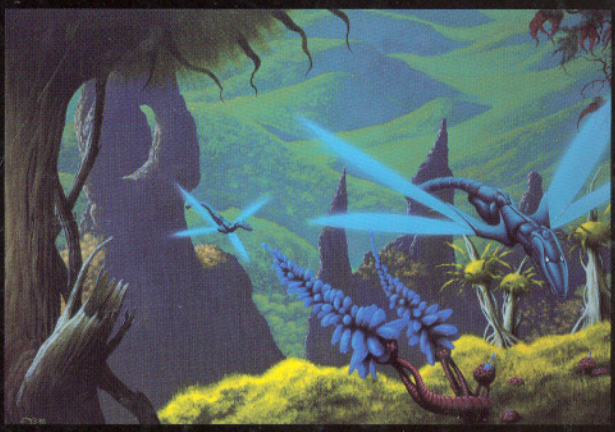
THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO



SCIENCE FICTION

Edited by Edward James and Farah Mendlesohn

Science fiction is at the intersection of numerous fields. It is a literature which draws on popular culture, and which engages in speculation about science, history, and all types of social relations. This volume brings together essays by scholars and practitioners of science fiction, which look at the genre from these different angles. It examines science fiction from Thomas More to the present day, and introduces important critical approaches including Marxism, postmodernism, feminism and queer theory. A number of well-known science-fiction writers contribute to this volume.

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preoccupied the Western tradition I referred to at the outset. They suggest that collective disagreements can be debated, and that political engagement can exist, without public or private coercion. In doing so they ably carry forward the most subversive message in sf: that humanity or its successors may yet outlive the state.

NOTES

1. Thomas Macaulay, *The History of England*, vol. II, ch. 10 (Everyman edn, London, J. M. Dent, 1906), p. 184.
2. Douglas Adams, in 'an impromptu speech in 1998', quoted in Richard Dawkins, 'Time to Stand Up', *The Freethinker* 122:1 (January 2002), p. 8.
3. Robert A. Heinlein, '"If This Goes On –"' (1940), in Heinlein, *The Past Through Tomorrow* (1967) (New York: Ace, 1987), pp. 498–9.
4. Heinlein, *Starship Troopers* (1959) (London: NEL, 1970), p. 155.
5. Karl Marx, 'The Civil War in France: Address of the General Council', in D. Fernbach, ed., *The First International and After* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974), p. 212.
6. Frank Herbert, *Dune* (London: New English Library, 1977), pp. 495–6.
7. Poul Anderson, 'The Last of the Deliverers' (1958) in Harry Harrison, ed., *Backdrop of Stars* (1968) (London: NEL, 1975), pp. 27–40.
8. See Robert Paul Wolff's *In Defense of Anarchism* (New York: Harper and Row, 1970).

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HELEN MERRICK

Gender in science fiction

Traditionally, sf has been considered a predominantly masculine field which, through its focus on science and technology, 'naturally' excludes women and by implication, considerations of gender. To varying degrees over its history, sf has in fact functioned as an enormously fertile environment for the exploration of sociocultural understandings of gender. My use of the rather slippery term 'gender' here refers to the socially constructed attributes and 'performed' roles that are mapped on to biologically sexed bodies in historically and culturally specific ways. Rather than a comprehensive account of representations of masculinity and femininity, this chapter explores sf's potential to engage with gender issues, highlighting texts that have served to disrupt or challenge normative cultural understandings.[1]

Despite populist notions of the overwhelmingly masculinist nature of sf, the problematic spaces signaled by 'gender' are crucial to sf imaginings. The presence of 'Woman' – whether actual, threatened or symbolically represented (through the alien, or 'mother Earth' for example) – reflects cultural anxieties about a range of 'Others' immanent in even the most scientifically pure, technically focused sf. The series of 'self/other' dichotomies suggested by 'gender', such as human/alien, nature/technology, and organic/inorganic, are also a central (although often unacknowledged) facet of the scientific culture informing much sf. The argument that at least some sf texts were justified in omitting women altogether was predicated on the notion that their ostensible subject matter – science and technology – were inherently masculine endeavours. Such views not only neatly sidestep the sociocultural relations of science and technology, but also serve to obscure the *active* reinforcement of the androcentric culture of the (Western) scientific 'world view'. As Brian Attebery notes: 'The master narrative of science has always been told in sexual terms. It represents knowledge, innovation, and even perception as masculine, while nature, the passive object of exploration, is described as feminine.'[2]

The narratives of 'Science' carry an implicit set of cultural assumptions about a whole series of relationships concerning subjectivity, knowledge, 'Nature' and gender, such that sf's central question 'what if?' ultimately cannot escape the analogous question 'what, then, becomes of us?' In what ways can we (re)imagine 'humanity'? Science fiction authors have employed a number of strategies to answer this question, in the process sometimes revealing, destabilizing or subverting normative understandings of gender. The earliest stages involved exposing the androcentric understanding that equates human with 'man', and making visible the repressed or absent feminine 'other' either through a denial of difference (the 'female man') or by a gynocentric re-valuing of the 'feminine'. Efforts to imagine a more equal gendered system may posit male and female as complementary halves which together equal 'humanity'; alternatively, the attempt to disrupt gendered binaries have taken the form of a number of 'androgynous' solutions: merging the binary into a singular 'gender' (the hermaphrodite); collapsing the binary by refusing gender categorization altogether; or positing a multiplicity of genders which subverts dualistic oppositions.

An examination of work which challenges traditional notions of gender needs to be contextualized within the broader field of 'androcentric' sf. Thus it is important to consider what representations and constructions of masculinity have been available and what implicit understandings of gender have thereby been implied. One very powerful image of masculinity in sf from the 1930s to 1950s was that of the 'super-man'. The superhuman qualities of such characters often lay in their intellectual and scientific superiority, rather than a more traditional masculine physicality. Such stories were indebted to Darwinian notions of evolution, and the highly gendered narrative of sexual selection. In Stanley Weinbaum's *The New Adam* (1939), Edmond Hall's superhuman powers are firmly located in terms of intellect, rather than in a hyper-masculinized body. Indeed, the depiction of his physical 'delicacy' complicates his masculinity, at times suggesting a 'coded' homosexuality. These are, indeed, narratives of the super-man whose vision of an improved 'humanity' derives from the evolution of certain traits specifically associated with the masculine. Despite – or perhaps because of – the strength of such narratives and metaphors, and the centrality of 'gender-coding' to the science/culture nexus, even androcentric sf highlights the way gender structures so many of our cultural 'stories'.

The subject of 'woman' was not, however, entirely absent from this masculinized arena; indeed, debates about the role of women and the representation of female characters in sf have been present from the genre's beginnings in the pulp magazines. Concerns about 'women in sf' developed from the 'sex in sf' question, which loomed large in the sf (un)consciousness from the

late 1920s through the sexual liberation of the 1960s, to intersect with (and be partially absorbed by) feminist narratives from the 1970s to the present. The early debates concerning the appropriateness of 'sex' (read romance) in sf stories (or on the cover of the magazines in the form of scantily clad women) were intimately connected with notions about the place of women characters in sf, and cultural constructions of 'femininity' and 'masculinity'. The 'alien' could signify everything that was 'other' to the dominant audience of middle-class, young white Western males – including women, people of colour, other nationalities, classes and sexualities. The interactions between aliens and human men were often inherently, if covertly, sexual in nature. Further, in the name of keeping sf pure of 'puerile love interests', exclusionary tactics were pursued by male fans, authors and editors to situate women characters 'outside' the masculine domain of science and sf. The majority argued that sex had no place in the logical, scientific, 'cerebral' topos of sf, and, *ipso facto*, that there was no place for 'woman'.

There has, however, been a long tradition in sf where a certain 'female' character has had a central role – in stories where the traditional gendered hierarchies of society are overturned and where 'women rule'. These 'Woman Dominant' – or in the words of Joanna Russ, 'Battle of the Sexes' stories[3] – reveal a latent anxiety about changes and threats to the gendered order in a much more obvious fashion than the majority of sf. These texts confront anxieties over the potential 'feminine' challenge to gendered hierarchies and the 'heterosexual economy', which are threatened by images of self-sustaining matriarchal societies. And whilst they may at least hint at the vision of a more equal gendered social order, this possibility is undermined by figuring female desire for greater equality in terms of a (stereotypical) masculine drive for power and domination.

The biologically essentialist, gendered assumptions underpinning the narratives of science (and evolution) are clearly articulated in these stories, depicting matriarchies incapable of establishing a functioning 'scientifically' progressive society. Thomas Gardner's 'The Last Woman' (1932) tells of an all-male 'Science Civilization' where only one woman remains, and is ultimately executed. This potentially homosocial society reinforces a heterosexually based model of masculinity through use of an 'Elixir', whereby those 'energies that had been turned toward sex and the emotional side of life were released for thought and work'.[4] Not only women, but all symbolic images of the 'feminine' are eradicated through the removal of these distracting 'emotional' forces.

Not all battle of the sexes texts foreclosed the possibility of female rule – some early stories depicted successful matriarchies, whilst a number of later texts deconstruct the negative 'woman dominant' stories through ironic or

satirical role reversals. Francis Stevens's 'Friend Island' (1918), presents a society where women are admitted to be the superior sex. Another unusual example was 'Via the Hewitt Ray', by Margaret F. Rupert (1930), in which Lucille Hewitt travels to another dimension where society is dominated by women with only a few 'breeding males'. What makes this story unusual is a reference to a 'reversed' system of prostitution, as men with 'physical beauty' are kept to satisfy women's 'biological urge[s]'. In Leslie Francis Stone's humorous 'The Conquest of Gola' (1931) a male invasion of a matriarchal planet is successfully resisted, primarily because the invaders cannot believe that the planet is ruled by women.

The work of C. L. Moore, one of the earliest and most successful female authors published in sf magazines, demonstrates other important developments in the treatment of gender. As well as her Amazon-like heroine, 'Jirel of Joiry' (from 1934), Moore offers an interesting approach to the female alien in 'Shambleau' (1933), which whilst ultimately depicting the medusa-like alien as a threat that must be contained, does emphasize the power of a 'female' sexuality, which at least temporarily 'feminizes' the 'hero' Northwest Smith by rendering him powerless and submissive. Most interesting in terms of gender is Moore's 1944 story 'No Woman Born', which offers remarkable insights into issues of embodiment, female beauty, power and what it means to be 'human', by uncoupling 'femininity' from the biologically female body. The cyborg Deirdre still possesses the feminine attributes of grace, beauty and her ability to dance, but through a wholly metallic body, which, as we come to realize, is endowed with 'hyper-masculine' qualities of super-human strength and agility. The perception of the male narrator, who worries about the 'fragility' of her 'glowing and radiant mind poised in metal', and her 'inhuman' appearance, is in tension with Deirdre's appreciation of the potentials and strengths of her new body.

The 1950s marked an important period in sf's engagement with sociocultural concerns, including a more engaged awareness of contemporary issues around sex, gender roles, race and ecology. The period from the late 1940s to the 1950s also saw the emergence and establishment of a number of important female sf writers, whose work often departed from traditional sf themes (such as Mildred Clingerman, Miriam Allen deFord, Margaret St Clair, Carol Emshwiller, Andre Norton, Kit Reed, Wilmar H. Shiras and Kate Wilhelm).[5] One text that is constantly valorized by critics as representing a watershed in sf's 'maturity' in its attitude to sex is Philip José Farmer's 'The Lovers' (1952), considered as one of the earliest to break sexual taboos and cited as evidence of sf's newly found progressiveness. It was left to later feminist critics to point out the misogyny of this graphic picture of miscegenation ending in the destruction of the *female* alien.[6]

The 1950s also saw a number of writers resolve the 'battle of the sexes' through some form of equality, including Robert Silverberg's 'Woman's World' (1957) and Frederik Pohl and Cyril Kornbluth's *Search the Sky* (1954). Best known of such works are Philip Wylie's *The Disappearance* (1951) and John Wyndham's 'Consider Her Ways' (1956). In *The Disappearance* women mysteriously vanish from men's lives, and vice versa. Although the male and female worlds are united at the end, women are shown to have dealt rather better with the separation than the men. However, the heterosexual economy is preserved, and only the inequalities of 'the sexes' are highlighted. 'Consider Her Ways', often considered a proto-feminist work, tells of a woman transported to a future matriarchal society arising after men had been wiped out by a virus. Much of the story centres around a stringent critique of the prescribed gendered roles for 1950s women. Yet, in many ways this matriarchy conforms to earlier examples, being modelled on a 'hive-like' society, with a total absence of sexual relations amongst the women.

Such role reversals engaged with gender to the extent that they parodied or criticized contemporary gendered norms through the familiar sf trope of 'defamiliarizing the familiar'. The other available option was to postulate a set of 'human behaviours' available to both men and women and depict female 'heroes' capably carrying out 'men's work'. Isaac Asimov's Robot series portrayed the female scientist Susan Calvin, who in a sense is masquerading as a 'female man'. However, Calvin's performance of masculine gender attributes ultimately compromises her identity – her 'cold nature', emotional isolation and adherence to rationality is apparently at odds with her 'natural' identity as a woman. More liberating examples of female characters are seen in the work of Robert Heinlein, who was one of the earliest authors to introduce considerations of sex and sexuality into sf. Unusually for his time, Heinlein routinely portrayed independent, competent and intelligent female characters, most notably in his juveniles such as *Have Spacesuit Will Travel* (1958), *Tunnel in the Sky* (1955) (which includes an African woman character) and *Podkayne of Mars* (1963). Ultimately, however, Heinlein's women are re-contained within a normative gendered order most often through their desire for male appreciation, remaining 'sexually dependent' whilst 'morally superior'.[7]

Heinlein's work also provides another example of the breadth of sf's engagement with gender issues, namely the complexity of representations of technology and masculinity. As technological development brings into question the boundaries of the organic, it can be seen to metaphorically threaten the embodied qualities of physical strength which inform social constructions of masculinity. Thus, 'technology' in sf can be read as both a

signifier of masculinty, and also as a site of cultural anxieties about gender. In Heinlein's *Starship Troopers* (1959) the prosthetically enhanced troopers can be read as 'hyper-masculine', representing an 'aggressive overinflation of masculinity' in reponse to their hi-tech environment. In a manner foreshadowing the 'feminization' of cyberspace in later sf, the images of spaceships and launching tubes connote the feminine metaphors of pregnancy and childbirth: 'Being contained inside the ship and inside the suit, at the mercy of a woman at the controls, the marines' technologically-enhanced body becomes a site of great anxiety and ambiguity'.[8]

In the 1950s a number of female sf authors emerged who helped make women 'visible' in sf through a focus on female characters, or writing from what Merril termed 'the woman's point of view'.[9] Such woman-focused stories were castigated – both at the time and in later feminist critique – as 'sweet little domestic stories', 'wet-diaper' fiction or '*Ladies' Magazine fiction* – in which the sweet, gentle, intuitive little heroine solves an interstellar crisis by mending her slip or doing something equally domestic after her big, heroic husband has failed'.[10] Such a simplistic rendering however, does not consider the disruptive potential of locating the 'women's sphere' as central in a genre that privileged science, space travel or heroic quests. In Zenna Henderson's 'Subcommittee', an intergalactic war is prevented by the wife of a high official, who discovers the real nature of the alien's needs at a family picnic, when power politics and military intelligence has failed. Far from being a simplistic, essentialist celebration of feminine 'intuition', the story is 'revealing as a critique of power structures and the language of power and . . . as a study of gender'.[11] Shifting the focus to the social consequences of the 'masculinist' (public) sphere of technology, politics and the military is similarly disruptive. As author Connie Willis observes, Judith Merril's 'That Only a Mother' (1948) 'hardly classifies as a domestic tale. It's a story about radiation, infanticide, and desperate self-delusion that manages to be poignant and horrific at the same time.'[12]

In part due to the increased number of female writers in the field, and their introduction of more female characters, by the 1960s some texts began to move beyond merely rendering women 'visible', or claiming a limited equality based on denial of difference. Increasingly more complex characterizations are evident, with portrayals of women as fully 'human', rather than 'female men', or complementary adjuncts to, or reflections of, the masculine. Some sf writers began to construct societies in which human involvement was not constrained by the social mores predicated on biological sex. This was particularly evident in the work of those writers who envisioned a scientific culture which could accommodate – even welcome – knowledges based on a broader spectrum of human experience. Katherine MacLean was one

of the earliest women writers to bring together 'hard sf' with intelligent female characters and an awareness of the foibles of cultural constraints attendant on such 'liberated' women. Similarly, Naomi Mitchison's *Memoirs of a Spacewoman* (1962) was unusually prescient in constructing a future society where the biological constraints of childbearing were totally disassociated from a woman's right to a fully 'human' array of choices and responsibilities – from career to parenthood. The spacefaring communications expert Mary casually reveals to us a 'future history' of science which takes for granted that there will be women – *and* women of colour – participating in all the sciences. Along with James Tiptree Jr and Alice Lightner, Mitchison's work was unusual for its concern with the intersection of both gender *and* race with scientific narratives.

From the 1960s on a number of sf texts helped shift the gender focus away from the 'Battle of the Sexes' to more egalitarian solutions. While still in dialogue with previous works, these texts offered more radical solutions by collapsing gendered roles onto one 'combined' sex, thus challenging the constraints of biological sex differences. Theodore Sturgeon's *Venus Plus X* (1960) postulates that equality can only be achieved through the removal of biological difference. In this future egalitarian and tolerant society the Ledom are 'biologically androgynous', sexually identical and can all give birth. Contemporary gender relations are compared unfavourably with that of the Ledom, in the process critiquing socially constructed notions of masculinity which rely on the identification of difference as a means of disempowering 'the other'.

In *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1969) Ursula Le Guin crystallized previous challenges to underlying gender assumptions with her 'thought experiment' of an androgynous society. The Gethenian inhabitants of the planet Winter are neuter except for certain periods of 'kemmer' when they can become either male or female: thus all Gethenians have the potential to both give birth *and* father a child. Le Guin directly confronts the question of socialised versus biological difference, as the human narrator, Genly Ai admits, 'It's extremely hard to separate the innate differences from the learned ones.'[13] In this society, 'humanity' is defined as a commonly accessible and shared set of values, attributes and behaviours tangibly separated from arbitrary and shifting notions of the self based only on a sexed embodiment. However, as Le Guin herself later admitted, her use of the masculine pronoun to refer to the Gethenians allows their society to be read as all-male: 'a safe trip into androgyny and back, from a conventionally male viewpoint'.[14]

The 1970s marks a high point in sf's engagement with gender with the publication of a significant group of texts which Russ would later classify as 'feminist utopias'. These self-consciously feminist works consistently challenge

and disrupt the perceived 'naturalness' of gender, and locate the operation and proliferation of the more harmful effects of the gendered order deep within the political and cultural institutions of contemporary society. While each proposes different approaches to the problem of gender, the resulting fictive societies bear a remarkable number of similarities. Gender is seen (in most cases) to be 'socially produced', thus challenging taken-for-granted structures which reinforce gender binarisms. Extended families or communal life are presented as alternatives to the nuclear family, while parenting is shared amongst numerous 'mothers', who may be female or male. These societies also promote freedom of sexual expression, including homosexuality, in order to 'separate sexuality from questions of ownership, reproduction and social structure'.[15]

In Marge Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time*, Mattapoisett is a 'culturally androgynous' society, a paradigm of an egalitarian, ecologically sustainable world where artificial wombs are used so that no one gives birth but both men and women 'mother' (and breastfeed). Le Guin's *The Dispossessed* also argues for a world where biological sex no longer produces a gendered hierarchy; as one of her characters notes, 'A person chooses work according to interest, talent strength – what has the sex to do with that?'[16] Most of the other feminist sf 'utopias' disrupt gendered hierarchies by (re)constituting woman as human, in many cases by postulating a woman-only world, in order to provide women with full access to the range of experiences and emotions associated with humanity. Russ's 'When it Changed' and *The Female Man* represent in some ways the apogee of the engagement of sf and gender, with their devastating critique of female stereotypes and masculinist sf tropes, and deconstruction of the acceptable, liberal 'whole' woman towards a multiple, shifting postmodernist sense of female 'selfhood'. In the utopian world of Whileaway we see the most obvious, rigorous – and humorous – case for the argument that 'women' equals human – even when they are working, living, loving and reproducing without men. In Sally Miller Gearhart's *The Wanderground* (1980), Suzy McKee Charnas's *Motherlines* (1978) and Tiptree's 'Houston, Houston, Do You Read?' (1976), the equation of women as human can only be realized through the construction of a society where men are absent. As Charnas observed, without the constraints of ingrained assumptions about gender roles, her female characters had 'access to the entire range of human behaviour. They acted new roles appropriate to social relationships amongst a society of equals which allowed them to behave simply as human beings.'[17] Perhaps the most famed author to explore the ramifications of these ingrained gender roles was James Tiptree Jr. Celebrated in the mid-1970s as a 'masculine' writer, she was revealed in 1977 as Alice Sheldon. As both James Tiptree Jr, and her second pseudonym Raccoona

Sheldon, she was the writer of some of the most powerful critiques of traditional gender roles in this period, including 'The Women Men Don't See' (1973) and 'The Screwfly Solution' (1977). In the first women choose aliens over men; in the second aliens engineer a sex-violence link to lethal levels in order to clear desirable real estate of pesky humans.

Rather than removing men, in works such as Delany's *Triton* (1976) the notion of social manifestations of gender are multiple and diffused to the extent that they become meaningless, and all kinds of gender/sexual difference are celebrated. On Triton, there are over forty 'sexes' in a societal structure where bisexual, homosexual, heterosexual and celibate relationships are all equally recognized and condoned. As in John Varley's *Steel Beach* (1992) (and his other Eight World stories), sex changes, complete with full reproductive capabilities, are common. In these scenarios, the socially mediated relation between sex and gender is dissolved into multiplicity and meaninglessness, as 'sex' becomes a referent, rather than a determinant of sexuality. Another author who disrupts the gender binary in a similar way is Octavia Butler (the first African-American woman to make a career writing sf) in her Xenogenesis trilogy (1987–9). The alien Oankali have a third sex: the ooloi who facilitate the Oankali's 'organic technology' of genetic exchange. Butler's work always concerns the destructive effects of both race and gender; in Xenogenesis radical change is required to construct a truly human(e) society, requiring its characters to become other than human through mating with Oankali ooloi.

The 1980s saw a move away from 'androgyny' to works which critiqued or explored gender through dystopian visions, role reversals and worlds which split men and women into separate societies. The re-emergence of sociobiology was one discourse about gender that fed into the idea of the 1980s as a period of conservatism and backlash, and texts such as Suzette Haden Elgin's trilogy which began with *Native Tongue* (1984) and Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985) are conventionally read in terms of this conservative atmosphere (as could the 'role-reversal' of C. J. Cherryh's *The Pride of Chanur*, 1982; Jayge Carr's *Leviathan's Deep*, 1979; and Cynthia Felice's *Double Nocturne*, 1986). The separatist texts *Gate to Women's Country* (1988) by Sheri S. Tepper and *The Shore of Women* (1986) by Pamela Sargent may be productively considered in the context of feminist critiques of reproductive technologies: in both these texts artificial insemination is controlled by women, and rather than 'farming' ova, men are 'milked' for their sperm. In Nicola Griffith's *Ammonite* (1993), a rare recent all-female world, a virus has infected a planet's population and killed all the men. One of the effects of the virus on the original inhabitants of Jeep is the ability to perceive and even influence their biochemistry, including developing a process

of 'gynogenesis', female control over a technology of reproduction. Reading such works as part of a feminist struggle over scientific narratives suggests at least some continuity with the 1970s works, rather than a 'failure' to live up to the revolutionary potential of the more overtly feminist utopias.

Another important locus of concerns about gender in 1980s sf – particularly in terms of masculinity – was cyberpunk. Described as the 'urban fantasies of white male folklore' the 'console cowboys' of this sub-genre enact a return to a 'purer' form of hard sf, apparently without cognizance of the impact of radical social movements such as feminism. Cyberpunk's representation of the body and human subjectivity recapitulate the old humanist dream of transcendence – here refigured as that of 'meat vs. mind'. Despite the potentially liberating promises of an escape from the body (and thus modernist notions of gendered subjectivity), and the presence of strong female characters, the dominance of the mind/body dualism in cyberpunk serves to reinforce the associated gender binaries. The only woman 'officially' associated with the cyberpunk movement, Pat Cadigan, offers a very different perspective which keeps in focus the gendered (and raced) nature of embodiment even in a virtual environment. *Synners* (1989), for example, critiques certain 'masculine' relations to technology, in particular the transcendental desire to escape the 'meat-prison'. Melissa Scott's *Trouble and her Friends* (1994), Mary Rosenblum's *Chimera* (1993), Maureen McHugh's *China Mountain Zhang* (1992) and Laura Mixon's *Glass Houses* (1992) all move beyond the heterosexism of cyberpunk and include lesbian, gay or bisexual characters, and confront the gendered issue of embodiment in a space that privileges the (masculinized) 'mind' over (feminized) 'body'.

Over the last couple of decades, increasingly nuanced explorations of gender are in evidence across a wide range of sf texts, for example, those which disrupt the conventionally 'masculinist' narratives of 'hard' sf and military sf. A number of authors have designed futures where 'science' is expanded to include areas considered 'unscientific' in Western technoculture. Communication – traditionally seen as a female attribute – operates as a 'science' in texts such as Bradley's Darkover novels (1962–2001), Sheri S. Tepper's *After Long Silence* (1987), Suzette Haden Elgin's *Native Tongue* (1984), Sheila Finch's *Triad* (1986) and Janet Kagan's *Hellspark* (1988).

The traditional male 'hero' at the heart of military space opera and future-war sf is also being rewritten in ways which challenges notions of masculinity. Lois McMaster Bujold's Vorkosigan series (1986 on) features the highly 'feminized' hero Miles Vorkosigan, whose abnormal physicality, avoidance of violence and relationships with women mark him as highly unconventional. Elizabeth Moon's Serrano series (1993–2001) plays with the masculine space of the military and 'the hunt' by placing women (and an elderly

clutch of 'aunts') at the centre of political power. From a different perspective, Joe Haldeman's *Forever Peace* (1997) powerfully deconstructs notions of war and gender – and his own 1974 novel *The Forever War* – through a compelling examination of what would happen to humanity if it was incapable of violence.

From a twenty-first century perspective, the easily identifiable concerns of 1970s feminist sf texts have been absorbed into a much broader consideration of the intersections of gendered concerns with postcolonial theory, ecological politics and radical critiques of (Western) science. Both reflecting and encouraging such developments, in 1991 the James Tiptree, Jr Memorial Award was founded by Karen Joy Fowler and Pat Murphy, to be awarded to sf that 'expands or explores our understanding of gender'.[18] Authors as diverse as Raphael Carter, Theodore Roszak, James Patrick Kelly, Nancy Springer and Kim Stanley Robinson have been recognized by the award, providing an indication of the enormously rich and complex state of the engagement of sf and gender. Some of these 'Tiptree' texts eradicate gender altogether, such as Gwyneth Jones's White Queen trilogy, with her 'genderless' Aleutians, and Ian McDonald's *Sacrifice of Fools* (1996). Others, such as Melissa Scott's *Shadow Man* (1995), imagine multiple genders, or refuse gender through characters who are not identified as either male or female, including the narrators of Kelly Eskridge's 'And Salome Danced' (1994) and Emma Bull's *Bone Dance* (1991). The success of the Tiptree award clearly signals the appropriateness of the genre as a vehicle for exploring gender and humanity and 'unlearning' the strictures of cultural norms. Science fiction provides a space where writers can seriously address the challenge articulated by Karen Fowler: 'Just ask yourself, if we weren't taught to be women, what would we be? (Ask yourself this question even if you're a man, and don't cheat by changing the words).'[19]

NOTES

1. My discussion is necessarily partial; there remains much critical work to be done on constructions of masculinity in sf for example, and I refer only briefly to the ground-breaking work of feminist sf writers as this subject is covered in the 'Feminism' chapter in this volume.
2. Brian Attebery, 'Science Fiction and the Gender of Knowledge', in Andy Sawyer and David Seed, eds., *Speaking Science Fiction* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000), p. 134.
3. In Joanna Russ, '*Amor Vincit Foeminam*', *Science-Fiction Studies* 7 (1980), pp. 2–15; see Justine Larbalestier, *The Battle of the Sexes in Science Fiction* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2002), for detailed readings of this 'genre' and the stories discussed below.

4. Thomas S. Gardner, 'The Last Woman', in Sam Moskowitz, ed., *When Women Rule* (New York: Walker and Company, 1972), pp. 131–48.
5. See Pamela Sargent, ed., *Women of Wonder: The Classic Years* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1995), for a sample of stories by many of these writers.
6. See, for example, Robin Roberts, *A New Species* (Urbana: Illinois University Press, 1993), p. 152. One contemporary critic who remained sceptical of this 'breakthrough' was Anthony Boucher; see his 'Sf Books: 1960' in Judith Merril (ed.), *The Best of Sci-Fi* (1961) (London: Mayflower, 1963), p. 379.
7. Farah Mendlesohn, 'Women in Science Fiction', *Foundation* 53 (Autumn 1991), p. 66.
8. Steffen Hantke, 'Surgical Strikes and Prosthetic Warriors', *Science-Fiction Studies* 25 (1998), p. 499.
9. Judith Merril, personal correspondence, cited in Justine Larbalestier and Helen Merrick, 'The Revolting Housewife', *Paradoxa* 18 (June 2003), pp. 136–56.
10. Joanna Russ, 'The Image of Women in Science Fiction' (1971), *Vertex* 1:6 (February 1974), p. 55.
11. Farah Mendlesohn, 'Gender, Power and Conflict Resolution', *Extrapolation* 35 (1994), pp. 120–9.
12. Connie Willis, 'Guest Editorial: The Women SF Doesn't See', *Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine* (October 1992), p. 8.
13. Ursula Le Guin, *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1969) (London: Granada, 1973), p. 200.
14. Ursula K. Le Guin, 'Is Gender Necessary? Redux', in her *Dancing at the Edge of the World: Thoughts on Words, Women, Places* (London, Paladin, 1992), p. 16.
15. Joanna Russ, 'Recent Feminist Utopias', in Marleen S. Barr, ed., *Future Females* (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1981), p. 76.
16. Le Guin, *The Dispossessed* (1974) (London: Grafton, 1975), p. 22.
17. Suzy McKee Charnas, 'A Woman Appeared' in Barr, ed., *Future Females*, pp. 106–7.
18. See the official website for the Award at http://www.tiptree.org.
19. Karen Joy Fowler, 'The Tiptree Award: A Personal History', *Wiscon 20 Souvenir Book* (Madison, WI: SF3, 1996), p. 109.

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ELISABETH ANNE LEONARD

Race and ethnicity in science fiction

Science fiction and the criticism of the genre have so far paid very little attention to the treatment of issues relating to race and ethnicity. The African-Caribbean writer Nalo Hopkinson says about her sf novel *Brown Girl in the Ring* (1998), 'I saw it as subverting the genre which speaks so much about the experience of being alienated, but contains so little written by alienated people themselves.'[1] Most English-language sf is written by whites. While some African-American writers produce work that has fantastic or magical elements, this work is not generally grouped with sf or fantasy; it is instead published as and treated by critics as African-American literature. The magical realist elements of Mexican, Native American or Indian subcontinent literatures are also not published or reviewed as speculative literature. Salman Rushdie's novel *Midnight's Children* (1980), for example, explores Indian independence and the tensions between Moslems and Hindus through the eyes of a boy who is one of a group of children born with powers such as telepathy, but it is not generally considered science fiction. Samuel R. Delany and other black authors, including Charles Saunders and Walter Mosley, have written about the racial issues connected to the field, ranging from the initial cold-shoulder treatment of Delany by racist old-guard white writers to the lack of a substantial black audience for the genre, but neither sf about race nor criticism of it have achieved the same prominence that works about gender issues have.[2]

Science fiction writers can use its imaginative possibilities to hypothesize worlds where existing social problems have been solved; they can also imagine a future where the problems have been magnified or extended into a grim dystopia. At the same time, however, they are bound and constructed by numerous other forces, including their own culture and experiences and their publisher's expectations and target audience. Being able to publish one's work in many ways comes out of a position of privilege, including both the education and the time for writing, and consequently those people who are oppressed the most are the ones least likely to be writing about it. Further,