function of the deep commitment to and concern about.

06:03:05.000 --> 06:03:10.000

What's she obviously considers an art, not a craft, and certainly not a business or a livelihood.

06:03:10.000 --> 06:03:29.000

In person, Eleanor Arnison is a perceptive, sensitive thinker whose quick sense of humor never obscures how deeply she cares about the writing, science fiction and fantasy, feminism, and other matters about which she has formed definite, though still adaptable, opinions.

06:03:29.000 --> 06:03:38.000

My experience with having my perceptions of her first novel changing on learning about the roots in Icelandic saga is one of several similar experiences.

06:03:38.000 --> 06:03:47.000

Again, with to the resurrection station. Oh, you know, I had to put pictures of this up instead of instead of our little troroglyite there.

06:03:47.000 --> 06:03:55.000

Oh, I have to do it over here though, sorry. I'll just click on this. There you can see the swordsmith, that was the first book.

06:03:55.000 --> 06:04:07.000

And then there's the appearance of to the resurrection station. I wish I could show you the original cover that was rejected by Walden Books and B Dalton's and so therefore they had to do this cover instead.

06:04:07.000 --> 06:04:15.000

But and then daughter of the bear king comes up a little bit later and that's the cover they have for the e-book now.

06:04:15.000 --> 06:04:26.000

Anyhow. I was disappointed with to the resurrection station mainly because I'd been expecting a book link house by the sea, the story that I so loved.

06:04:26.000 --> 06:04:36.000

The book is decidedly odd and I wasn't sure how it was supposed to hang together or why conventions were consistently flouted in ways that were clear and yet inexplicable.

06:04:36.000 --> 06:04:40.000

Unlike the short story, it's not a comic novel that keeps one in constant giggles.

06:04:40.000 --> 06:04:48.000

It's ironic and peculiar. The Gothic parody is only a part of what's going on and it never really assumes humorous force.

06:04:48.000 --> 06:04:57.000

All however much it really is almost classically comic in various respects. The situations are farcical, but it's not played for laughs, kind of like Delaney's the cute barbarian liberator.

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Gorgit. Gorgic, I'm not even sure. Who is constantly talking about political theory and economics while longing to sexually subjugate himself.

06:05:10.000 --> 06:05:15.000

To a dirty small crippled, I don't think physically challenged is the right term here.

06:05:15.000 --> 06:05:25.000

Man, while wearing a slave's iron collar. That's not exactly a humorous parody of Conan, parody, yes, but it's aiming at something a long way from silliness.

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There is also a casual introduction of lesbian relationship for the main character. This is in Elinor's book, not Delaney's.

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Almost incidental to her resistance to being married off to an alien prince for political reasons. Then there are the singing dolphins with lyrics worthy of Browning or Tennyson.

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Anyhow, I asked Eleanor about this book and she told me that she had been trying to capture the ideational change that has to precede social change.

06:05:51.000 --> 06:06:04.000

And that the title of the book is a reference to the famous book Edmund Wilson's *To the Finland Station*, which is about how Lenin worked at bringing about the revolution and finally realized that the moment was at hand when he got off the train in St.

06:06:04.000 --> 06:06:21.000

Petersburg, 1,917. Before without while not really knowing or understanding the socialist history behind this I found that the book suddenly took on meaning for me, meaning about social change, but said in a 70, s American social context.

06:06:21.000 --> 06:06:30.000

Eleanor's books are about ideas and I like that, but a lot of her characters are not very likeable or forthcoming and perhaps like Peacock's characters.

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Which are essentially abstracts, caricatures of various political or philosophical positions. Some of her characters are pretty terrible.

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Take Lucia in house by the sea again. Again, lots of folks have misread this story. I loved it, not because I liked Lucia, but because it was so clever and sharply satirical and fun.

06:06:49.000 --> 06:07:00.000

And also contained real ideas and genuine pathos. Other readers have reacted differently. Ruth Berman realized that the story was supposed to be funny but didn't find it so until a later rereading.

06:07:00.000 --> 06:07:08.000

Joanne Johnson was so taken with the darling little family retainer Troglodytes that she missed that their devotion was misplaced in their mistress.

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Other readers have attempted to identify with Lucia, but that makes for an untenable reading and they usually are totally puzzled by the story and put off.

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It's certainly not a funny story from the perspective of any of the characters. Only from the reader's vantage where you can also appreciate the creation of the plants.

06:07:25.000 --> 06:07:31.000

The troglodytes, the brooch and the house while being horrified by the sensibilities of its inhabitants.

06:07:31.000 --> 06:07:41.000

Or one might focus on the literary structure, balanced as it is, on a foundational Victorian poem, perhaps in dialogue with Matthew Arnold.

06:07:41.000 --> 06:08:00.000

So Eleanor comes to the writing more fully developed characters and sustaining a narrative for long, boring pages of logically preceding plot in *A Woman of the Iron People*.

06:08:00.000 --> 06:08:09.000

I can, and there's a cover. Anyway, I can imagine why she once described it as boring to write.

06:08:09.000 --> 06:08:20.000

Compared with her previous work, it is boring. And so was most other fiction. It may be more likeable and it may not leave lots of pieces half sketched occupying only the space that they need to occupy in this narrative.

06:08:20.000 --> 06:08:26.000

As props on a stage may be made only of paper mache painted only on the side facing the audience.

06:08:26.000 --> 06:08:31.000

But it's comparatively dull. People don't have to try so hard to get it with a woman of the iron people.

06:08:31.000 --> 06:08:32.000

Is that good? Lots of people seem to think it's pretty decent on its own terms as well.

06:08:32.000 --> 06:08:40.000

So you want a couple of awards for it. Erska L Gwyn wrote.

06:08:40.000 --> 06:08:46.000

Nice things about it and so did a whole lot of other people. I love anthropology and ethnography.

06:08:46.000 --> 06:08:51.000

I took 10 courses in Anthropology as an undergrad. I liked that aspect of this book.

06:08:51.000 --> 06:09:00.000

It was pleasant. It didn't sweep me away. I think I liked some of Lguin's books better for that sort of liking or John Sanzusi's Adore into Ocean.

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But I think what I like best about this book is buried more deeply under all of this stuff. The ideas about politics and human social interactions.

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Some people have questioned how this could be considered a mythopoeic story. It won the Mythic Fantasy Award.

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I reread the book watching for obvious mythopia. At first I focused on the native Draconian and that's capitalized.

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I don't quite remember this now, but I think it refers to the culture. Religious beliefs and stories.

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For after all, how could the beliefs of atheists carry the weight of men? Besides, the presumption had to be that the easily discounted ignorant native folk beliefs were being dismissed by the science fiction.

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Technologically based biased readers. I knew that the other shoe drops in the last part of the book, but I hadn't recalled it at the beginning.

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The native religious beliefs don't really kick in until the entry of voice of the waterfall into the story after about 100 pages.

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But the very beginning of the story is the carefully laid out myths about conserving human culture, protecting the less advanced cultures from our own dangerous post-industrial earth culture.

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These are the myths along with Marxism and Taoism and others that the atheists from Earth live by.

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As with their scientific technology, when they predicted that the native organisms wouldn't be able to survive in the visiting anthropologists.

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These myths and technologies are largely equal in terms of how well they function. Sometimes they're right.

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In fact, mostly they're right. But never completely sell. More than one explanation is required to explain the world.

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The book is full of arguments or ideas about the belief systems that we live by and how these affect our behavior and even our perceptions.

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It's worth noting that the stories of voice of the waterfall are no less effective in explaining the course of the story and events that the scientific explanations of the space bearers from Earth.

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The stunning revelations in the latter parts of the book not only save the peculiar appearances, You remember the save the appearance's expression?

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Of the 20 first or 20 s century human culture but they also turn back the arguments that seem to spring too easily to either Derrick's or Shipboard Commands spokespeople.

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Likewise, they might be rejoinders unnoticed to the many readers, reviewers, and commentators who have objected to Arnison's failure to notice or anticipate the fall of the Soviet Union and presumably its Marxist communist philosophy.

06:11:27.000 --> 06:11:42.000

But such reactions are not based in careful reading of a woman of the iron people to say nothing of the limits of the objectors understanding of Marxism or the so-called communism of the Soviet Union.

06:11:42.000 --> 06:11:51.000

And just need a separate water.

06:11:51.000 --> 06:12:01.000

So I have, and incidentally a lot of what I just read do was actually a rewrite of some stuff I put into the Mythopaic Society.

06:12:01.000 --> 06:12:08.000

Bi-monthly discussion appa Butterberg's woodshed. Which died about 10 years ago.

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Maybe more than that. I think the only person at this conference who is likely to have possibly read them before, although some of this might be online too.

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It would be Ellie Farrow who's been in some places, but she was part of Butterberg's woodchuck.

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Anyway, there was a discussion there and part of the way I'm writing that is reacting to some of the discussion.

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From. From Mary Stozenbach. And Edith Crowe and some other people who were part of that and a couple of those comments are on our Eleanor Arnison web page that we have up under the Rivendell.

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Web page which shown verba you can see here at the among the people listening here. Has been has put up and incidentally she's also revising some of the Eleanor Arneson entries as a out of coming out of this this effort.

06:13:02.000 --> 06:13:09.000

And has updated the bibliography sum that Denny Lean had done for Wiscan. 20 years ago.

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And so we're hopefully getting that more up to date before Eleanor is guest of honor at mythcon this coming summer.

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So anyway, I will redo a little bit more and then maybe we'll talk some about the books.

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Let's see. A decade after initial publication, Oh wait, no I wanna start back a little further.

06:13:31.000 --> 06:13:42.000

Have come to have doubts about Arnison's first 3 novels as novels. Without being very fleshed out, Northrop Fry distinguishes the novel from the anatomy.

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Thomas Love Peacock's work is held up as an exemplar of this sort of book.

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Though others, such as Alice in Wonderland and Tristram Shandy, have also been cited as widely divergent examples by subsequent critics and theorists.

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I suppose in most respects the swordsmith is a novel, but the way that most of Arnison's characters can represent ideas or philosophical positions and they are in some respects rather shallow as novelistic characters compared with some of the later characters and Woman of the Iron People or Ring of Swords, I think, is not all that dissimilar to the way that He caught through his characters in

06:14:17.000 --> 06:14:27.000

Maid Marian or the misfortunes of Elfin. And I gather, not having managed to actually read Peacock's other 5 or so novels or anatomies.

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Or whatever they are. That the other books were even less novelistic. Books like Project Castle or Nightmare Abbey.

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And I think Nightmare Abbey is probably his most widely remembered and read book, which is, I guess, almost directly arguments that he had with Percy Shelley and some other people but in any case.

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It may be that most science fiction violates a number of essential novelistic features under some definitions. This may only really be a concern of critics who dismiss fantasy and science fiction as sub-literature.

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And yet, an awful lot of science fiction and especially fantasy mostly seems written almost as literature to genre expectations and to satisfy conventional tastes in these stories for their readers.

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We don't seem all that interested in the high-minded ideas that are often claimed to be the Amazon debt.

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For science fiction and fantasy by some of its defenders. But I think many readers may bring some novelistic and even genre expectations to harness and sort fiction and especially her earlier shorter novels but even to aspects of particularly iron people and miss some of their excellence.

06:15:39.000 --> 06:15:47.000

Over the past few weeks, I've been reading a lot of articles and notes about Arnison's work and found more than I'd expected.

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Yet relatively little seems especially useful or insightful. The best are the various pieces from Brian Atterbury, and those are great.

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He wrote about her in his, his book on gender in science fiction. And the master's thesis from Nicole Lara Lajunes.

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Boya, which discusses dystopia in Arnison and Octavia Butler.

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I'm trying to compile a list of secondary sources as it there are widely divergent collections from the MLA bibliography to Google to various curated lists.

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And this is an ongoing process that maybe I won't finish by summer or maybe I won't.

06:16:31.000 --> 06:16:38.000

Over the past few weeks, I've been reading, I've read that, didn't I?

06:16:38.000 --> 06:16:44.000

And along the way, there are other reviews and a few articles and some good interviews conducted by various people.

06:16:44.000 --> 06:16:54.000

And we have some of those interviews up on that page too, like an interview that was done with Elise Matheson and an interview with Leighton Morehouse.

06:16:54.000 --> 06:17:03.000

And some others that we have up on connected to the Harnesson page. And then there's some others out there in the real world that you can find on the web.

06:17:03.000 --> 06:17:12.000

But anyway. There's also some papers I haven't been able to track down yet, but I, I will leave that aside for the moment.

06:17:12.000 --> 06:17:24.000

Went back to the earliest materials that I had compiled coming out of book discussions with both the Rivendell Discussion Group and the App of Butterbirds Woodshed and I am still grappling with how to describe the collectivity of Eleanor's work.

06:17:24.000 --> 06:17:33.000

But recently I am struck by how often her readers seem to mention the experience of coming to a new understanding of her work based upon rereading.

06:17:33.000 --> 06:17:45.000

Discarding certain preconceptions. The best article is Brian Alderbury's Ring of Swords, a reappreciation, which appeared in the New York Review of Science Fiction about 10 years after the book had been published.

06:17:45.000 --> 06:17:57.000

It begins. I'm going to read you a couple of paragraphs. Some readers may not know that Eleanor Arnison's ring of swords is one of the best science fiction novels of the 19 nineties or indeed of any decade.

06:17:57.000 --> 06:18:04.000

The book appeared just over 10 years ago following the considerable success of Arnison's Tiptre Award-winning novel, A Woman of the Iron People.

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Ring of Swords was not the breakout sales success the publisher hoped for and won no major awards.

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It was only twelfth in the locusts magazine poll for 1,993.

06:18:15.000 --> 06:18:22.000

But it continues to attract readers, is mentioned respectfully in critical sources and is increasingly taught in college courses.

06:18:22.000 --> 06:18:28.000

A decade after initial publication seems like a good time for a reassessment. How well has the book worn?

06:18:28.000 --> 06:18:37.000

What stands out now that the glow of novelty has subsided? What new connections does the story make with events and thinking in the 20 first century?

06:18:37.000 --> 06:18:44.000

My own sense, on rereading the novel, is that it is a slightly different book than the one I first read.

06:18:44.000 --> 06:18:57.000

And an even better one. Indeed, I would now say that it is a classic by which I mean not an unchanging monument, but a text that responds in new and surprising ways to a shifting reality.

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End quote from Attebury.

06:19:00.000 --> 06:19:10.000

Interestingly, Atterbury goes on to provide 3 different readings of the book because he can't figure out how else to provide a summation of its excellence.

06:19:10.000 --> 06:19:22.000

And those 3 readings are subtitled Jane Austen in space. Slashing Heinlein and the Scottish novel.

06:19:22.000 --> 06:19:27.000

And truly this is somewhat characteristic of Atterbury's critical approach.

06:19:27.000 --> 06:19:34.000

He's always coming up with these little fuzzy sats, but You know, different fuzzy sets aren't necessarily.

06:19:34.000 --> 06:19:49.000

Privileged over the others. And it depends where you start from to how you determine that. And even in his most recent book, he has all these separate little pieces that sort of somehow fit together, but you could fit them together in different ways.

06:19:49.000 --> 06:20:03.000

Anyway, But even in physics, we may resort to describing phenomena with conflicting descriptions. Light may behave like waves or else like particles, or both, or neither.

06:20:03.000 --> 06:20:06.000

I know we can kind of explain it with

06:20:06.000 --> 06:20:15.000

Equations, but I don't understand that. So anyway. Now, when Ruth Berman talks about how a story underwent a sea change, by the time she came to reread the story.

06:20:15.000 --> 06:20:22.000

And I have repeatedly found that some little clue suddenly opens up one of her stories to me and the foremost critic of fantasy.

06:20:22.000 --> 06:20:33.000

Reads a presumably dated book, after all, who could have forecast the changes in society brought about the impact of AIDS and the reassessment of the status of LGBTQ IA plus.

06:20:33.000 --> 06:20:39.000

And queer identified people in US long culture. Finding that it is a better book than he'd realized.

06:20:39.000 --> 06:20:56.000

Does that add up to something a little unusual? There are indeed readers on Amazon and Goodreads who dismiss ring of swords because it failed to anticipate changes in acceptance of queer people in the US and world culture, or to adequately include the range of gender identity in orientations.

06:20:56.000 --> 06:21:04.000

And others who laugh because Arnison apparently didn't realize that all Marxist philosophy and maybe Daoist and Christian philosophy fell with the Soviet Union.

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So Walton, an acute reader and critic, loves both ring of swords and a woman of the Iron People, but she spends a lot of her review at the latter.

06:21:12.000 --> 06:21:17.000

Puzzling over how the Mythopaic society could have awarded its fantasy award to the book.

06:21:17.000 --> 06:21:27.000

I've already recounted my response to that question, though I was replying to my own doubts and those of the others without knowing about Walton's reservations until I read her review last week.

06:21:27.000 --> 06:21:39.000

And I'm, I guess I'm sort of at the end except to say that at this point, I'm not quite sure where I'm going next and I'm busy with Miffcon, so I'm probably not working on anything.

06:21:39.000 --> 06:21:47.000

But I think there's a lot here for people to look at. Oh, you know, I sort of put up ring of swords, shouldn't I?

06:21:47.000 --> 06:21:52.000

Forget how to do that.

06:21:52.000 --> 06:22:00.000

Okay, and Eleanor of course has continued to write about the Hwarth. Which is a homosexual society.

06:22:00.000 --> 06:22:06.000

I'm just giving away one of the surprises of Ring of Swords, but these days it's not going to be so surprising.

06:22:06.000 --> 06:22:14.000

Probably not as, Shocking, I guess, as it might have been to some readers back in when it was published in what?

06:22:14.000 --> 06:22:21.000

1990 or whatever. And and you have 3 different covers there for ring of swords.

06:22:21.000 --> 06:22:28.000

And then the collected short stories, which appeared a few years ago, Hwarh stories, transgressive tales by aliens.

06:22:28.000 --> 06:22:42.000

And many of those stories are very powerful and I think one of the ways that Eleanor dealt with the fact that society changed so much is that she goes back into the history of the Hwarth and writes more about what happened on their home planet, Hearthworld.

06:22:42.000 --> 06:22:51.000

Stories mostly anyway that that are set in their past and sometimes in their legendary past and sometimes they actually are legends.

06:22:51.000 --> 06:23:05.000

I think this is probably her best work, but she's also done a lot of other stuff, kind of like Ursula Gwen not only does that science fiction stuff and the fantasy stuff she also does weird things like changing planes and publishing books of poetry.

06:23:05.000 --> 06:23:13.000

Elinor has published a sort of published in a small way. A narrative poem based partly on Spencer.

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In recent years but anyway

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And Eleanor has some other things too. The.

06:23:21.000 --> 06:23:31.000

Short story collections that are that vary quite a bit. But I think for purposes of most people interested in queer aspects of of fantasy.

06:23:31.000 --> 06:23:38.000

The Huawei stories, even though they are ostensibly science fiction, there's a lot of fantasy elements, particularly in some of those older stories.

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Are probably what people wanna look at. And I think they're well worth reading and and quite rewarding.

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However, I will also Try to show you. See is that.

06:24:03.000 --> 06:24:09.000

Here is a couple of her other books.

06:24:09.000 --> 06:24:21.000

These are big mama stories which are If you look at the cover, obviously the artist was somewhat influenced, I think, by African legends and retellings.

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And I don't know that Eleanor's stories are necessarily particularly influenced by that, but I can see where they where the feel of it comes from.

06:24:24.000 --> 06:24:36.000

In that respect. Their stories about

06:24:36.000 --> 06:24:49.000

Well, not only Big Mama and Big Papa and Legendary stories that or they seem to be like that But occasionally we have things like big virus and big bacteria.

06:24:49.000 --> 06:24:56.000

So it goes in. Different directions and a lot of them are kind of funny. But again, Elinor isn't usually laugh out loud funny.

06:24:56.000 --> 06:25:08.000

I think I'm pretty unusual and almost falling off my bus seat. And hidden folk are more austere stories that I think draw upon the Icelandic heritage, which is so important to Eleanor.

06:25:08.000 --> 06:25:18.000

Mostly again though, it's more like fairy tales or folk tails that might have been told in Iceland, but their original to to Eleanor.

06:25:18.000 --> 06:25:23.000

The book on the lower right there is

06:25:23.000 --> 06:25:32.000

A collection. It's mostly a long novella. About the mammoths of the western plains.

06:25:32.000 --> 06:25:49.000

And the ordinary people is a collection of some shorter pieces also. And, let's see, I think I have another one too.

06:25:49.000 --> 06:25:55.000

Tumour the Fathers is a novel which is more in the style of her first few novels.

06:25:55.000 --> 06:26:02.000

Featuring as a main character Lydia Duluth who is also the subject of a number of short stories.

06:26:02.000 --> 06:26:15.000

Or the protagonist in a number of short stories that Eleanor has published. And that probably continues more that strain of the early stuff where she's playing with ideas usually with science fiction conventions and questioning them and exploring other aspects.

06:26:15.000 --> 06:26:27.000

And then you can also see some some. Some images there of a sort of fine art book that a publisher in, I think St.

06:26:27.000 --> 06:26:38.000

Paul made of her, her short story, the grammarians 5 daughters. Which is about 5 daughters who set out and they need something to go out in the world with in the grammarians pretty poor.

06:26:38.000 --> 06:26:47.000

So she gives the first one nouns and the second one verbs. And the third one has to make do with adjectives and well anyway.

06:26:47.000 --> 06:27:03.000

You can kind of guess where that goes. I think that pretty much ends my my brief survey so are there I could talk more about some of the wrong headed articles I've read too.

06:27:03.000 --> 06:27:07.000

Yeah, but I'm gonna ask if there's any questions.

06:27:07.000 --> 06:27:11.000

You've got another 5 min if you'd like to continue to speak.

06:27:11.000 --> 06:27:22.000

Well, I think I'll just ask if there's any questions and maybe we'll get done early or maybe I'll start talking about something else.

06:27:22.000 --> 06:27:30.000

I understand there's a part 2 to the women of the Iron People.

06:27:30.000 --> 06:27:38.000

Oh, actually no. But the reason that you see that cover that says part 2 is when they did the mass market paperbacks.

06:27:38.000 --> 06:27:43.000

It was kind of long book, so they published it as 2 books. I like the cover.

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I don't think Eleanor likes it, but I like the cover. Of part 2 a lot better than the first one.

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But if

06:27:56.000 --> 06:28:10.000

Eleanor doesn't like either cover I think. One of the things she said about the the cover to Ring of Swords was was that Let's see.

06:28:10.000 --> 06:28:14.000

It was called Changing Women.

06:28:14.000 --> 06:28:15.000

Okay.

06:28:15.000 --> 06:28:23.000

Yeah, that was what they called part 2 and at least there's a furry alien on it all of the most all of Eleanor's characters who are non-human are furry one way or another.

06:28:23.000 --> 06:28:32.000

I don't recall if they were particularly Grayford on women of the Iron People, but they're definitely Grayford on Ring of Swords.

06:28:32.000 --> 06:28:39.000

And probably in Hearth World, which I have not read, which is the unpublished sequel, which Ianor has always said, oh, there's a big problem with it.

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And I think part of the problem, and she even said this as much once, was that the world changed.

06:28:43.000 --> 06:28:55.000

And so she really needed to redo Hearth World. To try to account for how our world changes, which reflects the reality of of writing science fiction.

06:28:55.000 --> 06:29:00.000

You're not really writing a story that's just set out somewhere else and has nothing to do.

06:29:00.000 --> 06:29:06.000

With this world. You're writing about this world all the time and about humans as we know them even when you're writing about Spider-shaped aliens.

06:29:06.000 --> 06:29:09.000

Oh.

06:29:09.000 --> 06:29:10.000

At least on some level.

06:29:10.000 --> 06:29:21.000

Was that when that was first published? That was they're both together the whole thing is that won the trip tree award?

06:29:21.000 --> 06:29:26.000

Okay.

06:29:26.000 --> 06:29:27.000

Yeah.

06:29:27.000 --> 06:29:29.000

Right, right. It was the the hardcover book that came out first. And then a woman of the Iron People with that awful cover with who knows who she is, some prostitute playing Hamlet or something.

06:29:29.000 --> 06:29:48.000

And then when the mass market came out. They published volume one with the same illustration. Which Eleanor fretted over because she couldn't get Amazon books, a feminist books store interested in a book that cover.

06:29:48.000 --> 06:29:59.000

And then. And then they published the second half of the book as Changing Woman. But subsequent publications have put the 2 back together.

06:29:59.000 --> 06:30:00.000

But I

06:30:00.000 --> 06:30:08.000

Okay. Cause that's it was the first tip tree award wasn't it?

06:30:08.000 --> 06:30:09.000

Yeah.

06:30:09.000 --> 06:30:14.000

Yes, yes, although it tied for the tip tree and 2 books received the tip tree that year. And, and then later on, of course, the tip tree was renamed.

06:30:14.000 --> 06:30:18.000

The other other something.

06:30:18.000 --> 06:30:19.000

Otherwise, maybe.

06:30:19.000 --> 06:30:30.000

Yeah, the other reward or something like that, but Yeah, but it also received the Mythopaic Fantasy Award for Adult Literature and did cause a lot of people confusion.

06:30:30.000 --> 06:30:31.000

Yeah.

06:30:31.000 --> 06:30:37.000

About why we were giving this award to to science fiction. Which is not a problem for David Brockman, who considers science fiction a subset of fantasy, or for Ruth Berman who can argue with you about it.

06:30:37.000 --> 06:30:38.000

Yeah.

06:30:38.000 --> 06:30:47.000

Having written her dissertation on the development of fantasy in the nineteenth century. But But I sort of get where some people are,

06:30:47.000 --> 06:31:06.000

Look at genre. Conventions and have a little trouble recognizing it. But as I said, it's really a book about ideas and it's a book about The myths that we live by and work by.

06:31:06.000 --> 06:31:07.000

Yeah.

06:31:07.000 --> 06:31:13.000

And our society is shaped by. And it turns out those aren't just voice of the waterfalls, they're also Marx's myths and they're Star Trek's myths.

06:31:13.000 --> 06:31:33.000

And they're all kinds of myths. And And so I don't think the committee was necessarily wrong, although I was on the committee and it wasn't my first choice that year, but don't tell Eleanor.

06:31:33.000 --> 06:31:34.000

No.

06:31:34.000 --> 06:31:39.000

The only thing I read of her so far is the house by the sea and I really liked it. And I like the protagonist.

06:31:39.000 --> 06:31:43.000

I was rooting for her all the way.

06:31:43.000 --> 06:31:44.000

Yeah.

06:31:44.000 --> 06:31:52.000

Well, she's pretty awful. But awful things have happened to her too.

06:31:52.000 --> 06:31:59.000

I want to share some reminiscence of Eleanor. And for writing.

06:31:59.000 --> 06:32:25.000

I was, she and I are members of the same writers group for many years. And, I, what we do it, what we did with the writers group is that every time we met we would read stories to each other so we I would hear Eleanor stories as she read them chapter by chapter And I still have a warm place in my heart for the novel, which is called Daughter of the

06:32:25.000 --> 06:32:31.000

Bear King, which is not necessarily the original title of it, but I forgot what the original title was.

06:32:31.000 --> 06:32:39.000

I just remember that I was rather surprised when the book came out and it was titled something other than what Eleanor had originally.

06:32:39.000 --> 06:32:49.000

Told us would be the title. But the daughter of the bear king was written during the Reagan administration.

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And I remember Eleanor saying that, when she was writing that novel that it was a protest against the mediocrity of the and mediocrity was her exact word the mediocrity of the Reagan administration.

06:33:07.000 --> 06:33:19.000

And, she felt strongly about that. And so she was writing it and she deliberately picked a housewife in St.

06:33:19.000 --> 06:33:29.000

Paul as the as as the main character. And, I really, enjoyed it for that reason.

06:33:29.000 --> 06:33:36.000

I think of daughter's barking as being a satire of the Reagan administration. This essentially and enjoyed it on that level.

06:33:36.000 --> 06:33:44.000

I also remember that, She was saying you can see a pterodactyl in the cover.

06:33:44.000 --> 06:33:55.000

And she was very proud of the fact that she had a scene in which a teradactyl crashed into a Skyway in Minneapolis.

06:33:55.000 --> 06:34:05.000

And that she always wanted to write a scene like that. As she was reading it. She read about 90% of the book.

06:34:05.000 --> 06:34:12.000

And then sort of got stuck on the last chapter, didn't quite know how she was going to finish it.

06:34:12.000 --> 06:34:25.000

So, month after month, and the group met monthly, it wrote after much we would come and we'd say, Eleanor, tell us what the tab we because she left us hanging at a climactic moment and we wanted to know what happened.

06:34:25.000 --> 06:34:33.000

It took about a year. To for, to finally read us the last chapter of the daughter of the barking.

06:34:33.000 --> 06:34:42.000

And, it was definitely worth the wait, but it was, it was something that I remember very well.

06:34:42.000 --> 06:34:54.000

I also remember her saying things such as, this comes to play in, in, the, The.

06:34:54.000 --> 06:35:12.000

Of the iron people. In which he said that the And it's you can see it in a couple of other novels as well, but she was saying that the structure of the society sort of parking back.

06:35:12.000 --> 06:35:32.000

To what she what society was in the fifties. When women for the most part. Stayed at home and took care of the children and the men left during the day So you'd have a society of Mostly met at the office.

06:35:32.000 --> 06:35:44.000

And mostly women at home taking care of the children. And that influenced. Part of the way that she structured the society there and I thought that was very interesting.

06:35:44.000 --> 06:35:55.000

Also thought was interesting. She was talking about ring of swords. And, and again, she was reading some of this while I, while she was still in the writers group.

06:35:55.000 --> 06:36:07.000

And there's a scene in there. Which, builds up to a which as written is building up to a big climax.

06:36:07.000 --> 06:36:14.000

And when you get to the part where you think there's something going to be climactic happen happening.

06:36:14.000 --> 06:36:27.000

It doesn't. And she said she did that deliberately. Because She felt that that was the. Best way to handle the situation given the plot of the story.

06:36:27.000 --> 06:36:34.000

And I also thought that was interesting. So it was it's really nice because I have good memories.

06:36:34.000 --> 06:36:43.000

Of Eleanor reading the chapters to us so that when I read her books I can hear her voice reading it to me.

06:36:43.000 --> 06:36:50.000

As she read it at the writer's meeting. So I just wanted to. To insert those thoughts.

06:36:50.000 --> 06:37:05.000

In, in case people might find them interesting.

06:37:05.000 --> 06:37:12.000

Does anybody else have any questions or input?

06:37:12.000 --> 06:37:13.000

We've got about another 5 min.

06:37:13.000 --> 06:37:26.000

One thing that One thing that I noticed when I glanced at my description in the book I mentioned that I'd had a review in the journal of the science fiction research association that doesn't exist.

06:37:26.000 --> 06:37:38.000

It's the SF. Some kind of brain mistake that It came up with a title that doesn't exist.

06:37:38.000 --> 06:37:52.000

It doesn't really matter, but it just, what was I thinking? I hadn't really thought about it actually appearing in a Another place either, but.

06:37:52.000 --> 06:38:03.000

Well, thank you for joining us for the discussion and I hope that if you haven't read any Ellen Arneson that you will go out and read some and I would be thrilled if anyone decides to write a paper for Mythconnex this summer.

06:38:03.000 --> 06:38:10.000

And that would be terrific. And I think that Mithler would be happy to see such a paper too.

06:38:10.000 --> 06:38:12.000

And, and I see Janet nodding, so yes.

06:38:12.000 --> 06:38:16.000

Yes. I sure would.

06:38:16.000 --> 06:38:25.000

And by the way, as I mentioned a little bit ago, the Mythopaic Tennessee Award went to.

06:38:25.000 --> 06:38:31.000

One of the one of the books by Jonathan Stroud and the Peek Fantasy Ward went to Eleanor Arnison.

06:38:31.000 --> 06:38:39.000

This year there's going to be a new category and I think the final time for submitting nominations is tonight at midnight or something.

06:38:39.000 --> 06:38:55.000

So it's been extended a little bit from the original deadline. So that people at this at this conference would have a chance to submit and there's also scholarly awards, Taylor Driggers was a finalist last year.

06:38:55.000 --> 06:39:06.000

He could actually be a finalist again this year if people nominate him. Because there's a three-year eligibility for the scholarly works.

06:39:06.000 --> 06:39:13.000

And Brian Atterbury, our guest of honor, this summer's Mythcon. Who I cited quite a bit here.

06:39:13.000 --> 06:39:25.000

Also received the scholarship award last year for his book *Fantasy How It Works* and he was also a finalist for another book he did along with a couple of other people.

06:39:25.000 --> 06:39:33.000

So, so nominate any books that you think we should. Notice in in this process.

06:39:33.000 --> 06:39:34.000

And so.

06:39:34.000 --> 06:39:43.000

Are you gonna put in a bid for the mythic. The thing you're doing, the Bartic Circle tonight.

06:39:43.000 --> 06:39:53.000

Oh yeah, you can come and join and sing songs. We do whatever or read poems. You know, I remember once years and years ago at a mythcon in Berkeley.

06:39:53.000 --> 06:39:59.000

Paul Edwin Zimmer recited the whole of Christina Rossetti's *Goblin Market*.

06:39:59.000 --> 06:40:00.000

Yeah.

06:40:00.000 --> 06:40:06.000

He did it in shifts. He didn't just do it. I mean, we would have been there for an hour listening to him, recite this, but it was long nevertheless.

06:40:06.000 --> 06:40:13.000

He did it in like 4 segments. The weirdest thing to me is that I think he did it from memory.

06:40:13.000 --> 06:40:14.000

Yeah.

06:40:14.000 --> 06:40:20.000

That is a long poem and it's amazing. There might have been someone reading along who prompted him here, there, but it was.

06:40:20.000 --> 06:40:26.000

I was just astonished. I mean, I love the poem. It's Christina Rossetti's clearly her greatest achievement.

06:40:26.000 --> 06:40:31.000

But, wow, it's long for for that kind of performance.

06:40:31.000 --> 06:40:39.000

Since we've got 1 min, indulge me, I want to read some titles of the, how, how do you pronounce that?

06:40:39.000 --> 06:40:40.000

Horth. Stories.

06:40:40.000 --> 06:40:43.000

Well, I pronounce it Hwarhas. Yeah, I've heard Eleanor Reed, so maybe I get it from her or maybe I've got it wrong, who knows.

06:40:43.000 --> 06:40:54.000

But the lovers, the actors, fantastic and religious romances, the small black box of morality.

06:40:54.000 --> 06:41:03.000

The seaman thief. So women who fall, fooled death 5 times. Scientific romances.

06:41:03.000 --> 06:41:11.000

I just think the titles are fabulous. I can't wait to read them.

06:41:11.000 --> 06:41:12.000

Yeah.

06:41:12.000 --> 06:41:17.000

Well, those are mostly all in that collection of short stories. There may be one or 2 Horaha stories now that didn't get collection of short stories now that didn't get collected or that she's written didn't get collected or that she's written since the collection.

06:41:17.000 --> 06:41:34.000

But they are marvelous. The potter of bones is one that I always remember in particular. She was nominated for a number of Hugos and nebulas for some of those stories along the way too.

06:41:34.000 --> 06:41:38.000

Well, David, thank you for your presentation and for sharing.

06:41:38.000 --> 06:41:44.000

You know, the one last thing that I kept meaning to to build into this and I completely forgot when I was typing at this last night.

06:41:44.000 --> 06:41:50.000

Is there's something about the way that people misread Eleanor or have trouble getting it or something.

06:41:50.000 --> 06:41:57.000

And I just wonder if maybe it is something about something not queer necessarily in the sense that we're mostly using it here but But what's the relationship?

06:41:57.000 --> 06:42:04.000

It's just she writes kind of queer stuff. And, and in, and I'm just wondering if this.

06:42:04.000 --> 06:42:12.000

Having to come back again and again to to look at it again is that Just kind of a little bit off kilter or something.

06:42:12.000 --> 06:42:18.000

Anyway, thanks for

06:42:18.000 --> 06:42:22.000

Thank you. I guess we'll call it a session.

06:42:22.000 --> 06:42:30.000

Yes.