



Maria Dahvana Headley

Topics

Best Selling and Award Winning Authors, Children and Young Adult Authors

Travels From

Bio

Maria Dahvana Headley is the *New York Times*-bestselling author of eight books, most recently *Beowulf: A New Translation*. *The Mere Wife*, a contemporary adaptation of *Beowulf*, was named by the *Washington Post* as one of its Notable Works of Fiction in 2018. She's written for both teenagers (*Magonia & Aerie*, HarperCollins) and adults, in a variety of genres and forms. Maria's short fiction has been shortlisted for the Nebula, Shirley Jackson, Tiptree, and World Fantasy Awards, and for the 2020 Joyce Carol Oates Prize, and has been anthologized in many year's bests; a collection is under contract to FSG. Her essays on gender, chronic illness, politics, propaganda, and mythology have been published and covered in *The New York Times*, *The Daily Beast*, Harvard's *Nieman Storyboard*, and elsewhere. Her work has been supported by The MacDowell Colony, Arte Studio Ginestrelle, and the Sundance Institute's Theatre Lab, among other organizations. Maria's taught writing in the master's program at Sarah Lawrence and delivered keynotes, masterclasses, and lectures at Dartmouth, Northwestern, Wesleyan Nebraska, and Newman University, among others. She grew up in the high desert of Idaho on a survivalist sled-dog ranch, where she spent summers plucking the winter coat from her father's wolf.

SPEECHES

The Pen is Mightier than the Sword: Storytelling for Social Change

It's a long-held truth that "knowing" someone from a marginalized group can shift a person's assumptions about said group, and from that, actions regarding said group. The same is true when that knowledge is transmitted by story. Stories are how we acquire intimacy with the unknown, and in the case of ancient stories, such as *Beowulf*, they're a portal to the past, as well as a means of understanding enduring human tendencies toward monsterization of neighbors, hoarding of comforts, and allowing arrogance to overrule empathy. How can we use the world's most entrenched stories and legends to understand ourselves, and, crucially, to shift societal tendencies away from hoarding and toward community care, equality, and responsibility for shared resources? A speech about the continuous power of myth, lore, and fiction as storytelling tools, and about how to mobilize those story-telling techniques to spur change.

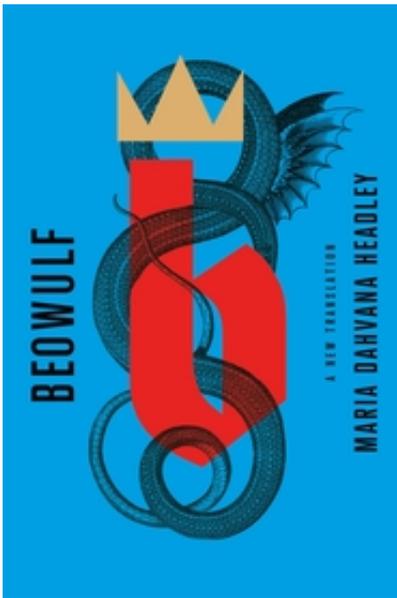
Hell-Bride or Warrior-Woman?: Recovering the Ferocious Feminine in Canonical Texts

Years of gate-kept English language translation have yielded a classical canon full of female characters whose roles, descriptions, and even dialogue, reflect gendered bias instilled by 19th and 20th-century translators. Though there've always been female translators of classical and medieval texts, institutional gatekeeping often led even those translators to translate monsters where, perhaps, there were none. New translations of classical and medieval texts in the 21st century - see Emily Wilson's *Odyssey*, Sarah Ruden's *Aeneid*, and my own *Beowulf* - seek to recuperate the feminine, unearthing elements that were, possibly, always there. Additionally, new adaptations of the classics, such as Madeline Miller's *Circe*, and Pat Barker's *The Silence of the Girls*, center female characters, adding complexity to stories formerly side-barred. This lecture explores the rationale behind translators shifting complicated female characters into monstrous ones, the further rationale behind reanalyzing those texts to see what might have been erased by Victorian gender standards and the outsize academic influence of Victorian-era and early 20th-century translators, as well as the possibilities for gender-equality that every era of storytelling have actually yielded.

Bro What?!: The Influence of Myth and Legend on 21st Century Masculinity

The collegial masculine narrative is a structure that's dominated Western canon for good reasons - among them that the Western canon was largely created by fraternal academic institutions. Much of that has changed over the years, but the idea that successful masculinity requires monster-slaying, and that if there aren't any monsters, they must be created, however, has remained. It has toxic implications throughout all sectors of society. This lecture investigates questionable qualities of masculinity in the canon, as well as the ways those notions have infiltrated larger society, helping to bolster arrogance, intransigence, and wholesale self-invention as lauded characteristics in leaders.

BOOKS

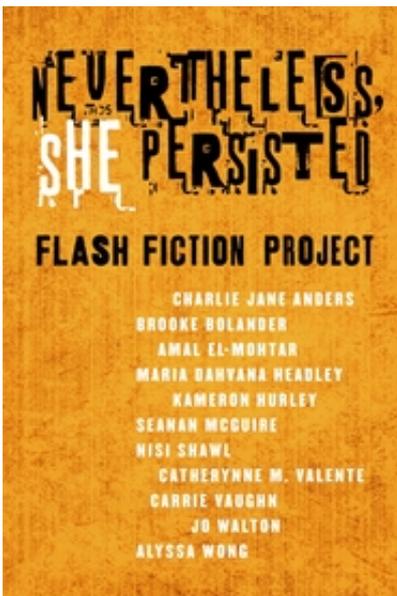


Trade Paperback

[Beowulf](#) A New Translation

MCD x FSG Originals

Nearly twenty years after Seamus Heaney's translation of *Beowulf*—and fifty years after the translation that continues to torment high-school students around the world—there is a radical new verse translation of the epic poem by Maria Dahvana Headley, which brings to light elements that have never before been translated into English, recontextualizing the binary narrative of monsters and heroes into a tale in which the two categories often entwine, justice is rarely served, and dragons live among us.



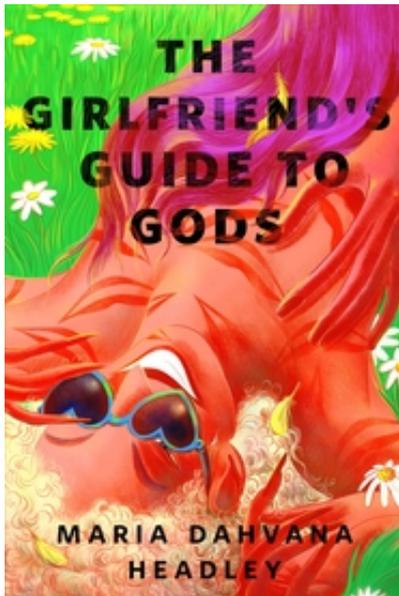
E-book

[Nevertheless She Persisted](#) Flash Fiction Project

Tor Books

We have assembled this flash fiction collection featuring several of the best writers in SF/F today, including Seanan McGuire, Charlie Jane Anders,

Maria Dahvana Headley, Jo Walton, Amal El-Mohtar, Catherynne M. Valente, Brooke Bolander, Alyssa Wong, Kameron Hurley, Nisi Shawl and Carrie Vaughn. Together these authors share unique visions of women inventing, playing, loving, surviving, and – of course – dreaming of themselves beyond their circumstances.



E-book

[The Girlfriend's Guide to Gods](#)

Tor Books

Gods won't save you. Gods will break you. Nevertheless, you will persist. And become anew. This is the first myth: that your boyfriend from when you were fifteen will come and get you out of hell. He might come, but he won't get you.

[The Mere Wife](#)

Picador



Trade Paperback

From the perspective of those who live in Herot Hall, the suburb is a paradise. Picket fences divide buildings—high and gabled—and the community is entirely self-sustaining. Each house has its own fireplace, each fireplace is fitted with a container of lighter fluid, and outside—in lawns and on playgrounds—wildflowers seed themselves in neat rows. But for those who live surreptitiously along Herot Hall’s periphery, the subdivision is a fortress guarded by an intense network of gates, surveillance cameras, and motion-activated lights.

For Willa, the wife of Roger Herot (heir of Herot Hall), life moves at a charmingly slow pace. She flits between mommy groups, playdates, cocktail hour, and dinner parties, always with her son, Dylan, in tow. Meanwhile, in a cave in the mountains just beyond the limits of Herot Hall lives Gren, short for Grendel, as well as his mother, Dana, a former soldier who gave birth as if by chance. Dana didn’t want Gren, didn’t plan Gren, and doesn’t know how she got Gren, but when she returned from war, there he was. When Gren, unaware of the borders erected to keep him at bay, ventures into Herot Hall and runs off with Dylan, Dana’s and Willa’s worlds collide.



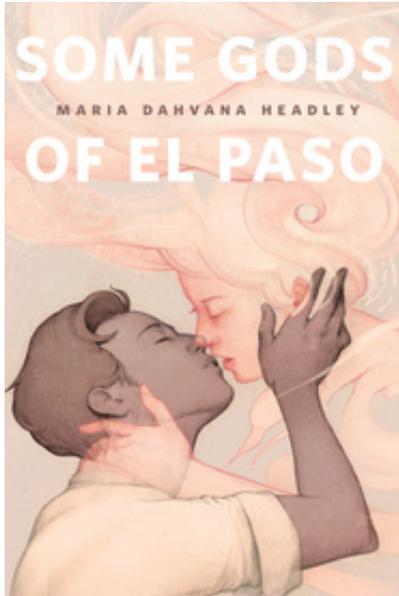
[Some of the Best from Tor.com: 2015](#)

Tor Books

A collection of some of the best original science fiction and fantasy short stories published on Tor.com in 2015. Includes short fiction by Nino Cipri, Seth Dickinson, Jeffrey Ford, Yoon Ha Lee, Maria Dahvana Headley, David Herter, Kameron Hurley, Noah Keller, David D. Levine, Michael Livingston, Usman T. Malik, Haralambi Markov, Daniel José Older, Malka Older, Kim Stanley Robinson, Kelly Robson, Veronica Schanoes, Priya Sharma, Brian Staveley, Sabrina Youryoulias, Ray Wood

E-book

Priya Sharma, Brian Staveley, Sabrina Vourvoulias,
and Ray Wood.



E-book

[Some Gods of El Paso](#)

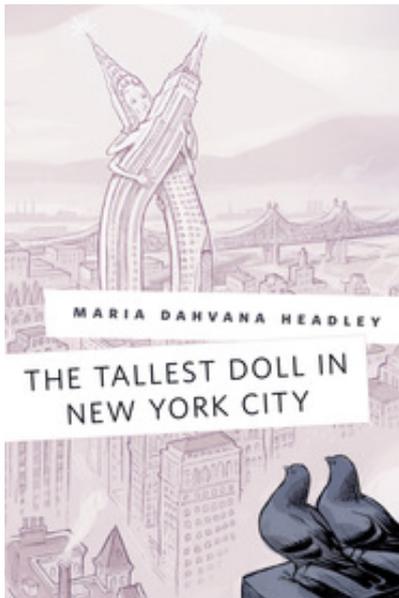
Tor Books

Some Gods of El Paso by Maria Dahvana Headley is a short fantasy story of a couple on the run from the law for stealing and illegally trading in strong emotions in 1920s US.

[The Tallest Doll in New York City](#)

Tor Books

It's Valentine's Day, 1938, and the Chrysler Building's tired of waiting on the corner of Forty-second and Lex for a certain edifice to notice her. Here's the story of what might happen if two of



New York's greatest creations met on a day built for romance.

E-book

REVIEWS: **Praise for *Beowulf*** "Maria Dahvana Headley's decision to make Beowulf a bro puts his macho bluster in a whole new light."

- Andrea Kannapell, *The New York Times* Briefings Editor