

# Rachel Swirsky

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Author headshot photo by Julie Randall.

See [website](#) for other resolutions: [500×700](#), [600×840](#)

## Biography:

### Short (100 words):

Rachel Swirsky holds an MFA from the Iowa Writers Workshop where she, a California native, learned about both writing and snow. Last year, she traded the snow for the rain of Portland, Oregon, where she roams happily under overcast skies with the hipsters. Her fiction has appeared in venues including Tor.com, Asimov's Magazine, and The Year's Best Non-Required Reading. She's published two collections: *Through the Drowsy Dark* (Aqueduct Press) and *How the World Became Quiet* (Subterranean Press). Her fiction has been nominated for the Hugo Award and the World Fantasy Award, and twice won the Nebula.

### Long (>400 words):

Rachel Swirsky holds an MFA from the Iowa Writers Workshop where she, as a California native, learned about both writing and snow. Last year, she traded the snow for the rain of Portland, Oregon, where she roams happily under overcast skies with the hipsters.

Swirsky has been publishing short fiction since 2006. Her over eighty stories have appeared in venues including Tor.com, Asimov's Magazine, and The New Haven Review, and been

reprinted in year's best anthologies including The Best American Science Fiction & Fantasy, and The Best American Nonrequired Reading. Her first collection, Through the Drowsy Dark, is a slim volume of stories and poetry published by Aqueduct Press in 2010. Her second, How the World Became Quiet, was published in 2013 by Subterranean Press and was honored as a World Fantasy Award finalist.

Swirsky's short fiction has been nominated for the Hugo Award, Locus Award, World Fantasy Award, and Sturgeon Award. She's twice won the Nebula Award: in 2010 for her novella, "The Lady Who Plucked Red Flowers beneath the Queen's Window," and in 2014 for her short story, "If You Were a Dinosaur, My Love."

Swirsky is the daughter of a librarian and a computer programmer who wooed each other by reading novels aloud in bed. She started reading at age three, presumably in an attempt to keep up with the family conversation. Her omnivorous parents read widely, so Swirsky grew up reading whatever she wanted, from Agatha Christie to Octavia Butler. In 2015, Swirsky attended the Clarion West Writers Workshop where she was honored to work with the incomparable Butler, who died suddenly several months later. Swirsky is also heavily influenced by theater, especially Sondheim.

Rachel Swirsky blogs on her website, [rachelswirsky.com](http://rachelswirsky.com), where readers can also sign up for her free newsletter. She publishes one new piece of flash fiction or poetry per month on [her Patreon](#) for her supporters. Chat with her on Twitter at [@rachelswirsky](#).

## Awards and Nominations:

**Nebula Award for Best Short Story** (2013) for "If You Were a Dinosaur, My Love"

**Nebula Award for Best Novella** (2010) for "The Lady Who Plucked Red Flowers Beneath the Queen's Window"

### **Nominations:**

Nebula Award: Best Novelette (2012, 2011), Novella (2009)

Hugo Award: Best Short Story (2014), Novelette (2012, 2010)

James Tiptree, Jr. Literary Award (2010)

Theodore Sturgeon Award (2010)

Locus Award (2015, 2014, 2013, 2012, 2011, 2010)

storySouth Million Writers Award (2008)

Rhysling Award (2008)

## Interviews:

"Interview with Rachel Swirsky" by Maggie Slater

<https://www.apex-magazine.com/interview-with-rachel-swirsky/>

“Nebula Awards Interview: Rachel Swirsky” by Larry Nolen

<http://www.sfwaworld.com/2010/12/nebula-awards-interview-rachel-swirsky-by-larry-nolen/>

“Then and Now: Rachel Swirsky, Transitioning from Booklessness to Being Bookful” by Jeff VanderMeer

<https://www.amazonbookreview.com/post/1c5aeb8e-3686-4b10-a77a-4cc193800191/then-and-now-rachel-swirsky-transitioning-from-booklessness-to-being-bookful>

“Conversations with the Bookless: Rachel Swirsky” by Jeff VanderMeer

<http://www.jeffvandermeer.com/2007/09/20/conversations-with-the-bookless-rachel-swirsky/>

“Interview: Rachel Swirsky” by Deborah Stanish

<https://uncannymagazine.com/article/interview-rachel-swirsky/>

## Praise For Rachel’s Writing:

“Swirsky’s crisp prose and insightful vision draw the reader in, and her work will amply reward both casual reading and close attention.”—*Publisher’s Weekly*

Rachel Swirsky is among the most talented science fiction/fantasy short story writers working today—one of the new generation that’s transforming the genre through a combination of inspiration, renovation, and fresh approaches. — Jeff VanderMeer, author of the Southern Reach trilogy

“[Her] fiction shows range and depth, it is intelligent and curious, and while the style is often both muscular and lyrical, that style (and voice) are almost always in the service of character and story.” — Jeff VanderMeer

Rachel’s stories are super-smart and gorgeously written. It’s [a short blurb], but it has the virtue of being true. —Ann Leckie, author of *Ancillary Justice*

I don’t think it’s any secret that I think she’s one of the best speculative fiction writers of the last decade – John Scalzi, author of *Old Man’s War*, *Redshirts*

Above all, Swirsky strikes me as a writer perpetually in search of a new fairytale, but a fairytale that matters. -- T. S. Miller, *Strange Horizons*

On "Eros, Philia, Agape"—

This is a story Isaac Asimov might have written, if only he had been an amazing prose stylist. --*Fantastic Reviews*

On *How The World Became Quiet* —

I love this collection and recommend it wholeheartedly to anyone who has an interest in intelligent, emotionally powerful and occasionally challenging short fiction. --Stefan Raets, Tor.com

## Selected Bibliography

For a longer and more comprehensive listing of Rachel's works, see [her bibliography](#).

### COLLECTIONS

*How the World Became Quiet: Myths of the Past, Present, and Future*  
Subterranean Press, 2013. (304p)

*Through the Drowsy Dark*  
Aqueduct Press, 2010 (146p)

### NOVELLAS

"Grand Jeté (The Great Leap)" in *Subterranean Online*, 2014

"The Lady Who Plucked Red Flowers Beneath the Queen's Window" in *Subterranean Online*, 2010

### SELECTED STORIES

2018

"The Stubborn Granny" on Patreon  
"Seven Months Out and Two to Go" in *Asimov's*  
"Shift, Scan, Tally" on Patreon

2017

"Becoming" in *Lightspeed Magazine*  
"Elemental Love" in *Uncanny Magazine*  
"The Day the Wizards Came" in *Lightspeed Magazine*  
"The Day the World Glowed" on Patreon  
"A Restless World" (with Cat Rambo) on Patreon  
"An Open Letter to The Coffee Table Currently In Residence at Mrs. Tabitha J. Mountwhite's Home, Family Room, By the French Doors" on Patreon

2016

"Destroyed by the Waters" in *Drowned Worlds*

"The Great Puzzle" on Patreon

"Whose Drowned Face Sleeps" (with An Owomoyela) in *Nightmare Magazine* and What the #@&% Is That?

"Love Is Never Still" in *Uncanny Magazine*

"Between Dragons and their Wrath" (with An Owomoyela) in *Clarkesworld Magazine*

2015

"The Reluctant Jew" in *Jews Versus Aliens*

"Tea Time" in *Lightspeed Magazine*

2014

"Endless" in *Solaris 3*

"Tender" in *Upgraded*

2013

"Abomination Rises on Filthy Wings" in *Apex Magazine*

"All That Fairy Tale Crap" in *Apex Magazine*

"Beyond the Naked Eye" in *Oz Reimagined*

"The Girl Who Waited (for the Doctor to Get to His Point)" in *Queers Dig Time Lords*

"If You Were a Dinosaur, My Love" in *Apex Magazine*

"Speech Strata" in *How the World Became Quiet*

"What Lies at the Edge of a Petal Is Love" in *The Dark Magazine*

"With Singleness of Heart" in *How the World Became Quiet*

2012

"Broken Clouds" in *When the Villain Comes Home*

"Decomposition" in *Apex Magazine*

"Portrait of Lisane da Patagnia" on Tor.com

"The Sea of Trees" in *The Future is Japanese*

"Virgin Sacrifices" in *This Means War*

2011

"A Brief Note Pertaining to the Absence of One Olivaceous Cormorant, Stuffed" in *The Thackery T. Lambshead Cabinet of Curiosities*

"Death and the All-Night Donut Shop" in *Unstuck Magazine*

"Diving after the Moon" in *Clarkesworld Magazine*

"Extremes" in *Nature: Futures*

"Fields of Gold" in *Eclipse 3*

"A Practical Guide to Loving the Dead" in *The New Haven Review*

"The Taste of Promises" in *Life on Mars*

2010

"Again and Again and Again" in *Interzone*

"The complex identity of the archetypal hero, a fictional treatise with unicorn Pegasus kittens" in *Clash of the Geeks*

"Defiled Imagination" in *Through the Drowsy Dark*

"Maiden, Mother, Crone" (with Ann Leckie) in *Realms of Fantasy*

"The Monster's Million Faces" on Tor.com

"Memorium" in PodCastle

"A Punny Thing Happened on the Way to the Tavern" in *Kaleidotrope*

"The Stable Master's Tale" in *Fantasy Magazine*

"Those Who Waited Through the Drowsy Dark" in *Through the Drowsy Dark*

"Tipping the Velvet" in *Pank Magazine*

"Where Shadow Meets Light" in *Fantasy Magazine*

2009

"Eros, Philia, Agape" on Tor.com

"Great, Golden Wings" in *Beneath Ceaseless Skies*

"Heat Engine" in *Last Bird Drink Head*

"Into the Air" in *Triangulation: Dark Glass*

"A Memory of Wind" on Tor.com

"No Longer You" (with Katherine Sparrow) in *Interzone*

"Undocumented" in *Fantasy Magazine*

2008

"The Adventures of Captain Blackheart Wentworth" in *Fast Ships, Black Sails*

"The Amazing Story of Dominic Lazar" in *Andromeda Spaceways Inflight Magazine*

"Detours on the Way to Nothing" in *Weird Tales*

"Exodus" in *Ideomancer*

"How the World Became Quiet: A Post-Human Creation Myth" in *Electric Velocipede*

"A Letter Never Sent" in *Konundrum Engine Literary Review*

"Marrying the Sun" in *Fantasy Magazine*

"Mirror Images" in *Fantasy Magazine*

"A Monkey Will Never Be Rid of Its Black Hands" in *Subterranean Online*

"Monstrous Embrace" in *Subterranean: Dark Fantasy*

"Needle and Thread" (with Ann Leckie) in *Lone Star Stories*

"Silence" in *Escape Pod*

"Skyscrapers" in *Escape Pod*

2007

"Dispersed by the Sun, Melting in the Wind" in *Subterranean Online*

"Heartstrung" in *Interzone*

2006

"The Art of Biting" in *Cthulhu Sex Magazine*

"The Debt of the Innocent" in *Glorifying Terrorism*  
"Scene from a Dystopia" in *Subterranean Magazine*

#### EDITOR

##### Books:

*The People of the Book: the Decade's Best Jewish Science Fiction & Fantasy* (with Sean Wallace) Prime Books, 2010

##### Magazines and Podcasts:

Women Destroy Science Fiction issue of *Lightspeed Magazine*, reprint editor

*Strange Horizons*, guest reprint editor

PodCastle founding editor, 2008-2009

#### SELECTED POETRY

##### 2017

"This Poem Was Supposed to Be Like a Cat" on Patreon

"Planted" on Patreon

"Elegy Ursidae" on Patreon

"Fade" on Patreon

##### 2016

"Deluge" on Patreon

"Through the Center of the Earth" on Patreon

"Distance the Evening" on Patreon

"Summer" on Patreon

##### 2015

"Dear Alice" in Letters to Tiptree

"Low Tide" on And Then I Got Sick

##### 2012

"The Architecture of Grief" in Mythic Delirium

"The Crows and the Witches and the Window" in Apex Magazine

"Thirteen" in Apex Magazine

##### 2011

"Black, Red, White" in Apex Magazine

##### 2010

"Evening in Pompeii" in Ideomancer Magazine

"Inside Her Heart" in Ideomancer Magazine

"Mundane" in Ideomancer Magazine

"Pomegranate" in Through the Drowsy Dark

"String Theory" in Ideomancer Magazine

2008

"Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam" in *Kaleidotrope*  
"Remembering the World" in *Electric Velocipede*

2007

"Dear Melody" in *Sybil's Garage*  
"Disparate Parts" in *Sybil's Garage*  
"Elfin Song" in *Goblin Fruit*  
"The Moth Explains" in *Kaleidotrope*  
"Invitation to Emerald" in *Lone Star Stories*  
"My Apologies" in *Talking Back*  
"The Oracle on River Street" in *Goblin Fruit*  
"A Season with the Geese" in *Abyss & Apex*

2006

"The Dream Vacation" in *Mothering Magazine*  
"How to Be a Bunny" in *Kaleidotrope*  
"The Fate of Hitler's Brain" in *Flashquake*

## SELECTED NON-FICTION

## ESSAYS & ARTICLES

"Unlocking the Garret" in *Disabled People Destroy Science Fiction*, 2017  
"Diving into SCUBA" in *The SFWA Bulletin*, 2016  
"Reprint Editorial" in *Women Destroy Science Fiction*, 2014  
"We Are the Fifty Percent" *Women Destroy Science Fiction*, 2014  
"All Your Fic Are Belong to Us" in *Queers Destroy Science Fiction*, 2014  
"Eileen Gunn on SF, SFWA and Community" in *The SFWA Bulletin*, 2014  
"On Vonda McIntyre's 'Little Faces' and Alien Sex" *Strange Horizons*, 2014  
"Guten Tag, Hitler" in *Chicks Unravel Time*, 2012  
"The Story of Leah and Vanessa" in *Role Reboot*, 2012  
"Writing and Mortality" on the SFWA Blog  
"Thoughts on Jewish Identity, Jewish Fantasy, and People of the Book," *SFF Chat*, 2010  
"Why We Tell the Story: the Political Nature of Narrative" in *Narrative Power*, 2010  
"How to Deal with Racist and Sexist Material in Workshop" in *The Wiscon Chronicles* (vol 2), 2008  
"Welcome Back to the Beginning" in *The Wiscon Chronicles* (vol 1), 2007  
Magazine articles for *Paintball Sports International*, *Odyssey Magazine*, and *Faces Magazine*, 2003-2005.

## REVIEWS



"Mandelbrot the Magnificent by Liz Ziemka" in *Locus*, 2018  
"The Fisher of Bones by Sarah Gailey" in *Locus*, 2018  
"Madame Zero by Sarah Hall" in *Locus*, 2018  
"The Beautiful Ones by Sylvia Moreno-Garcia" in *Locus*, 2017  
"Six Months, Three Days, Five Others by Charlie Jane Anders" in *Locus*, 2017  
"An Excess Male by Maggie Shen King" in *Locus*, 2017  
"Dreaming in the Dark" edited by Jack Dan in *Locus*, 2017  
"Hurricane Heels by Isabel Yap" in *Strange Horizons*, 2017  
"Worlds of Ink and Shadow, by Lena Coakley" in *Strange Horizons*, 2016  
"Accessing the Future: A Disability-Themed Anthology of Speculative Fiction, edited by Kathryn Allan and Djibril al-Ayad," in *Cascadia Subduction Zone*, 2015  
"The Moment of Change, edited by Rose Lemberg" in *Cascadia Subduction Zone*, 2012  
"Under the Poppy, by Kathe Koja" in *Cascadia Subduction Zone*, 2011

#### CREATIVE NON-FICTION

"Pretty, Ugly, Plain" on Alas, a Blog, 2010  
"The Black Angel's Kiss" in *Through the Drowsy Dark*, 2010