

# FINDING REALITY IN FANTASY



**Maria Zhang**

**Policy Tracks: Arts & Literature, Education**

**December 07, 2022**

The Leadership Scholars Certificate Program is a two-year selective, interdisciplinary certificate program that prepares Rutgers undergraduate women to be informed, innovative, and socially responsible leaders.

Leadership Scholars design and implement social action projects to expand their understanding of issues and problems and to develop leadership skills.

This project gives Scholars the opportunity to apply the theoretical knowledge they have gained about leadership, advocacy, and social change with the practical and experiential knowledge they have developed about a particular policy issue or problem through the field site placement. It also further develops leadership skills by giving undergraduates the opportunity to *practice* leadership *through* action.

To find out more please visit the Institute for Women's Leadership's website at <http://iwl.rutgers.edu>.



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# RECONNECTING SOCIETY THROUGH STORYTELLING



American society is rapidly losing its ability to have effective intercultural communication

Isolated circles result in loss of empathy for others

Finding Reality In Fantasy promotes empathy and open mindsets through the vessel of a fantasy-fiction novel

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**Polarization  
in America  
has reached  
an all time  
high**

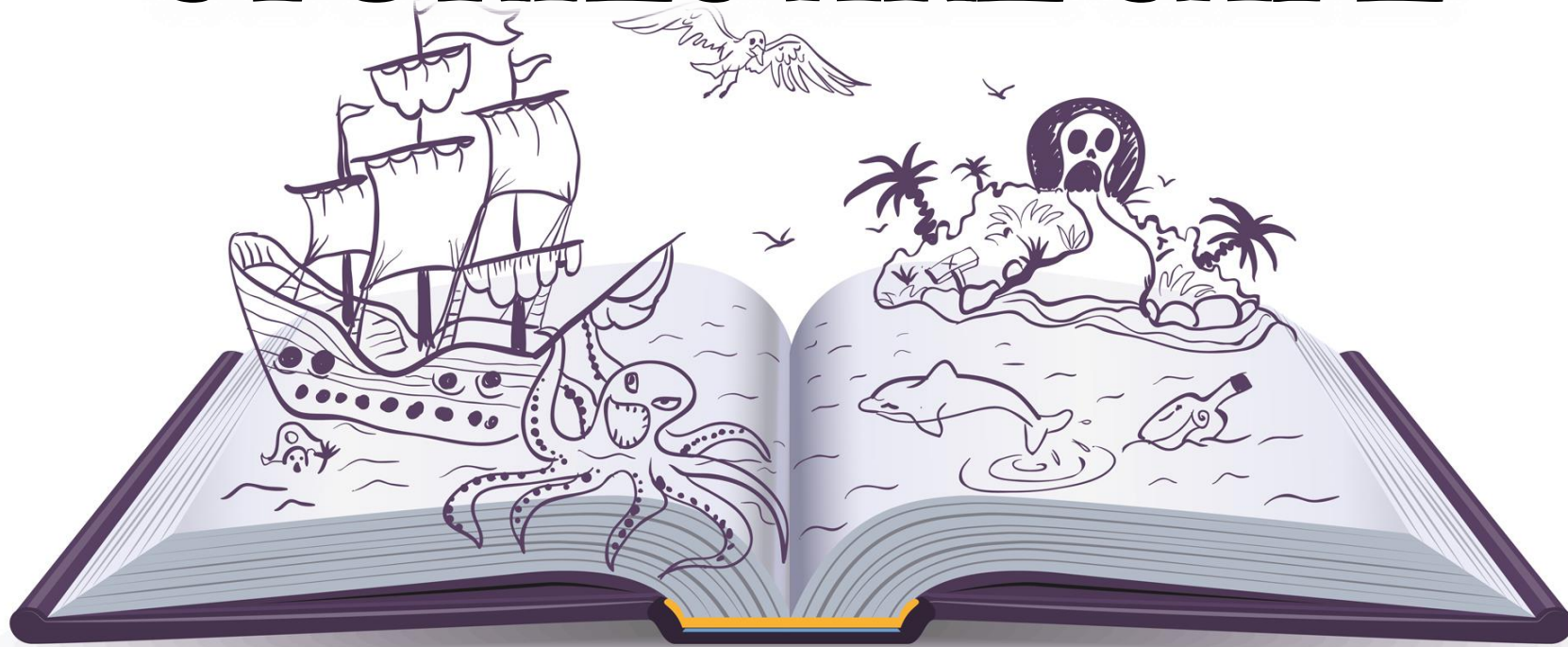
(Hetzl & Laurin, “Polarization in America: Two Possible Futures.”)



**Social media  
creates personal  
walls that shuts  
out any  
conflicting  
worldviews**

(Manney, “Empathy in the Time of Technology.”)

# STORIES ARE SAFE

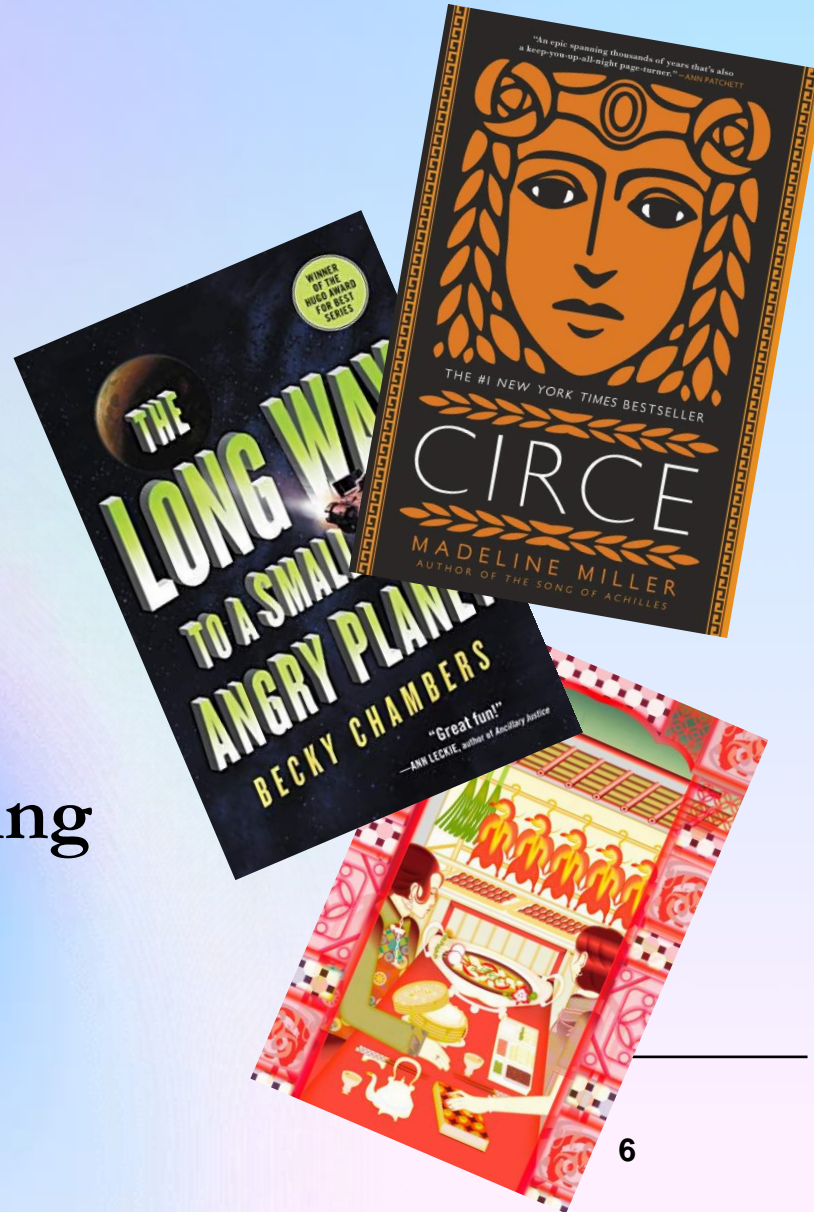


But what is it in a story that makes us empathize? I believe it is the imaginative act of the reader translating the words on the page into thoughts and feelings, enabling them to see the world through the characters' eyes and feel their feelings. – P.J. Manney



# PARTS OF THE PROCESS:

- Technique study
- Writing, writing, writing
- Workshopping with other creative writers



Writing retreat in the  
Pocono Mountains

# PROJECT TIMELINE

OCTOBER

Draft 1

EARLY  
NOVEMBER

Draft 2

MID  
NOVEMBER

Workshops

EARLY  
DECEMBER

Draft 3

MID  
DECEMBER

Submission

# FEMINIST LEADERSHIP WITHIN CREATIVE WRITING

At the basis of every work of history is a question of positioning. This is also, on some level, an ethical question. Whose history are you telling? And from whose perspective? – Dubois, “Atlantic Freedoms”

**My  
Voice**



**My  
Advocacy**



## PRESENT JOURNEY

20+ Polished pages

3 Drafts

Anticipated submission to:



## FUTURE DREAMS

Still continuing to write!



Ultimate goal →  
published as a novel

# MINI READING!

## Definitions:

里 Li - approx. one third of a mile, traditional unit of distance

魔 Mó - creatures born from dark desires & fears, require other life to sustain themselves

妖 Yāo – creatures similar to nature spirits, objects in the natural world (ex. animals, plants) who gain sentience and can take on human form



## A Big Thank You To...

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### The Rutgers English & Creative Writing Department

- Professor Alex Dawson
- Professor Adam Dalva

### The Institute of Women's Leadership

- Professor Mary Trigg
- Sasha Taner
- Elizabeth O' Brien

**My Leadership Scholars cohort – we did it!!!**

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