

—FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE—

# THE ROBOT SCIENTIST'S DAUGHTER

Poems by Jeannine Hall Gailey

“WE ARE WITNESSING A BRILLIANT  
PERFORMANCE.”

—Ilya Kaminsky, *Dancing in Odessa*

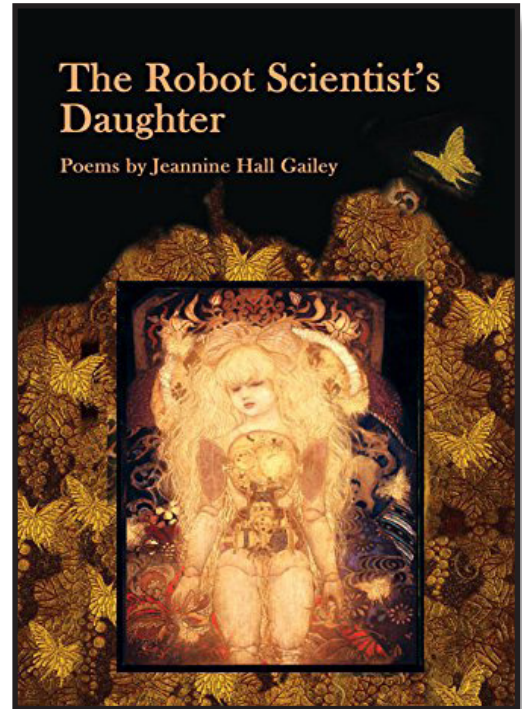
“FULL OF FLOWERS AND COMPUTERS, THIS RIV-  
ETING POETRY CAPTURES THE UNDENIABLE COM-  
PROMISES AND COMPLEXITIES OF OUR TIMES.”

—Denise Duhamel, *Blowout*

Dazzling in its descriptions of a natural world imperiled by our nuclear past, *The Robot Scientist's Daughter* presents a girl in search of the secrets of survival. Within its pages, poet and writer Jeannine Hall Gailey describes a world of radioactive wasps, cesium infused sunflowers, and robotic daughters, conjuring an intricate menace of the nuclear family and nuclear history.

Mining her experiences as a child growing up in Oak Ridge, Tennessee—“The Atomic City”—Gailey weaves together stories of the creation of the first atomic bomb, the unintended consequences of scientific discovery, and time spent building nests for birds in the crooks of maple trees to create a reality at once terrifying and beautiful. *The Robot Scientist's Daughter* reveals the underside of the Manhattan Project from a personal angle, and charts a woman's—and America's—journey towards reinvention.

**Jeannine Hall Gailey** served as the second Poet Laureate of Redmond, Washington. She is the author of three additional books of poetry: *Becoming the Villainess*, *She Returns to the Floating World*, and *Unexplained Fevers*. Her poems have appeared in *The American Poetry Review*, *Prairie Schooner*, and *The Year's Best Horror*, and have been featured on NPR's “The Writer's Almanac”. For more information visit [www.webbish6.com](http://www.webbish6.com).



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# Q & A WITH POET JEANNINE HALL GAILEY



“A FEW YEARS AGO, AFTER READING ONE OF MY BOOKS, ILYA KAMINSKY SAID:

‘NOW YOU MUST CREATE YOUR OWN FAIRY TALE.’

THIS BOOK IS MY ATTEMPT TO DO JUST THAT: TO CREATE A FAIRY TALE FROM MY AUTOBIOGRAPHY.”

—Jeannine Hall Gailey

**Q. Tell us a little bit about how *The Robot Scientist’s Daughter* came to be.**

I started writing these poems right after I completed my second book, *She Returns to the Floating World*. The disaster at Fukushima occurred during the week that the book went to print, and I began writing about that disaster.

Later, I began researching the EPA reports from my home town of Oak Ridge, Tennessee, and thought about how my own exposure to toxic waste—that origin-story of so many comic book superheroes and supervillains, from Spiderman to the X-Men—has impacted my health over the years. That’s what really got the book started.

I also wanted to write a bit about my father, his contribution to science in the nuclear field, and how his work impacted his life and my life differently. I have observed that many writers who I admire, such as Margaret Atwood and Louise Gluck, are the daughters of scientists and inventors. I think there’s something about that circumstance that drives us to try to communicate between our fathers’ specialized scientific world and the world of art and language.

**Q. *The Robot Scientist’s Daughter* melds scenes of a rural childhood with a science fiction universe. What inspired this juxtaposition?**

Oak Ridge is such a beautiful town, and my own memories of my childhood home are both threatening (signs warning you not to eat the fish in the pond, not to eat the deer from the woods) and delightful: oak trees, violets, large rocks full of fossils. I was a tomboy growing up and spent a lot of time with the plants and wildlife, climbing trees, exploring the woods, hanging out with the local animals.

Author interview continued on the following page...



Author interview continued from previous page...

So the scientific studies I read involving the impact to wildlife—which inspired some of the poems in the book, like “Hot Wasp Nest”—were particularly poignant to me.

**Q. Does this collection contain any traces of your previous works, or is this an entirely unique creation?**

A few years ago, after reading one of my books, Ilya Kaminsky said: “Now you must create your own fairy tale.” This book is my attempt to do just that: to create a fairy tale from my autobiography.

This is my most personal book to date. My other books involve mostly persona poetry—poetry spoken in the voice of a character, from fairy tales, comic books, etc. This book is mainly in my own voice, and the composite character “The Robot Scientist’s Daughter” is very much a sci-fi version of myself.

This book also reflects my background in biology more than my other books. It’s very science-y!

**Q. You recently served as Redmond, Washington’s poet laureate, a title bestowed on only one person before your designation. How did this new role impact your work as a poet?**

It was a wonderful opportunity to celebrate poetry in a civic way, like commemorating a sculpture for the city, or set up a discussion about e-book publication at the library. It helped me understand that a city can only have the creative community we want as each person contributes to it.

**Q. How is your book relevant in light of recent nuclear events, such as Fukushima?**

With Fukushima, there is a new awareness of the perils of nuclear energy, dealing with radiation, and all the wonders and dangers that science brings to the world. It also fits in well with our current apocalyptic mood, with girls that turn into spaceships, mutations and nuclear winters. I’m hoping that people will connect to this investigation of the beauties and dangers of science and nature.

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## —PRAISE FOR THE ROBOT SCIENTIST’S DAUGHTER—

“UNDERNEATH THE BEAUTIFULLY MEASURED SHEEN AND  
SPARK OF THESE BRIGHT STANZAS IS A HUMAN  
WHO OPENS UP THRILLING NEW WORLDS.”

—Aimee Nezhukumatathil, *Lace and Pyrite: Letters from Two Gardens*

“THE PRESENT DAY, THE NEAR FUTURE, AND  
THE FUTURES THAT NEVER WERE—YOU CAN FIND THEM ALL  
IN THESE PELLUCID AND MEMORABLE POEMS.”

—Stephen Burt, *Belmont and Close Calls with Nonsense*

