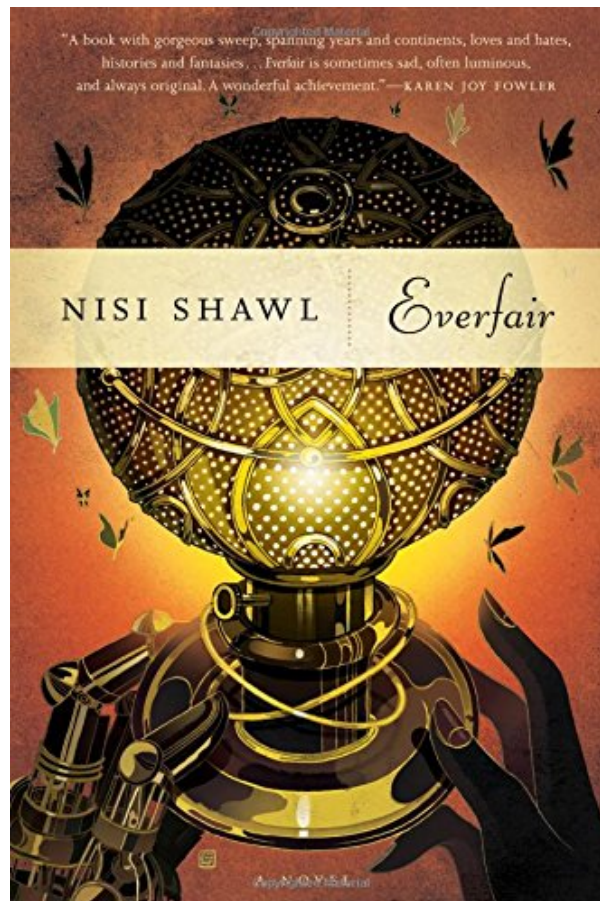
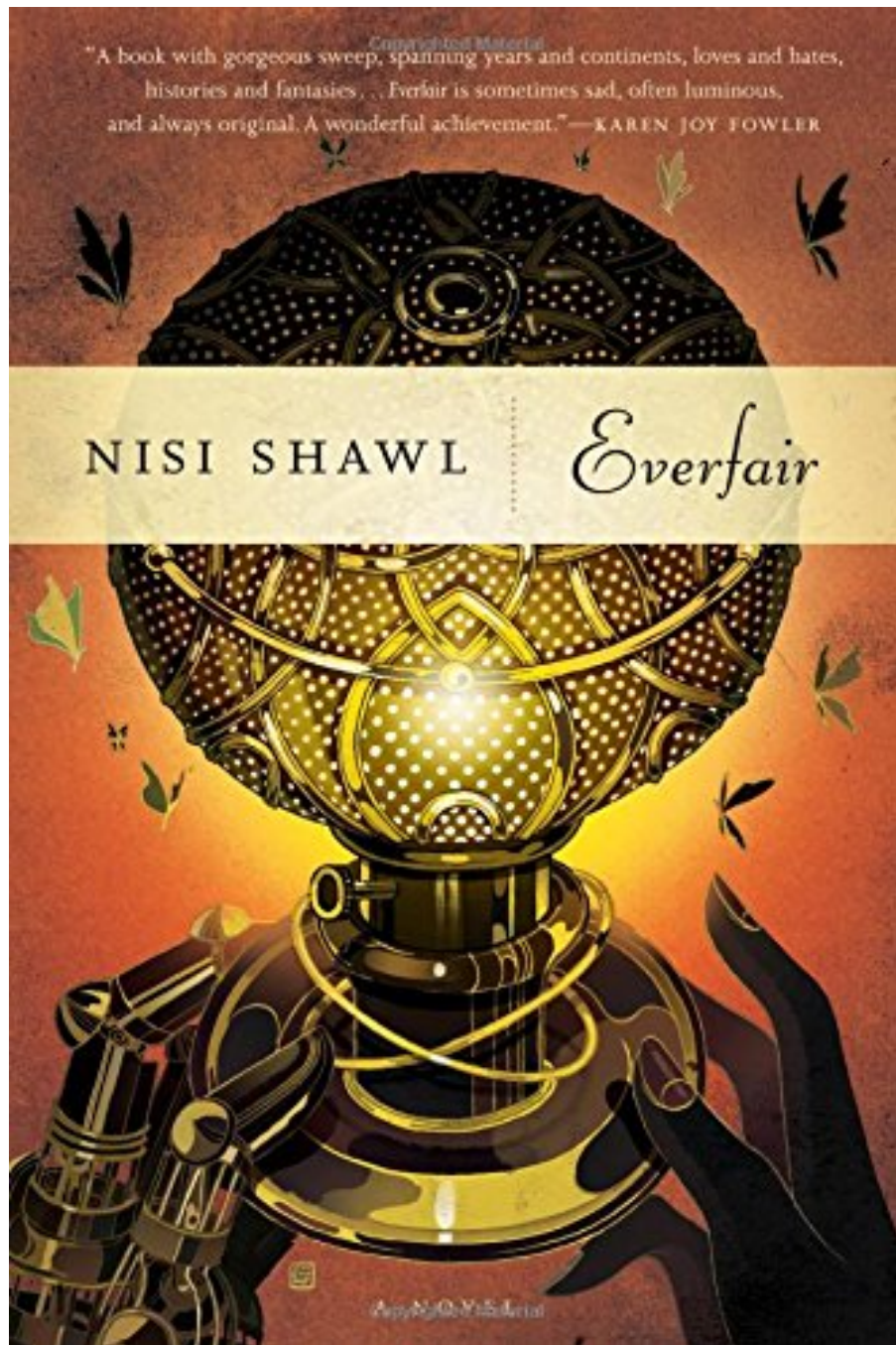


# EVERFAIR: A NOVEL BY NISI SHAWL



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### Review

"This highly original story blends steampunk and political intrigue in a compelling new view of a dark piece of human history." ---Publishers Weekly Starred Review

### About the Author

Nisi Shawl is a writer of science fiction and fantasy short stories and a journalist. She is the co-author (with Cynthia Ward) of *Writing the Other: Bridging Cultural Differences for Successful Fiction*. Her short stories have appeared in *Asimov's SF Magazine*, *Strange Horizons*, and numerous other magazines and anthologies.

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Everfair is a wonderful Neo-Victorian alternate history novel that explores the question of what might have come of Belgium's disastrous colonization of the Congo if the native populations had learned about steam technology a bit earlier. Fabian Socialists from Great Britain join forces with African-American missionaries to purchase land from the Belgian Congo's "owner," King Leopold II. This land, named Everfair, is set aside as a safe haven, an imaginary Utopia for native populations of the Congo as well as escaped slaves returning from America and other places where African natives were being mistreated.

Nisi Shawl's speculative masterpiece manages to turn one of the worst human rights disasters on record into a marvelous and exciting exploration of the possibilities inherent in a turn of history. Everfair is told from a multiplicity of voices: Africans, Europeans, East Asians, and African Americans in complex relationships with one another, in a compelling range of voices that have historically been silenced. Everfair is not only a beautiful book but an educational and inspiring one that will give the reader new insight into an often ignored period of history.

- Sales Rank: #71077 in Books
- Brand: Nisi Shawl
- Published on: 2016-09-06
- Released on: 2016-09-06
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 214.12" h x 1.22" w x 5.68" l, .0 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 384 pages

## Features

- Everfair

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## Most helpful customer reviews

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful.

People of All Colors Shine like Brass in this Well-Researched and Well-Realized Steampunk Alt History

By Anne K. Gray

Let me just say, the cosplay based on this book is going to be amazing.

This is a fascinating, well-written story about several idealists coming from very different perspectives to try to create a free state in African lands once dominated by Leopold II. Aided by steampunk-style alternate history advances in prosthetics, medicine, weaponry, and airships, the diverse cast of protagonists each bring their own special talents to the struggle.

Unfortunately, the unrelenting state of conflict makes it hard to settle into the many moments of personal joy that are delightfully woven into the tale. But that must also be true of any people fighting to establish freedom and equality in a world that either dismisses them outright or abuses their rights as human beings.

The story rotates between perspectives in a third person limited narrative, thereby giving us insight into the thoughts of one person at a time, and vividly illustrating how miscommunication and failure to understand one another feeds social and political dysfunction even in a group where everyone is trying to do the right thing. In light of this, the moments of unity within the story are all the more powerful and persuasive.

Highly recommended.

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful.

Good topic, middling execution

By Peter J. Orvetti

I really wanted to like this book. It differs from most alternate history in that it looks beyond the so-called "developed" world of Europe, North America, and Asia where most such novels take place, and also differs in that the alternative timeline is -- unlike in most AH stories -- a better one than in ours. The Belgian ravishing of the Congo gets too little attention, and the author gets credit for focusing on it.

But "Everfair" is a plodding and rather confusing novel. The book focuses almost entirely on about a half-dozen characters who come to have key leadership roles in the new state, but all but ignores the thousands of others living in the vast territory. There is a lot about the personal relationships between these founders, and a good deal about the steampunk technological boom in Everfair, but not a lot about life in the emerging state itself.

AH purists may enjoy it, but for others, it's a tough read.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

A sweeping epic of an Afrocentric 19th century

By J. Zimmerman

Since hearing about this book while it was being written, I've been eagerly anticipating its release. I love books which challenge assumptions by looking at things from a different perspective, and this has been that from its initial concept to its final product.

Everfair asks the question of how steampunk would look if it was born out of Central Africa instead of Europe. Shawl creates a compelling a beautiful re-imagining of the genre, letting go of the terms we are most familiar with to create a world distinctly its own.

There were a few things I hadn't anticipated, and I can't decide how I feel about them. The first is that the protagonist is not a person, but the country of Everfair itself. There are multiple POV characters that appear throughout the book, some of which don't make it to the end. The best comparison I can think of is Azimov's first Foundation book, but even that doesn't really map well.

This also results in there being a lot of story being covered in a comparatively short space. There are spots where the details of a scene are glossed over, when they could have been expanded into multiple books.

The second is that there's a stronger supernatural element than I had expected. Beyond the suspension of disbelief needed for some steam-based technology, several characters have superhuman abilities that presumably tie into the local mythology. I can't decide if it adds a unique flavor to the setting, or if it undermines the scientific accomplishments of this fictional country.,

Despite these things, I would recommend the book as a compelling view of a world that might have been and I look forward to her next work.

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