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SINGULARITIES:

THE INTERACTION OF FEMINISM(S) AND TWO

STRANDS OF POPULAR AMERICAN FICTION,

1968-89

Thesis submitted by

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for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in

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James Cook University of North Queensland

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ABSTRACT

The thesis examines how American writers in the popular genres of Female Gothic, Horror, and Science Fiction interact with strands of (mainly) American feminist thought and action, and with the cultural image of feminism(s) during the period 1968-89. The methodology combines male theorists' work with Marxist, psychoanalytic and other feminist approaches, including gay and lesbian theory and post-colonial perspectives.

The thesis frames its genres theoretically: Female Gothic as the shadow of feminist resistance, Horror as an endorsement of masculinist and normative phobias, Science Fiction as a heterogeneous but potentially more subversive genre that explores cultural and intellectual preoccupations. It then traces individual writers' progress through the synergy, or ongoing interaction of writers, genres, and changing feminism(s) over the period. The argument of the thesis contests the view of popular fiction as a shadow of canonical literature, indicating that within their various generic constraints the popular writers engage feminism(s) without mediation through `high' writers' work. At times they actually anticipate the latter and can share in the construction of feminist ideas. These findings then provide both a literary study and a form of feminist history, which argues that the reception and perception of feminism(s) within the American middle-class habitus during the period was a genuinely interactive process, in which feminists must also assume responsibility.

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DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my own work and has not been submitted in any form for another degree or diploma at any university or other institution of tertiary education. Information derived from the published or unpublished work of others has been acknowledged in the text and a list of references is given.

Sylvia Kelso.   Date ...1.9....5.1...1996.

- Section 1 -

AN OUTLINE OF THE PROJECT AND METHODOLOGY

One is too few, and two is only one possibility.

(Donna Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto" 180)

Fredric Jameson once called popular fiction "a way of reasoning" about "experience and society" (qtd. Pawling 5). This study began with the rejoinder, How does such literature reason about feminism? With the implicit and interested rider, Does it say feminism worked? These queries have mutated into something like, How does the social/ textual dialogue record the cultural impact of feminism(s)? and the answer has become an attempt, not so much to "capture," which is falsely masterful, nor to "record," which is too mechanical, but rather to share in an ongoing interaction - in science fiction terms, a synergy - between feminist thought, praxis and cultural image, the process of popular genres, the evolution of individual writers' *oeuvres*, and (other) socio-historical events.

For this project, the model of popular fiction as a passive reflector of social trends soon proved inadequate: in fact, the popular writers proved to "reason" as part of the social process, at times exercising real historical agency. But the strategy of deducing, from a group of synchronic but unrelated texts, that feminism had affected X genre in such-and-such a way, could not draw out this interaction's delicate, diachronic specificities. Instead I found myself building a group of metanarratives where, from the fossils of specific *oeuvres*, I could trace out the interactive synergy's path.

Inevitably such a narrative imposes its own form, or in Derrida's terms, does violence not only to the word but to the texts, the *oeuvres* and the living process of the synergy. But as Tania Modleski points out ("Feminism" 128), any reading exerts power over the text. Katie King goes on to shift the Derridean paradigm; for her, to write/theorise is to make an object of knowledge (xv-xvi): to do violence, but also to produce. So as the writers produce objects of knowledge secreted at certain moments in a certain vision of the synergy, I produce mine by re-processing their work.

The study's approach is also of its time. In earlier decades feminist thinking was often synchronically focussed, concerned to generate discourse, to valorise and critique: the watchwords were, Attack, and, Assert. In the '90s, feminists are realising that they have a past;

that they can, and indeed must factor it into their thinking. So this study is another turning to feminist history, though not an orthodox historical account of feminism, the genres, the period, or the writers *per se*. It rather incorporates such material as it follows the thread of each *oeuvre* over the synergy's same/different ground.

The genres I chose were Science Fiction, reputed the most adventurous non-canonic form, and Modern Gothic, a rubric for the booksellers' categories of Horror and Suspense Romance; together, the latter have literally global readerships. The study focuses on American forms as hegemonic in popular culture, and chiefly on American feminism(s), because this is what the writers mostly engage. Since any ending arbitrarily cuts the synergy's trail, the study closes around 1990, the year I began work, though it glances at some later texts. It begins around 1968: the ragged chart of writers' and feminist beginnings often draws it further back, but public feminist demonstrations and texts directly engaging feminism both begin around 1968. As the year of Robert Kennedy's death and the Paris barricades, 1968 also yokes the symbolic end of American political revolution with the symbolic start of the European intellectual revolution, movements central to the period and deeply implicated with feminism(s). My title marks this historical conjunction, along with the study's individualised focus; finally, it suggests the effect of feminism(s) on such fiction, which resembles that of black holes on the space-time continuum: a perturbation, a singularity, where accepted laws begin breaking down (Hawking 183).

Though SF as a genre has generated much academic and non-academic criticism, and (high) Gothic literature is well recognised, I treat both primarily as popular fiction. Hence I will first sketch the field of popular fiction studies, then discuss the relation of popular fiction and feminism(s) to the canon/establishment, and chart my theoretical bases, before moving to selection criteria, critical praxis, and a summary of the study's overall frame.

Approaches to Popular Literature

As post-humanist thought has turned literary texts from well-wrought urns to a tissue

of quotations (Barthes 146), cultural artefacts (Jameson, Unconscious 20) or "a fabric of traces referring endlessly to something other than itself" (Derrida, "Lines" 257), the erosion of high/low boundaries has opened the academy to popular literature. Marxist theorists have been prominent in this process, whether through the initiation of cultural studies, as with Raymond Williams in Britain (Ashley 41) or through adaptations of theorists like Macherey. Using the influential views of Gramsci on the heterogenous and hegemonic nature of ideology, Macherey argues that all literature reveals flaws and silences and records ideological conflict. Equally important is Fredric Jameson's already mentioned view of popular literature as a form of reasoning about society, which first instated such fiction as an agent in the social production of meaning, as vital as canonic forms.

Another major approach, generic analysis, was strongly influenced in the '70s by John Cawelti, who combined formulaic analysis with the earliest emphasis on the reader's pleasure and response. The development of discourse theory in Foucault's wake offered a more powerful and flexible version of this formulaic approach, where specific film or fiction genres could be analysed as "particular combinations of particular types or categories of discourse" (Stephen Neale 7) and themselves seen as a means of discourse production.

Reader response theory and theories of desire have also increased emphasis on the "social processes" of reading, and the multiple discourses of age, race, gender, sexuality and ethnicity that differentiate reader response, producing critiques of "highly authoritative" Marxist practice (Longhurst 3-4) centred on the actual text. Using all these methods, feminists have recuperated female popular genres like the Harlequin romance, allotting "popular feminine narratives" more of the attention given to popular male genres (Modleski Loving 11). From here writers like Jan Cohn have moved back to consider texts like Pride and Prejudice within a popular generic frame.

Popular Literature, the Canon and Feminism

Nonetheless, the study of literature as an academic discipline has remained in part

dependent on a "`significant other' ... whose absence from the conventional syllabus is crucial in helping to constitute the dominant literary culture" (Pawling 2). As Darko Suvin points out, a discipline ignoring 90% of published literature may suffer both tunnel vision and "run serious risks of distorted vision in the small zone it focuses on" (Metamorphoses vii). On the other hand, to admit the "significant other" to the canon may destroy the former's power for disruption, interrogation and stimulation, a vital component in dialectic upon what should be a constantly negotiable boundary. Read thus, popular literature's relation with canon or curriculum changes from precariously to preciously marginal.

Feminism achieves a similar oscillation when Annette Kolodny complains of failure to board the academic train (149-50), while Lesley Stern stresses the value of refusing to enter the institution, of "enacting a fantasy of levitation rather than maturity," of "engag[ing] in subterfuge, intimidation and seduction" (118). But though academic feminism has been institutionalised in America (Gallop 62), especially in Women's Studies (Eisenstein, Shock 12), in 1994 the American women's movement appeared to lack either coherency or political power (Anne Summers 53-55). In contrast, Australian feminism is seen as politically influential (58) but academically limited (Eisenstein, Shock 14; Sheridan). Since I agree that feminism should be a "political praxis which counters and resists the totalising imperative of age-old `legitimate' and `scientific' bodies of knowledge" (Mohanty 62), I would make a virtue of these differing fragilities. Feminism's position *should* be precarious but vitally marginal, balancing precisely upon the threshold of academic and social institutions. As Teresa de Lauretis wrote in 1990, this offers "a position of resistance and agency," that can deal with its own theory and social reality "from a standpoint at once inside and outside their determinations" ("Eccentric" 139). To study interactions of feminism and fiction, it seemed appropriate to choose a literature whose position *vis a vis* the canon matched that of feminism *vis a vis* the academic establishment.

In the general academic view, popular literature is most often considered formulaic: in essentialist terms, "very stylized and artificial," easy to read because of the speed "supplied by

the convention," and giving pleasure in the author's skill within these conventions (Frye 3-4).

Cawelti repeats that originality in such literature consists in revitalising stereotypes within

formulaic expectations; its goals are escape and entertainment; and it constructs

> moral fantasies constituting an imaginary world in which the audience can encounter a
> maximum of excitement without ... an overpowering sense of the insecurity ... that
> accompan[ies] such forms of excitement in reality. (16)

Cawelti tried to distinguish this from "high" or "mimetic" literature, which offered no certainty,

but represented the universal and engaged with `reality.'[1] The expectation of uncertainty,

however, is itself an expectation, and universality is now a deeply distrusted concept. And using

D.W. Winnicott's formulation of literature and art as a "transitional space" (14) that was neither

subjective hallucination nor objective reality, yet took up space and time (108-09), I could find

no way to distinguish in their consumption between high and popular forms.

Following critics of the Frankfurt school like Adorno, Marxists have seen "mass

culture," including popular fiction, as "degrad[ing]' ... formerly realistic materials into repetitive

diversions which offer no particular resistance ... to the dominant system" (Jameson,

Unconscious 217). But this accepts the contents of the canon *tout court* while leaving the thorny

question of `realism' unsolved. Moreover, it suppresses questions of the degraded literature's

agency and reader reception. A recent discourse theorist integrates elements of Jameson's and

Cawelti's work to speak of horror fiction as forming "a signifying (and significant) component

of our culturally determined intersubjectivity," which

> works within a set of conventionalized parameters ... (a specific set of formal rules of
> discourse and language) which are determined and maintained by a complex series of
> forces and attitudes which are conservative ... but not static. (Grixti 7)

Though ultimately acting as "exercises in ideological reassurance," productions within these

generic limits can be "humdrum and hackneyed" or "innovative and inspired" (78). This

incorporates the emphasis on meaning production and ideological content along with the

formulaic aspect, yet avoids the high-low dichotomy within a particular genre. It does not,

however, engage the overall discursive division of popular and canonical literature.

One solution is a constitutive definition: popular literature is whatever the canon defines itself against at any given time. Thus romance and female writers are excluded during the formation of the novel's canon in the late eighteenth century (Langbauer, Women 3) while the Edwardians reinstate romance as a masculine antidote to feminine realism (Trodd 18). Joanna Baillie and Mrs. Radcliffe are removed from the canon in the nineteenth century, and Dickens and George Eliot reinstated in the twentieth. Given this function, popular literature becomes a constitutive necessity through which

> The status quo defines itself by gesturing to its (debased) mirror opposite ... Yet it actually constructs this other out of elements within it that threaten its position. (Langbauer, Women 2)

Currently, then, popular literature is still seen (Hall and Whannel 60-64), as formulaic, unrealistic, `hackneyed' or aesthetically poor, often feminised or female-authored, providing narrative solutions to social problems, and inherently conservative, both because it reinforces ideology and because it is primarily designed for readers' pleasure. And popular readers are comfortable with safe, expected narrative solutions that endorse the status quo.

Ideology, Utopia, and Feminism

Gramsci and Macherey's views of heterogeneous ideology and its flawed textual reproduction allow the concept of a dialectic in such fiction, a play between what Jameson has termed ideology and Utopia. Paul Ricoeur, however, traces shifts in the concept of ideology from Marx to writers like Althusser, Mannheim, and Weber, then moves beyond their equation of ideology with bourgeois class consciousness, to see ideology and utopia as two faces of every "social imagination" (Taylor xxviii). To Ricoeur, ideology represents the imagination that "function[s] to preserve an order" and "stage[s] a process of identification" to mirror that order (265-66). Ideology is thus reproductive imagination, and may equate with the conservative bias in popular literature, the trend to endorse the status quo.

"Utopia" is a signifier whose meanings play within two major categories. Utopia as `the good place' indicates a goal, usually social or political, that is both attainable and desired. In

Jameson's discussion of <u>Nostromo</u> (<u>Unconscious</u> 269-280), "Utopia" seems to have a political and evangelical sense, as the achievement of a collective consciousness, a Marxist millennium. Retaining this sense, Utopia might mean something quite different to non-Marxists, including feminists.

Utopia as `no place' appears the sense intended by Ernst Bloch, when he writes of an endlessly deferred present where "nobody has ever ... really **been**" (qtd. Jameson, <u>Marxism</u> 136), of a hope perpetually thwarted (137), and a transformation of

> the most acute anxiety into a breathless eagerness, an expectation of the future in which joy and terror are indistinguishable. (133)

This Nowhere eludes concrete realisation as it does plot closures and ideology. It is particularly important to popular literature, if the latter is seen as having a built-in conservative bias. For such literature Utopia then becomes, like popular literature for the canon, an ever-disruptive other, precariously but preciously marginal. In Ricoeur's terms, it represents the "disruptive" imagination, "a glance from nowhere," which is "productive, an imagining of something else" (265-66).

Utopia as both literary genre and political concept is also peculiarly important to feminists. They too have a pragmatic and finite, if variegated, political Utopian goal. In literary terms, they have both to construct images of these political goals, and to achieve narrative solutions and ideological escapes that will at least maintain hope en route. To feminists, then, fictional Utopias are a serious exercise in imaging future reality. As this study proceeded, a central focus became the feminist-based dialectic of Utopia and ideology; the escaping of popular plot confines, eluding ideological bonds and sometimes, in the process, envisaging what from some or other feminist view might be seen as Utopian social or political realities.

At the same time, second-wave American feminism has been seen as a white middle-class heterosexual women's enterprise, another form of hegemonic dominance, both by historians within or without the movement (Marcia Cohen; Chafe 411), and by those, like Afro-American women, whom such a hegemony excludes (Radford-Hill). Popular fiction repeats this

pattern, with writers like Stephen King expressing an almost global hegemony of white American middle-class consciousness. As a white heterosexual middle-class Australian feminist, I hope less to perpetuate this hegemony, than, in Sandra Harding's terms, to re-invent myself as Other (156-62): to turn the perspectives non-white, working class and lesbian women have given feminists back upon the dominant class.

Such stress on a specific class made useful Pierre Bourdieu's concept of a habitus:

a subjective but not individual system of internalized structures, schemes of perception, conception and action common to all members of the same group or class. (86)

This is produced "in the last analysis, by the economic bases of the social formation in question" (82). In their siting and handling of non-white or non-middle-class Others, Modern Gothic and SF exhibit past and present features of exactly such a habitus. But though Bourdieu's paradigm allows for the naturalising of history, a process vital to middle-class investments in such fiction, it barely sketches fragmentations, contradictions, dissent or possibilities of on-going change. These can, however, be modelled through the concept of play between ideological and Utopian impulses, extending Jameson's political version to allow for conflict and management in the psychic economy: the interplay of forbidden, a-social or deviant fantasies and desires with the normative, orthodox lures of ideology.

This structure still left no room for the gendered differences feminists perceive in the habitus, and I found in the literature. Within the dialectic model, however, feminist psychoanalytic theory illuminated subjective structures ultimately dependent on economic bases, that functioned in a gender-specific manner to perpetuate the habitus from which they sprang. Nancy Chodorow's object-relations based, historically specific work on mothering was especially valuable in mapping and explaining the hegemonic Western middle-class models of masculinity and femininity, which play a crucial role in popular literature as in the capitalist economy.

Selection Criteria

In addition to common generic roots and class connections, I chose male and female

writers and male or female-oriented sub-genres because, despite the enduring academic bias to `masculine' forms and writers, to discuss only women writers in a study of feminism's interaction with entire genres might produce as distorted a view as Suvin attributes to defenders of the canon. While the overall division is therefore between Modern Gothic and SF, in Modern Gothic, Horror has no specific class or gender market, but is written chiefly by men and shaped to masculinist psychic patterns; I have accordingly re-named the form Male Gothic, and studied Stephen King and Dean Koontz. Suspense Romance is written and marketed almost exclusively for women, and evokes strong `feminine' psychic resonances; I have renamed it Female Gothic, and examine Barbara Michaels and Phyllis Whitney. In SF, which is far more heterogeneous than either Gothic form, I study writers with different writing spans and attitudes to feminism. Marion Zimmer Bradley and Robert Heinlein are writers from the '40s and '50s who at first resisted feminism. Ursula Le Guin and Joanna Russ are usually seen as vanguards of '60s overtly feminist SF, with John Varley and Samuel Delany their male counterparts. Larry Niven and C.J. Cherryh represent a more conservative, and with Cherryh, a '70s writer's reaction, while Lois Bujold and William Gibson, first publishing in the '80s, are "after-feminist."

The other criteria include that proposed by Samuel Delany: a text must be "marked" in the bookshop as SF, horror or suspense romance ("Gestation" 65). The writer must also be popular in the economic sense. King and Koontz, Whitney and Michaels are top-sellers in Modern Gothic, and the SF writers are nearly all as readily available. Thirdly, in SF I tried to choose winners of either a Nebula and/or a Hugo Award, as marks of readers' or fellow writers' esteem. Finally, except where authors specifically acknowledge a debt, or dates of writing are known to vary widely from dates of publication, as with Russ's The Female Man, I have based arguments about precedence, debts or parallels, on publication dates. This offers an arbitrary but definable and non-subjective approach to the problem, raised by content analysis, of `influence.'

Form and Methodology

The study intersperses orthodox academic sections with others, like section 2, that pursue its secondary project, to interrogate the PhD. form itself. Section 3 charts the historical roots and modern divisions of Modern Gothic, and offers a theoretical frame for the genre(s), while Sections 4 and 5 follow the *oeuvres* of the Female and Male Gothic writers through their synergy with feminism(s). Section 6, however, foreshadows the techniques of SF by confronting the reader with a non-academic but hegemonic discourse, while again interrogating the PhD. form. Section 7 moves to SF with a discussion of that genre's history and a theoretical frame. Sections 8 to 13 discuss the SF writers, and Section 14 offers general conclusions and a final interrogation of the form in which they appear.

Through praxis rather than the deliberate policy to which Annette Kolodny once enjoined feminists (161-3), my theoretical approach has become highly eclectic. In part this is because the competing multitude of current approaches reveal each other's deficiencies. Marxist-socialist readings offer valuable paradigms for resistance to hegemonic thought patterns, but they produce metanarratives of "order and meaning" (Edwards 139), suspect to post-structuralist theorists. Nor do they easily accommodate the axes of race or sexuality, vital to post-colonial and queer theorists, and "materialist analysis" (Nye 60) cannot deal with "the reproduction of personality in the family" (62). Nor can Marxism easily accommodate ideas of individual agency.

Post-structuralist theory, notably with Foucault and Derrida, avoids metanarrative, tries to undermine "standpoints" (Edwards 139), focuses on cultural rather than economic factors, and jettisons the individual subject as constructed by the Enlightenment (Nye 103-04). The multiplicity of the discourse-constituted subject and the potential for Derridean strategies to deconstruct hegemonic Western discourses do not function well, however, upon institutionalised oppression or material `reality.' And the death of the subject is repeatedly criticised on political grounds by groups still fighting to assemble identities, such as blacks, gays and feminists (Medhurst 206-07). It has been considered suspicious that such abandonments occur precisely

when counter-culture movements are making inroads on the white male centre's power (Hawkesworth 351; Eisenstein Shock 64).

Liberal humanism provides a discourse where "justice matters," where "there is such a thing as truth" and individual subjectivity and agency (68), concepts found politically essential to marginal groups. Yet liberalism also lacks ways to theorise collective struggle (Bowles and Gintis 14-20), while its emphasis on rationality gives little room to the ruptures and contradictions experienced within any consciousness. Psychoanalytic theory offers a rich paradigm for tracing such disruptions and contradictions from the depths of the individual unconsciousness. As is often remarked, however, psychoanalysis universalises, dehistoricises, and elides issues of race, class, or material political agency (Segal, Motion 89-92; Nye 162; Gaines, "Competing" 35-37).

From a feminist view, all of these approaches have one further flaw: as Andrea Nye demonstrates, they are philosophies of man (1-4). They are ill suited to dealing with women's issues, oppressions or subjectivities, because originally, none are gendered. This is as true of Foucault's discourse theory as of any form of historicism or post-colonialism.

Nor are feminist theories perfect. In America, liberal feminists have excluded lesbians, whites have forgotten blacks, essentialists have rendered women as Woman, while post-colonial issues were similarly elided. French theorists like Cixous and Irigaray have been critiqued for excessive dependence on phallocentric Lacanian theory, and "political impotence" (Nye 204), while the pro-sex/anti-pornography schism has proved reductive to the latter side's theory (Judith Butler, "Force"; Segal, Motion 205-32), with overall damage to the movement's political strength and coherency (Segal, Motion 222).

On the other hand, synthesis of differing approaches or appropriating elements of male-authored theory for feminist purposes has often been extremely effective, as when Juliet Mitchell sutured Marxism and psychoanalysis (de Lauretis, "Eccentric" 124-5). To re-view the unconscious as the site where ideologies are both internalized and resisted politicises

psychoanalysis, and makes Marxist theory allow for resistance and individual agency. On a far wider scale, feminists have applied Derrida's deconstructive strategies or Foucault's discourse theory. Following in such footsteps, I have used elements of theorists and approaches on the pragmatic criterion, Does this work here? This partly explains the general bent to socialist theory, whose concepts proved amenable to widening with Utopian and psychoanalytic approaches. But a determined stress on historic specificity and the material bases of power and gender relations is also apposite to a project based in feminism, which is, ultimately, "an analysis of women's subordination for the purpose of figuring out how to change it" (Linda Gordon, qtd. Eisenstein, Thought xii).

1. With so many uses of invented terms like "memory cube" and "ansible" drawn from SF texts, I use single quotation marks inside citations, and for citations of dialogue, but also for terms like `the Man Question,' that I have invented, or that, like `truth' or `reality,' are not to be taken at face value.

- Section 2 -

A STORY

NEW WOMEN'S WEEKLY SHORT FICTION: May, 2068.

Anne's Thesis

By Dorcas Anne Chick.

Anne sat by the open window, watching the falling snow -

Demon: Whadda y'mean, "open window ... falling snow?" She'd freeze. And she lives in the tropics, anyway.

Anne sat by the open window, watching the falling mango leaves -

Demon: "Falling fruit-bat waste," more likely. Mangoes don't shed in summer - I don't think they're gonna like that by-line. They're sure to think it's sexist. I mean, "Chick ..."

Daemon: Do you wish me to explain that Dorcas was her paternal grandmother's name, Anne is her second name and Chick her maternal grandmother's surname? We could put in some meaningful comments about writing back through her foremothers. I could mention Virginia Woolf.

Demon: Nah, nah, this is supposed to be women's fiction, what are they gonna know about V. Woolf? Just remember, she doesn't sit by windows, she sits in front of the *desk!*

Anne sat at her desk, watching the falling mango fruit -

Demon: Hell's de-*light!*

Anne sat at her desk, watching the ink dry on her quill. It was the third year of her PhD. -

Demon: I have told you and told you - she uses a computer! Will you get this stuff RIGHT?

Anne sat at her desk, watching the pixels fall on her computer screen. It was her third year's enrolment in her PhD. She had returned to University in her forties, as a casual tutor. Soon she was involved in the intellectual cut and thrust of academic life and eager to begin a PhD. -

Demon: No, no, NO! She was in her forties, but she wasn't eager to start anything. It was sheer perversity under pressure when she said, "I'll do something on Science Fiction," and she was horrified when they said, "Right, right!"

She had found it easy to select a topic, but harder to settle her approach -

Demon: She had no trouble finding an approach, she'd just been introduced to post-humanist theory and thought she was a two-year-old in a toyshop. What she found difficult was getting *rid* of topics. And getting a supervisor.

Daemon: ...?

Demon: It was a small Department and nobody did her specialty. The only person near it kept getting job offers. When she did take the plunge and enrol he was really helpful ...

Daemon: ...?

Demon: You're right. "He." This isn't too good for a feminist thesis. Not politically correct.

Daemon: "Politically correct" is an anachronism. At the time the phrase did not exist.

Demon: Yeah, yeah, OK, "ideologically sound."

Anne had trouble finding a supervisor. Nobody wanted to take on such an odd topic. But one person in the Department had always encouraged her. She had admired Professor Henbane from her first-year lectures. Tall, impetuous, strikingly silver-haired -

Demon: Now CUT THAT OUT! You wanna get us arrested for promoting sexual misconduct or something? Her supervisor wasn't tall and silverhaired and she damn sure never had him for first year lectures and if you try this Villette stuff on me ..!

Daemon: ....

Demon: Now let's get on.

Daemon: ....

Demon: What *now?*

Daemon: Do you want the faction or the fiction?

Demon: I want - what I want - I just want you to write!

Daemon: You know what you call when you invoke me. I am the black-gang. I am the matrix. I am the deep voice under the omphalos. "The lord of the oracle at Delphi neither speaks nor refuses to speak. He gives signs."

Demon: OK, OK, don't gimme Heraclitus, you're the straight plug into the habitus and the great Jamesonian PU and the Freudian id, but haven't you got some way round all that *stuff*?

Daemon: The fiction is the form.

Demon: HELL!

Anne sat at her computer, watching the pixels drift. It was the third year of her PhD. She had finished her research, and was ready to write.

Demon: You're at it again. She was a part-time enrolee and she wrote all through the damn thing. She -

Throughout her PhD. Anne had written chapters in her spare time; she was kept busy by her family and the demands of her husband, but she sat up at three in the morning by her trusty computer -

Demon: Don't pull that George Sand stuff on me either! She isn't married - she doesn't have children - and she sure doesn't write while Alfred de Musset's snoring - tell that to Ellen Moers!

Daemon: She must have a family. She's in her forties. If she doesn't have a family she has to be single and twenty-five. Then she will fall in love with her supervisor. If she's forty, he will tempt her, but love for her husband will win out -

Demon: Lady of Hell, it would have been easier to make the Supe a woman at the start. At least she couldn't fall in love with *her!*

Daemon: Not in women's magazine fiction. If you wish to change the genre -

Demon: Nah, nah, I'll thank Erishkigal for small mercies. Just go on from there.

She had found it easy to select a topic and get on with her supervisor. There was some trouble with a critical approach -

Demon: Cut to the chase, that was Project and Methodology. Gimme some *tension!* Gimme *narrative impulsion!* This is a STORY, isn't it?

Daemon: If you wish for narrative impulsion we must have either a love affair or a divorce. Of course, it will have to be stopped at the occasional cup of coffee and mysterious attraction. So will the divorce.

Demon: Why in Hades can't we do the problems of PhD. students? Nobody in the Department to talk to, nobody who gives a damn what she's doing - or too many people doing the same thing? Trouble getting her Supe to listen, trouble getting her Supe to shut up! Nervous breakdowns about whether her stuff's any good - about her methodology - about her markers - about the length - about getting her photo-copies burnt! Waking up at three in the morning with us going nova over some paragraph she stuck on - waking up at three in the morning wondering

if it'll ever pass - if she'll ever *finish* - if the cap and gown'll make a good wind-breaker while she queues to be a cleaning lady down at the CES!

Daemon: One does not need a wind-breaker at a tropical CES. Perhaps an umbrella -

Demon: God, god, GOD! Now you've made me blaspheme. Never *mind* verisimilitude then, just tell me. Why can't we write about *those?*

Daemon: Because you are still trying to mix the faction with the fiction. Those things do not happen to Women's Weekly heroines. They have romantic problems. Or family problems. The stories have single crises, not multiple schizophrenia. If you want tension -

Demon: Right, right. Skip the six years where she ploughs through *all* that secondary material, and trying on Heinz's fifty-eighth in theory, and reading the goddamn primary *texts*. Skip the hours swearing in front of a hot computer and all the nights she didn't go out. And even that she stopped running to get a chapter finished, when running was all that kept her sane. And skip the times she thought the thing *was* a marathon and she'd finish it like Gabriele Anderson, crawling on hands and knees!

Daemon: This will not fit magazine fiction. No editor will ever believe a housewife could be interested in intellectual endeavour, whatever the metaphor.

Demon: We're only PRETENDING to write women's fiction. This is the PhD!

Daemon: Then we cannot have personal details, faction *or* fiction. A PhD. is an objective, critical, academic endeavour -

Demon: You trying to tell me they jump straight out of the author's forehead, no sweat, no blood - not to mention tears? That's a bigger heap of garbage than the magazine!

Daemon: A PhD. is concerned with truth.

Demon: Yeah, and the PhD writer's another phallocratic old X upstairs in a night-gown, out of sight behind the work, pretending to file *his* nails?

Daemon: If you wish to quote James Joyce -

Demon: I know, I know, not in women's magazine fiction. Well, if I can't have Joyce and Woolf

in the magazine story, I'm gonna have Anne in the PhD! And don't tell me it's political. So's leaving her out!

Daemon: ....

Demon: I hate it when you sulk. Ohh-kay. Skip the bit where she's managed to finish the draft and checked *all* the references and they've found some markers and she's sent off the incubi - no, I mean succubi - and now she's gonna up the local Valium consumption for the next six months waiting to see if it passed. Skip the faction too. She doesn't write all through it, she doesn't have crises over methodology, she's a full-time enrolee with loving husband and children, she's done all the research and it's the third January, and here she is, sitting down for the start of it ALL ...

Daemon: This is a blatant lie.

Demon: You wanted fiction.

Daemon: YOU wanted faction.

Demon: Look! We got a story here. We got a market and a deadline, now just make with the words and the hell with it!

Anne sat at her desk watching the fruit bats slide down the computer. It was the sixth year of her PhD. and she was struggling with the re-draft of her first chapter. She thought about her imaginary husband. She thought about her non-existent children. None of them would help her. The PhD. student, she understood, 's gotta do what the PhD. student's gotta do.

She sighed. Then she dipped her thumbnail in the keyboard, shook off the extra blood, and began to write.

- Section 3 -

MODERN GOTHIC: THE CALL OF THE HOUSE

The manner in which writers fed off, surrendered to, squabbled with and expanded their traditions argues that genres too were participating agents in the synergy of fictions and feminism(s); a sense of these informing, indeed interjecting bodies is integral to a grasp of both *oeuvres* and texts. Since SF is arguably a cadet or daughter form of Gothic, I will begin with the Gothic writers, and firstly, the genre itself. Having situated it *vis a vis* high literature, this section charts its historical matrix, before offering a theoretical construction of its ideological project and psychic mechanisms. Finally it traces these diverging elements as I follow Male and Female sub-genres into the study's period.

Gothic and the Canon: Now and Then

Though Modern Gothic texts are distinguished in the bookshop by their covers' signifiers and/or the section names of Horror and Suspense, literary treatments of "the Gothic" have ignored or ejected them. In 1980 David Punter discussed "modern barbarity" without a reference to Stephen King, and a bare glance at a "turgidly-written medley of slightly perverse romance and tame supernaturalism" (2) called The Spectral Bride (1973); in 1996 Fred Botting ignores both. In the 1980s some King specialists did appear, but Koontz remains invisible, while the Female Gothic writers vanish in generic studies of female romance. Jameson, too, unhesitatingly includes all "gothic" among the "'degraded' sub-genres" of "popular ... or mass culture" (Unconscious 206-07). Both male and female strands of Modern Gothic are then popular in the low or excluded sense.

They also include some of the world's best-sellers, though with a distinct gender gradient. Female Gothic is a sub-genre of female romance, which with the family saga, the "bodice-ripper," or sexually explicit historical romance (Thurston 8), and courtship romances like the Harlequin or Mills and Boon lines, constitutes some 40% of American mass market paperbacks (16). During a career begun in 1943, Phyllis Whitney has sold over 35 million copies, while Barbara Michaels has made the New York Times bestseller list for six consecutive novels. But in the late '80s Stephen King was the world's best-selling

author, and in 1992 Dean Koontz earned $18 to $20 million solely for the transfer of his American soft and hard-cover rights.

Old Gothic displays a similar pattern. The original Gothic novel's ascendancy is usually dated from 1760 to 1820 (Punter 8; Tracy 1), and though Edmund Burke's estimate of eighty thousand readers in an English population of between six and seven million (qtd. Punter 25), hardly suggests a contemporary mass fiction, its commercial popularity is unarguable. Gothic tales appeared in chapbooks and in two, three or even five-volume novels (Tracy 1), "virtually dominat[ing] the novel market" in the 1790s (Punter 8). The doyenne of the Gothic, Mrs. Radcliffe, was paid the "colossal" sum of L.600 for The Italian (1797).

Old Gothic was also a hotly contested cultural site, part of a major opposition that extended from taste to religion and politics. Read negatively, old-fashioned, barbarous, Norman and medieval Gothic opposed civilised, modern, Roman Classicism. In the positive view, by a "quaint etymologizing" (Kliger 121) the Goths became Germanic fore-bears who helped found Anglo-Saxon "democracy." The myth of this Gothic free-holders' commonwealth was opposed to Catholicism and the financial structures of rising capitalism (Pocock 69-70). But as personified by Walpole, Lewis and Beckford, Gothic became identified with the Whigs, or even worse, "tainted with democracy" (T. J. Mathias, qtd. Sage 13) by female novelists like Charlotte Smith, while with Godwin and the Shelleys it descended toward the Jacobins. Exemplifying this contest, Coleridge praised Mrs. Radcliffe's work even as he lambasted Lewis's The Monk (1796) for immorality and blasphemy (39-43).

As the nineteenth century redefined 'high' literature, Gothic became wholly associated with romance, which was devalued to elevate the novel (Langbauer, Women 2-5), and the longstanding taint of female writers and readership condemned both. Though a collection of summarised Gothic novels (Tracy) has 44 female to 45 male writers, even a

feminist like Wollstonecraft could distinguish "'romantic unnatural fabrication[s]'" from novels, and "attribute them to the pen 'of a very young lady'" (qtd. Langbauer, "Romance" 210). Thus, at its height Old Gothic fiction was both commercially popular and pushed toward the low cultural space.

Old Gothic: The Cultural Matrix

Despite this popular taint, as has been remarked (Punter 421; Ellis; Botting 5-6) Gothic remains supremely the genre of the middle-class. It arose in the latter half of the eighteenth century, during the decisive phase in the growth of capitalism. Older Marxist views of this process have been modified to posit a pre-industrial English capitalism centred round the landowners and aristocracy (R.S. Neale; Pocock), a dynamic group whose cultural influence extended into the lower middle-class. In the later eighteenth century these developed the family businesses of the first manufacturers (Davidoff and Hall 32), which by mid-nineteenth century had become Marx's giant industrialists. Throughout this process the law of *couverture* confined women to passive ownership (R.S. Neale 100) or trading investment (Davidoff and Hall 275-80), or work as unpaid shop labour (52). Meanwhile the last phase of the agricultural revolution caused enormous geographical mobility among the lower classes, urban immigration (Lawrence Stone 146-47), greater poverty, especially for women, and the rise of the proletariat, the "most feared and least understood social phenomenon of late eighteenth-century ... English society" (Davidoff and Hall 270). Their unrest at corn shortages and proximity to the *sans culottes* across the Channel underlies the panic of the 1790s, which fuelled both the Gothic novel and the conservative pamphlets of Hannah More.

With these economic shifts came cultural changes, most importantly the rise of individualism, impelled by Protestant stress on private worship in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Lawrence Stone 257-61) and the remodelling of mediaeval society to initiate the nuclear family (139-41.) As Protestants and Puritans elevated marriage from a

substitute for celibacy to the supreme sacrament (Lawrence Stone 135-39; Hamilton 52-63), women became men's helpmeets and companions rather than vessels of Eve's sin. By the eighteenth century this produced the widespread practice of what Stone calls the companionate marriage (325 and passim). By 1765 Nathaniel Cotton, the mentor of Cowper, who would in turn become the provincial middle-class's favourite poet (Davidoff and Hall 166), was extolling the Gothic novelist's dream that appears in Frankenstein: the elusive bliss of domesticity.

The cult of domesticity remodelled the "great houses" of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries (Aries 380-83; Lawrence Stone 253-55), where "nobody was ever left alone" (Aries 385). In the segregated spaces of the nuclear family home the father now supervised wife and children at prayers and play in supposed felicity. This strengthening of family bonds reacted upon forms of upper and middle-class marriage, notably in giving children a choice of mate, though limited by considerations of kin, religion and money, especially for daughters (Lawrence Stone 288-89; Davidoff and Hall 56). Such relative permissiveness brought the backlash Marriage Act of 1753, demanding parental consent for marriage before twenty-one. "[No] law was ever made since the Revolution that has occasioned so many broken hearts" (The Lady's Magazine, qtd. Lawrence Stone 242). By the 1790s, the rise of Evangelicalism and political instability after the French Revolution had brought a phase of repressive patriarchy, no doubt exacerbating this effect (666). The vetoed marriage and the resisting heroine are at the centre of Old Gothic plots, emphasising what women readers would have seen as a major issue of the period.

As marriage and domesticity did not always produce happiness, and *couverture* left married women powerless, a bad husband was a very real villain. In the later eighteenth century, married discontent was increased by the cults of sentimentality and romantic love, so "romantic love and the romantic novel grew together after 1780" (Lawrence Stone 283-84). Such novels had a particularly pernicious effect on middle-class women, who were

denied experience to off-set their fantasies, and left idle to indulge in or rely on them for vicarious pleasure. Their bad effects on female readers are condemned both by conservative male writers and by feminists like Wollstonecraft.

Women's vulnerability deepened with the increasing division of public and private spheres, making the home a place where men are locked out and women locked in (Ellis ix). As early as the 1670s upper middle-class London wives were "'dismissed from the dairy ... the store-room, the still-room ... and the orchard'" (Marietta Grey, qtd. Lawrence Stone 397) as well as from "the counting houses" (de Mandeville, qtd. Lawrence Stone 351). So in the 1790s, the first Mrs. Cadbury worked in the family's Birmingham shop; but her daughter-in-law was a suburban housewife, and her unmarried grand-daughters filled their time with philanthropy (Davidoff and Hall 52-59). In a bad marriage such sequestration could become incarceration, a fate much feared by Old Gothic heroines.

Ideological contradictions intensified as women's subordination, a dogma accepted even by (male) radical Puritan levellers (Lawrence Stone 197) remained legally unaltered, while women were granted implicit equality in the companionate marriage, and middle-class women's romantic expectations increased. The contradictions worsened as the earlier model of insatiable female sexuality (Poovey 19-25; Lawrence Stone 495) yielded to that of the Proper Lady (Poovey 15-30), a paragon of self-negation whose virtue was signalled by unassailable modesty. Women would now be credited with moral superiority while suffering legal and political inferiority. Such girlish innocence was also contradicted by the demands of marriage, especially in the lower middle-classes that included most novel readers, where women were constantly pregnant or nursing, and whether married or single, expected both to manage and work in the house (Davidoff and Hall 281-83). The new construct of femininity also imposed on working women, forced to go "on the streets" for their livelihood, and then exposed to pre-judgement as well as sexual abuse (Clark 110-13). By the close of the century one can argue that, like Wollstonecraft's Vindication of the Rights of

Women (1792), the Gothic novel speaks to and from a simmering sense of women oppressed.

As the genre of this new middle-class habitus, the Gothic novel "stay[s] within a discourse that maintains its privileged position by inverting its content" (de Certeau, "Space" 128): that is, Gothic presents the nightmares of the eighteenth-century nuclear family, resolved in terms of the same social paradigm. The conflicts of women's mandated innocence and need for experience, the pre-marital battle of parental power and romantic desires, and the clash of domestic ideals and harsh marital reality, all appear in Old Gothic. Kate Ellis finds a subversive insistence on women's need for experience in its exiled and wandering heroines. She sees their resistance to the villain, which allows them to found the bourgeois Eden in a happy home, as a rewriting of Paradise Lost to make "'history' into 'nature'" for the bourgeoisie (33-51). The Gothic's fractured plots and repetitive characters are, however, read by Eugenia DeLaMotte as speaking the un-speakable about marriage as an entrapment of women where the hero really is the villain (156-161). Wollstonecraft's problems with Maria: or The Wrongs of Women are also seen by Mary Poovey as a seduction by the very romanticism she attempts to critique (94-111). In this light Gothic's repeated narrative solution, a happy marriage, fits the genre into a pattern of Utopian longings and ideological containment that perpetuates the habitus from which it springs.

Even as they bore the increasing weight of commercial competition and industrialism, middle-class men were also exposed to the ideals that made Birmingham entrepreneurs dream of early retirement (Davidoff and Hall 16-17) and young men die of unrequited love (Lawrence Stone 309). But while women withdrew into virtuous seclusion, men saw themselves as fallen and exiled from the domestic paradise. As A. J. Munby wrote in 1852:

> We are uncover'd – the rank, stagnant air
> Infects our breath – our curdled souls endure
> A press of crawling horrors – ... how can we be pure?

("The Sexes" 21-4, qtd. Davidoff 133)

This male inflection of the habitus produced the often remarked worldview of Old Gothic, "the vision of fallen man, living in fear and alienation ... and ... an awareness of his unavoidable wretchedness" (Tracy 3). Mario Praz affirms that the main theme of Gothic is "anxiety with no possibility of escape" (qtd. Wilt, Ghosts 10) and critical accounts often speak of "paranoia" (Punter 404-26; Modleski, Loving 61-84; Neilson 164-69; Sedgwick, Men 91-92). Such alienation, anxiety and isolation may be traced back to the emphasis on sin and self-examination among Calvinist or Puritan Protestants. Old Gothic heroes and heroines are, however, the first in fiction to suffer such isolation, just as the capitalist subject is the first to be isolated by domestic privacy, as by the removal of community institutions, that leave "a political wasteland stretching between the individual and the state" (Bowles and Gintis 140).

Old Gothic: Literary Heritage, Psychic Mechanisms and Ideological Project

To fictionalize this cultural matrix, Old Gothic draws strongly on previous eighteenth-century literature, first for the exquisitely over-developed sensibility of its protagonists (Punter 28-30), derived from sentimental novels like Henry Mackenzie's The Man of Feeling (1771). In contrast, the "black and funeral yews" and "charnel houses" of eighteenth-century "graveyard poetry" (Thomas Parnell's "Night-Piece," qtd. Punter 37) precede the gruesome settings and details of novels like The Monk, where

> my hand rested upon something soft ... Almighty God! what was my disgust! In spite of its putridity, and the worms that preyed upon it, I perceived a corrupted human head. (Matthew Lewis 385)

Eighteenth-century pre-occupation with the sublime also produced the wild or exotic Gothic landscapes, like the Pyrenees or Apennines in Mrs. Radcliffe, or the Alps in Frankenstein (1818), and Milton was quarried for sublimely Satanic villains like Mrs. Radcliffe's Schedoni. For Old Gothic writers, however, the sublime's primary aspect was its connection

with fear. When Burke's influential <u>A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful</u> (1756), proposed terror as the source of the sublime, it gave a moral justification for writing where "fantasy predominates over reality, the strange over the commonplace, and the supernatural over the natural, with one definite auctorial intent: to scare" (Moers 90).

This central psychic mechanism in Gothic was gendered from the first, as what are often called the "horror" and "sentimental" forms. The sentimental exemplar is Radcliffe's <u>Mysteries of Udolpho</u> (1794), where spectres are rationally explained and the most gruesome corpse proves a wax effigy. Radcliffe and her popular predecessor Clara Reeve despised the sensationalism of the male Gothic novelists (Spender 231-2), among whom they lumped both Walpole and Lewis. The gender split persists today with Stephen King's hierarchy of horror: "If I ... cannot terrify ... I will try to horrify; and if ... I cannot horrify, I'll go for the gross-out" (<u>Danse</u> 40); while Barbara Michaels distinguishes two strains of horror: "the more subtle kind and the rats chewin' up the bones." She adds: "I *like* the rats but ... I find much more horrifying the suggestion" (McDonald 26).

The "gross-out" is not explained by Burke, or by John Aiken and Anna Laetitia Barbauld, who found delight in "objects of pure terror, where our moral feelings are not in the least concerned," to be "a paradox of the heart" (qtd. Heller 191). Modern theorists do find much of Gothic's power in its readiness to "speak the socially unspeakable" (Punter 417), or, in the "horror thriller" typified by <u>Dracula</u>, in its "forcing the reader to entertain images ... of what a culture commands its members to exclude from their selves" (Heller 193). But though such images must "ultimately be put back," repeating the original psychological repression, to Heller they remain "representations of forbidden desire" (193-4).

Julia Kristeva, however, reads horror as a sign of abjection, a recoil from that which is without the symbolic network of language or desire, a reaction occasioned, in her

Lacanian psychoanalytic framework, by the impure and the ejected: fecal waste, menstrual blood, the corpse, the archaic mother from whom the Lacanian subject must separate at the point of pre-speech primal repression (Powers 1-90). Gothic's pleasure would then have universal psychic origins. But as Stallybrass and White tartly observe of Freud's Rat Man: "'Rats,' 'sewage,' 'filth' are not transparent signifiers which lead directly back to some primal moment. If they speak the unconscious, it is only through the mediation of the slum" (145). The rotting corpses, the Gothic pre-occupation with the process of death (Tracy 4-5), the taboos Punter notices, will all fit Kristeva's images of the "primal" abject; but in Old Gothic, the abject is mediated through eighteenth-century nostalgia, which turned at once to the ruins of the two great medieval estates. Thus the "narrative image" (Heath, qtd. de Lauretis, "Desire" 140) of Gothic is the castle, supplemented by the monastery and crypt. With these picturesque and conveniently labyrinthine spaces come the cellar and dungeon, "enclosed but negative spaces which, like hell, extend and augment the fallen castle" (Ellis 45). For middle-class women, these negative spaces became the bad side of the bourgeois home, from which "escape is a necessary condition for salvation" (48). For men too they were the opposite of the home, but now as the outer darkness of banishment.

Mediation through such space changes "the rhetoric of evil" (Reddin 12), disrupting the previous Augustan formulation of the abject, which Stallybrass and White argue uses 'low' bodily functions mediated through the fair and the marketplace (80-118). The Gothic novelists, however, were both in revolt against Classicism and further sublimating bourgeois 'purity' through the Gothic's exotic anti-realism. Here rats may embellish the charnel-house, but there is no place for farts or pigs. But the middle-class habitus already contained an alternative system of abjection, the Mosaic "taxonomy" (Kristeva, Powers 90-112) of impurity. When Gothic novelists wished to provoke horror, to speak the unspeakable, to display a psychic transgression, Biblical incest and corpse taboos were ready to hand. They were sufficiently associated with the prophetic aura of Milton, and grandiose enough to fit

the castle and the crypt.

To these elements of disgust and sublime terror Old Gothic added a different fear. "Lust" is seen as the commonest threat to the Gothic protagonist (Tracy 8); "heroinely terror" actually springs from "an omnipresent sense of impending rape" (Ellis 46). Yet Anna Clark's study of sexual abuse in England 1770-1845 makes clear that abuse of adult females, whether middle or working class, was everyday (49-50). The real sexual terror in Old Gothic is incest, most commonly a daughter threatened by father or uncle. James Twitchell argues that incest remains central to modern horror films, though he universalises the warning as a defence of the primitive family (93-103). In Old Gothic, devices like miniatures reveal the relationship, or the supernatural intervenes, implying there was no solution in real life.

Nonetheless, these psychic mechanisms produced a very strong sense of pleasure, attested by readers' comments. Beyond the excitement of transgression, this doubtless draws on popular fiction's combination of extreme excitement with a framework of certainty and security (Cawelti 16-18). A more complex element is "a highly controlled brush with the attractive/terrifying forbidden within the self" (Heller 193-4). But any such 'self' is a product of its habitus. Such pleasure then yokes the genre's psychic mechanisms to its ideological project, a project still commonly read as the function of horror films and literature. Like Freud himself (Newman 120), Stephen King feels that

> the horror story, beneath its fangs and fright wig, is really as conservative as an Illinois Republican in a three-piece pinstriped suit ... its main purpose is to reaffirm the ... norm. (Danse 442-43)

To Stephen Neale also the horror genre's specificity is in the articulation of "order and disorder ... across terms provided by categories ... of 'the human' and 'the natural'" (8), and S.S. Prawer agrees that "the central question of the terror-film is the complex one of 'normality' and 'monstrosity'" (270).

For sociologists, the function of deviance – monstrosity – plays between the threat of "the mutant" and the necessary agent of social change (Ben-Yehuda 3-20). This positive sense is lost in horror fiction, whose purpose is "to confirm our own good feelings about the status quo by showing us extravagant visions of ... the alternative" (King, Danse 316). Such "good feelings" may not directly endorse a political order (Carroll 201-02), but pleasure in the triumph of the normative is clearly a powerful ideological weapon. In Ricoeur's terms, horror literature draws most strongly on the reproductive imagination, and will preserve the status quo. It is then significant that the market for learning "what awful things happen to people who venture into taboo lands" (King, Danse 443) is seen as chiefly a childish or adolescent audience, who retain the ability to believe (121) or need to learn the rules of sexuality (Twitchell 67-70). Ironically, Gothic has been consistently censured for its powerful and supposedly harmful grip on these young audiences.

King distinguishes a third type of pleasure: "our most base instincts let free, our nastiest fantasies realised" (Danse 205). The assumption is that these are common cultural fantasies, but in texts like The Monk, "ours" seems to equal the reifying, voyeuristic, sadistic male gaze as first formulated by Laura Mulvey. Carol Clover notes that horror film audiences are predominantly adolescent males (6-7); but there are also older solitary men there to "help dish out the punishment" of female victims (Twitchell 70). Beth Ann Bassein traces this masculinist bias back through Poe, a major practitioner in nineteenth-century American Gothic (45-47) and beyond him into much canonical Western literature (58-127).

Female Gothic also reveals gendered terrors like loss of a child, virtue or sanity, or as feminist critics have argued (Masse, Name), masochistic leanings, "a form of pseudopower, which gives the victim the illusion of willing circumstances she cannot control" (DeLaMotte 157). But when Emily's aunt is starved to death or Schedoni abandoned to the tender mercies of the Inquisition, the female reader encounters more incendiary urgings. As in Jane Eyre, such fantasies of rebellion most frequently involve

violent destruction or repudiation of the house, Female Gothic's symbolic site. To recast Jameson's political description (<u>Unconscious</u> 287), the ensemble of these pleasures suggests the Gothic novel functions as a lasting form of cultural management, with subversive potential, yet simultaneously constructing and enforcing the norm, as it evokes and then contains socially unacceptable fantasies, which come in gendered as well as common shapes.

From its high point in the 1790s, Old Gothic's vigour carried the form three decades into the nineteenth century, after which "Gothic motifs and plots" (Tracy 1) spill into almost every form of literature. Gothic became a source, an influence, or even a mode of writing that approaches the Foucauldian meaning of 'discourse,' bleeding into media such as scientific writing and journalism (Higgins).

Modern Female Gothic.

Modern Male and Female Gothic first diverge in the nineteenth century, when Female Gothic vanishes from high literary accounts of the genre. This extension of Gothic's feminising and exclusion from the canonical novel is perpetuated when contemporary academics focus on male writers like Lewis and Brockden Brown, even calling Radcliffe "pseudo-Gothic" (Fiedler 131-3; Hoppenstand 161). Such accounts have very little notion of Female Gothic after <u>Northanger Abbey</u> (1818), leaving its recuperation to popular studies and/or feminists. Tania Modleski dates the current phase from 1938, with the publication of Daphne du Maurier's <u>Rebecca</u> (21-2). Kay Mussell traces a steady continuance of sentimental Gothic in America, where, as in eighteenth-century England, women novelists switched easily between domestic or sentimental romances and Gothics. This linked Gothic with accepted fields of women's writing, and "[b]y the 1840s, the gothic-romantic continuum in women's fiction was well established in its current form" (7). Sentimental Gothic then adopted the worldview of romance, where "[the] organizing action is the development of a love relationship, usually between a man and a woman" (Cawelti 41).

Mussell dates the current popular phase from Victoria Holt's <u>Mistress of Mellyn</u> (1960), a great-grand-daughter of the <u>Jane Eyre</u> governess narrative (15). Phyllis Whitney chooses softcover publication of her <u>Thunder Heights</u> (1960) and credits Gerald Gross, an Ace Books editor, with revival of "Gothic" as a marketing term (Whitney, "Writing" 11). Janice Radway claims the Appleton editor Patricia Myrer anticipated the boom in 1955 and became both Holt and Whitney's agent (31).

<u>Mistress of Mellyn</u> preceded <u>The Feminine Mystique</u> (1963) by three years, and Female Gothic popularity last peaked between 1969 and 1972 (Radway 33), American feminism's most publicised period. This suggests that both voice a protest building since women's World War II foray into the work-force was reversed in the later '40s (Neustatter 9-10), and when '50s domesticating propaganda was contradicted as the female job share rose from 25% to 75%, amid increased alcoholism and divorce rates that belied the image of suburban complacency (Chafe 126-27). When <u>A Vindication of the Rights of Women</u> (1792) appears two years before <u>Udolpho</u> (1794), <u>Jane Eyre</u> (1847) is published a year before the Seneca Falls Convention (Tuttle 288), and <u>Rebecca</u> the year after Virginia Woolf's "key feminist polemic" (Blain 1186), <u>Three Guineas</u> (1937), juxtaposition becomes more than coincidence. As Wollstonecraft's work first suggests, feminism and Female Gothic appear opposing faces of women's response to particularly stifling phases of oppression.

In the study's period, Modern Male and Female Gothic exhibit both a common ancestry and unmistakable divergences. To begin with, they are marketed separately. Their readerships are also gender discriminant: older men or women may, but mostly young women and men do read Male Gothic, while young and old women may read Female Gothic, but by choice men hardly ever do. The features of Female Gothic repeat this containment, simplification and domestication of Old Gothic, cloistered in a female sphere within the normative, male-oriented, public world.

So Modern Male Gothic discards the overt moral intention but keeps the passionate

pleasure in evoking terror, and with it the element of disgust:

> it was LeBay [driving], rotting and stinking of the grave, half skeleton and half rotting, spongy flesh ... Maggots squirmed their sluggish way up from his collar. (Stephen King, Christine 493)

When Old Gothic lost the cultural high ground the signifiers of abjection moved toward the city and the slum, but as literary taboos also shifted, Modern Male Gothic has been able to access other parts of the Mosaic taxonomy. As Claire Hanson notes (140-43), the first scene in King's first novel, Carrie (1974), is a classic example of Kristeva's phallocentric abject, a vivid evocation of disgust at a menstruating "hog" (14) of a girl. But rats and decaying corpses decorate most of King's novels, and Koontz has added that slum signifier of the abject, the cockroach. In Female Gothic, however, Mrs. Radcliffe's tendency to subdue disgust is carried to vanishing point. Modern writers avoid the corpse and incest taboos. Ghosts may occur, but corpses are kept off-stage and cellars contain dust and spiders but not rats.

While incest has faded from Modern Gothic in general, Male Gothic makes free use of sexuality, both 'good' heterosexual sex, cementing the relationship of hero and heroine, 'bad' rape or sex-killing of female characters, and villains' homosexuality. Female Gothic retains the genteel Radclifffian heroine and her hero's asexual courtesy. Sexuality makes a modest appearance in the late '70s, while father-daughter incest is mentioned in just two of Michaels' novels. Nowadays, threats to the heroine are limited to attempts on her life, her child or her inheritance, sometimes by supernatural figures, never by explicit violence. The last strong echo of Old Gothic is the fear that because of others' disbelief in the villain's machinations, she may be ruled insane.

Expressing middle-class insecurities, both Old and Modern Gothic convey a sense of being precariously sited between hostile upper and lower classes. Old Gothic in the 1790s made its major villains the aristocracy, either in the myth of the noble seducer (Clark 89-91)

or as representatives of a wicked and powerful Catholic Church (Ellis 47-48). In Modern Male Gothic the 'normal' *petit bourgeois* protagonist is repeatedly trapped between the lawless underworld and the institutions of extreme wealth and unaccountable State power. Paranoia still imbues these texts with fear of corrupt institutions, serial killers or other catastrophes. The gendered moral view also endures when women are seen as moral arbiters in Dean Koontz's Chase (1972), but in many of King's novels become hated authority figures. In Female Gothic, however, the rare examples of lower class insurrection work to help the heroine overthrow an aristocratic or authoritarian enemy.

On a structural level, while Modern Male Gothic may employ a Victorian multiplicity of characters, and Stephen King has a taste for nested stories, Female Gothic writers have shed the ornate or labyrinthine Old Gothic plots. There is essentially one plot with minor variants: a heroine isolated by loss of family, husband or job enters an old house with some threatening secret. There she meets hero and villain, endures terrors and threats and is freed by solving the secret or unmasking the villain. She and the hero then form a nuclear couple. A child is optional, and so is inheritance or removal from and/or destruction of the house.

Modern Female Gothic retains the Old Gothic taste for exotic sites like Greece, Hawaii or Italy, and for the historic, both traits prized by Radway's romance readers (109-11), while male writers revel in supernatural villains, apocalyptic disaster scenes and melodramatic thunderstorms. In America both Male and Female writers prefer the East Coast, a tradition old as Hawthorne's "scribbling women" (qtd. Mussell 8). Within these landscapes, Modern Female Gothic restricts its action to the environs of the re-inscribed medieval castle, a Victorian or Georgian mansion, Italian villa, or Japanese house. A conspicuous feature of this enclosed female sphere is alarming disinterest in the public world. Among forty-five American Female Gothic novels spanning the period 1968-89, there were only two mentions of a computer, and one each of Watergate and the Vietnam

War. With its formulaic, single-strand narrative and its stereotyped settings, Modern Female Gothic seems to illustrate the "ossif[ication]" of a genre (Pawling 11).

The formula's variations underline this limitation. To adapt Raymond Williams' ideas of residual social elements (Marxism 121-23) and older social values retained in literature (Revolution 81), the first alternative to the "residual narrative" of Mrs. Radcliffe's Gothic appeared with Jane Eyre (1847), and has widened to include various feminine professions like nurse or therapist. It incorporates a long tradition of governess stories (Mussell 52-53), and its choice between morals and indigence may express the dilemma of poor nineteenth-century middle-class women; that Bronte needs the fairytale motif of an inheritance to achieve a narrative solution implies that, as with incest in the Old Gothic, there was no way out in real life.

The revival centring on Rebecca (1938) brought the infantilising of middle-class women to its apogee, allowing Modleski to read all Female Gothic as a female Oedipus narrative (Loving 59-84). The newest variant appears in the late '50s: spelling out the identity of hero and villain hinted by Old Gothic, and illustrating the ideological containment of such knowledge, a wife and/or mother replaces a wicked husband with an ideal mate. Anne Ferguson divides capitalist patriarchy into Father-Patriarchy in the eighteenth century, Husband-Patriarchy in the Romantic-Victorian period, and Public-Patriarchy in the welfare state ("Motherhood" 165-72). The husband-villain makes a good case for Husband-Patriarchy's lasting into the '50s. In any case, the new variant is a clear attempt to express frustrations with domestic exclusion and mothering cults, before coaxing reader and heroine back into the married state.

Where Old Gothic endings may be tragic, the Modern Female Gothic closure is almost always happy. Within the normative Gothic framework, this can be attributed to the form's specific ideological project, which is to manage and promote the very important economy of female desire. The double power behind this economy is illuminated, firstly, by

relating Female Gothic to the feminist object-relations theory of Nancy Chodorow.

The Female Gothic: Psychic and Economic Intersections.

Chodorow's classic The Reproduction of Mothering (1978) already supports Janice Radway's equally classic Reading the Romance (1987). As is well known, Chodorow uses cross-cultural comparisons, but draws clinical evidence from studies of Western middle-class women for a theory whose central "explanation" was the Western practice of women's primary parenting in nuclear families. To summarise yet again, unlike Freud or Lacan she argues that sexual difference develops in the pre-Oedipal stage, where the mother's identification with the female child allows women to develop "a sense of self continuous with others" (Feminism 184), and in turn to grow up with "the capacities and needs" that commit them to mothering (Reproduction 209). In cultures where several valued women parent, girls develop ego identity and a strong sense of self-worth in a "mature" mother-dependency, as in Javan Atjhenese families or Hopi Indians (Chodorow, Feminism 61; Lebow 9-15). Western women struggle to establish ego boundaries, especially with the mother, for whom they retain an "infantile" dependency. That is, as Chodorow and Contratto argued in their 1980 essay (Feminism 79-96), adult women see mothers in relation to their own needs rather than as independent subjects. In turn, the mother finds it difficult to release her daughter. As in Freud, women do not resolve the Oedipal crisis but continue to oscillate between mother and mate as objects of sexual desire. To women, relationships with women are thus as important as those with men. But in Western society these are denied or stunted, while, lacking a real relationship with an absent father, women tend to fantasise and romanticise men, and demand from their heterosexual mates the support of a mature mother-dependency.

Chodorow founds the complementary Western male self on a denial of connections and a sense of separateness. Having to define himself as not-mother and not-feminine, the male becomes more "reactive and defensive" (Feminism 184). Added to childhood

experience of an all-powerful mother, this produces misogyny and fear of women, fuelled by the need to deny any feminine attributes, which in turn devalues women and drives "male dominance in culture and society" (184-85). Resolving the Oedipal crisis, the Western man makes woman/mother his single object of sexual desire, but retains a powerful need to affirm superiority and separateness.

In the near twenty years since publication, Chodorow's work has been widely adapted and as widely criticised by feminists. Arguments that her models limit the fluid, discourse-based postmodern subject (Weedon 62-63, and that "masculinity" and "femininity" are traits of power rather than gender (Lott 76-88), follow doubts of her clinical evidence (Bart 151-52), and theories of male envy (Kittay) and mothers' doubled consciousness (Ferguson, "Motherhood") attempt to explain male dominance outside psychoanalysis. In a cogent critique, Lynne Segal points out that women's primary parenting is as much a "product of other institutional practices of male dominance as their cause." Nor can such an approach fully account for the "power and privilege of masculinity" (Motion 81). To begin with, especially in the '80s and '90s, actual families vary widely from Chodorow's script. To Segal, for mothering to create male dominance, "we need to presuppose a society where ... masculinity is already more highly valued." Chodorow's picture of frail, inferior males does not fit a society where masculinity remains "the exciting identity" (80-82).

Nor do Chodorow's models allow for variations like the black and gay masculinities Segal herself traces. Nevertheless, Chodorow's model elucidates the Gothic better than male-centred theories that treat women only as the negative of Man. And Modern Female Gothic shows a persistence of character constructions that fit both Chodorow's models and an attempt to perpetuate those models by punishing deviants.

I would suggest that Chodorow actually maps hegemonic gender models: what Western, American, white middle-class culture considers the most desirable forms of

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masculinity and femininity. Segal's study makes clear that the hegemonic model of masculinity is unattainable: no male image can ever be hard *enough* (<u>Motion</u> 89). The same can be said of models of femininity. "No (woman)," to quote another reputable source, "can ever be too rich or too thin." But nothing stops men, women, families and upholders of cultural norms from trying. It is the fractures, negotiations and warpings, but also perpetuations of this hegemony within historic and gendered specificities, that are recorded in popular Female Gothic as in other literature.

Chodorow's model of unstable female sexuality does substantiate the ideological need for female romances, and its picture of the mother-daughter relationship affirms Modleski's reading of Female Gothic as the daughter's Oedipal story: centred round the mother, concerned with establishing the daughter's identity. This is certainly one psychic episode in Female Gothic; I would argue that there are actually three, superimposed on one narrative and telescoped into one topographical space: this is the lasting centre of the Gothic genre, the castle/house. In this one plot and space the Gothic heroine establishes identity, traverses the Oedipal crisis, finds a mate, and settles to become a mother herself.

Such a reading explains the prominence of older, more powerful and often hostile female characters, and the blurring of mother, female rival and matriarch in texts like <u>Rebecca</u>. Hostility to a mother figure may blend infantile protest at separation and self-definition with hostility to the mother as sexual rival, underlain by pre-Oedipal desire. The "doubling" of the heroine with mother and/or sexual rival, seen as fragmented subjectivity in <u>Jane Eyre</u> (Gilbert and Gubar 358-62), is explained by the middle-class woman's difficulty in forming ego boundaries. Hostile relations may also mark patriarchal warping of the need for woman-to-woman relationships, in a society that needs but de-values women and must resist their wavering sexuality.

The confluence of father and hero also fits a multi-layered Oedipal narrative, as do the disconcertingly feminine Gothic heroes, even labelled surrogate mothers (Milech 185;

Michele Roberts 227). Such a hero shows the Western model of hegemonic masculinity warped by equally hegemonic Western middle-class women's desire, a construction diametrically opposed to that in more masculinist popular fiction like "pulp" war novels. The Good/Bad, Asexual/Sexual split in Gothic heroes and villains (Russ, "Somebody" 343-47) may as easily be the persistence of the eighteenth-century ideal of companionate marriage as a paranoiac demand for a husband at once understanding and tough, sexual and sympathetic (Modleski, Loving 79-81). Paranoia is, of course, "normal" for Western women (81). In Chodorow's terms, however, a Western middle-class woman will desire an understanding and perceptive mate, firstly because she herself is relationally based, secondly, because the repression of women's relationships forces her to seek them from the male, and, thirdly, since the same upbringing ironically represses just these qualities in men, because this is a *fantasy* mate.

In this light the Female Gothic's romantic ending becomes a fantasy of the most pernicious sort. Despite subversive elements such as claiming time to read (Radway 90-93; Thurston 133), studies of female romance show very high consumption (Thurston 114; Radway 59-60), used for relaxation (Radway 61), but also as a bar against unhappy reality (Mussell 103-15). As Radway remarked, "the romance's short-lived therapeutic value ... is made both possible and necessary by a culture that creates needs in women that it cannot fulfill" (85). As Old Gothic reasserts the family paradigm after its inversion in family nightmare, the happy ending offers the reader an impossible version of the very situation she is reading to escape.

Such an approach does not consider the race or class of readers, or variations among women the texts claim to represent. If, however, Female Gothic is implicated in the perpetuation of hegemonic gender models, what emerges is a picture of how women are supposed, taught, and pressured to behave by cultural discourses. Such models are modified by historic and gender specificities, while still asserting white middle-class cultural primacy.

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Female Gothic heroines enact the middle-class women's story recorded by Chodorow; even Michaels, an unusually politicised and liberal author, has never made a heroine black.

The continued siting of Female Gothic's psychic narrative in the haunted house that "could metonymically represent" Old Gothic readers' and writers' problems (Ellis 3) is more than a residual element or a testament to the complex and powerful psychic resonances of the Female Oedipal narrative. The house may also be read as a metaphor for marriage, the closure of the Western female Oedipal trajectory, and for the female body itself. It is, further, the site where economic and psychic struggles intersect.

Such economic patterns appear in contests for the inheritance of Udolpho or Otranto, or the curse of capitalist sins embodied in Hawthorne's house of the Seven Gables. The Gothic house is consistently involved with the secret of the formulaic intrigue, which is frequently lodged within the building. In Jane Eyre, as Penny Boumelha points out, Thornfield's wealth comes from the Jamaican slave-plantations, and Bertha delivers their curse ("Women" 112-13). Thus the heroine's marriage becomes implicated in the economic crime or struggle that produced her inheritance. But the house is also where the bride herself struggles for economic power in a patrilocal family. Whitney's heroines fight for their child's inheritance in at least five novels. Michaels' heroines fight for a child's inheritance in at least two and for an ideal mate's in at least four. Such a struggle expresses the economic reality of marriage for "women of substance," from Emily's inherited castle to the era of divorce settlements.

The fiercest struggle of all is the ideological conflict where dominion over the house becomes a metaphor for control, in both reproductive and sexual capacity, of the female body itself. Here lies the intersection between the economies of finance and desire. As Gayle Rubin argued in her classic "The Traffic in Women" (1975), patriarchal societies are built on the exchange of women's bodies, on their reproductive and mothering ability and the use-value of their labour. As Nancy Hartsock repeats (164-67), so are capitalist societies:

the value of unpaid labour in Australia has been estimated at $124 billion, of which 70% is done by women (Gray 1). Despite the shift to single parent and female-headed households as poverty became feminised in America (Chafe 436; 440-41), the waning of paternal power and the freedoms won by feminism make it imperative for both capitalism and patriarchy that female desire be enticed into marriage and heterosexuality. This is the lure female romance provides.

This intersection of economies means the house cannot be read solely as either psychic or economic metaphor. It is not only a figure of female sexuality (Wolff), any more than, despite the number of demon lovers and incestuous patriarchs it harbours, it can be read only as threatening male sexuality. Neither reading explains the connection of house with capitalist curse, patriarchal ownership, the heroine's repeated discovery of love outside, or its violent destruction before she reaches happiness. The house may, however, operate as a metaphor for female sexuality as mediated through patriarchy; the former's violence, danger and ambivalence to marriage is then expressed in forbidden fantasies of rebellion and destruction, before being safely defused in the formula's close. Again, Utopian fantasies encounter normative ideological pressures, and are usually contained.

Modern Male Gothic.

Although by then officially exiled to popular and female literature, Gothic infiltrated the work of 'high' nineteenth-century American male writers from Poe and Hawthorne onward. Though a popular Gothic surfaces in mentions of English penny-dreadfuls like Varney the Vampire (1847) and American "popular sensational" writers like Maria Monk and George Lippard in the 1830s (Reynolds 100-01), Punter and Botting trace the neo-Gothic only through writers like Sheridan LeFanu to Stevenson, Machen and Stoker, on through Henry James into contemporary 'high' culture with Mervyn Peake, William Burroughs and Angela Carter. But while ignoring the nineteenth-century "splatter novels," essayists in the popular tradition include King and Koontz with such practitioners as

undisputed heirs of the main Gothic line (Neilson). Only with these writers, however, does Gothic/horror again become both a best-selling literature and one assigned to the popular cultural space.

Though its popularity rose in the '60s with films like <u>Psycho</u> (1960) and novels like <u>Rosemary's Baby</u> (1969), and reached maturity with <u>The Exorcist</u> (1973), Stephen King's <u>The Shining</u> (1977) first put Modern Male Gothic on the hardcover best-seller lists. The genre's recent popular ancestors include Dennis Wheatley, with his emphasis on the occult, and a '50s revolt against the surreal style of H.P. Lovecraft, led by Richard Matheson, who wanted to restore "a sense of everyday immediacy, 'the thing from the sugar bowl'" (Neilson 160-65). After reading Matheson's <u>I Am Legend</u>, King realised he could write about horror "on his own [i.e., American] terms" (Beahm 389). But for King and Koontz as for Matheson, the "*paranoia theme*" is "central" (Neilson 164).

In contrast to Female Gothic, this paranoia probes the "phobic pressure points" (King, <u>Danse</u> 19) of the public sphere. Koontz's texts react to computers and the Vietnam war with worst-possible scenarios for malevolent artificial brains and military egomaniacs or rogue scientists. His novels show intense awareness of scientific advances and social shifts like the rise of cult Christianity. Jameson once read Balzac's <u>La Rabouilleuse</u> (1842) as a narrative dealing in a Symbolic register with a bourgeois class struggle, and in an Imaginary register with Balzac's fraternal rivalry for his mother's love (<u>Unconscious</u> 170-84). Extending this Lacanian metaphor to an *oeuvre*, Koontz's novels treat capitalist paranoias in the Symbolic register. King reduces them to the infantile simplicity of the Imaginary: What if a giant mother could keep me in bed and make me drink dishwater? What if there really was a shop where the laws of supply and demand were written in blood?

Further contrast to Female Gothic appears in the relationship of house and characters. In Modern Female Gothic, the heroine finds hero and villain already established in the hostile house. In Male Gothic, the woman is in possession, and the men must enter,

the hero by negotiation, the villain by violence. But the freedom of the public sphere also appears in Male Gothic's topographic repertoire. Here old mansions are only one place of trial, as in King's The Shining (1977) and Koontz's Whispers (1980). Other sites are the natural enclosed spaces of forest or cave, a rural community or city, a street, garage or sewer system. As horror moved from the North Pole to the house "next door" (Spencer, "Gothic" 95) with novels like Dr.Jekyll and Mr.Hyde (1886), Modern Male Gothic has found newer enclosed spaces, such as the locked car in King's Cujo (1981).

Male Gothic has also kept the option of a tragic ending while accumulating widely differing narrative variants. There is the hostile male double inherited by Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (1886), via James Hogg's The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner (1824), from Frankenstein (1818), which in turn drew its pursuit motif from Godwin's The Adventures of Caleb Williams (1794). Stevenson's novel may depict a schizophrenic splitting of male personality (Donald 40); I would suggest its cultural basis is the deepening public-private division through the nineteenth century, as men are required to be one thing in public and another at home. As women are divided into whores and angels, men become Jekyll and Hyde.

Dracula (1897) finally united the twin strands of Old Gothic and vampire narrative. It also displays the late-Victorian invasion phobia (Dingley 15-18), cements the division of good and bad women, and affirms the sex-death constellation evident in Varney the Vampire (qtd. Summers, Europe 105-11) and so conspicuous in Modern Male Gothic. Vampire fiction today is a sub-culture, with lesbian and gay vampire novels, vampire comedies, vampire romances, and a huge readership. But Dracula also introduced a vital modern component: the formation of a community to fight evil, and a happy ending when the community wins.

Modern Male Gothic's narrative variation is The Exorcist (1973): possession, "the literal invasion of our personal space by something or someone from far away" (Twitchell

62). King divides horror as resulting from "a conscious decision to do evil," and being "predestinate" (Danse 79). The first part appears to cover Old Gothic, which Judith Wilt argues ("Mystery") is a form of morality play, constructed within a habitus informed by Christian concepts of guilt, sin, temptation and, above all, the protagonist's free will. Lewis's demon Matilda in The Monk can tempt Ambrosio to illicit passion, but she cannot possess him unwilling. Sin thus becomes a matter of personal responsibility.

Secularised as the Cartesian mind-body division, the Christian dichotomy of evil body and good soul descends via nineteenth-century scientific discourses of Darwinism, evolutionary anthropology, and psychoanalysis, into contemporary cognitive maps, as the concept of "the beast within" (Grixti 86-103). Where the Victorians feared regression to the black or barbarian beneath the civilised veneer, Freud perpetuated the dichotomy with the concept of the id. In his wake, horror is justified as a cathartic release of repressions, a need to exercise the "alligators" under "the forebrain" (King, Danse 205). Thus, rather than condemning the sinner, Modern Gothic's narrative of possession excuses evil-doing and pleasure in forbidden fantasies as the escape of the 'beast.' But all myths of possession shift the consequences of horror to the predestinate: that is, they negate individual responsibility. Like Jonathon Davis (36-47), Tony Magistrale argues that King's evil-doers are offered frequent moral choices (58-65). I consider they are offered frequent opportunities for choice, but circumstances almost always force the fall into evil. And in Koontz's novels, evildoers seldom suffer even doubt.

Like the rise of subjectivity and the concept of privacy, such secularisation of the middle-class habitus is usually attributed to the development of capitalism (Brenner 5), especially industrial capitalism. In American society it brought urbanisation, suburbanisation, and the economic streamlining of production lines and robotisation (Lash and Urry 67-83) that underlies the Modern Male Gothic picture of the worker/individual: a cog in the machine, divided from faceless owners in multi-national corporations on one side

and anonymous consumers on the other. This industrial efficiency reached its limit in the 1970s, just as the end of the post-war boom and the recovery of national economic rivals (Kemp 199-200) collided harrowingly with the '60s' cultural aftermath. Reeling under the loss of economic primacy signalled by the energy crisis (Chafe 447), Americans confronted the defeat and deep social divisions of Vietnam, the disillusion of Watergate, the threat of liberal activism (337-38), and the alienation of youth amid the drugs, sex and rock and roll of the counter-culture (320-28; 430-50; 465-68). The added traumas of economic stagnation, deindustrialisation, decay of city centres, and high unemployment (Harvey 259-61), produced massive political cynicism, especially among the increasing under-privileged (Chafe 457-59). In the ensuing paranoia of America's "crisis of faith" (468), Modern Male Gothic reached its ascendancy.

A demographic shift enhances this paranoia. American society was once modelled by Ralph Miliband (19-24) as a tiny business, political and military "power elite" above wealthy business families and professionals, followed by petty bourgeois businessmen and the "service class": supervisors, foremen, bureaucrats. Under this, "two-thirds to three-quarters of the population" were working class. In the '70s and '80s William Chafe sees this society becoming two-tiered as "those with a decent education ... a secure family background, and an aptitude for those jobs prized by post-industrial society" improved their lives, while those less lucky, like divorced or single-parenting women, black teenagers, and the poorly educated, sank into "alienation, hopelessness ... and an ever deepening immersion in poverty" (444-45). The fear of this social shift is clear in Male Gothic texts where middle Americans perceive themselves sandwiched between the powerful elite above and the lawless threat beneath.

In this society the capitalist family has lost its shape as "a productive unit based upon private property" (Zaretsky 65). Indeed, under economic pressures, the ideology of feminism, and the "new morality" of quick divorce and casual sex, classic single male

income-earner families in America dropped from 70% in 1950 to 15% in 1980 (Chafe 436-37). Nevertheless, though Female Gothic presents the family as a hostile or at best newly founded unit, and Male Gothic uses its parameters for both the middle-class nightmare and its resolution, both cling for narrative solutions to this residual paradigm.

Such changes exacerbate an individual's sense of being "ranged against a society he or she cannot affect" (Zaretsky 58). In Male Gothic, possession then becomes a metaphor for the power of 'the system.' Koontz's narratives may acknowledge this by making the possessed mad generals or research scientists. In the SF film Alien (1979) the Old Gothic apparatus of disgust and gruesome detail is deployed in a story of hapless individuals whose deaths are explicitly blamed on "The Company." In Male Gothic, individuals can be victims either through possession or destruction; a lucky few, the protagonist and the fighting community, may escape/resist, in a narrow space defined by chance and by an important aspect of the middle-class habitus.

This aspect arises directly from capitalism, in a conflict Thurman Arnold summarised in 1937:

> The use of the individualistic ideal to justify dictatorial business institutions is ... one of the greatest obstacles to ... the freedom of the individual. (347)

The conflict of individualistic business and human values has shaped what Bowles and Gintis term the discourse of rights, an amalgam built "since the demise of feudalism" to insist on rights like constitutional rule and representative government, meritocratic advance, freedom of worship, speech and assembly; finally "social rights" like medical care and job safety were augmented by the rights of women and minorities (166-69).

"The discourse of rights, then, is no more bourgeois than it is aristocratic, or Protestant, or proletarian" (169), but it is a significant part of the middle-class habitus. In dramatising the paranoias of late capitalism, Male Gothic speaks through this discourse for the individual. Some of King's and most of Koontz's protagonists enact it in narrative

solutions presenting individual triumph over coercive, possessing powers often explicitly representing the state or capitalism. But protagonists also show the virtues of business individualism: financial success, enterprise, readiness to compete. Their narrative solution draws on Dracula and parallels the closure of Female Gothic. They found a fighting community whose victory produces the sedimentary social paradigm: an independent nuclear family of man, woman, and, optionally, child.

The basic Modern Male and Female Gothic opposition, however, is in their view of independence. Female Gothic sets the individual heroine against a hostile house and family community. Male Gothic repeatedly opposes the individual and the power of self-determination to the threat of coercive power and the not-individual. This version of the public-private dichotomy recurs in findings on gendered American speech patterns:

> For most women ... conversation is primarily ... a way of establishing connections ... [for] most men, talk is primarily a means to preserve independence and negotiate and maintain status in a hierarchical social order. (Tannen 77)

Luce Irigaray's recent studies (sexes et genres a travers les langues) indicate that in Italian and French too, "women privilege interpersonal relations ... are less abstract than men and are more likely to take account of context" (Whitford 5). Thus oppositions expressing the "discourse of rights" in Male Gothic follow Chodorow's gender models, apparently across Western cultures. This makes the gendered Gothic variations both explicable and predictable. If masculinity is defined as not-woman and not-feminine, and men learn to value separateness, they will prize independence and resist coercion. In Male Gothic the other traits Chodorow posits will also apply: fear and distrust and need to devalue women, producing, at worst, Kristeva's phallocentric model of the abject, projected in figures like the monster from Alien (1979): what Barbara Creed has called the monstrous-feminine.

- Section 4 -

SHADOWDANCE: FEMALE GOTHIC WRITERS AND FEMINISM

Beside convincing me that Female Gothic and feminism are intimately related, matching Barbara Michaels' and Phyllis Whitney's work to the progress of feminism(s) first contested the older, Marxist-influenced view of popular fiction as passively recording the social debate. Any form of feminism will strain such fiction, since it disrupts masculinist Western norms and is Utopian in both Jameson's and Riceour's senses. Nevertheless, despite the apparent strait-jacket of formulaic narrative, market demands and reader expectations, with little scope for writerly play or formal experiment, Michaels' and Whitney's responses were remarkable. They openly adapted liberal feminist discourse, used feminist concerns to disrupt the generic formula and, most of all, had an uncanny knack of broaching such concerns in novels published with or ahead of the feminist texts. That is, they were "reasoning" simultaneously about the same situation, in a different medium.

With no academic articles, let alone published academic interviews about their lives or work, Michaels and Whitney are only less faceless than the generically marketed Mills and Boon writers. Trade magazines gloss over their politics; both are presumably white[1], middle-class and, in Michaels' case, married and divorced, with grand-children as well as a PhD in Egyptology. When Michaels published The Master of Blacktower (1966), Whitney had been writing since 1943, and with average first printings of 800,000 copies (Radway 33), was at her popularity's height. Repeating the Lacanian metaphor used for the Male Gothic writers, she interacts with feminism in the Imaginary register: less politicised and formally adventurous than Michaels, she moves from resistance to a gynocentric decentring of the formula, eventually being able at times to discard the solution of the nuclear family, through a powerful invocation of pre-Oedipal desire.

Though Michaels shares Whitney's oscillation between texts or series of resistant and pro-feminist texts, and also remodels stock characters, she operates in the Symbolic register. Her overt early attacks on "the patriarchy" adapt liberal feminist discourse; later she dislocates and even fractures the formulaic envelope; and in the crucial years 1980-81 non-heterosexual

and separatist trends alienate her from feminism for nearly fifteen years.

Since this study traces the synergy between fictions and feminism(s) rather than a history of feminism(s) alone, I juxtapose textual discussion with historical sketches, which are most detailed in this section, the first to trace the synergy's chronological path. By 1996 any `history' of feminism(s) can be only partial and fragmentary; but beyond now out-dated accounts (Marcia Cohen; Coote and Campbell; Castro) and competing taxonomies like the "hegemonic" frame of liberal, radical, and socialist feminisms (Katie King 67), there is a consensual sense of some three overlapping but diachronic phases. The first displays chiefly "critiques of androcentrism" (Wylie 31) and political attempts to enter the prevailing order (Kristeva, "Time" 193-94), with some recuperation of women's value (Trebilcot 1-5). This covers early initiatives in America, from the founding of NOW in 1966, often seen as the ground-plank of liberal feminism, to the emergence, from 1967 onward in the Left and student movements, of the Women's Liberation Movement. Its splinter groups include most of what was seen, with '80s nostalgia, as `radical feminism' (Echols, Daring 243; 287; Castro 67-88).

The second phase chiefly increases "`remedial research'" (Wylie 31), develops political separatism (Kristeva, "Time" 194), and concentrates, amid an attempt at cultural consensus (Stimpson, "Reagan" 223-30) on the validation of women (Joan Scott 245-47). After the notorious straight/lesbian split in the early '70s (Cohen 248-51; Echols, Daring 220-41), this brings recuperative strategies like Elaine Showalter's literary gynocriticism, and a move to foreground lesbianism with the rise of essentialist or `cultural' feminism in the late '70s (Echols, "Taming," 50-66).

The third phase "reconceptualises subject fields" (Wylie 31-32; Stacey and Thorne 168), as it fractures consensus over women's cultural and racial differences, adding post-colonial and postmodern perspectives to the input of Third World, black and Chicana feminists. Meanwhile the pornography schism fragmented the Western movement (Segal, Motion 222), and the swing from liberal feminism alienated many women (Denfeld 242-45)

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bringing a sense of stalemate and disillusion at the '80s' end (Hirsch and Keller 3). The work of historian/theorists like Katie King makes the '90s the decade that writes all these phases' history.

Before The Deluge: Whitney 1960-70

An idea of pre-feminist Female Gothic emerges from Whitney's '60s texts: <u>Thunder Heights</u> (1960), <u>Silverhill</u> (1967) and <u>Lost Island</u> (1970) very clearly show the genre's mechanism of ideological containment strained by discontent that simultaneously became feminist activism, deployed by a writer clinging to the reactive project when American feminism was well into its first phase. The clearest sign of such a reactive text is negative female characterisation and hostile women's relationships. Mothers, particularly, are erased. <u>Silverhill</u> has two absent mothers, one weak, one vilified. Other women, like the two aunts in <u>Thunder House,</u> are hostile or at best neutral to the heroine, while matriarchs try to bully her outright. Young women are sexual rivals. In <u>Lost Island</u> the beautiful cousin who stole both the heroine's childhood object of desire and her illegitimate child, breaks her neck on the sea-wall, a quietus repeated for rivals, including blood sisters, in <u>Skye Cameron</u> (1957), and <u>The Moonflower</u> (1958).

In contrast, young men like the uncle in <u>Thunder Heights</u> may be villains, or heroes as strong, gentle and almost as asexual as Radcliffe's Valancourt, but older males are consistently respected, loved, and marginalised. In <u>Thunder Heights</u> the patriarch dies on the point of introduction. In <u>Lost Island</u> the older man is a cypher, apparently the titular prize of the matriarch; but female characters hostile to the heroine are hostile to the patriarch, indicating where a good woman's sympathies should lie. An increasing need to protect these figures appears in <u>Silverhill,</u> when a minor male character assumes family rule, with an explicit statement that the house has "`been a matriarchy long enough'" (186).

The heroines themselves are pale copies of Mrs. Radcliffe's genteelly resisting Emily.

Attempting to outface the matriarch in <u>Silverhill</u>, the heroine is "left both humiliated and astonished" with "no proper weapon" (85). Whitney's texts often solve the problem of reproduction for these ladies with the cuckoo heroine, already a mother, as in <u>The Moonflower</u> (1958), and <u>Feather on the Moon</u> (1988), or who inherits the hero's child, as in <u>Snowfire</u> (1972), and <u>Flaming Tree</u> (1985). The heroines also exploit women's fears and desires in a society valuing women by their looks. Like most Female Gothic protagonists, a tradition straight from <u>Jane Eyre</u>, the heroines in <u>Thunder Heights</u> and <u>Lost Island</u> are plain. This poses no threat to the average reader's self-image, and since female rivals are beautiful, also as in <u>Jane Eyre</u>, women readers can imagine winning a contest most might well lose.

Opening the Floodgate: Michaels 1968-1975

Michaels first breaks this mould with <u>Sons of the Wolf</u> (1967) and <u>Ammie, Come Home</u> (1968). That these novels came out just as American feminists began demonstrations like the notorious picketing of the Miss America Beauty Pageant in 1967 (Marcia Cohen 149-53) signals the political awareness of the writer in the Symbolic register. More notably, these texts parallel the first "critiques of androcentrism" like Mary Ellmann's <u>Thinking About Women</u> (1968); and as I noticed with surprise, anticipate Kate Millett's <u>Sexual Politics</u> (1970), the classic of this phase, by two years.

<u>Ammie, Come Home</u> is less formally adventurous than <u>Sons of the Wolf</u>, which is cast as a diary whose end feeds back into its beginning. Though mild in comparison to the fractured narrative of Monique Wittig's <u>Les Guérillères</u> (1969), for Female Gothic the experiment is highly unusual. In both novels, however, feminist influence shows in the commonest Female Gothic response, the modification of stock characters, and especially, the change to positive female characters and relationships.

In <u>Sons of the Wolf</u> a traditional pair of plain and pretty sisters enact the transition, from the plain sister's judgement of the other as "sweet and winsome, and about as intelligent, as a Persian kitten" (Michaels, <u>Wolf</u> 2), to warmth and trust that culminates in the

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`kitten' riding off bareback on a black stallion to fetch her sister's rescuers. Unlike Whitney's frequent but hostile pairings, Michaels' three sister couples exemplify the slogan, "Sisterhood is Strong." In even sharper contrast to Silverhill, the dead grandmother in Sons of the Wolf, first described as, "`That witch, that crone, that ... malicious hag!'"(9), turns out to have horse-traded wills, catching two husbands with the sisters' single legacy. This sketch of benevolent matriarchal power undercutting the patriarchal marriage-system recalls that marriage was a prime target for early radical feminists like Ti-Grace Atkinson (Castro 78-81).

More strikingly, for the first time in Female Gothic, Ammie, Come Home renovates the hostile female Oedipal relationship. Instead of identifying with the wronged daughter, readers are offered a middle-aged female protagonist and loving niece, both with lovers, so readers can simultaneously enjoy the magnanimity of a mother marrying off her daughter, and the pleasure of finding themselves a new mate. This does not so much parallel contemporary feminist thought, which often saw motherhood as an instrument of women's oppression (Palmer 112-13; Chodorow, Feminism 79-81), as anticipate its validation in the later '70s.

An equally strong shift marks sexuality. In a return to Jane Eyre, Sons of the Wolf reverses the usual pair of Good-Asexual-Hero/Bad-Sexual-Villain, so the rough, uncouth, threatening son proves the hero. Michaels' heroines also break the Radcliffian mould with increasing sexuality, although here, as in Master of Blacktower and Prince of Darkness (1969), it is only hinted in mysterious capitulations to the hero's mesmeric effect. The narrator's `forced' surrender to the advances of older villain and good lover does match the persistent fantasy of coercion, and thus abrogated responsibility, found in women's '60s sexual fantasies (Friday, Garden 91-94); but Michaels' heroines also adumbrate the radical feminist attempt to release women's sexuality without such exploitation as happened on the New Left (Piercy, "Coolie"; Faust 109-12; Lillian Rubin 89-95.)

The most important change is the match of ground-breaking "critiques of

androcentrism" with '60s Female Gothic's first patriarchal villains. In both texts a patriarch is revealed as the presiding evil; <u>Ammie, Come Home</u> revives the Old Gothic threat of paternal incest in Michaels' own variation, where a present-day narrative revises an unspeakable past. An incestuously jealous father who murdered his daughter and her lover returns to haunt the house, rout a priest, and possess the older contemporary male lover. A double disaster is only averted by the `daughter,' who quells the ghost by quoting from the Bible, the ultimate Word (Michaels, <u>Ammie</u> 239). The reversal of hostile female relations and respect for patriarchs is a violent contrast to Whitney's contemporaneous <u>Silverhill</u>.

Michaels' next three texts oscillate back to reactive attitudes, a process itself found typical of feminist praxis (Snitow 13). But Michaels' submission to ideology in <u>Prince of Darkness</u> (1969), <u>The Dark on the Other Side</u> (1970), and <u>The Crying Child</u> (1971) opens the basic cleavage between Female Gothic and feminism; for the "five-thousand-year-buried anger" (Morgan, "sisterhood" xv) of feminists is not ideologically contained in acceptable fantasies (Radway 213). This split is seldom clearer than when Michaels retreats into orthodoxy precisely as American feminism experienced the equivalent of the universe's first four seconds. 1967-72 has been seen as its actual life span (Marcia Cohen 366-67). Certainly the tumult and shouting of media exposure was at its height, as liberal feminism built its popular base, radical feminists abandoned the "male-dominated counterfeit Left" (Morgan, "sisterhood" xiv) and fractures of race and sexuality disappeared behind a briefly monolithic front amid sit-ins, marches and other public spectacles. The period also engendered many long-term feminist projects and theoretical fields, as radicals enunciated separatist, anti-marriage and anti-motherhood stances. "We will not ask what is `revolutionary' or `reformist', only what is good for women" proclaimed the Red Stocking Manifesto (Morgan, "sisterhood" 535). "Don't Cook" said a banner from the national march on August 26th, 1970, catching the revolutionary fervour of what had just been named Women's Liberation: "Starve a Rat Today" (qtd. Marcia Cohen 286).

Meanwhile Michaels retreats to '60s traditions. Mothers and friendly matriarchs vanish. The sisters in The Crying Child are covert sexual rivals. The female rival in Prince of Darkness is a villain, and the helpful older woman in The Dark on the Other Side is both unpleasant and quickly destroyed. Patriarchs remain prominent, but regain both respect and power: in The Crying Child and The Dark on the Other Side they offer counsel or vital material help to hero and heroine. In The Crying Child, however, the wicked ghost is routed by its ghostly mother. More interestingly, while all three novels turn on forms of women's madness, in The Dark on the Other Side the incursion of feminist sensibilities temporarily destabilises the Female Gothic formula.

Like many Female Gothics, this text opens with a narrator who fears she is deranged. Usually Whitney makes this a dramatic gambit, refuted by discovery of the villain's machinations. Michaels' heroine removes the cushion of generic expectation that makes such danger and pain delightful "at certain distances" (Burke 33). Firstly, she is not having the usual genteel nervous breakdown; she is a Grade A alcoholic. Secondly, although denied the stylistic fireworks that a deranged narrator offered Faulkner in The Sound and the Fury, Michaels evokes madness strongly enough to breach the fantasy envelope, in terms tailored for a female readership:

> The house talked ... Hunched on its hill, like a fat old woman crouching on her haunches ... its tower a thin neck, wattled and scaled with lichen, the house talked. Sometimes it said, *Run away ... leave him ... if you can.* Sometimes it wailed, *I wish he'd die*. (Dark 7)

Here the genre's psychic site becomes a ground for married women's illicit fantasies, while the simile of an ugly old woman too clearly images their real-life fears. Feminists were concurrently foregrounding both old age and female madness: one contribution to the classic anthology sisterhood is powerful was entitled "It Hurts To Be Alive And Obsolete: The Aging Woman" (Moss 161-69). Two years later Phyllis Chesler's landmark Women and Madness (1972) would extend Foucault's studies of insanity to show that women's `madness' all too

often remained a matter of convenient or gendered labelling.

Michaels, however, cannot maintain this incursion of unspeakable reality. The heroine flees to a strong, gentle, asexual hero who eventually reveals that the husband who incited her madness is a mental vampire, feeding on gifted people's minds. A Van Helsing-like psychiatrist assists the lovers to kill the husband with a silver bullet during a Satanic rite in the house's tower, after which the hero takes her off to a presumably safer domesticity.

Greygallows (1972) repeats the unsuccessful struggle with formulaic narrative, but its opening makes Michaels' first direct reference to feminism:

> In the year of my birth ... it would be ... half a century before the Married Women's Property Acts were passed. (9).

The allusion marches with one of the first "`remedial' research" projects (Wylie 31), the reconstruction of history exemplified by Gerda Lerner's work, which paralleled the whole re-examination of women's estate called for by Juliet Mitchell (qtd. Eisenstein, Thought 17-19). Its "first effort" (Tuttle 146) was to rediscover the memory of just such first-wave projects as the campaign to pass the Property Acts.

Michaels' mid-'70s texts, Witch (1973), House of Many Shadows (1974), The Sea King's Daughter (1975) and Patriot's Dream (1976) swing back to feminism with a succession of patriarchal villains and a friendly biological mother-daughter pair in Witch, where madness threatens the young male. Increasing feminist influence marks The Sea King's Daughter, whose assertive, active heroine reaches truce with an unmitigatedly cold, absent father, a condemnation unthinkable in '60s Whitney texts. The closures of this text and of Patriot's Dream also begin to strain the form. The Sea King heroine ends married but working for a medical degree, while Patriot's Dream repeats the closure of Greygallows. Enacting a romance version of feminist commitments, but combating mid-'70s malaise with a residual paradigm from the '60s, the hero takes the heroine off to a life of political activism.

This early '70s liberal feminist stance is balanced at the close of Sea King by a long

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metaphor about souls recycled by "a thrifty Housekeeper." "In Her wisdom and benevolence She wipes off the memory slates" (230). This draws directly on critiques of androcentric theology like Mary Daly's Beyond God the Father (1973), a writer whose later work is central to essentialist or `cultural' feminism's validation of women (Eisenstein, Thought 107).

As these texts came out, American feminism was losing media attention amid the calamities of Watergate, OPEC problems, international terrorism and the nightmare of achieved revolution in Phol Pot's Cambodia. Revolutionary fervour became "rigidities": "You ... must *never* let your daughter play with a Barbie doll; you must *never* say 'chair*man*,' `mail*man*,' `fire*man*'" (Marcia Cohen 361). Political failures like the 1972 Democratic convention (344-47) offset legal gains in job equality and abortion rights, effects strengthened by the economic downturn and the ensuing sense of social disintegration, that encouraged the New Right and the swing to conservatism. In this climate of capitalist paranoia, feminism became one more threat to the beleaguered white male middle American.

At the same time feminist foundation texts proliferated, exemplified by Adrienne Rich's Of Woman Born (1976), which reclaimed motherhood as a powerful, enriching, female experience. Almost coterminally, Gayle Rubin overturned Levi-Strauss's structuralist anthropology with "The Traffic in Women" (1975), and Susan Slocum rewrote the theory of human development with "Woman as Gatherer: The Male Bias in Anthropology" (1975). But work like Susan Brownmiller's Against Our Will (1975) presaged the hardened essentialist position that would stunt theoretical thinking (Segal, Motion 229), while the collapse of socialist feminism in both England and America (Segal, Future 50-55) furthered the trend to valorise traditional femininity, as in Daly's Gyn/Ecology (1978). Women like Audre Lorde, bell hooks and Barbara Smith also began to restore the black grass-roots voices of early feminism (Katie King 12-14), as others like Rich foregrounded and theorised lesbianism. Amid this starburst of evolving positions, women's studies burgeoned in American academia.

Near the height of this mid-decade expansion, Michaels' House of Many Shadows

runs the gamut of disruptive strategies and very nearly dissolves the Female Gothic fantasy. The heroine makes "remarks about male chauvinists" (147) while carrying half the groceries, and Michaels actually cites The Feminine Mystique on housework, a long-standing feminist target fully analysed in Oakley's The Sociology of House Work, also published in 1974 (Tuttle 229). The heroine is consistently sharp-tongued and assertive, a model product of the long-term struggle against women's silence (Tillie Olsen; Dorothy Smith), while the hero has lost the godlike superiority of the '60s, along with the alternatives of mesmeric sexual power or maternal asexuality. This one insults, squabbles with and propositions his heroine, and is the more cowardly and less stable personality. Where feminist perspectives almost derail the formula, however, is in the interaction of the double narrative.

In the past narrative, specifically American as in Witch and The Crying Child, neighbours murder a noble German immigrant for practising alchemy, leaving his grand-daughter alone. But if the murderers' ghosts terrify the modern lovers, visions of the latter encourage the alchemist. Implicated in the murder's guilt, the present cannot function as a safe rewriting of the unspeakable past. At the closure the hero tries to convince the heroine, against the whole Gothic tradition of ghosts, that "`what we saw was ... the girl herself ... experiencing pain and suffering that is done, over with ... a quarter of a millennium ago'" (Michaels, Shadows 222). But the Gothic formula of expiation and exorcism is itself destabilised as the pair reconstruct her fate:

> `She had no relatives to contest the disposal of her grandfather's property, and her lover was dead. Emig's neighbours would accept any story he told... His son wanted her and he wanted her farm... They took her with them, kept her imprisoned... They worked on her for a whole year. Lecturing, reading from the Bible, thundering denunciations... brainwashing is a modern word, but the process is as old as these hills' (220).

This unspeakable vision of a marital subsumption more final than mental vampirism is powered by the numerous recuperative projects of feminist historians. It de-romanticises the Gothic heroine's stereotypic captivity, making it too real to be even masochistically

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pleasurable, and leaves the reader unreassured by the present-day romantic plot's supposedly happy close.

Re-Imagining the Mother: Whitney 1973-1980

As Michaels first oscillated back to reactive texts, Whitney had finally responded positively to feminism, with Listen for the Whisperer (1971). Characteristically, where Michaels renovated the hostile female Oedipal relationship, Whitney turns the novel's psychic focus back to Lacan's pre-Oedipal Imaginary phase. Jan Cohn observes that popular romance "necessarily tells a woman's story, but the central interest ... remains fixed on the hero, sign of the patriarchy" (8). Listen for the Whisperer makes the mother this central object of desire.

Whitney manages this simple but radical variation by narrating a daughter's quest for a famous but estranged actress mother. The absent, weak or denigrated mother-figure thus becomes the text's inevitable focus; at one blow pre-Oedipal desire is renovated and legitimated and the fantasy's romantic centre is skewed toward bisexuality. This attraction is strengthened when Whitney gives mother and daughter a friendly, indeed loving relationship. The closure with daughter, mother and lover in an almost perfect female Oedipal triangle may be read as reversion to a daughter's pre-Oedipal dependence. But for Whitney such a women's relationship is a near revolution, while the division of female desire marks a Utopian menace even stronger than Michaels' explicit, `Symbolic' critiques of androcentrism.

Most remarkably, perhaps, the mother is instated as a subject in her own right, a person with ambitions, desires, and vulnerabilities, such as her wish to make a stage comeback. The ability to present a mother undistorted either by child's desire or child's hatred for its separation, is a maturity Chodorow does not find even among late '70s feminist work on mothering (Feminism 79-96). If this text counters coterminal radical feminist attacks on motherhood, it is ironic that resistance to one phase of feminism let Whitney anticipate another phase's validation of mothers by some three years.

After a swing back to orthodoxy with Snowfire (1972), the same foregrounding of pre-

Oedipal desire in The Turquoise Mask (1973) outdoes Whitney's first patriarchal villain. Here the matriarchal portrait, descended via Rebecca from the mobile grandsire in The Castle of Otranto, denigrated for its smiling wickedness in Silverhill (31), becomes the turquoise mask that hides a grandfather's murderous identity. It is tempting to read this as symbolic shorthand for the patriarchal persona, which compels an individual to defend his property by murdering an inconveniently pregnant daughter and trying to kill her child. But this critique pales before Whitney's remodelling of female relationships.

For Suzy McKee Charnas the test of a feminist novel is if the protagonist has "a mother? Or sisters, women friends and confidantes, aunts, daughters ... enemies, lovers, rivals, teachers?" ("Road" 159) Whitney's heroines always have plenty, but only in The Turquoise Mask do they become friendly. Here women exercise positive agency, as in the heroine's rescue by her unmarried, previously hostile aunt. The aunt herself traces this enmity from bondage to both house and patriarch: "`He ruled me, and I bowed to him because he threatened to disinherit Eleanor'" (Whitney, Mask 266). But when the new heiress, the heroine's worsted sexual rival, acknowledges the wounded aunt as "`my true mother'," the heroine forgets her hero to mourn her "lost, foolish dream of finding a family" (267). Here pre-Oedipal desire spans the whole kinship web, threatening not only the romantic hero but his essential consequence, the Gothic paradigm of the nuclear family. Even more Utopian than the choice of a patriarchal villain, such a shift hints at the instalment of a functioning matriarchy in his place, and in her gynocentric '80s texts, this is what Whitney does.

This sequence of powerfully decentred, gynocentric texts includes The Golden Unicorn (1976), where the heroine's true reward is the discovery that a secondary female character is her blood mother, and Domino (1979), which reinstates a positive female Oedipal relationship, as remarkably, between a heroine and a matriarch. In between, Whitney reneged to produce her strongest reactive text in Spindrift (1975), where a heroine in fear of committal after a nervous breakdown fights a beautiful matriarch for husband, son, and murdered

father's good name. The portrait regains its strongest Female Gothic function, as an emblem of threatened identity, when at a fancy dress ball the heroine is coerced to dress as a former homicidal matriarch. The most interesting modification, however, is her husband's role as ultimate rescuer. This contradicts both Russ's and Modleski's view of the villainous husband as a constant in Female Gothic, and is unique in Michaels' and Whitney's outputs. Both father and husband figures speak an ideological erosion so deep that all the usual ambivalence to marriage, expressed by the pair of husband-villain and ideal-mate, must be expunged.

Vivian Sobchack traces attempts to shore such an erosion of patriarchal power through three film genres, as the patriarch becomes a nightmare in horror film, an alien in SF film, and a `maternal' father in domestic melodrama. Whitney's and Michaels' later '70s texts display the Female Gothic version. Whitney's <u>The Stone Bull</u> (1977) reneges to a fractured Cinderella heroine overshadowed by a beautiful sister, yet presents Whitney's most sexually assertive hero, a massive sculptor coupled not too subtly to his greatest work, the stone bull. This shift is matched by one of her two open allusions to feminism. When the hero washes up: "I made no female offer to help him ... It was likely that he was not a role-playing man" (123). Such skeletal references to the fundamental second-wave theory of gender indicate feminist discourse has infiltrated the habitus to the point where a conservative like Whitney can use it comfortably.

Most importantly, <u>The Stone Bull</u> introduces a brand-new stock character. The husband who marries the heroine as her sister's look-alike is neither heroically evil nor heroically good, but scorned as a cypher who would lose his wife rather than risk his dynastic `house.' So in Michaels' novel of the same year, <u>Wings of the Falcon</u>, the heroine's beloved father turns out a gigolo, probably bisexual, who dies a pauper, leaving her threatened by his former lover, and a patriarch proves ineffectual, slightly unbalanced and grossly wrong about his sons. Amid the violent oscillations of their '70s texts, Whitney and Michaels do not only parallel feminist thinking, or humanise the fantasy male figures of Female Gothic, just as

feminists would break the monolith of `patriarchy' into a cluster of sometimes competing masculinities (Segal, Motion 105-195). With this new character the Female Gothic writers actually record the impact of feminism on patriarchal power and the habitus.

Limits and Balances: Feminism and Female Gothic in the '70s

Despite these innovations, the flood of feminist-oriented fiction that accompanied the mid-'70s theoretical burgeoning reveals Female Gothic limits. Denied the formal freedom that Angela Carter would exploit in The Passion of New Eve (1977) as she literally put a man into a woman's body, ignoring lesbianism along with the rape and abortion issues, it could not offer such images of female empowerment as Marilyn French's The Women's Room (1977) or Verena Stefan's reconstruction of a passive unhappy heterosexual as a lesbian feminist in Shedding (1975) (qtd. Anderson and Zinsser 425). Barred from non-realism, it could neither reach nor destroy the female Utopias then appearing in Science Fiction, as in Joanna Russ's The Female Man (1976), or James Tiptree Jr.'s "Houston, Houston, Do You Read?" (1976)

Again, women's pre-Oedipal desire is persistently associated with lesbianism, from Adrienne Rich's theoretical move between celebrating motherhood in 1976 and postulating a lesbian continuum in 1980, to the mother-daughter images recurrent in lesbian writing and film (Farwell, "Definition" 113; Lisa Walker 873; Mayne 174-75; Curb). Yet neither Michaels nor Whitney can ever take this final step beyond decentred heterosexuality. Nevertheless, Jean Wyatt's study of contemporary `high' women's fiction like The Colour Purple (1983) and Housekeeping (1980) sees just such a reclamation of female pre-Oedipal desire as I have postulated for Whitney's gynocentric novels. In The Colour Purple she finds an extended, matriarchal family (168-85) like that in Whitney's Silversword (1987). And in the early '80s Michaels perfected Wollstonecraft's attempt at "a militantly feminist Gothic novel" (Modleski, Loving 84), escaping plot constraints and ideology into a moment of Utopian free-fall.

Out of the House: Michaels 1981-2

In Someone in the House (1981) explicit references convey the duration of both

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feminism and the Equal Rights Amendment campaign. The heroine's ex-lover is an "unreformed male chauvinist" who "kept stepping on my tender feminist toes" (3). The heroine has a "clean but worn" T-shirt proclaiming, "Women belong in the House - and in the Senate" (167). But as Modleski claimed for Wollstonecraft's The Wrongs of Women (1788), the text also "explores on a conscious level conflicts which popular Gothics exploit, but keep at an unconscious level" (Loving 84). To do so it focuses rebellion on the nexus of the form and the institution behind the form: it makes the villain the actual house.

The opening establishes a metaphor of battle, and all too topically, its unequal terms, against an adversary that is "still there, undefeated, strong as ever," and "no doubt it will still be standing a thousand years from now" (Michaels, House 2). The title thus acquires unusual topicality and polysemicity. Most simply, it evokes the ghost/interloper ambiguity of so many horror and thriller films, and the scaring function of all Gothic: is there `someone' in the house? The male lead begins sleeping with `the house' in the form of a succubus, and most of the action turns on attempts to explain or destroy the ascendancy of this `someone in the house.' But by eschewing a human villain, Michaels can expose many female Gothic motifs as part of the enticement to make living women `someone in the house.'

Thus the friendly older female who offers to help the heroine prettify herself, strangely enough by changing her slogan-emblazoned T-shirt, reveals the beauty trap as painted by early feminists. The house itself offers an impression of warmth and safety and interludes of cosy domesticity that alternate with ghost-hunting, as in House of Many Shadows. But when the heroine understands that the succubus really is the `house', and that its lure is meant to ensure its own survival, she realises she is being groomed as a house-wife in the most literal sense. Responses are limited. To destroy the house is impossible. As the succubus shows, the house can defend itself. To burn it down is only a symbolic letting of rage before capitulation. There is no human villain to scapegoat. Michaels' heroine cuts the Gordian knot by denying

the form's strongest imperative; she destroys the happy ending. She runs away.

This is the one Female Gothic text to reach what feminist critics (Boumelha, Bronte 12-37; DuPlessis 1-19) have read as a true Utopian moment: not a fictional good-place, but the no-place where fiction itself falls free of plot and ideology, into space. To thus undo a Female Gothic closure is more remarkable than the plot renovations of `high' fiction, which experiences nothing like the same pressures from both ideological project and readership. With Someone in the House, Michaels completes the critique that Wollstonecraft could not finish in The Wrongs of Women: she ruptures not only the plot but the seductive dream, old as the eighteenth century, of perfect romance.

The escape is not easy: "I wasn't playing a role. At least I don't think I was. And that was why I ran away - because I couldn't be sure" (Michaels, House 296-97). The comforts of marriage are a very real lure. The male lead marries a sillier female rival; both will be absorbed happily into the patriarchal institution. The heroine quotes T.S. Eliot: "`I have heard the key turn in the door once, and turn once only...' I got out the door. It won't open again" (300). There is a bitter irony in setting quotation and closure against the end of the ERA campaign that supplies the title's final significance: when American women lost their symbolic fight to be someone in the House as well as `someone in the house.' There is an equally bitter truth in the closure of Michaels' Utopian flight. Reversing Jane Eyre's prospect over the Thornfield battlements, the heroine totals the price and scope of freedom: "Sometimes it's cold out here in the big wide world" (300).

Feminism(s) in the '80s: The Diffractive Prism

In 1981, as Female Gothic reached its Utopian apogee, American feminism had conquered the academy (Gallop 62) and reached its political height. By 1982, with ERA defeated, feminists were losing general support (Denfeld 242) and had to face the Reagan administration's anti-feminist offensives (Sapiro 130) along with the rising New Right (137). The economic downtrend helped spending cuts target "the poor and very poor" (Kemp 222),

especially single-parent women's families. According to Sapiro, Reagan's election sparked an "unprecedented ... professionalization" among feminists (129), but to Anne Summers, American feminists focussed on showy issues like abortion, permitting schisms and neglecting solid gains like wage security (54-58). Her charge of political passivity and failure to compromise is seconded by Rene Denfeld, who cites NOW's failure to support Ferraro (187-88), the Democrats' 1992 convention (185), or a Texas woman governor's campaign (200).

Just as serious were internal schisms, epitomised by the "sex wars" that erupted with the notorious "barney at Barnard," the IXth Scholar and Feminist Conference in 1982, between supporters of Women Against Pornography like Andrea Dworkin, Susan Griffin and Sheila Jeffreys, who would ally feminists with the New Right, and those in the Feminist Anti-Censorship Task Force like Gayle Rubin and Pat Califia, who spoke out for creative sexuality. Such schisms re-expose enduring "oppositional stances" within feminism (de Lauretis, "Upping" 264). The longest-running divides implicitly heterosexual liberals seeking equal rights in the system, from increasingly lesbian-oriented radicals wanting its demolition. Other claims or conflicts, such as race or theoretical disputes, cut across this pattern, some sketched by Joanna Russ: "black women are frequently more radical than white feminists and black lesbian feminists are more radical still" (McCaffery, "Russ" 206). So the Utopian feminist project develops internal degrees of Utopianism. But as political reverses and theoretical advances swung '70s thinking from androgynous models of equality to visions of essential difference, the hegemonic liberal/radical tension increased. By 1984, to Hester Eisenstein, taking gender difference as moral high ground "conceals a new biologism." Yet "the woman-centred perspective ... is not only legitimate, but essential to the foundation of a newly just society" (Thought xviii-xix).

Unhappily, with "sex wars" in 1982 and the political disintegration of British feminism in 1978 (Segal, Future 96), the vital balance of gynocentrism and in-system political action

was already lost. By 1987 Lynne Segal saw feminism split between the "dominant popular conception" of essentialist valorising and separatism, and neglected political action (213). But if the "logical" outcome (Jeffreys 293-95; Rowbotham 254) of '70s lesbian leadership (Cruikshank 152) was separatism and political lesbianism, it exacerbated the fearful cultural image of all feminists as separatist (Gallop, Hirsch and Miller 351). More dangerously, it created a `women's backlash' that grows to Denfeld's 1995 indictment:

> A movement that began ... with a fierce fight for economic, social, and political parity has degenerated into a series of repressive moral crusades that have little to do with most women's lives. (216)

These "crusades" include the critique of heterosexuality, the rape and pornography offensives, separatism, and the "hocus-pocus" (149) of goddess worship. Denfeld finds her American peers want a women's movement (264-65), yet reject the name feminist because "people would automatically assume that I'm not going to shave my armpits ... wear make-up ... have any positive views on men" (qtd. 251). Segal's 1987 warning that "[a] feminist politics which can reach out to all women ... must concern itself with material inequalities" (Future 244) has evidently gone unheard.

In contrast is the '80s theoretical expansion, as acknowledgment of women's differences (Joan Scott 248-50; Stimpson, "Reagan" 237-43), initiated by black feminists like Audre Lord with her "Open Letter to Mary Daly" (1979), was extended by post-colonial theorists like Chandra Mohanty and Gayatri Spivak, and Chicanas like Gloria Anzaldua and Cherie Moraga. Writers like Michelle Rosaldo and Sherry Ortner, followed by Evelyn Fox Keller, Sandra Harding and others, also widened a critique of patriarchal science to feminist epistemologies. With this came adaptations of Foucauldian discourse theory, the rise of standpoint theory, and the swing to queer theory and postmodernism. As early as 1985, feminists implicated in postmodern thinking began to view technological advances and postmodern boundary-blurring positively, and to call for a turn to "affinity, not identity"

(Haraway, "Manifesto" 155; Chow 114) that would regain political viability.

Both Ways: Whitney and Michaels in the '80s

These contradictions are strikingly mirrored in '80s Female Gothic, as the writers trade stances, and contradictions appear between and within texts. Firstly, after another reversion in Poinciana (1980), Whitney paralleled feminist theoretical advances with Vermilion (1981), which develops the weak father figure. Unlike the daughter of Spindrift, the heroine loves but resents her father for his treatment of her mother, and firmly announces that "some time ago... I'd made the choice to stand by her" (Vermilion 1). Secondly, though the heroine's blood sister is conveniently murdered to provide a ready-made nuclear family, Whitney also attempts Michaels' renovation of the hostile sister relationship, with a Red Indian half-sister and an imaginary double, Vermilion.

Unlike Bronte's Bertha, in non-violent Modern Female Gothic Vermilion has little real agency, but she is only "left" (311) at the novel's climax, when:

> I realised with a new intensity that she really had been the hating, jealous part of me, useful whenever I was threatened. Now I'd learned something about loving, and I could let her go. (306)

Although "loving" is a trope that covers inheriting her sister's husband and daughter, it also offers a "strange forgiveness" for her father and, "Even forgiveness for myself?" (306) which implies integration reached by discarding both guilt and hostility.

Though sisterly death or absorption so far repeats Gilbert and Gubar's reading of Jane Eyre, only two years before (1979), the text's title also evokes the Indian half-sister, Alice Rainsong, met in a discovery-scene of amity and implied future love. This will not only offer the heroine economic independence and the exercise of her creative power in an Indian co-operative, but fulfils the failed promise of The Turquoise Mask: this time she is able to enter the Utopian space of an emotional extended family. More strikingly, Vermilion here matches '80s moves to contest white ethnocentrism. This is Whitney's first favourable portrait of a non-

white woman, a sharp contrast to the treatment of the clipper-captain's Chinese widow in <u>Sea Jade</u> (1965) or the young Turkish female villain in <u>Black Amber</u> (1964).

In contrast, as early as 1980 Michaels voiced the `women's backlash.' Using her second pseudonym, Elizabeth Peters, <u>The Love Talker</u> anticipates Segal by seven years:

> She didn't want to be identified with the extremist elements of the women's movement... such advocates did the movement more harm than good by making it repellent, not only to men but to many women. (175)

After her moderately reactive late '70s texts, <u>Wait for What Will Come</u> (1978) and <u>The Walker in Shadows</u> (1979), Michaels' <u>Black Rainbow</u> (1982) speaks the rage and frustration of post-ERA liberal feminists. Set in the house from <u>Someone in the House</u>, on its original English site a century before, it is formally innovative, or in a <u>Kirkus</u> reviewer's terms, "a bit tricky" (895). It is the only text in these authors' output to split the narrative viewpoint, between an apparently orthodox governess heroine and her friendly but plain sister-in-law; more innovatively, it alienates the reader by exposing the manipulations of female courtship. Unlike Jane Eyre, this governess provokes her rival to display bad manners before the object of desire. The rival herself wants the marriage to pay her debts. When this plan is exposed, Megan conceals her eavesdropping by a pretence faint in her beloved's arms, so he naturally proposes to her instead.

The illusion is strained less intentionally by sags in the suspense, that, like my inability to employ the usual terms of hero and heroine, mark a jump from the smoothly-greased formulaic tracks. This is chiefly because the divided viewpoint breaks that Gothic mainspring, the escalation of menacing, mysterious incidents about the ever more terrified heroine. Usually Megan's marriage would either close the terror-spiral with the reward of an ideal mate, or open it, situating her husband to become the villain. But after her courtship in the prosaic first half, the wicked-husband plot splits the second half into another traditional unit and makes a villain from her object of desire.

Where <u>Someone in the House</u> dealt lightly with the narrow chance of women's escape

from oppression, <u>Black Rainbow</u> speaks fiercely of captivity realised. As the husband-villain plot escalates, the text methodically explores the fate of `someone in the house.' The hero-villain ousts his sister as manager of the family mill, provokes a worker's uprising, persecutes the union-sympathising foreman, imprisons his sister and tries to murder his now unfaithful wife. The women's helplessness is expressed most fiercely by Megan's sister-in-law, Jane:

> `we are little better than the unfortunate slaves in America ... They cannot go where they like; neither can we. They are bred like cattle ... so are most of us. If they are abused, they have no appeal. Neither do we.' (334)

Again, liberal feminist sensibility speaks through the discourse of rights. But untoward reality emerges with Jane's imprisonment in a lightless, haunted cellar, and the fierce conflict between the mill-owner and his men. In <u>Greygallows</u> or <u>Wings of the Falcon</u>, such class insurgencies remove the villain or help the heroine to her mate. Here women's agency achieves a violent solution, when on a deer-hunt where he meant to shoot Megan, Jane kills her brother with his own gun.

The crime goes undetected by the "stupid, kind" male magistrate (353). Such atypical violence indicates the practice a decade of feminism had given women in speaking their anger, and a rage that may be wholly contemporary. Retreating in time, <u>Black Rainbow</u> can distance both rage and captivity. Paradoxically, it also deploys a woman-centred productive imagination. The text closes with Megan about to marry her child's foreman father, and with Megan and the unregenerately single Jane ruling the business and estate. Asserting control of their bodies by refusing marriage, or mothering outside wedlock, and appropriating the capitalist enterprise, the women signal this double victory by taking over the unscathed house.

Central to this Utopian defiance, however, is a myth-making characteristic of essentialist feminism (Caputi 425-33). The text's first page wrests the rainbow from androcentric mythology. It is black, seen by moonlight, and explicitly linked to Diana/ Hecate, goddess of hunting and the underworld. She reappears as St. Arca, the village church's obscure patron saint, with Megan's expedition to the local dolmen, where in a symbol too obvious to

need labouring, she crawls through its round hole in a village tradition to ensure fertility, and finally, when Jane shoots her brother in the same place. That it happens on a deer-hunt reinforces the allusion to Actaeon. The text closes with Jane, literally in her brother's seat, reading an invocation that serves as thanksgiving to the "Queen of Heaven," "Mistress of life," "Virgin and Mother, sower of seed and bearer of fruit," who is asked to "accept our sacrifice so that we who serve you may be granted justice" (Michaels, Rainbow 353-4). Jane considers the list some of the funny Catholic names for the Virgin Mary; but the knowing reader identifies the real Goddess. The discourse of rights has been commandeered by a wholly female demand for "justice," sought from a deity who retains all of Diana/Hecate's ancient aspects: huntress, fertility giver, and dealer of death.

Michaels' subsequent texts extend the disillusion, firstly with a parallel to what Jean Wyatt finds (187-209) in texts like Toni Morrison's Beloved (1987). Wyatt does elide the specifics of black motherhood, where infanticide might be resistance to enslavement (Angela Davis 357). A less problematic parallel is Luce Irigaray's "And the One Doesn't Stir without the Other" (1981). In a striking reversal of Whitney's trajectory and of her own '60s and '70s texts, Michaels' mid-'80s texts turn savagely against mothers, revealing, like Irigaray's, the destructive side of female pre-Oedipal desire.

Thus in Here I Stay (1983), the strong independent heroine manages to let go her crippled son-brother, if only in death, but finds that the ghostly mother figure who seemed a support had actually driven her own daughter to suicide with such grasping. In The Grey Beginning (1984) a glacial Italian matriarch abuses her child-nephew and repels the heroine. When she orders her own son shot to save the heroine and her mate, she is described as "the personification of some cold abstraction such as Justice or Retribution" (276). Such justice is a far cry from the passionate violence of Black Rainbow. Finally, Be Buried in the Rain (1985) centres on a grandmother who terrorised the heroine's childhood and psychologically mauled the hero. A stroke has left her grotesque to the point of invoking the mother-monsters of Male

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Gothic, and in this repeat of savage '60s mother-daughter struggles she is found to have imprisoned and murdered her sister, before eventually trying to murder the heroine.

Simultaneously, in a coupling of reactive and resistant elements typical of '80s female romance (Jones 201-14), the text attacks the patriarchal institution of bastardy and retrieves the figure of the sister imprisoned and murdered to conceal her illegitimate child. Thus the hero complains of civilised people who "`follow the old savage rules about women and fornication, and the curse of bastardy'" (Michaels, Rain 322), and the heroine explains her struggle to preserve the victim's bones, the only evidence of her existence, as about "`justice denied'" (324). The most savage attack on the matriarch is her positioning as the agent of this injustice. But though a second stroke exiles her to a nursing home, the ending, most atypically, is her dying words:

> `Again, Melissa. Every year you come back ... *Why won't you and your bastard brat stay where I put you?*' (326)

To suggest that the ghost has not been laid would disrupt the closure of any Gothic novel. And to replace the romantic ending with a vision of unexpiated crime is to imply that the powerful mother-monster, as in so many horror films, also will not die.

The repressed rage of women's later '80s sexual fantasies (Friday, Women 135) emerges in these texts' mistreatment of heroes. In The Grey Beginning the hero is beaten up; in Be Buried in the Rain he is emotionally damaged. Such violence is seen as a characteristic of '60s and '70s female romance (Coward 195-96), and even as a "revenge fantasy" of men reduced by the power of love (Modleski, Loving 45). I would argue that damage to the hero is an index of oppression: the more battered the hero, the greater need for compensatory violence among the female readership. Significantly, it almost vanishes in Michaels' '70s texts. Thurston's comment that "by 1976 the gothic romance was all but dead" (50) in the wake of erotic historical romance like Kathleen Woodiwiss's The Flame and the Flower (1972), only to revive in the saturated '80s romance market (191), re-affirms the tie between Female Gothic

and oppression's increase.

These unhappy attempts to reconstruct pre-Oedipal desire also point up Michaels' position as the `Symbolic' writer, more politically aware, but more committed to liberal feminism, and more deeply implicated in the Symbolic order; so deeply, it may be argued that her '80s texts acquire masculinist characteristics. Most seriously, the series of attacks on matriarchs and the continuing paucity of friendly female characters undercut Michaels' attempts to produce strong independent heroines. In effect, they begin to resemble masculine gender models, unable or unwilling to compromise their ego boundaries in relational connections. In Shattered Silk (1986) these tendencies complement a quasi-Male Gothic relationship of heroine and house.

Epitomising the oscillation of Michaels' '80s texts, Shattered Silk is also among her most gynocentric novels. Set in the antique clothes trade, whose background is developed with the detail prized by romance readers (Radway 195), it turns on that question pertinent to so many '80s women: Is there life after divorce? As she regains her self esteem and economic independence the heroine enters a world of female business rivals and villains, friendly matriarchs, and a `sister' who becomes both friend and business partner. The two join a series of '80s heroines who show women's increasing economic emancipation, and whose female rivals are thus more than sexual competition. But where sisters in Black Rainbow achieve a woman-centred fantasy ending, in Shattered Silk one of the ideal mates buys the house which is to be their shop-cum-residence, turning a take-over of the patriarchal economic unit to a ceding of independence under the patriarchal aegis. At the close, the heroine actually threatens, in jest, to coerce her widowed `sister' back into marriage itself.

The house's treatment in this text parallels the way that over three decades Whitney's texts partition it into public/private sectors in times of women's economic strength. In The Red Carnelian (1943) the action moves between the heroine's flat and her work-place, a big department store, a pattern regained in 1974 with The Turquoise Mask. In Black Rainbow the

women take the house over intact, while in <u>Here I Stay</u> the heroine runs a hotel, combining home and business. In <u>Be Buried in The Rain</u> the heroine deserts "a monstrosity that had long since outlived usefulness or beauty" (28) whose ruin she observes with "a satisfaction so strong it couldn't be missed" (30). <u>Shattered Silk</u> makes the house the usual site for unpleasant happenings, while the heroine builds her career in the shop. But here the heroine's entry into a house with villain and hero waiting is overlaid with a Male Gothic structure: the heroine is in nominal charge of her borrowed house, which both villain and hero must enter from outside.

Michaels' contradictions are most remarkable in <u>Smoke and Mirrors</u> (1989). On the one hand a classic shrinking violet becomes a campaign worker for a female Senate candidate, taming her hero with merely some spirited henpeckery. Even more strikingly, the text constructs Michaels' most powerful benevolent mother, a political career woman who governs her own House - both home and campaign office - with agency throughout the action, culminating in her personal rescue of a young black male from a fire. Moreover, she ends as the point of an Oedipal triangle with the heroine and her lover, whose romantic ties are by no means confirmed.

Conversely, there are few female characters, one devalued older woman, and a card-carrying feminist who competes with the heroine for both hero and job. In this text feminist allusions are reversed to indicate disapproval. Yet while explicitly denying she is "`a feminist'" (<u>Smoke</u> 36), the heroine stands up to and silences the hero, achieving independence in a paradigm of '70s feminism. Like Denfeld's peers, text and heroine accept the discourse constructed and economic gains won by earlier feminists, while denying the name. <u>Smoke and Mirrors</u> is a chastening sign of how the patriarchal backlash, movements beyond heterosexual hegemony, political passivity and internal schisms have affected the cultural image of American feminists.

In the same period, Whitney had produced two gynocentric texts in succession, following <u>Vermilion</u> with <u>Emerald</u> (1983) which investigates female identity through the

metaphor of the film industry. Whitney's text offers a submerged critique of mainstream cinema, which, in a truism of feminist film critics, exploits and objectifies women. Whitney's film-star matriarch is first revealed as an impostor who renounced her own sculptor's career to play a celluloid fake. She then dies almost immediately after acting to rescue the heroine, something "`I did ... *myself*'" (304). The text suggests grimly that for a woman caught up in the industry of women's division and reification, to reintegrate identity is to reach an ideological vacuum, where neither persona can survive. This message is off-set by the strong relationship between the matriarch and a heroine who is, again, escaping a villainous husband to research her "great-aunt's" biography.

In Whitney's '80s output, such gynocentric novels alternate with reactive texts like Poinciana (1980), Rainsong (1984), Flaming Tree (1986) and Feather on the Moon (1988). Like Smoke and Mirrors, however, Dream of Orchids (1985) is a hybrid of resistant and reactive elements. Whitney reverts to the '60s pattern of a vindictive absent mother, adds the mystery of a powerful stepmother's murder, and makes the heroine's step-sister the murderer. An ostensibly hostile sibling is tentatively called "my sister" by the heroine, a claim Whitney cannot take beyond reserved neutrality on either side. On the other hand, the father is so weak that he dies of a heart-attack during a crisis, and the loving father-daughter relationship of earlier reactive novels never eventuates. Published in the same year that, according to Denfeld, election of a separatist president ended NOW's involvement in the political system (187), Orchids displays '80s contradictions in a single text.

In contrast, Silversword (1987) resumes a positive speaking of pre-Oedipal desire. There are no patriarchs. The only father figure proves to be not only weak and adulterous but a would-be murderer, while the hero is absorbed in a familial web that includes the heroine's illegitimate Kamaaina half-brother and his mother. Its centre is the heroine's maternal grandmother, who controls a ranch on the island of Maui, where the heroine flees from a matriarch who wants her to "`worship'" (Silversword 265) her dead father. The maternal

matriarch remains in active, favourably-presented economic and emotional ascendancy, but the claims of the paternal `house,' symbolised by the family hotel and a mainland *fiancé*, are rejected by the heroine with the statement "`I'm staying right here with Grandma Joanna'" (249). She thus resolves her identity problems, while rejecting the hero's attempt to help her achieve a monolithic `masculine' self.

Where the matriarch is powerful, the mother first appears mad, and in a yet more decided reverse of Spindrift, the daughter's project is to reclaim her sanity. Maternal madness actually eludes the plot-secret's unspeakable reality: that the matriarch killed her son-in-law to save her daughter's life. When she recovers this memory, the matriarch is absolved, a hostile aunt silenced, and mother and daughter join in a loving relationship. The mother regains her ability to paint, as the text closes with the `family,' including half-brother and hero, gathered at the maternal ranch. At Whitney's Utopian apogee, the patriarchal queendom of Lost Island becomes a genuine matriarchy.

In Silversword the dichotomy of maternal and paternal houses found in Dream of Orchids opposes the grandmother's ranch to the mainland hotel, the heroine's childhood home, and the volcano Haleakala. The ranch is most often the site of family gatherings, bondings, and happy elucidations, and the site of the closure: "now Manaolana would live up to its melodic Hawaiian name that promised hope" (302). The hotel, in contrast, is a patriarchal threat, while the childhood home provokes unhappy memories. Truly menacing events take place in the volcano crater, a lunar environment where the phallic Silversword of the title flourishes. Here the hero brings the heroine in her failed attempt to `find herself.' Here the murder happens and the mother goes mad. The paternal house thus becomes an sterile natural environment, menacing and murderous, reversing the usual association of women with nature. In a serendipitous echo of classic binary oppositions like man/woman, sun/moon, so famously attacked by Cixous ("Sorties" 90-98), Haleakala in Polynesian means "The House of the Sun."

The opposition of ranch and hotel also makes Maui a type of matriarchal paradise,

opposed, down to its friendly treatment of non-white Others, to the mainland, where marriage threatens to force the heroine into the patriarchal capitalist economy. Just so Grand Isle in Chopin's The Awakening (1899) makes an idyllic contrast to patriarchal New Orleans, or Jamaica contrasts to Thornfield in Jean Rhys's Wide Sargasso Sea (1964). In each case an island, `outside' dominant Western society, becomes the site for an alternative, woman-centred vision. It is a testimony to the ennabling influence of feminism, that where Chopin cannot sustain either the romantic illusions or the holiday-based economy of Grand Isle, and Rhys sees Antoinette's Jamaica erased by colonial exploitation, in Silversword, working in a female romance genre, Whitney can extend the productive imagination to envisage Maui as an economically and emotionally viable good-place, a `real' women's Utopia.

Conclusion

The shadowdance of Female Gothic with feminism's contradictory, diffuse, non-linear and variegated progress affirms the intimacy of their relationship. Though generic and ideological containment excluded some options, Whitney and Michaels match `high' literary uses of feminist ideas with considerable facility. Female Gothic is limited chiefly by its quasi-realism, which restricts Utopian options, and by its repression of pre-Oedipal desire within heterosexuality. Hence it can decentre the romance formula, but not elide structures like the binary opposition, which lesbian theorists argue (Engelbrecht; Farwell, "Plots") may be overthrown, for example by lesbian plot frames that invoke Self/Other-self structures of desire.

The intimacy of the relationship suggests that in a feminist Utopia, where feminists are unnecessary, then as Michelle Massé envisions (Name 274), Female Gothic would vanish too. Though this clearly has not happened, second-wave feminism has expanded Female Gothic options with friendly female relationships, and a whole new character, the weak father. Most clearly expressing feminism's contradictory gains, the gynocentric alternative seems to have become a lasting option. In 1989 Whitney maintained her favourable handling of pre-Oedipal

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desire with <u>Rainbow in the Mist</u>, while the scholar heroine of Michaels' 1994 novel, <u>Houses of Stone</u>, is a proclaimed feminist. This implies the kind of affinitive reconciliation called for by Third World feminists like Rey Chow. If Female Gothic eschews feminist limits, it supports Denfeld's figures on the acceptance of liberal feminist tenets, by American men as well as women (257; 264-65); but it also sustains a trickle of gynocentric vision that looks beyond political parity.

1. "Presumably" here marks, firstly, the paucity of biographical information on these writers, and secondly, an intent to flag the usual `marking' of black or lesbian writers, for example, while leaving white middle-class heterosexuality `unmarked,' the `default' which is taken for granted unless `marked' otherwise.

- Section 5 -

A DIFFERENT DRUM: MALE GOTHIC WRITERS AND FEMINISM

Unlike Female Gothic, which reasons about the same questions simultaneously, Male Gothic appears out of step with feminism(s). With its wider choice of narrative and format, its sensitivity to public concerns and current events, and its congruence with the discourse of rights, the genre seems better equipped to accommodate at least liberal feminism. But its very awareness of "national phobic pressure points" (Stephen King, Danse 19) made political demands for equality appear an economic threat during the '70s recession, while the danger to the male breadwinner's ego and the nuclear family aligned feminism with other domestic terrors. The real menace touched the roots of masculinity, and hence of Male Gothic itself.

This threat springs mainly from feminism's validation of women. If Gothic is implicated in perpetuating norms, and the Western norm, as has been abundantly argued, is phallocentric, then in Male Gothic too, women's role is as de Beauvoir first enunciated: to be Othered to constitute the norm. Women are thus essential to the genre. Most visibly, they provide victims, extending the longterm association of women, sex and death, with such famous fictional victims as Anna Karenina, Clarissa, and Poe's emblematic dying women (Bassein 35-127). With Modern Male Gothic, violence enters the equation: Carol Clover argues that despite apparent gender fluidity, horror films illustrate a patriarchal inability to express evil except in images of destruction wreaked on women's bodies (21-64). A strong unmasculinised woman character short-circuits this coding. Moreover, feminist resistance to marriage threatens the narrative solution of the nuclear family. Worst of all, a self-reliant woman undoes the vital hierarchy of superior male, inferior female, that sustains Western masculinity. She does not merely steal his thunder; she makes him doubt himself.

Since this shakes the phallocentric norm, feminism itself becomes a phobic pressure point, invoking women's second Male Gothic role: as the ab-normal, the unhuman monster, the *vagina dentata*, the vampire, and the archaic mother (Kristeva, Powers 12-15; 54-55) whose womb threatens to subsume actual identity. Thus Othered, female characters become metaphors for phobias and hatreds generated by the very construction of Western masculinity.

The next dissimilarity to Female Gothic is that while King and Koontz began writing in the '60s, neither engages feminism before it became a public issue in the early '70s. Though Koontz's politics are still glossed over, trade magazines do sketch a biography from the American dream, rising through his own efforts from poverty and an abused childhood to millionaire status ("Comedian"; de Lint). King's life follows the same pattern, spotlighted by popularity that includes a <u>Stephen King Companion</u> (Beahm 1989) with exhaustive literary and personal details, and even academic readers pilgrimaging to his house (Jonathon Davis 4-5). Both writers are white, heterosexual and (now) part of the plutocracy. Their paths through the synergy of fictions and feminism(s) are powerfully shaped by both biography and genre, but not identical. In the early '70s King's work enacts a gynophobic reaction to feminism, only slightly modified before an early '80s adjustment to feminist stances already in the habitus; with the '80s turn to reactive politics and feminist disarray, he cannot use these changes to escape narrative and formulaic restraints. In Koontz's '70s novels the generic correlation of the discourse of rights and masculine psychic patterns brings a clash of ideological and Utopian impulses as he overtly attempts to endorse liberal feminism; during the '80s this impulse fades back into the formulaic stance. Koontz's initial support may come partly from the early strength of liberal feminism, whose invocation of the discourse of rights appealed to liberal men as it did to Michaels. It also supplies a powerful weapon to combat traditional presentations of women. Koontz attempts first to renegotiate the masculine subject, and to make room in Male Gothic for a third female role, a strong heroine.

The New Woman and the Masculine Abject: Koontz 1972-1977

Having subsumed his several writing personae, such as Owen West, Brian Coffey, K.R. Dwyer, Leigh Nichols and Deanna Dyer, and bought back rights to fifteen early SF novels (Brooks 73), Koontz has combined three or four *oeuvres*, classified from thrillers to suspense romance, as "`genre-bridgers with a mainstream point of view'" (de Lint 16). He now resists tagging as a horror writer ("Comedian" 5; 81-82), but his work retains Male Gothic elements. The current *oeuvre* opens with

Chase (1972), a thriller with the stock Male Gothic plot of male saviour and/or fighting community assailed by some threat to the family/ community/ world. Here a veteran with a Medal of Congress for shooting Vietnamese women purges guilt and averts an alcoholic breakdown by saving his town and beloved from a serial killer.

Where a police or detective thriller would ally his hero with the law, Koontz sites him in the Male Gothic frame, as an individual caught between a psychopath, representing the underclass, and an uncaring system. Betrayal by institutions, like the police and his psychiatrist, justifies his violence, a pattern repeated in Charles Bronson films (Grixti 179-80). The solution is to act alone, and then to understand that, like the Vietnamese guerrillas, he has been "a victim of his society." So "[g]uilt should be tempered with hope and happiness, even for him." This hope is a nuclear family: "in a few years they might even have a baby" (Koontz, Chase 212). To Koontz, the desired norm is the fighting community's merger into such a unit, while maximum abnormality is a non-human or `wrong,' that is, not heterosexual and possibly incestuous family. His Male Gothic fiction will move between these poles for the next twenty years.

A major part in this solution is played by the heroine, here fitted between the traditional female figures of monster and victim. In Koontz's Symbolic *oeuvre* the hated powerful mother is reduced to Chase's old, slatternly, but amorous landlady, from whom liberation is finding "enough determination to tell Mrs. Fiedling to button the neck of her damn housedress" (214). But there is also the killer's girl-victim:

> a petite brunette ... moaning softly, her hands gripped so tightly on her knees that they looked more like claws ... Her small breasts were spotted with blood, and the nipples were erect. (8)

Here violence joins the Victorian sex-death constellation, a blatant example of `bad' male fantasy, repeatedly attributed to villains but constantly elaborated and hence undercutting Koontz's '70s attempts to endorse feminism.

This attempt first produces allusions almost as plentiful as Michaels'. War leaves the hero "bleached of his male chauvinism" (107). The heroine is "`liberated'" (167), and with the common outsider's conflation of liberation and female sexuality, sexually available (131). Like most Koontz heroines she is beautiful, a sharp contrast to Female Gothic, but almost six feet tall, a virtual Amazon. But feminism is wrong-footed when she protests that, "`I hate men opening doors for me as if I'm an invalid'," (147) when the killer is hunting them and chivalry equals real `protection,' and her ignorance of weapons excludes her from the final fight. Though Elizabeth Massie finds Koontz's heroines unqualified "masters of their own fates" (170), all but one falls back in crisis on a male. However liberal their politics, hero, writer and male reader have too many big investments in the heroic male rescue to let it go.

The thriller models a masculine subject that replaces "clean, modest, neat, restrained" early Victorian ideals (Segal, Motion 106), with the "outwardly brutal" (108), "imperialistic and all-conquering" (111) hero of this century. As Segal notes, such masculinity, always incomplete, depends on "perpetual renunciation of femininity" (114), and exists in forms of men's power (123). Nancy Hartsock has argued that men using such a model can only relate to the Other by struggle and violence (170-173). In 1968 a new feminist found such a figure, as typified by Hemingway (Segal, Motion 111), "an alien monster" (Russ, "Alien" 137).

To renegotiate this subject, Koontz reverts to a Victorian dichotomising that first splits off the male villain. Pure evil, direly abnormal, he is usually a rapist and/or serial killer violently expunged by the hero, as is the paedophiliac religious fanatic who shoots canoodling couples in Chase:

> Chase slapped him hard with the back of his hand. When Judge's mouth fell [sic], he jammed the silenced barrel between the man's teeth and pulled the trigger. (209)

This is not gratuitous violence. In the physical domain, masculine separatism becomes an obsession with body boundaries, where the male/female opposition is re-coded as impermeable/pregnable. The impregnable male body has been theorised as a central

tenet of Western masculinity (Theweleit 1: 244-49; 2:40; Ching-Liang Low, "His Stories?" 105-110). German fascist males saw the hard, dam-like male body contaminated by symbolic dirt, slime, or bog (Theweleit 1: 385-402), and opposed to the abject of pulped male or female enemy bodies (1: 194-95; 2: 17-20). Deploying the Gothic rat, pig, corpse and feminine abjects, King and Koontz reserve pulp and slime to signify a masculine abject: dissolved male bodies/ego boundaries. Contemporary homophobia (Sedgwick, Men 3) appears in the strong suggestion of homosexuality, which is absent from fascist writing. So when Case asserts his American heterosexual normality, he applies violence that involves both penetration and rupture of the villain's body, degrading him as homosexual, pregnable, unmasculine. In effect, such destruction *constructs* a masculine abject, whose expulsion will purify the norm.

The thriller model of `good' masculinity still remains a far cry from the Female Gothic hero, let alone the demands of feminism. The asexual tough guy of thrillers like The Thirty-Nine Steps (1915) has yielded to a Bond or Rambo's technological expertise, violence, assertive heterosexuality and emotional incompetence. Koontz starts with the emotional dimension: Chase is heterosexual and efficiently violent, but he is guilt-ridden, a near alcoholic. More notably, he overtly favours feminism, a stance conveyed by a parade of '70s shibboleths. In conversation "she talked ... and he listened" (Chase 128). Asked to supper, he almost begs to wash up: "`I thought maybe I could *dry*'" (129).

This sketch of a sensitive New Age hero is vitiated by often brute phallocentric equations of violence with potency. Chase is unable to bed his willing beloved until he kills the villain (212), and he still proposes before they make love. To this heterosexual conservatism is added his non-negotiable role as saviour. Most ironically, Koontz's attempt to strengthen his heroine has her finally absolve Chase's guilt. She pictures two Chases, one who followed orders, one saw the wrong "`instinctively.'" With the first "`dead'," the second should no longer "`want to be punished'" (145-46). While this echoes a feminist-oriented '70s belief that "women, middle-class white women will make it better" (Lowder Newton 294), here it extends the Jekyll-and-Hyde

male dichotomy, and the role of moral arbiter revives the Victorian or even Old Gothic ideology of female purity.

Yet the harder Koontz tries to improve his hero by an ejection of increasingly `bad' masculine abjects, the more they enact the classic `return of the repressed' within the text. In Shattered (1973) the woman is sidelined, as the hero and his young brother-in-law flee across America from a psychopath, a monster "central to the modern consciousness" (Neilson 185), whose final destruction is undercut by the power of his pornographic fantasies. Night Chills (1976) goes beyond fantasy. Here the SF "novum" (Suvin, Metamorphoses 63-66) or speculative datum of a drug that would allow brainwashing, founds a worst-case scenario for subliminal advertising. In the traditional Male Gothic setting for "pastoral horror" (Neilson 166), the drug's final test on a small town culminates in its scientist-discoverer's sex-crimes. Where the villain in Shattered was `possessed' by a brain tumour, the scientist is driven by simple greed atop childhood homosexual abuse. His cabal with a crooked general and capitalist, invoking the system, is foiled by a fighting community of hero, future wife, children and father-in-law.

Koontz confronts feminism more directly with a heroine beautiful as always, correctly warm and heterosexual, but who "distrusted romance and feared marriage" (Chills 48), refusing repeated proposals. She will not, of course, follow divorcees in feminist novels into celibacy or lesbianism. Instead the battle with evil becomes a narrative solution to feminist resistance of marriage, coaxing her into the nuclear family through her experience of evil and of fighter's comradeship.

Part of this cajolery is the hero's empathy and sexual expertise. The central rape scene is interspersed with cuts of hero and heroine making love in an idyllic natural setting, with the woman actually allowed to initiate sex. Both climax, with "very nearly excruciating [pleasure] for her," and afterward "the memory of joy was an invisible umbilical" (121). This revealingly Oedipal metaphor repeats that normative love's union, or actual orgasm with an ideal or committed heterosexual partner, is the only safe way to open the male body and dissolve psychic boundaries. Nevertheless, a

feminist reader finds dubious overtones. The hero insists,"`I want to get you off first'," and he will get his way because, "`I'm bigger than you'." Her cry of, "`Male chauvinist'," is silenced by his lovemaking, and she admits, "`You're right. A woman should have her pleasure first'" (124-25). This is a case of "we have ways to make you liberated" that leaves traditional hierarchy intact.

The hero's `good' masculinity does allow stronger agency for both his daughter and the heroine. Children are prominent in Modern Male Gothic (Neilson 187-95; Magistrale 75-89), for shock value, post-war emphasis on the family, or exploitation of fears set up by the '60s generation gap. But though this `good' girl begins as a classic victim, disbelieved and hunted, she also helps the heroine dispatch a villain, blurring the heroine-victim dichotomy in Chase. Such agency is undercut when the wicked general perceives the heroine in ambush as "a black form, like a monstrous bat," braced in a church tower above him, "like a goddamned bat" (322). Beyond the strong echo of the Texas tower sniper, the bat invokes female monsters, in a conflict of favourable project, unruly formal elements and deep male fears typical of Koontz's attempts to promote feminism.

This undercutting is clearest in the construction of the text's masculine abject, the scientist and his drug-enslaved victims. Closing the rampage, he appears "a disgusting bug-eyed troll ... pressing a revolver between her pale thighs in a vile ... imitation of the sex act" (292). His fantasy of a waitress whose "every movement" was "an all but open invitation to violation" (91) is realised with the central rape victim:

> She was his. Entirely his: her mouth, breast, ass, legs, cunt, every inch and fold of her ... The only consideration was his own pleasure ... No complaints afterward ... Just the act - and then to hell with her. (128)

Published in 1976, Night Chills probably parallels rather than draws on the classic feminist construction of rape as power-play in Against Our Will (1975). But shown from the `stalker's' viewpoint, the violence becomes almost masturbatory:

He was ready, the veins about to burst, hard as iron ... big as a stallion's gun, a horse cock. And red. So red it looked as if it had been smeared with blood. (132)

Finally the villain is punished with an equal violence, now justified by an ominous appeal to the discourse of rights: in "the 1970s ... individual survival ... counted for more than all else" (303). When he is shot, "the bullet ... tore through Salsbury's throat. Blood and bits of flesh spattered the metal firearms cabinet" (304). Again, enforcing the norm involves penetrating and shattering the male body, producing a masculine abject that can be ejected and destroyed.

This text strongly invokes the debate over horror fiction/film's relation to psychopathic violence. To Grixti, horror fiction is "an expression (rather than a primary cause) of an undesirable or unsatisfactorily patched-up state of society" (147). After the Helms/ Mapplethorpe episode and the New Right co-option of WAP, feminists have had to re-think the `direct-drive' model of representation enshrined in Robin Morgan's "Theory and Practice: Pornography and Rape" (1980), (Butler, "Force" 111-21; Stimpson, "Reagan" 238-43). Given his belief that "evil exists ... outside of cultural forces" ("Comedian" 82), Koontz's project may have approached the WAP castigation of male violence and sexuality. Nevertheless, the homosexual Kirk-Spock relationship produced in illicit <u>Star Trek</u> "slash-zines" (Penley, "Feminism" 480-87; Jenkins 193-98), argues that readerly "poaching" (De Certeau, <u>Practice</u> 31), could as easily re-direct Koontz's material. And the text's divided viewpoint suggests David Reynolds' idea of an "immoral didacticism" (108): it allows the (male) reader to share rape from the villain's view and punishment from the righteous hero's; in effect, to have the cake and eat it too.

Following this pattern, Koontz's '70s and early '80s work sets ever more lurid masculine abjects against increasingly feminist-oriented heroines and heroes. The strong heroine reaches her pinnacle in <u>The Vision</u> (1977), where a clairvoyant who helps track down killers is hunted by another psychopath. Here Koontz first uses supernatural elements to replace the SF "novum;" but the most daring modification is to make the clairvoyant female. This produces a direct confrontation with the New

Woman, since paranormal gifts imply not-humanness as well as unfeminine, very nearly coercive power.

Koontz maximises this threat by making his clairvoyant a celebrity and breadwinner, though married to a physically strong, virtuous man who is both sympathetic and her money manager. Of course, she has no mother, sister, or women friends; as befits male Oedipal fantasy, her attention is wholly on the male. Another Oedipal element is his conflict with her brother, the villain: as in Shattered, where the heroine was the common apex of the `good' family of husband and brother and a projected `bad' family with the villain, division of attention in the object of desire produces a `bad' family.

The novel's real Utopian moment, however, is the one time Koontz dares to risk male superiority. He has the heroine defeat the villain alone. That this misses the free-fall effect of Someone in the House may be because The Vision still fulfils formulaic expectation: *somebody* destroys the villain. It may also be because her victory is presented in masculine or normative terms. Failed by the fighting community of friend and husband, she destroys her brother with her paranormal powers, a narrative solution to mass killings presented as the achievement of non-relational, masculine ego boundaries. As Chase exorcises guilt for his war-skills by saving his community, in killing the villain the clairvoyant accepts her gift and `finds' herself.

The frequent sadistic rapes and smashed female bodies that adorn The Vision reach their apogee with that Gothic signifier of the abject, the bat. Under ultimate threat the heroine retrieves buried childhood memories of being tied up by her brother and literally raped with a bat,

> *between my legs, under my dress. It squeals... I am engulfed by primal fear ... the thing writhes and nips ... and Alan is trying to ram it inside of me.* (250-1)

An extreme abnormal rape produces a feminine abject, but in contrast to Night Chills, the reader must take the victim's view. And when she "snap[s]," the abject's gender is reversed:

> She wanted most of all to put the bats on him... force them into his mouth while they were squirming and still alive ...
> Every bat in the rafters... tore at his head and face and neck ... When he screamed, one of them got in his mouth... Five steps down he fell ... plucked a bat from his nose ... had to bite another bat that crawled from his chin to his mouth. (264-65)

As with Chase, there are sexual overtones in breaking/penetrating the male body, in particular, through the mouth. But as with the simile from Night Chills, bats also evoke the female monster, the unhuman witch. Though the conclusion absolves the heroine of guilt or remorse, in Koontz's most Utopian response to feminism this phobic whisper remains. In comparison to the fate of King's paranormal protagonists, however, his attempt to escape the enormous gravity well of the Male Gothic genre, normative demands, and the feminist threat to masculinity is to be admired.

The New Woman and the Feminine Abject: King 1974-1979

While Koontz tried to accommodate feminism within the "paranoia" of "those days" (Author's Note, Shattered) by expelling a masculine abject from the Symbolic Order, King's first novel saw feminism, to repeat Barbara Creed's coinage, as a monstrous-feminine. Writing Carrie (1974), about a female psychic who runs amok, King felt he "was fully aware of what Women's Liberation implied for me and others of my sex" (Danse 198). Carrie is then another symbolic confrontation with the apparently rampant New Woman. But while King also claims that, "Carrie is largely about ... what men fear about women and women's sexuality" (198), Carrie dies unmatured, in the holocaust made by her telekinetic powers after a cruel prank as she is crowned Queen of the Senior Prom. What then focuses men's fear is a blend of the New Woman with a particularly strong form of feminine abject, the cross-culturally terrifying `dark' powers connected with the menstrual period, the paramenstruum.

Shuttle and Redgrove's pioneering text The Wise Wound (1978) recuperates previous views of menstruation. Historically, they re-construct menstrual blood as a symbol of women's magic and fertility, which men envy, emulate, or exclude from

patriarchal societies. So menstruation became first a sacred and then a profane taboo; here their work intersects with Kristeva's tie of the abject to the Mosaic taxonomy of impurity:

> To the Rabbis, sex at the period when the blood is flowing was most strictly taboo ... [This] is a taboo which approves only that half of the woman's nature which is concerned with childbirth and pregnancy. (21)

Such exclusion is embedded in the middle-class habitus, with its extra emphasis on bodily purity. It is hardly surprising that King's attempt to examine women's sexuality followed the public visibility of feminism, and that his phobic response should link such power to the paramenstruum.

King's penchant for the Imaginary register sets the novel in the high-school world of his main readership, but it is not just a "fantastically exaggerated evocation of adolescent initiation rituals" (Skal 10). Male rituals carry no cultural load near that of King's opening scene, the immensely powerful transgression of modern menstruation taboos as the innocent/ignorant Carrie begins her menarche in the girls' locker room. The `good' girl feels "welling disgust as the first dark drops of menstrual blood struck the tile in dime-sized drops" (King, Carrie 12). Female readers might also share the "horrible memory of half the [Western] population" (Ellison 335), the culturally induced terror of `showing' menstrual flow. This disgust is underlined by Carrie's leit-motif, her identification with the pig. She is repeatedly called "pig." In the first scene, her eyes roll "like the eyes of a hog in the slaughtering pen" (Carrie 14). But though an even older signifier of the abject than the rat (Stallybrass and White 44-47), the pig was also Demeter's holy animal, sacrificed at her festival (Shuttle and Redgrove 188-89). And the attack that triggers destruction is Carrie's `baptism' with pig's blood, a reversal of this sacred symbolism.

Though King tries to depict his protagonist as the victim of maternal tyranny and children's mob cruelty, the repeated use of these culturally empowered phobic images overrides him. Much of this is due to King's own escalation of catastrophe when Carrie traps the Prom crowd in a fire, electrocuting some and burning others

alive. Later she incendiarises much of the town centre; live wires incinerate civilians in the streets with a "smell ... sweet like pork" as the narrator "watch[es] Georgette Shyres turn black" (187). A traditional female victim enforces the normative message, the threat to the community of women's power; the blended abject in corpse and pig produces King's characteristic "gross-out." The novel may critique the "`natural' understanding of Carrie as deviant female (witch)" (Lovett 159), undermining the orthodox view of menstrual "energ[ies]" (160). It did produce shame and pity in a young male reader who persecuted a `real' Carrie (qtd. Jonathon Davis 22). General opinion, however, is reinforced by King's own view that Carrie ends as "a bitch goddess" (Norden 59). That is, normative and phobic messages drown this potential subversiveness.

Amid the plethora of narrative voices, mimicry of the hegemonic discourses of science and medicine reinforces this phobia with references to the telekinetic gene that "dominates only in the female," bearers who are "Typhoid Marys capable of destroying almost at will" (King, Carrie 96). The closure enforces this panic:

> your little neece is growin like a weed, awfull big for only 2 ... The other day ... Annie was playin with her brothers marbles only they was mooving round all by themselfs. Annie was giggeling...It reminded me of gramma, do you remember when the law came up that time after Pete and there guns flew out of there hands and grammie just laffed and laffed. (221-22)

The spelling, the address, in Tennessee, and the anecdote about "gramma" align this dark female power with lawless hillbillies, excluded from and threatening polite middle-class Maine. Noel Carroll is puzzled by the unkillableness of some monsters (201-02). Homi Bhabha suggests that colonial stereotypes like the bad Negro must be perpetually renewed ("Other" 18). If Carrie figures a constitutive female stereotype, it is clear why she cannot die.

Behind the "unexploded bomb" (Shuttle and Redgrove 41) of the menstruating woman looms the most phobic female type in King's *oeuvre*, the mother who devours Carrie herself. Predictably, mother and daughter form a fatherless dyad, and King

draws on Gothic's anti-religious tradition to make the mother a religious bigot whose denial of (female) sexuality causes Carrie's fatal innocence. Mrs. White is constructed as the devouring mother of a `bad' male childhood, "a very big woman," her eyes "magnified behind rimless bifocals" (Carrie 52) to seem both monster and giant. Her life with Carrie faithfully repeats the hostile Western mother-daughter relationship. Confronted with Carrie's menarche:

> She thumped Carrie with the side of her foot and Carrie screamed. `Get up, woman. Let's get in and pray. Let's pray to Jesus for our woman-weak, wicked, sinning souls.' (53)

This brutal, repressive or uncaring female authority figure reappears with undiminished resentment throughout King's *oeuvre*, to culminate with Annie Wilkes in Misery (1987).

Dwarfed by these gynophobic giants, King's male characters show none of Koontz's response to feminist demands. The putative hero of Carrie heads a series of males who exemplify King's much-praised ability to produce `decent,' realistic middle-class characters (Herron, "Horror" 58; Winter 33-34; Magistrale 68-70; 104-08). The sexual fantasies of Koontz's Symbolic *oeuvre* appear only once in King's work. Sex, however, is class oriented; the hero and his clean middle-class girlfriend reach orgasm in the back-seat of his car, a muted version of Koontz's sexual fireworks. Less typically, having played Prince Charming by taking Carrie to the Prom, the hero is destroyed by the New Woman's holocaust. The villain, in contrast, is a decidedly lower-class bully, again initiating a line of bad secondary characters, usually destroyed, to purge middle-class trauma, in the major holocaust. He and his gang smoke, drink, worship fast cars, and he indulges in `bad' sex, that is, sado-masochism, with the `bad' middle-class girl. "`Get me dirty'" (King, Carrie 122) she orders. These types vary very little throughout King's *oeuvre*.

Where female sexuality powers the nightmare New Woman in Carrie, King's vampire novel, 'Salem's Lot (1975) ricochets off "the wall" of Dracula (King, Danse 40), and at the flood-tide of '70s feminist validation, "largely jettison[s] the sexual

angle" of Stoker's work (85). Though the vampire remains a foreign invader of a New England town, named, aptly, after a sow called Jerusalem, and police and church fail the fighting community, the hero, unlike Jonathan Harker, is another decent, unreconstructed but solid bourgeois. King's saviours are always male, usually writers or teachers, his own trades. The other survivor is a young boy, who introduces the Imaginary in his visions of haunted houses and vampires. Fitting this pre-sexual ambience, the fighting community is almost entirely male, and the survivors form an all-male but apparently acceptable family. Unlike the smouldering bisexuals of Anne Rice's equal best-seller Interview With The Vampire (1976), King's Barlow entirely lacks the sexual threat of Stoker's Dracula, and Stoker's central Lucy-Mina double is compressed into one female victim-vampire, Susan, whose death leaves the text without a major female character.

A woman does epitomise the monstrosity of the living dead, with strength that makes the hero "feel like something made of rags" and flesh that parts to the jab of a crucifix with "a hot and porcine smell" (King, 'Salem 268). In contrast to this porcine/feminine abject, the vampirised Susan is quite insipid, her face "blushed with colour," lips "innocent of make-up" and a "flawless" forehead, with "skin like cream" (337). Chelsea Quinn Yarbro remarked that King "is not able to develop a believable woman character between... seventeen and sixty" (49), while his friend Peter Straub adds, "Stevie hasn't discovered sex" (qtd. Norden 58). A subtler implication emerges from Shuttle and Redgrove's reading of the Christopher Lee Dracula films (252-259). They see Dracula as women's Jungian "other husband," the repressed animus who revives in the more assertive sexuality of the paramenstruum. The blood of vampiric possession then becomes woman's magic, the initiating blood of menarche, and of non-procreative sex. "It is the flight from this blood-wisdom of the female that is reconstituted into sadistic fantasies in the male psyche both in actuality and in films" (255). Where Carrie, then, exaggerates the New Woman's terror, 'Salem's Lot suppresses the vampiric female sexuality threatened by Stoker's Lucy, as by the extra-marital sexuality that radical feminism tried to unleash (Segal, Future 75-81).

In an oscillation recalling Female Gothic, King's next novel, <u>The Shining</u> (1977) is his nearest approach to a Symbolic attack on the patriarchy, as it attempts to speak the unspeakable of American capitalism, domestic violence. An old hotel destroys a family by possessing the father, who becomes a psychopath. This archetypal haunted castle is called the Overlook - both a *belle vue*, and the old usage for the evil eye. Its posy of fright-making props culminates with a ghostly female corpse in the bath, "bloated and purple," its "gas-filled belly rising ... like some fleshy island" (King, <u>Shining</u> 204). Far more deadly is the husband's transformation to a shambling nightmare killer, "Jack and yet not Jack," his eyes lit with "a vacant murderous glow," as he buries a roque mallet with "whistling, deadly velocity" in his wife's "soft stomach" (370).

Unlike Koontz's dichotomised male characters, this is a victim/ villain, a middle-class Everyman destroyed by a combination of personal weakness - he drinks and has a vile temper - family background - his father was a wife-basher - and economic depression. A writer who cannot live by writing, his temper makes the Overlook his only job chance. The stress worsens his temper, which loses jobs, which worsens his temper, which rebounds on the family. His wife, a typical King female, is, in stark contrast to Koontz's heroines, plain and wholly domestic and unable to break the spiral of his fall, which reaches its nadir when, having bashed his wife, Jack goes hunting his son. The novel insulates its nightmare by insisting that the hotel has taken over, that:

> It was wearing Daddy's clothes.
> But it was not his daddy.
> *It was not his daddy.* (391)

With the child/reader cornered, narrative solution is achieved by the boy's insistence, "`You're *it*, not my daddy'" (398) that spares him long enough to remember the untended boiler in the cellar will blow, and to run away.

To Vivian Sobchack the film of <u>The Shining</u> (1980) is crucial in depicting the "cultural drama" (3) of '70s patriarchal crisis, for which the horror film transfers responsibility from terrifying children like Carrie to "Dad as the primary negative

force in the middle-class family" (4-9). As the family changed, the horror film dramatised "the terror of a patriarchy without power," "iconically realized" by Jack Nicholson in Kubrick's film (10). But within this nightmare of the nuclear family torn apart by its patriarchal lynchpin, lies the unspeakable reality of domestic violence. The Shining presents particularly vicious images of wife-battery:

> the cane was whickering through the air, smashing against her face. Blood spurted from her nose. Becky screamed. Momma's spectacles dropped into her gravy. The cane ... had come down again, this time on top of her head, splitting the scalp ... the cane had gone up and down on her seven more times before Brett and Mike got hold of him. (King, Shining 212)

Such arbitrary assertion of male dominance appears in English women's stories of paternal tantrums over something as minor as gristle in the mince (Cline 94; 104-09).

King himself remarked that The Shining confesses his child-bashing impulses as a young father (Beahm 396). He also described the strains on his marriage produced by his drinking at the time of Carrie (Norden 38). The Shining glances too at this further misogyny. Exactly "what had driven his daddy to drink," the disintegrating husband wonders: "hadn't it been the woman he was married to?" (355).

That The Shining can approach this unspeakable at all may well be due to '70s feminist campaigns against domestic violence. As in Koontz's work, the very force of its indictment goes near affirming its abject, and it evades the issue by making the hotel the instrument of possession; but it is a long step from the gynophobia of Carrie, though it was 1980 before King could openly condemn domestic violence. Nevertheless, it is hard not to see The Shining as an attempt to face the nightmare of unemployment, eroding male power and domestic violence, and interrogate the myth of the nuclear family. Appearing in the same year as Michaels' and Whitney's depiction of weak fathers, it records the patriarchal loss distinguished by Sobchack. Taken with The Vision, it makes 1977 the height of both male writers' early response to feminism.

Raising the New Man: Koontz 1978-1985

Having established his masculine abject and reached his strong heroine's height,

Koontz worked to balance her with a palatably sensitised hero. In <u>The Face of Fear</u> (1978), another psychopathic killer is hunted down by a male clairvoyant. With the usual female victims comes a heroine "[s]exy", but "[i]n business ... every bit as tough as she was pretty," a harbinger of the Female Gothic '80s businesswomen, beautified to suit male desire, but still the hero's "doctor and nurse as well as his lover" (Koontz, <u>Face</u> 37). But having faced the worst with the self-saving heroine in <u>The Vision</u>, he can now imagine a hero not only possessed of `feminine' or not-human powers, but

> not tall, but lean and hard. He was thirty-eight, yet he still had a trace of boyish vulnerability. (41)

At the crunch, of course, he can violently destroy the villain and protect the heroine. But he is the first step in a far-ranging shift that will `move the goal posts' in the contest of patriarchy and feminism, as men retain the saviour's role but appropriate now covertly prized feminine qualities, in opposition to apparently admired but ever more masculinist heroines.

<u>Whispers</u> (1980) reaches equity in this process, with a heroine both "one of the most beautiful women [he] had ever seen" (73), and a top Hollywood script-writer. Like Koontz himself, she has risen from a childhood "nightmare" of poverty and paternal drunkenness (Munster 18-19) in the Chicago slums, to own her rose garden in Bel Air. But she is also a high-profile '80s career woman, a model business individual; and "always ... a loner" (Koontz, <u>Whispers</u> 25). Again, the idea of female relations or friends is absent. But she is a greater threat to the patriarchy than the clairvoyant, for she apparently needs no men at all.

Against this menace Koontz deploys a genuine SNAM, an LA policeman who is a model capitalist individual, "ambitious" (62), hardworking, a "professional" (63). But like all `good' men, he dislikes singles-bar sex, "`cruising ... looking for fresh meat'" (58). Most striking of all, he "dreamed of earning his living as an artist. He had talent" (65). When the heroine learns, in a revision of the rape myth designed to keep women home, that even the house does not protect her, this SNAM believes her story

of the villain's break-in. But though she repulses one attacker and kills another, the hero has to coax her out of the house, into bed, and finally, save her in the crisis - reasserting the need for male muscle by the most independent woman. In the Male Gothic pattern, however, the villain breaks into her house, while he waits to be invited. On a date they discuss "films and books and music" (199). Extending this new dimension, despite the "inner authority ... of a cop," he is "surprisingly gentle." And, spelling it out, "sensitive" (202).

This new male ideal is framed between the `bad' masculinities of the villain and the hero's misogynistic police partner, with whom he achieves Koontz's only relational male bonding. In an echo of a supportive women's relationship, the hero backs him in shoot-outs, listens to the tale of his marriage failure, and breaks down over his death. Both are a striking contrast to a masculine abject that, in keeping with the "folklore" that "there are no bad children - only bad parents" (LeMasters 289) is blamed on paternal incest, childhood in a classic decayed Victorian mansion, and maternal abuse that has left the physically huge villain insane and psychically inseparable from his twin. Each calls the other `himself.'

Again, the persistent images of slashed and raped victims off-set this abject's ejection, but despite stress on its paternal source, the `bad' mother is an ominous harbinger of conservatism. It is deepened by a glimpse of assertive female sexuality, which makes the hero feel "like a tasty little morsel" (Koontz, Whispers 56). The eating metaphor signals the *vagina dentata*, discerned in the carnivorous monster from Alien (1979) (Creed, "Horror" 54; Lowder Newton 295), which here betokens the archaic mother herself. Behind doors that would close "like a set of jaws," she would be "all over him ... using him until he fragmented and dissolved and simply ceased to exist except as a part of her" (Koontz, Whispers 56). Even for Koontz, assertive female sexuality remains terrifying.

Thus as Female Gothic and American feminism reached their Utopian apogee, the more favourable Male Gothic writer is already in tune with the '80s conservative swing. Koontz's orthodoxy increases after Reagan's election. By Darkness Comes

(1983), his use of racial Others contrasts sharply with Whitney's concurrent treatment. Now the villain is a Haitian voodoo priest who intends to take over New York. Increasing American "fear of the Third World" (Fitting, "Alien" 289) may have overcome Matheson's realistic influence, which made all Koontz's previous villains middle-class whites. Even more reactively, hero and heroine are New York police, for the first time discarding '70s paranoia to align good adult characters with `the system.' Again, the action moves to complete a good nuclear family by inserting the heroine into the group of children and widowed hero.

The heroine, however, is a long step tougher than the script-writer in <u>Whispers</u>. Despite a "noble, classic, feminine face" (Koontz, <u>Darkness</u> 29) she is a clone of '80s police-women like Cagney and Lacey, tough-talking, quick-shooting, hard and cynical. Extending the male post-feminist dilemma, she is financially independent and quite uninterested in marriage, a work rival, a female man.

The feminised hero wrong-sides these qualities. When she greets him with, "`We have two stiffs'," he complains, "`Isn't there   at   least   time   for   polite chit-chat?'" (27) Investigating later murders, he "feels" it is the same case, and she retorts, "`Don't get mystical on me'" (33). `Feeling' and `mysticism' are attributes scorned in a woman; in a man they become a narrative strategy at once allowing the text to insist on male attractiveness to picky feminist women, and to wrong-foot the heroine, who appears hard and unfeeling even before she is sidelined by their lack in the final crisis.

Here, when the voodoo killer's gremlin creatures have hunted the family into a New York blizzard, the heroine huddles in a cathedral with his children while with his intuitive `sense' of evil, the hero locates the villain; whereupon he wins a sorcerer's battle by literally pouring his own blood into the void of "Hell." This time piercing of the male body becomes an image of transcendent sacrifice that Shuttle and Redgrove might well read as a further colonising of women's magic, already appropriated by the Eucharist.

Suppressing the New Woman: King 1978-1980

Koontz's reactive move was anticipated by King's <u>The Stand</u> (1978). Both King and Koontz often blend SF with Male Gothic, and <u>The Stand</u> is a mirror twin of Niven and Pournelle's SF novel, <u>Lucifer's Hammer</u> (1977). These male texts in non-realist genres match the rise of the New Right before ERA, when the threat of late '70s feminist essentialism and separatism evidently began to outweigh the discourse of rights, even for liberal males. Hence among American domestic problems King specifically cites inflation and the abortion question (<u>Danse</u> 447), or by synecdoche, since abortion remains a major concern in America (Ann Summers 54-58), feminism; as in the house, masculine ego damage outside was set to rebound on troublesome women at home.

This fictional backlash produces a masculinist fantasy variation on a favourite narrative in post-war SF, the Fall of Civilisation: after some cataclysm a few valiant survivors must fight off anarchic Others to preserve the flame. In King's novel, '70s paranoia lays the blame squarely on the state, with the escape of a killer virus from a research station. The fantasy's contradictions emerge as King gleefully lists the "actual relief[s]" of barbarism: no more gas shortages, cold war, crime, "No more Ronald McDonald! ... No more terrorists! *No more bullshit!*" (<u>Danse</u> 446-49); while at the same time both texts grimly fight to re-impose a morality based on "those things which the heart understands to be true" (451) - in other words, "the unconscious principles of the ethos" (Bourdieu 77), the habitus. When that habitus is American middle-class, the brave new world becomes a masculinist Utopia, invoking a Golden Cave Age when `civilisation' equalled physical strength, violence and he-man values, and women assumed their proper dependency.

Post-Apocalypse society is figured by these reactive roles for women as passive, dependent protectees, or potential victims of abduction and rape. Feminist readers, however, receive a direct warning:

> Women's lib ... was nothing more nor less than an out-growth of the technological society. Women were at the mercy of their bodies. They were smaller. They tended to be weaker. A man couldn't get with child but a woman could ... And a pregnant woman is a vulnerable human being ... Before

civilisation ... women had been slaves. (King, Uncut 651-52)

One is tempted to retort that "technology" does not equal "civilisation," and that women were better off in Minoan Crete (Rohrlich 30-37), to repeat Sojourner Truth's refutal of female weakness (Tuttle 328), to add that it is a patriarchal elision to equate `woman' and `pregnant,' and that "wise women" handled unwanted pregnancy until ousted by patriarchal medicine (Chamberlain 10-45). Nevertheless, this clot of masculinist assumptions spells out the sub-text's warning: Better pull your horns in; civilisation is fragile, and without it, see where you'll be?

Good and evil male characters are identified by their reaction to this feminine temptation, offering male readers both the license of the masculine abject, and the gun-toting, engine-fixing, brain-waving role of the `good' man. In a cruder way, The Stand anticipates Koontz's sensitive heroes:

> Stu attracted her ... Stu was calm, capable, and most of all he was not ... `twenty pounds of bullshit in a ten-pound bag.' (Uncut 652)

It is axiomatic that de-civilised women instantly lose both inhibitions and independence: "she needed a man. Oh God, she badly needed a man" (652). This clone of the Great American All-round Hero duly escapes the dying state system, saves the lady and, when the new society threatens to replicate the old, decamps with her to keep the isolated nuclear family unit as the only tenable paradigm for a New Jerusalem.

Post-Fall zones of civilisation are narrow. Homosexuals are out. Sedgwick reads homo/heterosexual as the "presiding master-term" of contemporary masculinity (Closet 11), and points out that developing the category "homosexual" offers "a disproportionately powerful instrument of social control" (Men 86), since it makes all men vulnerable to homophobic blackmail. Homophobia then becomes "a mechanism for regulating the behaviour of the many by the specific oppression of the few" (88-89). It is hence no accident that homosexuality draws instant retribution in most

King novels. In The Stand homosexual plague victims are friends of the villain, and a homosexual rapist is killed within hours. Negroes are also out, especially criminal negroes, like the male junky whose death climaxes the roll of minor plague victims. Hispanics never appear. White criminals join the evil crusade and die amid its defeat. The supreme villain, the "black man," Randall Flagg, is specifically related to the leader of the Symbionese Liberation Army who kidnapped Patty Hearst (King, Danse 446-47); that is, an American terrorist, a violent internal threat to the middle-class.

For women the norm is brutally simple: be white, young, monandrous, fertile, available but not aggressive. A twenty-six year old virgin, "morbidly afraid of rape," "didn't like people" (Uncut 436), and when she shoots at an innocent male is killed by her own gun. "No great loss" (438). But a forward white girl is eventually struck and rejected, seen as "something inhuman" (528). On the other hand, a sexually available but aged white woman dies on the road from New York, while a young white woman goes bad after declining a `good' male offer of sex. Age and blackness protect a patriarch in The Shining, but in The Stand, despite three husbands whom she "had welcomed ... as a woman must always welcome a man, by giving way before him" (608), the Negro matriarch dies on the trek across America, leaving her cabin to be colonised by the white nuclear family. The young white heroine selects wisely, when invited, among the capable males, and after a stint as victim, when a villain tries to abort her with a coat-hanger, ends up safe in the norm with her house, child, and All-American man.

The Fall even dissipates the Imaginary bogey of the devouring mother, who dies, with a final glimpse of the abject, during the plague: "the thing he never forgot, was the way her visible eye rolled up ... like the eye of a hog in a slaughtering pen" (200). But the heroine's mother gets the full patriarchal double-shuffle. The heroine's extra-marital pregnancy raises the question of abortion, which King solves, after Bush-like qualms of conscience, in favour of the child. Her henpecked father sympathises. Her mother speaks for the patriarchy:

> `After all we've done for you, this is the thanks we get? For you to go out and ... and ... rut with a boy like a bitch in heat?' (129)

When she slaps the girl her husband slaps her: "`You have had that coming for ten years or better'" (133), he finally asserts his masculinity. It is no surprise that plague takes this scapegoat before the daughter eases her father's death.

The Stand was re-released in 1990 as "The Complete and Uncut Edition," although references to Bush and Tom Cruise imply it was also an up-dating. Its generic hybridity is remarked (Collings, "The Stand"; Casebeer), and the emended version favours fantasy above SF (Casebeer 49). The 1978 ending, however, is open. Safe in their nuclear family, the hero asks, "`do you think people ever learn anything?'" implying, will there be another apocalypse? To which the heroine can only respond, "`I don't know'" (King, The Stand 733-4). The 1990 version leaves Flagg poised to wreck a primitive society, a vision of undying white colonial `darkness.' Meanwhile, anecdotes like King's own story of a Stand reader who repelled a mugger (more sadly than ironically, an unbalanced black Vietnam veteran) (Danse 441-42), and a radio survey where The Stand was voted greatest book ever by a majority of teenage Californian girls (Herron, "Good" 131), imply that readers elided the '70s ending into a powerful positive message. This seems a classic case of readerly `poaching' from a text that simultaneously denies and reinforces the status quo.

In The Dead Zone (1979) and Firestarter (1980), King again ignored feminism's existence while reinforcing the norm. Of three paranormal psychics, the New Girl in Firestarter, protected by pre-sexuality and her father's permission to use her powers, escapes both a `bad' Indian father and a meta-CIA institution. But her father and the emblematic `normal' hero of The Dead Zone die, even when using their powers for good.

> `God ... destiny ... providence ... fate ... seems to be reaching out with its steady and unarguable hand ... Perhaps I was meant to die in that car-crash, or even earlier.'(King, Zone 461)

Or, it may be, the pressure of the norm, the habitus - "God... fate... destiny" - was too great to resist.

When this norm alters, however, the Male Gothic writer, so sensitive to community concerns, is equally unable to resist. Published the same year as <u>Someone in the House</u>, <u>Cujo</u> (1981) begins an era when this strongly normative writer must take account of and even repeat feminist stances that have permeated the habitus; the first is the attitude to domestic violence.

Bending to the New Woman: King 1981-5

In <u>Cujo</u> as in <u>The Dead Zone</u>, normative retribution operates disguised as destiny, when a St. Bernard possessed by rabies - "Free will was not a factor" (<u>Cujo</u> 344) - punishes two erring families. In the first, the dog's owner is a wife-basher and domestic tyrant who threatens to warp his son. In <u>'Salem's Lot</u> a bashed wife is adulterous; in <u>The Shining</u> the husband is `possessed,' in <u>The Stand</u> striking a wife is justified. In <u>Cujo</u>, however, the culprit's sins rebound on his head because he omits the dog's anti-rabies shots; Cujo first tears out his drinking buddy's throat and then, "a blood-streaked killing machine with strings of foam flying backward from his jaws" (148) he "came for Joe Camber's balls" (149).

The second family's punishment introduces conservative elements. Robin Wood (qtd. Magistrale 31) sees Cujo as a "symbol of masculine aggression:" but since the dog punishes an adulterous wife and a wife-beater, I would call it an agent of the norm doubling as metaphor for economic terrors of the '70s. This father's advertising agency is about to fail. Left alone while he overworks, his wife has an affair, before she and their three-year-old son are marooned in the elegantly conceived enclosed space of a stalled car, with Cujo outside.

Retribution intervenes when the discarded lover destroys a note saying where they are. With the hysteria of a typical King female, she flattens the battery trying to restart the car. It is ninety degrees inside. The rescuing sheriff is killed before their eyes, and though she finally destroys the weakening dog, her son is already dead. The novel closes with the agency saved and the couple reconciled; but despite King's

explicit claim that "the visitation is [not] a God-sent punishment of Donna Trenton for her adultery" (qt. Winter 115), it is hard not to see the boy's death as punishing both for family neglect, and Donna for her infidelity. On the other hand, although the female support system of a sister fails the abused wife, at the close she and her son are prospering as an independent, female-headed unit that retains the family farm, an outcome surprisingly near Michaels' Black Rainbow. From this view, Cujo enunciates a changing moral norm: female adultery is still punished, but wife-beaters justify *post hoc*, female-headed families.

Christine (1983) illustrates both feminist infiltration of the habitus and the strength of gynophobic stereotypes. This story of a demon car that destroys men when "ownership [turns into] Possession" (Cover note) literalises the fear of adolescent males becoming obsessed by cars, and culminates King's fictional exploration of the enormous role cars play in American society, through "Trucks" (1976), where Mack trucks embody the "techno-horror" of machines mastering humans (Egan 142) to The Dead Zone, where a car delivers the blow of destiny, to Cujo, where a car becomes the enclosed Gothic space. In Christine the car is evil's symbol, site and agent. Again the novel is set on the "outermost limit of kidhood" (24), and Christine, emblematic of female sexuality, destroys the male bond of narrator and male victim.

Here King uses feminist discourse for the first time since Carrie. When he and his father mock his mother's creative writing class, the male narrator admits

> you could be saying ... that my father and I ... were nothing more than a couple of male sexist pigs oinking it up in our kitchen, and ... you'd be perfectly right. (71)

Accused of tricking the female lead to exclude her from the climactic danger, he again admits

> I would not do it the same way now - but I was going on eighteen then, and there's no male chauvinist pig like an eighteen-year-old male chauvinist pig. (565-66)

Though by 1983 "sexist pig" is a mere cliche, the context does appear to indicate change. But then the girl serves as bait, is battered by the demon car and rescued by the male, just as, having admitted their sexism, narrator and novel continue to deride female literary pretensions. King does not or cannot seem to realise that admitting and combatting prejudice are not the same.

This Clayton's feminism is lost in a bevy of phobic female roles, including an extremely hostile portrait of the powerful mother, "Regina," whose domination of her wimpish academic husband and son, the male victim, is tacitly made responsible for his being "a loser" (1). But she pales before the mechanised female monster, the red Plymouth Fury with the grille that snarls like "steel teeth" (77), whose colour insists on the menstruating vagina that gave the *vagina dentata* its real taboo power (Shuttle and Redgrove 246): Christine itself.

Christine is an astonishing accretion of gynophobias. Snaring the victim, `she' is a motorised Belle Dame Sans Merci: "[I]t's the way you feel when a friend of yours falls in love and marries a right high-riding, dyed-in-the-wool bitch" (King, <u>Christine</u> 83). The plentiful eating images, old cars sucking money like vampires (20), a Venus Fly-trap with "its green jaws wide open" (124), "*her grille snarling like an open mouth full of chrome teeth*" (76) enforce this invocation of the *vagina dentata*. As jealous Other Woman, when Arnie falls for the heroine, Christine locks its doors as the former chokes on a hamburger. As a killing machine of middle-class revenge, the car attacks the gang who vandalise it, like "a dog or a she-wolf" (286). The murders end with the car's engine sounding like "something prehistoric ... a great wolf, or perhaps a sabre-toothed tiger" (351). This carnivorous imagery evokes the archaic mother, who duly "swallow[s]" (42) Arnie: the heroine feels "swallowed in Christine," as if "making love inside the body of her rival" (235). The Oedipal blurring is forwarded because a driver is actually inside his car, where, in a womb fantasy "[y]ou could enter her any time and rest on her plush upholstery, rest in her warmth" (381). But the recurring "sick, rotten smell of death and decay" (235; 322; 373; 493) implies a rotten womb.

By the novel's climax Christine is partly the ship of Death in "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" driven by the ghost/corpse of her first owner, and partly the "old and infinitely clever she-monster" (521) whom the narrator batters to death with a sewage truck in the modern haunted castle of a deserted garage. A sub-text links the car to the "unending fury" (113) of her first owner, an illiterate wife-bashing loser firmly sited in the lower class, with a phobia about "Them" - that is, the system. Like Carrie's, this threat is perpetuated because the car is apparently back in action at the novel's end. Against the traditional phobias powering this motorised monstrous-feminine, King's gestures to feminism disappear.

Off the Rails: King and Koontz, 1982-6

As '80s Female Gothic mirrors the contradictions of feminism, '80s Male Gothic oscillates, with the writers' trajectories crossing from reactive to Utopian. This may follow political conservatism, or match the pace of feminism's refraction through the habitus, but overall it echoes, as with Female Gothic, feminists' loss of political momentum. "Mrs. Todd's Shortcut" (1984), is the apogee of King's response to women's validation. Here a married woman drives her "little Mercedes go-devil" ("Mrs. Todd" 213) clean out of time, to become Diana with a rejuvenated New England local as her Endymion. `Diana' is married, sandwiched inside two men's stories; the Endymion legend is the most domesticated version of Diana/Hecate, and Linda Badley reads it as inserting women into the murderous auto-mobile mystique evoked by Christine (91-2). I would argue that for a woman to drive reverses gender roles, putting her into the male seat of agency and power. Driving, Mrs. Todd at least evokes the Goddess of Black Rainbow, "something *wild* and something free" that both attracts and frightens her Endymion, because "`she looked like she could kill you if her eye ... fell on you and she decided to love you back'" (King, "Mrs. Todd" 222). But for once the text does not succumb to fear of female power. At its centre, Mrs. Todd speaks for women's freedom in a Utopian moment King never achieves again. If women want to be goddesses, she explains, they do not want to do so by "`loll[ing] on ... the foothills of Olympus'." Rather, "`all a woman wants is what a man wants - a

woman wants to *drive*'" (233).

While Koontz's '80s texts align heroes and heroines with the system and steadily transfer `good' gender attributes, the sadistic rapes and killings disappear, and the masculine abject alters. First it is adulterated by supernatural evils, as in Phantoms (1983) or Darkness Comes (1983). Then the supernatural too is rehabilitated in the astonishing Strangers (1986). This blend of SF and Male Gothic achieves Ricoeur's sense of production with a Marxist, quasi-feminist and generic Utopian moment, even managing Bloch's transformation of "the most acute anxiety into ... an expectation of the future in which joy and terror are indistinguishable" (qtd. Jameson, Marxism 133).

Generic escape begins with a multiple narrative about the guests at a mid-West motel the night a UFO landed nearby. Koontz's determination to evade the horror label (Munster; Laymon) creates a Dickensian crowd of characters who reduce sensitised hero and tough heroine to another plot line. The villain is a '70s throwback, a `hawk' general who has captured both witnesses and aliens, brainwashed the former and imprisoned the latter. He comes extremely close to Theweleit's construction of the paranoiacally individual fascist male. When memory blocks slip, the humans are drawn back to the motel and discover common ground in dreams of a threatening "moon." Again, the romantic plot is submerged in the stress on their shared trauma and comradeship. But this Gothic clone of Close Encounters (1977) then switches its scenario exactly in the manner Bloch postulates, when at the most threatening moment the fighting community finds the aliens are really benevolent. They have gifted some humans with paranormal powers, such as healing. When these are used to break into the underground army base, the general suicides after failing to blow up the spaceship, and some of the community go aboard to return with glorious news: safely linked in their abnormal fellowship, they can go out to pass on their alien powers, impose peace and save the world.

In this euphoria the fighting community fuses into an echo of Whitney's extended family, one of only two cases where Koontz can consider ceding masculine

individuality outside a sexual bond. The aliens' role reversal also produces a sense of revolution and achieved millennium, giving the extended family Utopian overtones of a collective conscious-ness. Whether it anticipated *glasnost* or was an extreme narrative solution to the threat of increasing militarism (Kemp 216-17) like the Starwars project, <u>Strangers</u> is a striking escape from the generic gravity well, especially in the mid-'80s. A feminist reader's sole quibble might be that the paranormal powers are granted almost exclusively to males.

Straightened Rails: Koontz 1987-89

<u>Strangers</u> and "Mrs. Todd's Shortcut" fall either side of <u>Aliens</u> (1985), a film whose positive female roles mark what may be called the high-tide of feminist cultural approval, but which lags behind the Female Gothic match to feminist political clout. From this mid-'80s apogee Koontz's treatment of heroines descends in <u>Twilight Eyes</u> (1987) to heavy masculinising foiled by ethical and physical weakness. In <u>Watchers</u> (1987) the heroine regresses to an artistic victim needing rescue from her tyrannous aunt. Both heroes are standard SNAMs, but in <u>Twilight Eyes</u>, Koontz pushes his hero's abnormality beyond clairvoyance: he can see the "goblins" who feed on human pain and can assume human form.

With the slide from endorsement of strong women, villains also change. In <u>Twilight Eyes</u> Koontz deconstructs the usual human/monster hierarchy, first to give carnival freaks subjectivity, then to have them scorn the `normal' customers as marks, then to uncover goblins among the customers. This offers a rich potential to extend the usual Male Gothic debate on monstrosity, increased by the insistence that they are "`our creation'" (Koontz, <u>Eyes</u> 246). But the generic demands of SF and the thriller, and the pressure of masculine self-esteem, reduce this window to an extrapolation of goblin origins, and a mission to destroy their base while saving the morally frail heroine.

In <u>Watchers</u>, Koontz splits the masculine abject, supplementing the human psychopath with a genetically engineered baboon warrior. Again there is potential for a complex moral dichotomy and examination of `humanness;' but the need to eject the

masculine abject decrees that the only pitiable `bad' male is unhuman. Ominously, a woman produces the "abomination" (249), described as "Yarbeck's warrior" (246; 248) or "Yarbeck's monstrosity" (248). And the compulsion of the hero's validation and the search-and-destroy formula see it destroyed.

Lightning (1988), however, presents both a strong, independent, successful heroine and a female support system. The heroine survives poverty, loss of family, a bad orphanage and a disastrous marriage to become, in sequences that acquire an obvious autobiographical tone, a best-selling novelist. In the orphanage she meets another survivor who overcomes loss of her twin to become an equally successful female comedian. Their friendship spans the novel, a wisecracking but deeply supportive bond reminiscent of King's male friendships, though it is paralleled in female fantasy writers like Emma Bull. But the heroine's success depends on the interventions of the hero, an apostate Nazi scientist who emerges like a literal *deus ex time-machine* at crucial points in her life, and eventually saves and persuades her into the nuclear family.

The Bad Place (1990) is Koontz's reactive perigee. Here his strong heroine becomes a masculinist travesty in a pair of private investigators, she the gun-slinger, he the instrument man. Beyond this reversal of the male-mind/female-body opposition, he fills their office with Disney cartoons, she "worried about what [clients] might think" (130). With "any insect more formidable than a housefly, he called upon Julie to capture or kill it" (140). She wants to batter a recalcitrant witness, he restrains her. He gets telepathic messages from her brother, who has Downs's syndrome; she finishes a job, while the villain kills the brother. So childishness, impulsive compassion, paranormal powers and fear of insects, all classic feminine attributes, valorise the male, while the female, inheriting masculine toughness, violence and rationality, appears unsympathetic. And, of course, the villain easily overpowers her; under his eyes "she was cowed, perhaps for the first time in her life" (489).

To this judo throw of his strong heroine, Koontz adds a masculine abject from an Addams family cubed. A vampire with a teleporting amnesiac brother and a pair of

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lesbian twin sisters whose physical and psychic communion extends to animals, "Candy" springs from an archaic mother *par excellence*, who teaches him to suck blood from her finger or breast, a perversion of female "blood wisdom" (Shuttle and Redgrove 255) that leaves him fixated on her after the amnesiac kills her with an axe. Worse still, she was born of sibling incest, with male genes supposedly mutated by taking LSD, and is a hermaphrodite who produced children from her own sperm and ova. Like the attempt of an unmarried English virgin to have a child by artificial insemination, this female self-sufficiency is clearly intolerable, and Candy has paid its price. He was born without a penis, castrated before birth.

This phobic bouquet includes Male Gothic's only extended portrait of lesbians, "the Pollard twins, long-legged and bare-foot," dressed in panties and T-shirts, "as sinuous as their cats." Both "virtually radiated wildness" as if they might "do anything that occurred to them" (Koontz, Place 490-91); they scare the safely heterosexual heroine as much as the villain. Here homophobia applied to women invokes older gynophobic responses. The twins are not only "wild" but feline, a traditional image of female menace, and they transgress all the male taboos, denying passive femininity, dissolving physical and mental bounds across the human/ animal boundary as well as between individuals. In a final shift of female power to the `bad' side, they even cow the villain who cows the heroine.

Naturally such deviants cannot be allowed to live. Candy kills the twins on learning that they ate his adored mother to absorb her spirit. Candy's brother then teleports his sibling until their bodies merge:

> a slanted mouth gaped ... where a nose should have been; and a second mouth pocked the left cheek ... Another face was set in the chest, mouthless but with two eye sockets, in one of which lay an unblinking eye ... the other socket was filled with bristling teeth. (497)

The dissolution of the impregnable male body, the "most intense fear" of Theweleit's male fascists (2: 40) caps this phobic cornucopia as The Bad Place touches bottom in Koontz's conservative swing. It is saddening to watch the '70s sketches of female

power and the Utopian venture of the '80s devolve back into orthodoxy. It is the more so since, after "Mrs. Todd's Shortcut," King's *oeuvre* follows the same path.

Straighter Rails: King 1986-89

In King's Pet Sematary (1983), a noted parallel to Frankenstein (Pharr; Schumann 113), the horror of a father resurrecting a dead son produces a normative message that falls into the stance found by feminists in Shelley's novel (Anne Mellor, "Possessing"; Moers 94-99; Waxman): would-be male lifegivers destroy others and themselves. Like Dream of Orchids (1985), however, King's next novel, It (1986) manages a two-step between adoption of feminism, criticism of homophobia, and insistence on homosexual and gynophobic stereotypes. It has King's one belated attempt at Koontz's character option, producing an independent career woman, complete with female bond; this latter actually anticipates Midnight by two years. King's woman begins as token female in a fighting community that battles an evil lodged literally in the system, the sewers, of a small New England town. In the first battle, she is even a better shot than the boys, but her warrior role finishes early, and she then becomes an archetypal passive site of wisdom. The boys symbolise their rite of passage by all having sex with her, after which their path-finder can remember the way out of the sewers.

As an adult, she is a successful fashion designer, a first among King women, and another sign, in comparison to Koontz and Whitney, of how slowly he accepted women's altered status. A tyrannical father emphasises her childhood independence and courage; but then she marries a wife-basher. Advancing from Cujo, King does make the battered wife fight back; but the text manages to have and eat its cake when the husband batters and spiritually breaks her female support system, a divorced feminist writer. And after a minor role in the final battle, she ends with her childhood sweetheart, safely back under male tutelage.

It does attempt to attack racism and homophobia; like Pet Sematary, it almost enunciates a critique of its habitus. "`It *was* Derry'" (It 48) says a battered homosexual of his attackers, meaning the town (Derry) as a whole. But though this has been read as

satiric (Keesey 191-94), later homosexual episodes, strictly catastrophic and strictly among villains, suggest the usual normative response. Several times the text attempts to speak the unspeakable: "It might be them" (486), "`It's ... inside'" (499), but finally it deflects blame to an invading ET. Emerging from the sewers as a homi-cidal clown, this evil possesses the lower class bullies who terrorise the fighting community. The latter encapsulates East American society, including a Jewish boy, a Negro, and the girl/ woman, along with obligatory white males like the script-writing final saviour. But racism prevails when the Negro is sidelined before the last struggle, and the Jewish boy becomes a casualty.

Meanwhile, the phobia of the devouring mother remains intact. In childhood the female warrior's eventual spouse was fed into obesity by his single-parent mother. The Jewish boy marries a replica of the huge, clinging mother who coddled him into psychosomatic asthma. When the bullies beat him up and she goes hysterical, he thinks "she's only eating me because she loves me" (776). Finally, the true form of the extra-terrestrial evil under Derry is a gigantic she-spider, a disappointing imitation of Tolkien's Shelob in The Lord of the Rings.

As Whitney envisioned her Hawaiian Utopia and Michaels produced the contradictory messages of Smoke and Mirrors (1989), King enters what may be called his Writing Phase, three unusually self-reflexive Male Gothic texts that literalise the problems of a `low' best-selling male writer. Largely ignoring feminism, these texts colonise feminine positions and revert to gynophobic mastertypes. Thus with Misery (1987), King "tried ... to illustrate the powerful hold fiction can achieve over the reader" ("Two" 238); but the text better illustrates the threat readers pose to such a writer. This threat centres on Annie Wilkes, King's ultimate female authority figure.

An ex-nurse and serial killer, Annie is also a fanatic devotee of a female romance heroine called Misery. She literally gives life to the male author of this `junk' creation after a bad car accident; but she then imprisons and tortures him to produce another Misery novel, before he kills her, after pretending to burn the MS unread. Annie is first compared to "an African idol out of She or King Solomon's Mines":

> Her body was big but not generous. There was a feeling about her of clots and roadblocks rather than welcoming orifices. (Misery 8)

As Katherine Gottschalk notes, such a goddess invokes the dark side of the Great Goddess, in forms like the Greek Artemis, both butcher and virgin (196; 200). But an impregnable female body is also both a reversal of the normative opposition and an appropriation of masculinity.

Annie's size further signals a detested powerful mother, and passages of Misery approach regression to a `bad' male infancy. She "breathes life" into the injured hero, and her breath stinks. She confines him to bed and makes him drink floor-mopping water. She tortures him by withholding painkillers. To imprison him she chops his foot off with an axe, a gross distortion of the nurse's feminine nurturing. Beyond her violence - she brutally murders a young policeman - Annie is strong, exaggerating male helplessness, and a manic depressive, whose extreme and arbitrary power is an infantile version of maternal authority. Thanks to the hero's later delusions, she even seems unkillable.

Chiefly, this female power threatens male creativity; it has an apparent biographical basis in King's aunt who "disapproved ... strenuously" of the horror magazines he found in the attic as a child (Danse 115-7), a threat renewed in a dream that recurs "at times of stress," of "writing a novel in an old house where a homicidal madwoman is ... on the prowl." As he labours in a hot third-floor room, he waits for the sound of his typewriter to bring her bursting through the attic door, "all gray hair and crazed eyes, raving and wielding a meat-ax" (104). Since "the history of the individual is never anything other than a certain specification of the collective history of his group or class" (Bourdieu 86), behind aunt and madwoman stands Chodorow's powerful mother. But in this case, her power is generated by her clash with "Romantic ideology."

This is the complex of ideas on authorial self-possession, denial of influence, exclusion of femininity, and repudiation of a female readership, that Marlon Ross finds

constructed by the canonical Romantic poets ("Quest" 26-51; Contours 3-14). As the Romantics tried to deny dependence on the market ("Quest" 33), withholding the MS in Misery violently asserts authorial self-possession, while Annie's death is a brutal narrative solution to the pressure of popular celebrity. Byron indignantly rejected his female readership (35-36). Annie's death is a narrative rejection, justified by a caricature that, like the spate of films about female killers, parts company with `real life.' There, like John Lennon's killer who told King he was "`your number one fan'" (Beahm 364-65), most obsessed fans are male.

Making Annie a female fan of female romance, however, lets King apply Romantic ideology to his more sensitive position as a popular `low' writer. Though King sees his writing as "the literary equivalent of a Big Mac and a large fries from McDonald's" ("After-word" 557), he is also defensive of it:

> I could be in worse company. I could ... be ... a `brilliant' writer like John Gardner and write obscure books for bright academics who eat macrobiotic foods and drive old Saabs with faded ... GENE MCCARTHY FOR PRESIDENT stickers on the rear bumpers. (554)

Since female romance is traditionally sited below even horror fiction, by killing Annie, King's writer purges his *oeuvre* of a powerful feminine abject, and asserts his creator's claim to be a `high' writer too.

Meanwhile, as the Romantic poets colonised the feminine virtues of passion and imagination (Ross, "Quest" 36-38), King's author colonises femininity, excusing his production of female romance as writing, like Scheherazade, to save his life; again, there is a parallel to the demands of the market on King himself. And as women in Romantic poetry become like Mary Tighe and Dorothy Wordsworth, suppressed influences and silenced listeners (Contours 155-86; 4-5), Annie's plot suggestions are first rejected and then subsumed without acknowledgment.

King also colonises the romance form. A good half of Misery is "Paul Sheldon's" novel, Misery's Return; here Misery becomes a surrogate for revenge on Annie, suffering near fatal allergies, capture by an African tribe, display in bondage,

and silent helplessness. As she is imperilled and rescued by the muscular heroes, the nested novel displays an attribute of male-authored romance easily detected by Radway's readers (179): the reader never shares Misery's point of view.

That King's novelist learns to take pride in his romance is a clear narrative solution to King's own `low' best-selling ability. At the same time, Misery's Return lets King flout his own coercive audience. In a decorative edition of Koontz's Twilight Eyes the artwork and production design "literally establish the reader's expectations before the author has had the chance to communicate a word" (Collings, "Koontz" 147). So in a New English Library paperback edition of Misery, an internal cover signals by script and illustration a female romance by a writer like Joanna Lindsey, entitled Misery's Return, "by Paul Sheldon" (Beahm 361). Thus King foregrounds female writing while colonising a female style to reach his own freedom. Were the roles of Annie and Misery less traditional and gynophobic, one might argue that this writerly Utopian impulse achieves a laudable escape.

The Tommyknockers (1988) frames a stereotype of the Romantic writer between threats of control and rivalry expressed in female form. This dystopic version of Strangers has a community possessed and destroyed by a UFO dug up near by. Again, the bodily mutations of "American taxpayers" (690) symbolise the masculine horror of their absorption by an "alien group mind slowly welding them together," a "human net-mind" (289). Again, too, the novel almost manages to indict its habitus. The woman who uncovers the UFO does it herself rather than call in "the Dallas Police" (181) - government institutions who, as in Firestarter, are not publicly accountable. But again, the critique soon deflects to the UFO: "*It's turning Bobbi and everyone in town into the Dallas Police*" (385).

Female victims of the UFO also contrast suppressions of feminism with gynophobic stereotypes. On the one hand the "heart and conscience" (346) of the possessed town is a female constable who was a brilliant law student, reverted to orthodoxy by marrying, but is childless. Though powerful against domestic violence, she can only become the Tommy-knockers' most regretted victim, again allowing the

text both to extol and suppress the New Woman. Her foil is a "`dragon'" (436) who guards her sister's sexuality from the hero, "eat[s]" (479) unhelpful service people, masturbates with a giant vibrator and has only "grim and cheerless climax[es]... she'd never been with a man in bed and never intended to" (480). Even when tortured as a living power source for the Tommyknockers, the text will not forgive her: "She *was* a fiend. She *was* a witch" (639). Despite voluntarily supplying the power to rescue a child victim, she has committed the supreme crime of rejecting men.

The only recourse against superhuman evil is, predictably enough, "one man" (667). "[N]ever, anywhere, had [the Tommyknockers] met anyone quite like this *one man*" (668), who finally gets the ship off earth, destroying the monster community at the cost of his life. This hero is the Romantic poet's stereotype, modified by the myths of Dylan Thomas, the Beat poets, and American novelists like Jack Kerouac and Norman Mailer: drunken, rebellious, involved in nuclear protest marches, he is at violent odds with the academically grounded and feminised ambience of the poetry reading circuit which is his livelihood.

This Romantic's best friend is also his lover, the `dragon's' unmarried sister, a successful Western writer. The genre, her first name, Bobbi, and the frequent use of her surname, turn an attempt at an independent successful woman to a masculinised sketch of the eighteenth-century ideal, the companionate relationship. But whether or not it is the norm's revenge for living alone, childless and independent, she is tacitly blamed for digging up the UFO. She is allowed to retort, "`You don't really think a person chooses something like that, do you?'" (518), but she is also its first victim; abnormal menstruation is a "bad omen" (Burns and Kanner 160), again signalling evil; possessed, she becomes part, then leader of the hive mind, then a physical monster with "a grotesque thatch of tentacles like sea-grass [that] wavered from her vagina" (King, Tommyknockers 499), and finally the hero shoots her when she tries to murder him.

However originally friendly, Bobbi is also a masculinised female writer, and as Marlon Ross illustrates in the covert but fierce contest between Wordsworth and

Coleridge (Contours 87-111), a male poet's male friend is first and last a rival. Again, though Bobbi writes `low' Westerns and the hero produces `high' poetry, she is a prosperous craftsman, and he a drunkard on the edge of bankruptcy. As Annie Wilkes died to exorcise the female reader, Bobbi dies to save the male writer's supremacy.

Embodying the counter-threat of control over the writer's output is the woman behind the poetry circuit. Again like Byron, King's poet scorns the audience on which he depends, "all those stupid menopausal matrons" (Tommyknockers 12), even as the poets exploit the system, loading every extra on "THE TAB" (58). They vent their guilt and resentment on the "principal contributor and head ramrod" (65), who is naturally female, but upper-class and sexually unattractive, with "long but skinny" legs, "non-existent breasts, and eyes as grey as a glacier on a cloudy day" (65-66). But she funds the network and hires the poets: where Bobbi is a rival, this woman, like Annie Wilkes, controls the hero's creativity; she "could muzzle him" (68).

As Misery closes with "Sheldon's" romance on a publishers' "fast-track" (362) and the writer beginning a new novel, the writer in Tommyknockers naturally bests this female threat, drawing most applause at a reading, ravaging an academic party, tipping a drink down her dress as a Parthian shot. His last thoughts, however, plumb the depth of resentment she evokes:

> *Patricia McCardle had tried to break him, but she had never quite been able to do it. Now he was back in Haven, and there was Bobbi coming down the porch steps ... and Gard grabbed Bobbi and hugged her, because it was good to be with your friends.*(683)

In the overall scheme of saving the world, a poetry-tour co-ordinator is insignificant; Romantic ideology, however, inflates her to a symbol of the system for which the Tommyknockers themselves are a substitute. But like a Romantic poet's, the hero's last moments are enclosed between these female poles of threat and friend/rival, which he can deny but cannot escape.

In contrast to Misery, in The Dark Half (1989) King "tried to explore ... the powerful hold fiction can achieve over the writer" ("Two" 238); the novel actually

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dramatises Romantic ideology's ultimate struggle, that of the writer with his male rival, his masculine `other' self. Ironically, a major strand in horror fiction began with Polidori's "The Vampyre," where an aristocrat closely resembling Byron destroys a young man whose fate parallels the writer's; "The Vampyre" was long claimed as Byron's work (Montague Summers, Kith 280-90). King internalises the contest as a struggle between a writer and his pseudonym who comes to life, kills his friends and tries to subsume the writer as well.

The text can thus symbolise the literary struggle as a contest for physical bodies, and the threat to psychic integrity is again coded through physical signifiers of the masculine abject. The writer's childhood brain tumour proves to be his subsumed twin: "Protruding from the smooth surface of the dura was a single blind and malformed human eye" (King, Half 9). As in The Bad Place, gross breakdown of male body borders suggests the ultimate abnormality: "so horrible -... so *alien*" (377). Later the alter ego physically decomposes, a "decayed scarecrow" (339), which heals when the writer reassumes his persona, while his `real' body decays. In the end, male rivals cannot co-exist. The mutually exclusive oppositions of Western thought are seldom more evident than in the final battle, when the writer literally kills his other self. Nor is there a sharper contrast with female treatments of the male double; in Ursula Le Guin's famous A Wizard of Earthsea (1968), a male wizard accepts and absorbs his dark half, while in A Different Light (1979) another SF writer, Elizabeth A. Lynn, can imagine a dying artist's mind transferred so his personality and talent shares a living man's flesh.

The ideologically correct removal of a Romantic rival also contradicts King's relationship with his fellow horror writer, Peter Straub. Personal friends, each admires the other's work (Wiater 159); in double interviews they "finish each other's sentences, agree with everything the other says" (Goldstein 417), and they collaborated on The Talisman (1984), whose production was "never a problem for either" (419). In further contrast, when King constructed his own alter ego, "Richard Bachman," a "fairly unpleasant fellow," he "died suddenly" after the pen-name was uncovered (King,

"Why" viii). Yet Koontz abandons pen-names without bloodshed, even after an interview as "Leigh Nichols" on novels he marketed as suspense romance (qtd. Neilson 214).

Internalising the contest of Romantic ideology, however, permits exploration of the pivotal question, "`*Who* are *you when you write?*'" (King, Half 128). Here the *alter ego* has multiple significances for King and his *oeuvre*. The light half of The Dark Half is "Tad Beaumont," the antithesis of Gard in The Tommyknockers: a decent upper-middle-class writer, living in Maine, a good post-feminist husband who helps care for his young children. "George Stark," the dark half, crowns King's line of lower-class bullies, a Mississippi red-neck who drives "a dead-black Tornado" (33), kills with a razor and sums up William Burroughs as, "`Couldn't shoot a pistol worth shit, but *smart*'" (432). Vulgar American masculinism is vital to King's non-fiction literary persona, as a good ole boy who drinks beer, loves baseball, and opposes censorship. More importantly, he admits that "particularly in my teens, I felt violent, as if I wanted to lash out at the world" (Norden 41); there is a "destructive side of me" (35). As Tad "`loves'" Stark's "`blackness'" (King, Half 442), in this text King walks the edge of a literary personality disintegration; for Stark is King's own dark half. In killing Stark, as in killing Bobbi or Annie, the writer inside stands proxy for the writer outside the text.

Beside violent impulses Stark may represent King's masculine abject, the antithesis of the SNAM to whom Tad Beaumont is King's closest approach. In this case, feminism's sole influence in this text, with its largely ineffective wife and female victim, may be King's version of Koontz's Victorian dichotomy. Stark can also represent King's `low' class origins, struggling on the edge of poverty from his father's desertion in childhood till the publication of Carrie (Norden 40-41). "Beaumont" is a `high' name, whereas much is made of Stark's "cracker" accent (King, Half 172; 217; 245); like Carrie's reincarnation, he comes from the threatening hillbilly South. As the death of Annie Wilkes symbolically purged King's *oeuvre* of `low' fictional affiliations, Stark can represent King's `low' fictional status, the part the would-be canonical writer

must deny.

Though the closure of <u>The Dark Half</u> is not the double destruction of <u>Frankenstein</u> and <u>Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde</u>, it is by no means happy. The text wonders if "things will ever be right" (465) with husband and wife; in fact <u>Needful Things</u> (1990) reveals that she "took the twins and left him" (65-66), and he is seen as "an unindicted co-conspirator" (199) in the destruction of another family. King created Bachman "to do something as someone other than Stephen King" ("Why" viii); and he observed about writing <u>The Talisman</u> that, "`I felt sort of safe for the first time in five or seven years in a creative way'" (Goldstein 419). In contrast to these empowering `realities,' King's Writing Phase illustrates the dead-end into which Romantic ideology can drive the male writer: unable to admit feminine qualities, female readers or female influence, unable to tolerate male peers except as rivals or subordinates, unable to envision any way out of the impasse except the *alter ego's* death. <u>The Dark Half</u> is a saddening picture of how little feminism has been able to affect, not the society in which the Male Gothic writer functions, but the ideology on which he constitutes himself.

Conclusion

King and Koontz display the Male Gothic's strongpoint, its extreme sensitivity to pressure points and shifts within the habitus, but both pay the price of this sensitivity. As white, heterosexual and now wealthy males, writing from the centre in this most normative of genres, they cannot generate such alternate visions as that postulated by Nancy Hartsock, on analogy to Marx's ideas about the proletariat's "privileged" (159) view of capitalism, which has become known as feminist standpoint theory. Rather, as Burns and Kanner note, King's problem with women, specifically, comes from "deeply unconscious, culturally shared understandings of what constitutes Woman" (159). That is, from uncritical assimilation of a fundamentally phallocentric habitus. Though Koontz does attempt resistance, the cultural swing within and without feminism overwhelms him as well. As Vivian Sobchack remarks of SF, "real solutions to patriarchal bourgeois crises" will be "born on the margins of dominant culture" (25);

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by race, class and gender, let alone the demands of genre, this is not a position open to Koontz or King. Nor have feminist insights yet allowed them to interrogate aspects of masculinit(ies), a strategy Sandra Harding suggests for pro-feminist men (158).

These limits are highlighted by comparison to Female Gothic, whose equally white, heterosexual and middle-class writers, in a more rigid genre, are more capable of destabilising or escaping generic demands. The liberty of the margins is even clearer when writers in a horror sub-genre, like Anne Rice, Jewelle Gomez, Tanya Huff, and Barbara Hambly, can transform the vampire, giving the figure subjectivity and `humanity.' For both Male Gothic writers, however, the generic frame, grounded on normative Western gender models, with their enormous investment in male superiority and hence resistance to the changes brought by feminism, proved too strong to break. One might say that within the scope of this study, King and Koont scope of this study, King and Koontz heard the feminist music, but could not learn the steps.

- Section 6 -

A PROGRAM

```
/* Program: GATEKEEPER

* Language: Turbo C Pseudocode

* Programmer: Sam Mazian

\**************************************************************************
**/

    /* DOCUMENTATION
```

* This program is designed to recapitulate the Modern Gothic section by reminding readers of key authors, theorists and concepts and to pre-familiarise - brief them - by mentioning key authors, jargon and theorists in the Science Fiction section. Situated at the interface, frequently crossed in fiction, between the genres of Gothic and SF, it is written in the computer programming language Turbo C, which exists at the machine-human interface, being intelligible to both humans and machines. All but a couple of sections of this program could be performed by a computer. These sections' presence requires the Appendix "Pseudocode."

* The page shows the command and message structure a computer would need to run the program. These commands are Turbo C specific. For example, `Printf ("Welcome etc") tells the computer to display the bracketed section on the screen - to `say' "Welcome" to the user.

* `Case' labels a program sub-unit. `Case 3' tells the computer: `Find the piece called "Case 3" and fulfil the commands inside.'

* `Scanf' means: Read the user's input. `%' adds that this input is not numeric, 'answer 1' is a label for such input.

* `If' clauses specify what to do with possible inputs for `answer1.'

* "*" at the beginning of a line of program means `Humans only.'

* The program structure is a simple repeated choice flow. At each input point, following each quiz, the user is given a choice of answers, such as "Some," "None," "Who?" Some of these will invoke the command `Case 3,' which in real time running would terminate the program.

* The program is also designed to confront the reader with a hegemonic discourse as narrowly intelligible and even more powerful in its field than academic theory, to make opaque some of the ideological assumptions possible in the readers, and to acquaint the reader first-hand with the technique/device/sensation of defamiliarisation that is a staple of SF.

```
\****************Debriefing Module********************/

{
        \* Module purpose: Establish reader retention*/
 case! = 1

  printf ("Welcome to the Rest Stop.
        How much do you remember?");
```

```
 printf ("For instance, have you any recollection of
        Barbara Michaels
        Phyllis Whitney
        Stephen King
        Dean Koontz?");

while case! = >1
case 1
 {
   printf ("Select from: All/ Some/None");
   scanf ("%c", &charquiz1);
     {
     if charquiz1 = "A"
     case! = 4;
     if charquiz1 = "S"
     case! = 4;
     if charquiz1 = "N"
     case! =2;
     }}

case 2
 {
   message ("Kindly reread Part I, willya?");
   case! = 3;
 }

case 3
 {
   message ("You are now leaving Gatekeeper.
            Have a nice day!");
   case! = 0;
       \*Exits program*/
 }

case 4
 {
   printf ("Not bad. Do you recollect anything about the
           theories  of
                Julia Kristeva
                Nancy Chodorow
                Fredric Jameson
                Pierre Bourdieu
                Vivian Sobchack
                Shuttle and Redgrove
                Bowles and Gintis?"

   printf ("Select from: Yes/Some/None/Who?");
   scanf ("%c", &charquiz2);
     {
     if  charquiz2 = "Y"
```

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```
        message ("Wiseass");
        case! = 5;
        if charquiz2 = "S"
        message ("Right");
        case! = 5;
        if charquiz2 = "N"
        case! = 2;
        if charquiz2 = "W"
        message ("We'll see you out");
        case! = 3
      }}

  case 5
  {
    printf  ("Have you naturalized the concepts of
            habitus
            Utopian/ideological dialectic
            Oedipal and pre-Oedipal desire
            gender models
            Gothic paranoia
            signifiers of the abject
            archaic mothers?");

    printf (Select from: "OKay/Hell/What?");
    scanf ("%c", &charquiz3);
      {
      if charquiz3 = "OK"
      message ("Go for it");
      case! = 6;
      if charquiz3 = "H"
      message ("Sorry, you wanna reread? y/n");
      scanf ("%c", y/n);
       {
        if y/n = "n"
        message ("Okay")
        case! = 6;
        if y/n = "y"
        case! = 2;
       }
      else if charquiz3 = "W"
      message ("Gatekeeper says 'Bye");
      case! = 3
    }}

\**********************************************************/

\*************** Theory and Ideology Module*****************/

    \*Purpose of Module: Establish political correctness/*

  case 6
```

```
        {
          print ("It's good we share so much. No doubt you are familiar with
                Post-structuralism
                Discourse theory
                French feminist theory
                NeoMarxism
                Theories of desire
                Feminist psychoanalytic theory
                Post-colonial theory?");

          printf ("Select from: Certainly/
                        Certainly Not/
                        Why should I be?");
          scanf ("%c", &charquiz4);
            {
            if charquiz4 = "C"
            case! = 7;
            if charquiz4 = "N"
            message ("It's been nice knowing you");
            case! = 3;
            if charquiz4 = "W"
            message ("It would take some time to explain.");
            case! = 3
          }}
        case 7
         {
          printf ("So au fait  Chanel couldn't fault you.
                Just a couple more questions.
                Are you male or female?");

          printf ("Select from: M/F/None of your business");
          scanf ("%c", &charquiz5);
            {
            if charquiz5 = "N"
            message ("Sorry to have troubled you")
        \*Call Modem module, get police phone number */
            \* message ("We have located extra-terrestrial.
                    Notify ASIO.")*/
            case! = 3;
            else case! = 8
          }}

        case 8
         {
          printf ("Okay. Now, do you agree or disagree:
                Ideology does not affect literary texts.
                Ideology is invisible.
                Ideology is not gendered.
                Objectivity is possible in literary analysis.
                The fracture of the post-modernist subject is a matter for pessimism .
                The canon will always be selected from the texts that
```

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```
        everybody knows belong there");

    printf ("Select Y or N for each");
    scanf ("%", &y);
    total/y = 0

      { if y = "y"
        Total/y = y + 1;
      }
        {
         if charquiz5 = "F" and Total/y > 1
         case! = 3;
         if charquiz5 = "F" and Total/y < 1
         case! = 9;
         else if charquiz5 = "M"
         case! = 9;
        }}
```

case 9
```
 {
   printf ("Another round, then. Do you agree that a Ph.D.
           thesis should
           be about a subject that is important and original
           "be about an unimportant topic, in agreement with existing beliefs, ... [use]
convoluted methods and [be written] in a somewhat unclear way"
(Ben-Yehuda 177)
           question or deconstruct what is acceptable knowledge
           question or deconstruct the canon
           question or deconstruct the examining system
           question or deconstruct its own authority
           (en)gender all or any of the above
           push the limits of the acceptable in all of the above
           found a new acceptable field of study
           found a new acceptable field of study and get the candidate a degree
           found a new acceptable field of study and get the candidate expelled
immediately?");

    printf ("Write your own answers in less than 100 words");

    {
    if char-answer> 200
    message ("Please be briefer. Once again?");
    case! = 9;
    \* Call Process-text Routine */
    \* Identify Text*/
    if char-answer = ("All of the above")
    case! = 10;
    if char-answer = ("It depends")
    message = ("Pass, friend");
    case! = 11;
    else
```

```
        message ("Thank you for your attention");
        case! = 3;
        }}


 case 10
  {
    print ("What are you doing after the show?");
    case! = 3;
  }


\**********************Prep Module*************************

      \*Prep for SF section*/
 case 11
  {
   printf ("You're theoretically daring and ideologically
        sound and I wish you were marking my thesis. Welcome
        to the Prep Sequence. Have a nice day!");

   printf ("Are you at all familiar with the names
            Hugo Gernsback
            Sam Moskowitz
            John Campbell
            Michael Moorcock
            Lester Del Rey
            Algys Budrys
            Darko Suvin
            Brian Aldiss
            Kingsley Amis
            Joanna Russ
            Ursula Le Guin
            Samuel R. Delany?
            Sarah Lefanu?")

   printf ("Select from: Yes/No/Some/Who?");
   scanf ("%c", &charquiz6);
     {
     if charquiz6 = "Y"
     message ("Good");
     case! = 12;
     if charquiz6 = "N"
     message ("Why not read on?");
     case! = 12;
     if charquiz6 = "S"
     message ("Fair enough");
     case! = 12;
     if charquiz6 = "W"
     message ("Oh, my.");
     case! = 3
     }}
```

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```
case 12
 {
   printf ("Have you visited
         Fargone
         Jinx
         Whileaway
         Dune
         Anarres
         Gaia
         Barrayar
         Triton
         Freeside?");

   printf ("Select from: Yes/ No/ Where?");
   scanf ("%c", &charquiz7)
     {
     if charquiz7 = "Y"
     message ("Welcome to the matrix");
     case! = 14;
     if charquiz7 = "N"
     message ("Well, keep reading, please");
     case! = 13;
     if charquiz7 = "W"
     message ("Ah, Houston, we have a problem -");
     case! = 3
     }}
case 13
 {
   printf ("And have you encountered
         Clones
         Cyborgs
         FTL
         Lightsails
         Matrix jewels
         AOS
         Geosync
         O'Neill Habitats
         Lagrange points
         VR
         Organleggers
         Plasma arcs
         Wormholes
         Jump
         C
         The stupidsphere?");

   printf ("Select from: Yes/What?/Hell!");
   scanf ("%c", &charquiz8);
     {
     if charquiz8 = "Y"
     message ("You are fully prepped for access.
```

```
                    All systems green");
        case! = 15;
        if charquiz8 = "W"
        message ("There has been a small technical slip-up. The
              management apologises and will remedy the matter immediately");
        case! = 3;
        if charquiz8 = "H"
        message ("Remember the Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy
              and DON'T PANIC.This isn't about props,
                this is theory.");
        case! = 14;
        }}
   case 14
    {
     printf ("One last check. Have you heard of
           Cognitive estrangement
           Fabulation
           Hard and Soft SF
           New Wave
           Fanzines
           Cyberpunk?");

     printf ("Select from: Yes/No/How much more?");
     scanf ("%c", &charquiz9);
       {
       if charquiz9 = "H"
       message ("No more, prep is concluded");
       case! = 15;
       else
       message ("You will, then. You will!");
       case! = 15;
       }}
   case 15
    {
     printf ("Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for your patience.
          You are now fully certified as retentive, attentive,
          ideologically correct, politically sound, and prepped
          for the next major section of this thesis. Gate closed.
          Have a nice day!");

     case! = 0;

}}
```

- Section 7 -

SCIENCE FICTION: THE SPACESHIP OF DOCTOR MOREAU

If Gothic is the genre of the middle-class at home, rooted in the founding of that class's habitus, operating to endorse the *status quo*, reasoning through symbolic treatments of domestic or national fears, Science Fiction is the genre of the middle-class abroad: grounded in the rise of colonialism and science, consciously concerned with intellectual speculation, encompassing both hopes and fears as it looks, or claims to look, into the universe at large. In this section I will locate SF in relation to the canon and discuss its other unique features, the SF community and its relation to science, before treating the vexed questions of its nature and origin, examining its psychic mechanisms, and tracing important historic developments up to the study's period.

SF differs firstly from Modern Gothic in its canonical acceptance. Where Modern Gothic reached academic attention in the '80s, SF was taught in American universities by 1961, attracting 412 doctoral dissertations by 1977 (Clute and Nicholls 1065). From the first academic study in 1947, major interest began with Kingsley Amis' New Maps of Hell (1960) (277-78), increasing through the decade to produce '70s reference works like Neil Barron's Anatomy of Wonder (1977) and dense theoretical studies like Robert Scholes' Structural Fabulation (1975) or Darko Suvin's The Metamorphoses of Science Fiction (translated 1979), to become an '80s academic industry (Clute and Nicholls 278-80).

Such attention is firmly involved with the critical turn to popular literature. Yet within the field of "genre SF," that is, of writers marketed and respected firstly in the SF field (Gunn 298-301; Clute and Nicholls 483-84), such as Robert Heinlein, John Varley, C.J. Cherryh and Lois Bujold, academic interest centres on a few stylists like Ursula Le Guin, Samuel Delany, and William Gibson, aesthetically appealing fields like the New Wave or cyberpunk, or the handful of overtly feminist writers like McKee Charnas, Piercy, Gearhart Miller, and Elgin, who may produce only a single text. Such interest has rarely reached `low,' often meaning feminised popular SF like the female Star Trek "fanzines," of which there were "thousands" in the '70s (Bradley, Introduction, Keeper's Price 11-12).

The Star Trek fanzines also demonstrate SF's expanded commercial base, which exceeds its academic acceptance. From the '20s to the '50s SF was popular but low, confined to what is called the ghetto (del Rey 88; Clareson, "Toward" 12), but which is also the genre's greatest strength. Where horror or female romance readers may meet authors at annual conventions, SF writers have operated in the "living matrix" (Clute and Nicholls 312) of the SF community: the writers, reviewers, fans, magazine editors, or all four in one, who formed "an active sub-culture" (Adrian Mellor 23), down to its own language (del Rey 207), who have supplied active intellectual feedback since Gernsback's '20s magazines, and constitute the core of fandom, which in the 1990s spawns SF conventions in the US nearly once a week.

As with female romance's exponential expansion in the late '60s (Radway 27-28), this community expanded partly through new communication technologies. In the '50s, paperbacks made a full-time SF writing career viable, and through mainstream publishers brought a wider readership (del Rey 200-05), increasing in the '60s as the addition of `soft' social sciences broadened the original stress on "the centrality of the hard physical sciences" (Andrew Ross 109). In the '70s, an SF text reached the best-seller list (Gunn 299). The height of commercial success came via other media, most notably the TV phenomenon of Star Trek (1966-69) and, after the landmark 2001: A Space Odyssey (1968), the late '70s cinematic blockbusters, Star Wars (1977), Close Encounters of the Third Kind (1977), and to a lesser extent, Alien (1979). Thus boosted, SF, like Modern Gothic, has reached global audiences. Such audiences are divided, however. Film or TV viewers or followers of popular spin-offs like Star Trek novels do not necessarily move on to other SF, while volume nowadays makes it impossible to read across the genre as a whole (Suvin, "Gibson" 349-50).

Both kinds of acceptance have been resisted by genre readers, who fear academia will "domesticate" SF (Clute and Nicholls 1065), but scorn Star Wars as "sf hack-work" (1078-79). This tension between academic, popular and fan audiences is only one of many that play within SF, not least of which are the disputes, flaring at times into major controversies, like

the argument between Ursula Le Guin and Gregory Benford in the middle '70s (Slusser 238-43), over what SF is and when it began.

The `Origin' and Nature of Science Fiction

SF has no accepted founding text such as <u>The Castle of Otranto</u> is for Gothic. Proposed beginnings range from <u>The Epic of Gilgamesh</u> (3rd Millennium BC) to Hugo Gernsback's establishment of the term's hegemony (Andrew Ross 109) usually dated to June, 1929. Yet Gernsback placed SF as "the Jules Verne, H.G. Wells and Edgar Allan Poe type of story - a charming romance intermingled with scientific fact and prophetic vision" (qtd. Clute and Nicholls 311). Thus the generic marker is already retroactively defined. Moreover, to begin with Gernsback, or even, as Darko Suvin proposed, with May Day 1871, publication date for E.B. Lytton's <u>The Coming Race</u>, the magazine version of George Chesney's <u>The Battle of Dorking</u>, and the manuscript submission of Butler's <u>Erewhon</u> (Clute and Nicholls 965), excludes the *oeuvre* of Jules Verne, usually seen as a founding "father" of SF (Clareson, "Toward" 7; Gunn 41). Among earlier nineteenth-century candidates, however, Brian Aldiss first proposed <u>Frankenstein</u> (1818), as begotten on the Gothic, with its taste for "the distant and unearthly" (42) - the latter in both senses - but innovative in removing God and adding science (51-52).

If <u>Frankenstein</u> is read as founding text, SF appears in all truth a cadet or daughter genre of Gothic, its mother-text sharing the "auctorial intent to scare," but appearing just as science and capitalism gain ascendancy, and with them, deeply implicated in the colonial European re-visioning of women, nature and the world as passive bodies to be unveiled/ penetrated/used by virile scientists, explorers and capitalists (Haraway, <u>Visions</u> 136; Merchant; Stott 77-85). The "gendered erotic trope[s]" (Haraway, "Biopolitics" 205) of penetration and unveiling common to science and colonial exploration are faithfully re-produced by Shelley in <u>Frankenstein</u> (Ann Mellor, "Possessing;" Hindle 39-42). SF has been seen as the genre that endorses science (Elkins 23-25), as the genre of the educated, even of

the scientific middle class (Klein, "Discontent" 4-9). Unlike Poe's stories, also candidates for a founding text (Gunn 41; del Rey 15-16), Frankenstein can move beyond sketching a scientific idea to portray its cultural matrix; so recent studies (Ellis, "Monsters;" Moretti, qtd. Hindle 37) reveal in Frankenstein the values of the emergent middle-class. As a voice of colonial Europe's ascendant class, SF shares these historical inflections with science; and with them, not merely the pre-eminent narratives of exploration, colonisation and empire, but the discursive fields they construct.

Thus with Frankenstein the SF staple of the fabulous voyage, the genre's oldest mythos, enters a scientific and colonial context. This story's use is the chief argument for beginning SF with texts like The Odyssey; but Walton's voyage is to find the Pole, a contemporary explorer's goal that, unlike Homer's Wandering Isles, offers a fabulous but historically specific interface with the unknown. Shelley was also strongly influenced by "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," which hybridises Romantic poetry with the narratives of actual European exploratory voyages.

In SF this colonial inflection turns strange worlds from Swift's and Lucian's sites of contemporary satire to sites of wonder, which, like European colonies, may be entered, marvelled at, and thus symbolically possessed. Narratives of planetary colonisation are as common in SF as was the setting to rights of strange races in imperial romance (Patteson 121-22), while the motifs and discourses of European colonialism litter its texts. Heinlein sees planets as frontiers of opportunity, from Farnham's Freehold (1965) to Friday (1982). Nicola Griffith still uses the motif of colonial exploration to ground her lesbian utopia in Ammonite (1991). In the post-colonial era SF also presents the guilt and damage of colonisation, down, as in Tiptree's "The Colour of Neanderthal Eyes" (1990), to the perils of the colonial gaze.

As the British Empire provided context and material for imperial romance, galactic empires have been called "the central myth of genre SF" (Wollheim, qtd. Clute and Nicholls 461). Where US (mostly male) writers can still revel in fantasy reclamations of the Frontier

and recuperations of the American Revolution, both British and US writers frame narratives in the "necessary invention" (461) of galactic empires, the most famous of which was created by an American, Isaac Asimov's Foundation series. Though often seen from a post-imperial perspective as decayed or lost, as in Mary Gentle's <u>Ancient Light</u> (1988), or "evil" as in <u>Star Wars</u>, they remain a political staple of SF.

Unlike the Gothic genres, however, SF is incorrigibly heterogeneous, "not so much a literary form as a whole literature in itself" (Raymond Williams, <u>Revolution</u> 304). Hence the abundant definitions of the genre best succeed in generating controversy over what was left out. Such definitions range from claims that SF should parallel scientific methodology, explaining the known and extrapolating the unknown, applying "not only to machines, but to human society" (John W. Campbell, qtd. Clute and Nicholls 311), to the retort that, "People don't read science fiction to learn science" (Benford, "Technological" 82). A well-known claim contends that SF is a genre needing "the presence and interaction of estrangement and cognition" (Suvin, "Poetics" 62), whose generic mark is the novum, an innovation "deviating from the author's ... norm of reality" but "postulated on and validated by ... scientific method" (<u>Metamorphoses</u> 63-65). From Gernsback's day onward (Andrew Ross 108), there has been a general consensus that

> science fiction shows things not as they ... are but as they might be, and for this `might be' the author must offer a rational, serious, consistent explanation. (Russ, "Image" 79)

But the SF Encyclopedists doubt that "a workable definition of sf," implicitly prescriptive, "will ever be established" (Clute and Nicholls 314).

Meanwhile, the purity or even defensibility of genres has been questioned by deconstructionists like Derrida, who concludes that, "Every text participates in one or several genres ... yet such participation never amounts to belonging," and hence that to demand purity of genres is "a madness" ("Genre" 212; 228). Samuel Delany picks up the Derridean concept of the exterior "mark" to claim, "The generic mark ... is always outside the text," for example

on the bookstore shelf ("Gestation" 65). This emphasises the economic reality of "[American] book production" that Delany argues underlies essentialist definitions ("Gestation" 66), and converges with the despairing simplicity of Damon Knight's "Science fiction is what we point to when we say it" (qtd. Clute and Nicholls 314). Science Fiction, then, is what we point to when we buy it; here the economically based external generic mark is good-enough.

Recasting the term "impure genre" (Clute and Nicholls 567) allows a different approach to SF's other distinguishing feature, its relations to "literature" and to science. For Derrida, an "impure genre" would be a tautology; but if "impure" is replaced by "hybrid," the implications allow an almost epistemological shift. "Hybrid" can suggest union rather than defilement, connection rather than borders whose attempts at separation and purity inevitably fail. Such failure is a tenet of Lacanian and Kristevan psychoanalytic theory, a stress on the inescapable presence of the Other within. A different sense appears when post-colonial theorists (Bhabha, "DissemiNation"; Rosaldo) begin to speak of "borderlands" and "zones" as sites of "cultural production," as metaphors for Hispanic Americans' enabling hybridity (Rosaldo 208; 216). Nevertheless, these concepts of transgression and hybridity retain the assumption of a border's existence to transgress. And like the binary opposition, the border belongs to an epistemology derived from phallocentric, un-feminised Western thought, to rephrase Alice Jardine's formulation of "feminised" postmodernism (Gynesis 25), or from the construct of a separation-based Western masculinity. It now contrasts with feminist constructions of the non-oppositional (Baring and Cashford xii), or "[h]eterogeneous" (Cixous, "Medusa" 260), or postmodern female subject (Weedon 88-106), the essential femininity valorised by Mary Daly, and the relationally based model of Western femininity hypothesised by Chodorow (Feminism 45-65).

Within this alternate epistemology the emphasis can move beyond studying the dissolution of oppositions and boundaries, to "affirm the pleasure of connection," not only between "human and other living creatures," but between genres and even disciplines.

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"Hybrid" may even become Donna Haraway's influential concept of the cyborg, a "theorized and fabricated [hybrid] of machine and organism" ("Manifesto" 150) that erases the human/ machine/animal boundaries, a "disturbingly and pleasurably tight coupling" (152) - or tripling - of the original categories, but a "replication uncoupled from organic reproduction" (150). That is, a form which, more positively than the experiments of Wells's Dr. Moreau, welds together originals and overlaps boundaries, rather than establishing a new hybrid in between.

The SF Cyborg and Science

Such a welding appears if SF is regarded as a coupling of literature and science. Here it is useful to recall D.W. Winnicott's concept of literature as a part of transitional space: that which develops *between* mother and infant, which becomes the area of play and all the arts (105-06), the unresolved paradox of what is neither subjective hallucination nor objective reality (1-25), yet which takes up space and time (109). Within this area SF is separated on the bookshelf from "literature," and has in fact been called a paraliterature (Delany, "Gestation" 72: Suvin, Metamorphoses i). Imaginatively, it exists at the interface of knowledge and hypothesis, the known and the unknown (Wolfe 16). Unlike other literary forms, however, by its content and writing practices SF also couples the discipline of `literature' to the discipline of science.

As traditionally seen, science takes up time and space, but is not concerned with play, and claims to deal firmly with `objective reality.' Its projects and practices are apparently quite different to those of literature, and there is another endemic dispute over SF's relation to science. Though J.G Ballard claimed that "science belongs in a completely different world" from SF (qtd. Clute and Nicholls 312), Donna Haraway points out that scientific practice is "actually a kind of story-telling practice" (Visions 4) and calls scientific fact "those potent fictions of science" (5). In fact, SF and science share not only certain writing practices, such as the inability to attribute causes to the supernatural, but generic similarities: for example, both deploy the story of the fabulous voyage, from metaphors of exploration to TV spectacles

of flight in space. Like much SF, "science," says Haraway, "remains an important genre of Western exploration and travel literature" ("Biopolitics" 205). Moreover, their commerce goes both ways. While SF writers plunder scientific writing for hypotheses and theoretical verisimilitude, vital scientific discourse, like recent work on the immune system, deploys "themes of nuclear exterminism, space adventure, extra-terrestrialism, exotic invaders, and military high-technology" (205), patently drawn from SF.

The SF Cyborg and Literature: Genres and Belief Systems

SF's differences from science couple it to `literature': it does not rely on experimental evidence, its project and its audience pleasures are based on `play' in the literary transitional space, it has access to stories, like boy-meets-girl, and writing practices, like the use of dialogue, that are not available to science. At the same time, it differs from other forms within the literary space.

The largest general division here is between realist and non-realist fiction. In realist fiction, very roughly, `real' is defined according to the current laws of consensual reality, or common sense in Bourdieu's terms (77-9): that is, the cognitive maps of the habitus. Thus the consensual reality of the 1500s could include demons but not viruses. The belief system that sustains acceptance of the realist text is this consensual reality, and when acceptance is broken by writing practices like postmodernism, it is the credibility of the text, not the laws of consensual reality, that is breached.

In non-realist fictions such as SF, fantasy, and Modern Gothic, there is no constraint by consensual reality, and credibility is sustained by differing belief systems. In Gothic, credibility for monsters and ghosts was originally a hangover from Christianity, a tacit acceptance that these things, when not explained as they were by Mrs. Radcliffe, might still be read as possible within the literary space. Frankenstein marks the point of transition to the hybrid belief system of Modern Male Gothic, where monsters and horrors are as likely to be attributed to science as to ETs or ghosts. In contrast, as I will argue, SF supports both

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monsters and marvels on the layperson's trust in science. But <u>Frankenstein</u> also marks the splitting of SF from Gothic. When del Rey complained that Shelley merely "rework[ed]" the tale of the Golem (15), he missed the vital point that the Golem is created by `rational' experiment, and within the bounds, as Shelley understood the speculations on galvanism, of scientific hypothesis. Thus <u>Frankenstein</u> also initiates SF by switching belief systems, making the first good-enough gesture to science.

As lumped with SF on the '90s bookshelf, fantasy is not Rosemary Jackson's subversive `high' literary form (9) or Todorov's fantastic, hesitating between natural and supernatural (167). Nor is it the `low' pulp magazine form distinguished from '50s SF, according to Kingsley Amis, by "sexual fantasy on an uninhibited scale" (55). Though moving toward magic realism, what might now be called commercial fantasy was almost entirely spawned by the influence of J.R.R Tolkien's <u>The Lord of the Rings</u>, and its popular mass as written by David Eddings or in the Dragonlance series has at best two or three fabulae, such as the quest and the cosmic war, which perpetuate the limiting binary oppositions read by Jameson as the mark of romance (<u>Unconscious</u> 110-50). In this non-realist fiction the belief system is sustained partly by reader expectations: elves, for example, are accepted as a legacy from Tolkien's work. But wonders like time travel and telepathy are also attributed to magic, which sustains credibility as does science in SF.

The border between SF and fantasy is a division shirked even by publishers, and there is strong similarity of audience desire, non-realist form and belief systems. SF like <u>Star Wars</u> is hardly distinguishable from fantasy, and erodes gate-keeping definitions about the "seriousness" of SF (Russ, "Image" 79; Delany "About Five Thousand" 32-33) and its "hard science" core (Benford, "Technological" 82). On these outer limits a blaster and a crossbow become interchangeable, a distinction apparently as academic as in the eighteenth-century recipe for making a novel out of a romance:

Where you find :-

recipe for making a novel out of a romance:

Where you find :-
A castle put   An house...
A giant   A father...
Assassins   Killing glances...
A gliding ghost   An usurer, or an attorney

(The Age, qtd. Summers, Gothic 35)

In fact, the blaster and crossbow signal the two disparate belief systems of magic and science, and in a single text produce not a coupling, as in the welding of SF and say a detective story, but the much discussed hybrid of science fantasy (Scholes; Joseph Miller; McClintock). In texts like Barbara Hambly's The Silicon Mage (1988), the technology of computers and the magic of spells and "sigils" lie unblended, side by side.

Thus, though commercial fantasy and SF look most similar they are actually less compatible than SF and Modern Female Gothic, which eschews science, displays no wonders, and hardly touches the Christian belief system. SF and Modern Male Gothic, however, can couple inextricably, as in The Stand or Night Chills. Both are non-realist. Both can use the science belief system. SF frequently provides Male Gothic rationales and topoi,such as plague disasters - an SF theme as old as Shelley's The Last Man (1828) - alien invaders, psychic powers, and rational sources for traditional monster-figures. The dystopic perspective of SF is hardly distinguishable from horror, while "paranoia" is a common feature of SF (Clute and Nicholls 909-12). More fundamentally, both SF and Male Gothic play across the categories of human/inhuman, natural/monster, and are implicitly to do with defining humanity: that is, humanity understood as cultural norms.

If Frankenstein is taken as the founding SF text, the relationship of Modern Gothic and SF appears as an overlapping clover-leaf:
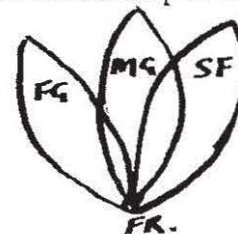
On the left, Male and Female Gothic share Old Gothic beginnings, settings, and the emphasis on terror or horror in readers' response. Popular Female Gothic and SF touch at the point

"Godwinian" motif (Clemit 45-69) of male pursuit and double, which Godwin's Caleb Williams (1794) freed from "the eighteenth-century courtship plot" (Leask 20) to become a Male Gothic staple. This close coupling of SF with Modern Male Gothic has persisted ever since.

The vital difference is that SF can supplement horror's sole, phobic response to the Other with wonder, with a reaching out to that Other, the first response of Europe's explorers, "the joyful and silent experience of childhood: ... *to be other and to move toward the other*" (de Certeau, qtd. Greenblatt, Marvelous 2). In Ricoeur's terms, Male Gothic's normative bent makes its imagination reproductive rather than productive. Its vision is actually dystopic, and normative pressure mostly limits Utopian urges to escape from plot demands. In fantasy and SF, however, the polysemy of "Utopia" extends the modes of productive imagination, giving the *potential* to achieve a fictional reaching out to the Other, even to produce literal Utopias. These, in turn, offer flexibility between dystopic and Utopic visions, and those that are simply "somewhere else."

That all SF societies are located in the "allotopic" (Haraway, Visions 137) Elsewheres of space and time would appear, *de facto*, to dehistoricise SF, thus destroying its political Utopian potential. But as Samuel Delany indignantly claimed for his '80s fantasy sequence, "[t]he Neveryon series is, from first tale to last, a document of our times, thank you very much" (Flight 322). Re-inflections of older SF material, and the appearance of newer topoi, not only date SF texts but show them grappling with contemporary problems, as Delany's own "Tale of Plagues and Carnivals" does with the historically specific occurrence of AIDS (Flight 237-475).

As often remarked (Bartkowski 5-14; Lefanu and Green 3-5) this license to create Nowheres does have a rich potential for female writers, down to the Star Trek fans liberated by the series' soft lack of science. But all SF writers are far freer than in the Gothic to deploy the productive imagination, to rupture the plot, to create the ab-normal, to meet or even sleep

with the alien. Defamiliarization can be a mandate to explore the Other rather than a phobic drive to separate or eliminate it, a process aided by a complicit, forgiving, or sophisticated audience. And in its more cavalier treatments of plot and viewpoint SF pulls in any genre from female romance to Platonic dialogues, and techniques of `high' literature like magic realism, just as Frankenstein combines not only Male and Female Gothic but the epistolary form of Pamela, and a mythic re-writing of Paradise Lost.

The psychic mechanisms of this polymorphously promiscuous cyborg emerge within the community formed by the popular response to both SF and science. Diachronically, SF readership/s have been both shifting and multiple, swinging from the minority literate and thus by definition middle-class who received Frankenstein, to the hardcover buyers of Verne and Wells, to the lower-class adults and then adolescents who were presumed by the publishers to read the pulp magazines (del Rey 20-23; 29). In the late '50s, however, 66% of magazine readers were hard or biological science majors. This return to adult readership shifts to accommodate social science graduates in the '60s and '70s (Berger, qtd. Adrian Mellor 43). In the '80s and '90s films have swung the trend back to younger audiences. Again, while SF readers are traditionally seen as white, male, young and science-oriented, Isaac Asimov considers that by 1982 the influence of Star Trek, in particular, might have "feminised" SF readership to as high as 25% or even 40% women (608). Of 700 fans surveyed at Midwestern conventions in 1981, 45% actually were women. More interestingly, 90% overall considered themselves either somewhat or very much feminist (Day and Day 95-96).

One element of response has united these diverse readerships, an element running back, as Brian Aldiss notices, to the Old Gothic mobilisation of the sublime (44), but so central to SF that "sense of wonder" is given an encyclopedia heading (Clute and Nicholls 1083-85), and fans now ironise it as a cliche (1085). Nevertheless, titles like Astounding Science Fiction, Amazing Stories, Women of Wonder, Anatomy of Wonder, the occurrence in secondary literature of "wonders" (Clareson, "Emergence" 5; del Rey 86) "marvelous" (del

Rey 24), "wonder" (Aldiss 205), and the continuing stress in '90s coverblurbs -"one enormous sense of wonder" (Stith) "lots of sense-of-wonder" (Review, Melissa Scott, Dreamships), "Beauty, terror and wonder" (Brust) - make it clear that, however hackneyed, wonder is still perceived as an SF audience's chief desire.

When grappling with actual audience response, philosophers tend to reclaim the less self-conscious phraseology of older theorists. So Heller (191) and Carroll (8) revive John Aiken and Laetitia Barbauld's striking phrase for the pleasure of terror: "a paradox of the heart." And in tracing the poetics of wonder from its Aristotelian linkage with pleasure as the "end" of poetry, to mediaeval and Renaissance variants on its artistic pre-eminence, Stephen Greenblatt revives the equally marvellous phrase of Aquinas' teacher: wonder causes a "systole of the heart" ("Resonance" 179-81; Marvelous 79-81).

Greenblatt goes on to discuss three variants of wonder, all linked to forms of travel literature: the renunciatory vision of marvels found in the mediaeval Travels of Sir John Mandeville contrasts with wonder as "an agent" for "appropriation" (Marvelous 24) of the colonised Other in Columbus' first triumphant letter, and then in Bernal Diaz' history, to the destruction by which, after their pause of sheer wonder, Cortes' men must possess the Aztec capital. Wonder here becomes implicated in physical possession of the New World. But Greenblatt does not consider that this "possessive use of the marvelous is decisive or final" (24). And "wonder" and "wonderful" reappear in Haraway's analysis of images as unattainable as Mandeville's Holy Land, the magnifications of immune system cells and the colour-enhanced Voyager photographs ("Biopolitics" 221-2), as it recurs in the title of Stephen Jay Gould's book on the Burgess Shale fossils, Wonderful Life (1991). As for SF readers, wonder is clearly seen as central in the lay response to science.

Such vicariously possessive wonder arises partly from the (as yet) unattainable nature of space, and partly from lack of knowledge. As the Middle Ages took miracles on religious faith, the layperson must take most scientific `fact' on trust. But in SF, too, most readers must

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take the science on trust. In the metaphysics of wonder developed in Columbus' wake, the poet "must above all seek credibility or verisimilitude in combination with the marvelous" (Castelvetro, qtd. Greenblatt, Marvelous 79). So the SF reader accepts a marvellous in which credibility is firstly "conferred by faith" (80) in science.

This faith is bolstered by the texts' attention to the scientific discourse and `factual' detail in which they embed their wonders. SF is often called the genre of "What if" (Russ, "Image" 79), or, in Miriam Allen deFord's striking phrase, of "improbable possibilities" (qtd. Aldiss 30). So when Michael Crichton asks "What-if dinosaurs returned?" in Jurassic Park (1991), he bolsters the hypothetical leap with current detail from DNA research. This demand for verisimilitude is repeated by both writers and critics (Aldiss 30; Hawkins 16-17; Delany, "About Five Thousand" 33), but it also applies to SF's "plausible impossibilities," a phrase deFord used of fantasy. So when C.J. Cherryh writes of faster-than-light starships, she works out the consequences of an unexpected vector change at high sub-C speeds according to current science and experience in space.

Whether it be produced by the shift of perspective at the end of van Vogt's The Weapon Shops of Isher (Clute and Nicholls 1084), or the opening sequence of the space armada in Star Wars, wonder in SF is intimately connected with its position at the interface of the known and unknown. If uncertainty produces terror, it is also potential of wonder. "[Un]qualified wonder" follows the first glimpse of the Monster and its dog team on the Polar ice in Frankenstein (Shelley 69). In the later nineteenth century, SF settings were distanced to Africa, to Asia, and other unknown corners of the world. When European intellectual or political possession erased this interface on-planet, SF found less accessible unknowns: the future, space (Clareson, "Emergence" 6-7; 17-18). The ultimate unknown arrived with galactic empires, which are accessed through what may properly be called tropes, in Peter Hulme's sense (28): a "turn" or crux in discourse, which in this case is the violation of scientific verisimilitude, since the only feasible way to get a single human character to or between stars

is to exceed the speed of light. FTL starships have been a staple of SF since the '20s. Ironically, other such "turns" may be overtaken by reality, like the one-time tropes of space-flight and lunar voyages.

Though still contained by the cultural matrix of Western imperialism, this vicarious sense of possession extends the "historical trajectory" of wonder as traced by Greenblatt (Marvelous 25). As readers of Verne or Shelley could participate in great imaginary versions of Columbus' voyage, the readers of Rice Burroughs and Heinlein could win a West that could never be attained, but never lost. SF's persistent colonial and imperial context allows an expansion of Elkins' and Adrian Mellor's proposals: SF is not merely dystopic despair, or a middle-class escape from late capitalism. The British Empire may be gone and the US have left the Philippines, but SF readers can experience the ultimately deferred pleasure of colonial voyaging, occupation and production of wonder, in a context that, unlike Cortes' men, they can no longer harm.

The SF Cyborg: Organic and Accumulated Elements

Different types of material may be distinguished within the vast body of communal tradition understood, by the mark of the bookshelf or the good-enough gesture to science, to be SF. Firstly, there are mythoi, story patterns, some, like the fabulous voyage, older than SF. These are often lumped with so-called mythoi developed in SF, as in Thomas Clareson's list of nineteenth century "motifs": the lost race, prehistory, the fantastic voyage, future war, Utopia, the wonderful invention, Gothic psychological stories, and the catastrophe ("Toward" 9-11). At the risk of confusion, I want to propose a scheme that goes from mythoi, narrative patterns, to topoi: sites of discussion, ideational talking points, most often contemporary theories that have caught some writer's imagination, as galvanism did Shelley's. Many of Clareson's "motifs" are actually topoi. They can provide narrative frames, as with the Utopia/ dystopia, inside which a mythos takes place; but as has been noticed (Peel 35), such a frame cannot propel the mythos itself.

A further deficiency was picked up by Amis, who saw SF as a genre where "Idea was hero," but noted that ideas do not sustain novels as well as they do short stories (118-19). So, while SF readily and brilliantly produces new topoi, from Martian landscapes to cyberspace, it is far less fertile with new mythoi wherein such topoi may be deployed. The paucity of such mythoi constrains the productive imagination of SF as a whole.

Topoi form the largest section in the body of SF material. They range from wholly fictional - the lost race - to scientific - atomic power, genetic engineering - to `pseudo-scientific' - psionics, UFOs. SF has added its own furniture: cyborgs, mutants, generation spaceships, working out from scientific speculation, for example on the O'Neill space habitat, and the off-shoots of spaceflight technology. These topoi are historicised - for example pollution and ecology - and rehistoricised, as with the recasting of the lost race as the lost planetary colony. They include social, scientific and cultural forms, such as mythology, religion, and ancient speculation sites like monsters, reincarnation and immortality.

Mingled with these topoi are genuine tropes: bends in the discourse of scientific verisimilitude necessary to fiction. The most obvious are time travel and hyperspace. And somewhere in transit between the impossible - earlier readers were cautioned not to believe in space flight - and realised technology, are tropes, like a voyage to the moon, artificial intelligence and genetic engineering, that may become topoi instead.

Here Clareson's stress on SF's cumulative quality ("Toward" 5; 12) becomes relevant. Where ideational hot-points may come and go, "none of [SF's] earlier interests/ conventions has disappeared" (5). As a result, SF writers draw on a common narrative fund that becomes streamlined or taken for granted, as with the shift from laborious extrapolation of stellar distances to the convention of FTL in the '30s magazines (del Rey 84-85). In this cumulative body there are topoi-of-the-moment, often dependent on the hot-spots of scientific theory/speculation rather than historical events, which can be loosely matched to periods: in the seventeenth century, the moon voyage. The nineteenth century is a particularly rich source

of such legacies. In its second decade, Shelley used her brush with galvanism to rewrite Genesis in Frankenstein; ten years later, with The Last Man (1828), she produced the equally lasting topos of world catastrophe, or the end of humanity, and by attributing it to a plague rather than God, secularised Apocalypse.

While Poe and his `high' successors used SF and Gothic elements in stories like Hawthorne's "Rappacini's Daughter" (1844), increasing numbers of less known writers coupled fiction and new scientific ideas - or pseudo-science - to produce topoi like the hollow world, first used in Symzonia (1820) (Clareson, "Emergence" 7). In 1869, Jules Verne introduced the quasi-scientist hero, and woke the SF delight in cutting-edge technology like the submarine, as he turned the fabulous voyage into adventure/explorer narratives like Five Weeks in a Balloon (1869), the better-known Round the World in Eighty Days (1874) and 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea (1869). In reviving the hybrid of `low' commercial popularity and science-based speculation, Verne's publisher also pioneered the younger market (15-17). SF's lasting colonial ambience emerges in Pierre Macherey's well-known deconstruction of The Mysterious Island (1875) (159-240).

After Verne came a deluge of British, French and American SF writers, recuperated by recent academic studies such as Everett Bleiler's Science Fiction: The Early Years (1991), whose new topoi often prefigured technological reality, like Edward Fale's depiction of a satellite in "The Brick Moon" (1869). Such overt interest in scientific or intellectual specul- ation, and SF's position at the interface of proven scientific experiment and improbable extra- polation, produce another specific attribute of the genre, its at times socially influential interactions with material and political reality. Such encounters stud the genre's history, as when a new mythos appeared in the later nineteenth century.

The trigger for this encounter was George Chesney's The Battle of Dorking (1871), a hugely popular SF mythos that was instantly pulled into other genres, from imperial romance to the spy-thriller, in America, Europe and Australia. Although the mythos is present in earlier

texts (I.F. Clarke 4-26) <u>Dorking</u> was the first of the actual SF invasion narratives, or future wars. Its specific historical impetus was the "surprising result of the Franco-Prussian war" (Clareson, "Emergence" 11). As <u>Frankenstein</u> tapped the post-Revolutionary fears of Tory radicals in the 1830s (Hindle 37), <u>Dorking</u> tapped the "growing hysteria of [British] nationalism and imperialism" (Clareson, "Emergence" 11). H. G. Wells' <u>The War of the Worlds</u> (1898) took invasion paranoia to an off-world scale, while repeating contemporary fears that the heart of the Empire was sick (Porter 130-33) and unable to resist. The dates make it arguable that <u>Dorking</u> and its successors actually fed this hysteria, implicating popular literature as a historical agent rather than a mere mirror of events. In a gross over-simplification, SF helped cause the First World War.

This interaction occurred particularly through the SF penchant for up-to-date technology, "the `hardware' of the period" (Clareson, "Emergence" 12; Clarke 29) and its attention to verisimilitude. As with Orson Welles' famous broadcast of <u>The War of the Worlds</u> in 1938, Chesney mobilised hysteria because his improbable possibility appeared horribly plausible. But future war SF texts interacted with government as well as popular opinion because of their emphasis on weapons, a feature that, unlike mysterious plagues or space invaders, nations could act upon. And with the Edwardian naval arms race, they did (Michael Howard 152-60).

The entanglement of this mythos with material reality had an equally ominous effect in America in the late 1970s and early '80s: one can easily read <u>Star Wars</u> (1977) as a compensatory myth for Vietnam, recuperating militarist aspirations as the stellar struggle of American colonists, mutating national humiliation in the post-imperial fantasy world of space. But if the film salved post-Vietnam trauma, its absorption in the cultural blood-stream instigated much more alarming dreams of future war. How much of Reagan's "evil empire" was an unconscious echo of the film? And about the "Star Wars" project itself there was nothing unconscious at all.

SF's new nineteenth-century material also reveals an absence as significant in science as in SF. The use of "Women in SF" as an encyclopedia entry (Clute and Nicholls; Gunn) is glossed by the comment that "Science fiction traditionally has been considered a literature for men and boys: men wrote it and boys read it ... It would not make sense ... to have an entry in an SF encyclopedia about men" (Gunn 510). As women rarely wrote nineteenth-century SF, their roles within it are limited to those delineated by Frankenstein: as `humans,' to be marginal spectators of men and science, or, as in Male Gothic, to be victims of monsters; or to be monsters themselves. Thus women hardly impinge on Poe's SF stories like "The Narrative of A. Gordon Pym" (1838) while an Indian widow is graciously rescued from suttee in Verne's Around the World in Eighty Days. And Frankenstein's female monster, whom Robin Roberts sees aborted for fear of women's reproductive powers (20), reappears as the poison-proof combination of monster and victim in "Rappaccini's Daughter."

Exemplifying the expansion of nineteenth-century SF, the female monster won her own topos the same year that Chesney produced The Battle of Dorking, when Edward Bulwer Lytton re-used the hollow-earth topos to grapple the Woman Question. With its underground world of superior giant women, The Coming Race expresses the "tension and anxiety" of patriarchal society as first-wave feminism added political unrest to the spectre of women's power, magnified as sex and reproduction became fields for science, and Darwinism made women appear the "source of evolution and devolution" (Robin Roberts 9).

This misogyny, a lasting feature of male-authored SF (Roberts 3), was furthered by the coupling with science, which has progressively constituted itself by the exclusion of magic, superstition, religion, and alternative science, all identified, as in the internal division of `hard' natural science from `soft' social science, with the feminine (3-9). In late nineteenth-century SF, the process intersects with the trend of Edwardian fiction, when romance, excluded as feminine from the constitution of the novel (Langbauer, Women 2-3),is reinstated at the expense of the realistic novel, now considered feminine (Trodd 8-11). In America the trend

was assisted by women's exclusion from the colonial mythology of the Frontier, artic-ulated and perpetuated in Fenimore Cooper's Leatherstocking novels. In SF such Othering reduces `human' women to marginal presences in <u>The War of the Worlds</u> or Conan Doyle's <u>The Lost World</u> (1912), or symbols of feminine "incapacity for science" with the Eloi in Wells's <u>The Time Machine</u> (1895) (Roberts 32-36). But Bulwer Lytton first shapes the alien monster/mother whose terror haunts dystopic SF and Modern Gothic, who will bestride the colonial world as a menacing and/or monstrous alien female ruler in the wake of Rider Haggard's <u>She</u> (1887).

Though what Clareson calls the "lost-race motif" ("Emergence" 17) thus began as an SF topos, Haggard's African re-setting pulled it into the colonial ambience of imperial romance. In a further shift to the unknown, Edgar Rice Burroughs re-appropriated the topos for SF with planetary romances that retain the masculine colonial fantasy of "the fascination of the British/American man for the non-European woman" (Clareson, "Emergence" 17). Lost worlds and races persist in current SF as lost planetary colonies (Clute and Nicholls 42) while Robin Roberts traces the female alien and female ruler's permutations through subsequent male and female-authored SF.

Wells's Eloi appear in his classic <u>The Time Machine</u>, which produced the trope of time travel. The largely dystopian view of this dominant SF writer carries on the play of pessimism and optimism from Shelley's dark vision and Verne's celebratory use of technology. It is seen as characteristic of British SF at the time, in contrast to American SF (Clareson, "Emergence" 20) which was developing "the love of technology" second only to love of nature in "the American sense of identity" (Seltzer 3).

Perhaps not coincidentally, this turn in British SF overlapped the shift to the magazines, where the notable <u>Pearson's</u> published most of Wells' work, while Burroughs first appeared in Munsey's stable of magazines in 1912 (del Rey 22-24). After the war SF retreated with Burroughs into the notorious ghetto of specialists. Here the strands of pulp adventure and

the older body of SF material were utilised by the "hobbyists" (30), the do-it-yourself inventors of burgeoning technology, like Hugo Gernsback himself, who as writers and fans would produce the "living matrix" of the SF sub-culture, epitomised in Astounding Science Fiction/Analog, the mainspring of American SF until the '50s.

In the magazines the hobbyists' love of gadgetry and the now residual narrative of the individual inventor-genius (Andrew Ross 124-25) met the earlier passion for cutting-edge technology, to supplement Burroughs' adventure fantasies with the extrapolation, first of rocketry, and then, in the '30s and '40s, of nuclear/atomic power. A major figure in this process was John W. Campbell, the editor of Astounding, whose double emphasis on up-to-date science, and on sociological speculation about the future where it was to be deployed, stamped the *oeuvre*s of writers such as Herbert, Heinlein and Asimov, the `classics' of modern genre SF. Many like them, such as Simak, van Vogt and Sturgeon, began writing in the '30s under Campbell's aegis. Many, like Heinlein, were still writing in the '80s and are republished in the '90s. The endurance of this intellectual and literary community may well justify the name Golden Age for the period of Campbell's ascendancy, from 1937 to the early '50s, and the tacit consensus that makes this `hard,' physically based, scientifically rigorous body of texts and writers the core of SF.

As Betty King points out, however, this is not a Golden Age for women (62). The dearth of women writers continues; there are almost no main female characters; and women appear chiefly as terrifying super-aliens, whose threat is averted when "she destroys herself for a man" (Robin Roberts 50). Women's expulsion from the post-war work-place is justified by the narrative solution of superior female aliens who "renounce their achievements and defer to human males" (42). Gynophobic perigee arrives in the '50s stories of Philip Jose Farmer, where in "The Lovers" a man betrays into pregnancy a beautiful alien, "the complete female" (Farmer, qtd. Roberts 52) who dies as her offspring eat their way out of her womb.

`Human' women were also made to illustrate the domestication lesson, like the girl

who fails at engineering and retires gratefully to the house in Heinlein's <u>Podkayne of Mars</u> (1963); and Wells' division of women and science becomes a warning of women from this male province in Tom Godwin's "The Cold Equations" (1953), with its female stowaway caught in the gears of ideology rather than physics, as John Huntington demonstrates ("Hard SF" 50-56). Yet despite their eventual defeat, Robin Roberts points out that depictions of powerful females encouraged resisting female readers. As one such woman told her:

> I read the stories for the beginnings - men may have been reading for the endings. I was looking for strong, capable women and science fiction was the only place I could find [them]. (qtd. Roberts 45)

Such readers included Le Guin, James Tiptree, Octavia Butler and McKee Charnas. As Roberts remarks, the inflation of the powerful alien female in the magazines laid the ground for women who would "`re-write the endings'" (45) in feminist SF.

Ironically, the Golden Age may be considered to end when Campbell's interest swung to pseudo-sciences like dianetics and "psionics" (del Rey 161-69), which promptly became the now ubiquitous `soft' topos of psychic or paranormal powers, whether generated by machines or minds. However, the general dystopic swing in '50s American SF is in sharp contrast to the optimism that overcame financial stress on magazines during the Depression and World War II. But there is evidence of another disastrous interface with material reality, which rebounded directly on the central SF community.

Under Campbell's direction <u>Astounding</u> was involved, through both popularising articles and fictional speculation, with the search for "atomic power" (del Rey 152-57). At one point the offices were actually raided when a story anticipated details of bomb technology (108). Atomic research thus carried the psychic investment of the SF community, an optimism paralleled in an eye-witness account of the scientists' euphoria after the first bomb test, when only one man felt concern (Feynman 135-36). Thus as the full repercussions emerged, the inner SF community confronted not only a fearful piece of hardware, but the wreck of a central ideological tenet in their writing and in many cases their lives, their commitment to the

"positivist religion" (Andrew Ross 105) of technofuturism.

Hard-core `hard' SF writers solved this problem by shifting frontiers. In 1960 Kingsley Amis saw the prospect of a space age as "the propelling force of much science fiction" (68) which retained "confidence in human character and abilities" (67). But Amis also chronicles the double-shuffle whereby SF writers shifted the weight of atomic guilt to technology with dystopic visions of "conformist hells" (94) and, particularly in Frederik Pohl's work, the horrors of consumerism (102-15). This recoil was out of tune with the rise of American national confidence during the '50s economic boom (Chafe 112-19). But Amis plays down the "great deal" (58) of SF that voiced with "hysteria" (Stableford 217) the "emotional impact of Hiroshima" (Clareson, Understanding 173), the "central fear" (129) of the post-war period: nuclear holocaust. Amis thus misses the rise of a major new topos, as "writers became much more interested in the potentialities of the post holocaust scenario" (Stableford 217). The topos of After-the-Bomb brought the interface of known and unknown back from space to earth, and also generated a "mythology of the post holocaust frontier" (217). Nevertheless, this topos operated under a change in basic SF givens, as writers assumed nuclear disaster was inevitable (Clareson, Understanding 216; Stableford 217). The tension between dystopic visions and technological advances like those in computing became complicated in the 1960s, as literary revolt and widening readership, popularity, and horizons within the genre, meshed with the cultural upheavals of the period.

Literary revolt came with the so-called New Wave, as Michael Moorcock in England assumed control of New Worlds in June 1964, and in America Damon Knight's Orbit 1 anthology (1966) was followed by Harlan Ellison's Dangerous Visions (1967), intended as "a canvas for new writing styles, bold departures, unpopular thoughts" (Ellison xxvii, qtd. Clareson, Understanding 205). Though rejecting connections with Moorcock and Judith Merril, who coined the term, Ellison's manifesto repeats the emphasis on style and experi-mentation seen as the mark of the New Wave (Stableford 211; del Rey 253). It is also seen as

a generation of new writers (Clareson, <u>Understanding</u> 202) whose rebellion set them in tune with the counterculture and the '60s youth movement. As `radicals,' the New Wave delighted in breaking taboos, especially that on the use of sex (Greenland 23-43). A recoil from `outer' to `inner space' foregrounded psychoanalytic metaphors and drug experience (44-68), while J.G. Ballard's postmodern disillusion with `reality' (56-7) matched writers like Philip K. Dick and Thomas Disch in perpetuating the dystopic vision of '50s SF (Berger).

The rise of `soft' topoi coincides with women's visibility as both writers and characters. Betty King finds female heroes and women writers increasing in the '50s (77-106); many prominent '60s female writers, from Marion Zimmer Bradley and Judith Merril to Joanna Russ, were first published in '50s SF. But though New Wave rebellion, `soft' topoi and <u>Star Trek</u> would make SF a rich field for the female or feminist productive imagination, in the '50s such writers were often ghettoised as producing `women's stories,' like the work of Zenna Henderson, or as Bradley put it, having to be "twice as good as men" (Introduction, "Somebody Else's Magic" 64) - that is, at perpetuating the exclusivist, masculinist discourse of Golden Age SF.

Nevertheless, such increased women's presence undoubtedly weighted the '60s tension in SF between "a conservative pole of technophiliacs" and a "radical pole of apocalyptic technophobes" (Stableford 211). The Old Guard/New Wave, hard/soft, conservative/radical, content/form, technophiliac/technophobe oppositions were spelt out when John W. Campbell, Robert Heinlein, Hal Clement, Larry Niven and Jerry Pournelle, among others, took out an advertisement in the June 1968 <u>Galaxy</u> supporting the Vietnam war, while Philip K. Dick, Harlan Ellison, Ursula Le Guin, Joanna Russ, Robert Silverberg and Kate Wilhelm, among others, took out one opposing it (Stableford 219).

Such political awareness matched SF's wide visibility in film, TV, academia, and the bookstore, and the proliferation of topoi from current concerns like pollution, over-population, and ecology. The texts that best sum up the changes are perhaps, <u>Stranger in a Strange Land</u>

(1961), and <u>Dune</u> (1965): in one, the doyen of the Golden Age turned to sociology; the other, in a less catastrophic way than <u>Dorking</u>, turned a contemporary issue from an SF topos to part of the national consciousness. An equally hot intellectual spot was the topos of sexuality, from sexual liberation to visions of alien sex to the nature of sexuality *per se*. This was intimately related to the sexual revolution of the '60s. In the late '60s and '70s, it became involved, through the concept of gender, with feminism, which functioned both as an intellectual frame and as a topos in itself.

- Section 8 -

MARION ZIMMER BRADLEY AND ROBERT HEINLEIN: "THE DAY

BEFORE THE REVOLUTION"

In "The Day Before the Revolution" (1974), the philosopher-foremother of Anarres, Ursula Le Guin's famous anarchist Utopia, demanded "a story ... about herself" (Le Guin, Headnote "Day"). But like Moses, Odo never reaches her Promised Land. In this chapter her life forms a metaphor for the work of Marion Zimmer Bradley and Robert Heinlein, the first pair of SF writers I discuss. These are writers shaped by the demands of '40s and '50s SF, who engaged positively with the topos of sexuality during the pre-feminist '60s: Bradley mutated traditional SF versions of sexuality and colonialism, while a Heinlein novel actually "reasoned for" rather than "about" the sexual revolution. But in the late '60s, when the New Left's sexual inequities helped trigger second-wave feminism (Faust 110-12; Segal, Future 75-79), or what Lillian Rubin calls the gender revolution (95), neither writer could lead its synergy with SF. The one could only colonise, and the other never fully entered, the area feminism(s) opened for SF writers, which is concerned not only with (alternate) sexualities, especially for women, but with examination of gender roles and constructions, in what Sarah Lefanu calls feminist imaginative space.

As for other writers in the SF community's matrix, Bradley and Heinlein's biographies are fleshed out by SF fanzine interviews and articles, in which politics, including feminism, are matters of explicit interest, and in Heinlein's case, by academic studies and essay collections. Bradley draws some academic feminist attention, but speaks for herself in fanzines, Convention or conference addresses and Introductions or anthology headnotes. Their personal input to the synergy of feminism(s) and SF is thus a matter of report rather than inference. Both writers are white, middle-class, and have been married, with or without children. Within their genre, in comparison to the Modern Gothic writers, both were equipped to engage sexuality and feminism(s) with a far wider choice of topoi and, with the New Wave's revolt in the mid-'60s, a veritable licence to transgress the SF ban on sex (Greenland 32). The subsequent proliferation of "carnal encounters," to use Leonard Heldreth's phrase, reveals a dispiriting tendency to perpetuate stereotypes of women as Other, alien, and inhuman. But by then Heinlein had produced a counter-cultural blueprint

with his vision of human sexuality in <u>Stranger in a Strange Land</u> (1961).

Leading the Counter-Culture: Heinlein 1960-66

By 1961 Heinlein had already helped lead one era in SF. First published in 1939, by 1941 he was the most popular author of '40s magazine SF (Peter Nicholls 186), which he helped bring from the "gadget story" (Heinlein, "Writing" 11) to the cultural extrapolations sought by John W. Campbell. His schema of a Future History, separate works in a common historical frame, has become an SF staple. <u>Methuselah's Children</u> (1941) is still cited as a "top read" on a 1994 SF publisher's list, and in the '50s he led SF's move "upward" into juveniles and "slick" magazines (Peter Nicholls 188). Work like "The Man Who Sold the Moon" (1949) which mixes cutting-edge '40s rocket technology with capitalist chicanery, <u>The Puppet Masters</u> (1951) with its lack of sex, rare women and terror of lost psychic boundaries, and <u>Starship Troopers</u> (1959), a *Bildungsroman* whose hero moves from recruit to military elite in a war against hive-mind invaders, remain, for good or bad, classics of hard SF.

In its turn, <u>Stranger</u> anticipated the `soft' '60s. The story of Valentine Michael Smith, human, raised on Mars, brought to Earth to remodel society through a religion of sexual communion, finally martyred and ritually eaten by his disciples, abounds in lectures on comparative theology (<u>Stranger</u> 368), cultural relativism, such as tolerance of Martian ritual cannibalism (125-28), and the nature of God and man (138-143). The Candide-type protagonist lets Heinlein defamiliarize and critique repressed, materialist '50s America, but the main focus is mysticism - "Thou art God" is Smith's slogan - and spiritual "plurality-into-unity" (369) achieved through free and copious sex.

As with "Dorking" and World War I, the novel's date and reader response argue for genuine historical agency. It became a cult book "extraordinary" for its sexuality even among cult books (Whissen 245). The practices of Smith and his disciples, "Bacchanalia, unashamed swapping, communal living and anarchistic code" (<u>Stranger</u> 364) shaped the counter-culture (Franklin 127-28; Samuelson, "`Stranger'" 173-74), from images of free love and alternate community seen world-wide in <u>Woodstock</u>

(1970), to Sharon Tate's murder by some of the novel's professed devotees (Whissen 245). But the image of women who "[desire] intercourse with a whole-heartedness that Cleopatra never dreamed of ... free of guilt and fear" (Stranger 401) provided an icon of the sexual revolution. Above all, Stranger modelled the liberation of women's sexuality.

Stranger also prefigures the double-bind of this revolution. Technologically underpinned by the Pill, identified with the counter culture, '60s permissiveness was linked to political activism. As one of Lillian Rubin's interviewees recalled:

> `You cared about the people you were sleeping with, even if you just met them, because people who were out there on the streets together *felt* like they knew each other.' (88)

But, as Rubin put it, "[t]he revolution, which had freed [women] to say yes, also disabled them from saying no" (93).

Thus Stranger dissolves the virgin/whore stereotype perpetuated in The Door Into Summer (1957), where a scientist's time-trips save his inventions from a chiselling girlfriend and keep him young enough to marry a once adoring schoolgirl; but only to anticipate Koontz's heroines. Its perpetually available, sexy if not beautiful, supportive but not assertive women are male models of female sexuality, while as Robert Plank noticed (87), the `free' love is emphatically heterosexual. Men may kiss, but "`it's not a pansy gesture'" (Stranger 365), and though Smith's chief lover comes to relish working as a stripper, she "`grok[s] naughty pictures'" only through a man's eyes. "Lesbian tendencies would have been too much" (306-07). To the end, women are treated as on the New Left: as sexual conveniences, secretaries, food and coffee makers. The last scene of Smith alive has him asking his "high priestess" to bring him clothes (425), while the presiding patriarch's recovery from Smith's death is marked by a shout of "*Front*!" for a (female) stenographer (436).

From a psychoanalytic perspective, Stranger shows dubious changes in Heinlein's *oeuvre*. The '50s juveniles repeatedly present adolescent male escapes from a "suffocating" but naive mother to the mentorship of surrogate fathers (Peter Nicholls

189-90). Though preserved in King's hatred of powerful mothers, this appears a historicised solution to the '50s cult of motherhood, even as, in Lacanian terms, it forms a typical Oedipal transit from absorption in the maternal body to participation in the paternal Symbolic Order. In Stranger, the emphasis on merging personalities suggests a Utopian shift from masculine boundary phobia toward a relational, feminised psyche. But Stranger is also the first text where, as Nicholls notes, Heinlein over-privileges the father figure (192).

In fact, Stranger implodes the Oedipal narrative, which should produce a space between father and mother for the male subject. Mike Smith reaches Earth an "`infant'" (Stranger 37), with immense wealth and proxy sovereignship of Mars. He is saved from dangerous custody by a nurse, his surrogate mother; but it is an older male, Jubal Harshaw, who must battle the system to save Smith and his wealth, and then `grow Smith up' - induct him into the Symbolic Order of cultural knowledge. When Smith founds his church, he still claims Harshaw as father; when he dies, Harshaw literally and symbolically subsumes his `son' by ritually eating his body. Here escape from masculine ego boundaries appears to dissolve the male subject inside the persona of the patriarch.

Hence while operating as an agent of the sexual revolution, Stranger suggests alarming psychic consequences for the male who tries to match female `liberation.' It is tempting to see an evasion of this knowledge in Heinlein's other '60s SF. While the sexual and political revolutions gathered momentum, his last juvenile, Podkayne of Mars (1963), published the same year as The Feminine Mystique, firmly warns teenage girls to pass up science for domesticity. And in Farnham's Freehold (1964) and The Moon is a Harsh Mistress (1966), liberal issues and the male subject struggle against an encroaching patriarch.

In Farnham's Freehold the patriarch swamps the story of a family thrown into the future by nuclear holocaust. Here paranoias inflamed, as Bruce Franklin argues (155-58), by nuclear terrors and Civil Liberties riots, turn a Swiss Family Robinson mythos into a masculinist survival narrative, ancestor of The Stand. The usual demand

that women reproduce to save humanity reduces the sexual revolution to fantasies of Oedipal transgression: a daughter sees her father as the best husband available, but dies before marriage. And a son prey to "Oedipus Rex" (Freehold 104) is about to elope with his mother when the family is conveniently enslaved in a black dystopia.

This attempt to reverse the discourse of slavery to defamiliarize and critique racism - having the white patriarch called "`Boy'," rewriting history from a black view (190-91) - backfires as the discourse of rights is tied to whiteness and manliness. Having chosen to become a slave concubine, the patriarch's overweight alcoholic wife is replaced by a child-bearer who "never chattered when her man wanted her to be quiet" (287). His son, who fights his authority through the holocaust and re-settling, drops out on the local happy drug to be castrated and join his mother in contented slavery. The male subject is reduced to a pre-Oedipal infant; and since the patriarch "never had control over his rearing" (289), his mother gets the blame.

In The Moon is a Harsh Mistress (1966) Heinlein's libertarian politics pull his work back toward feminism. NOW was founded that year, while in 1964 black women in SNCC had already began to protest against sexism (Chafe 332). So Mistress re-enacts the War of Independence as the revolt of a Lunar colony, where women are sexually willing, but their scarcity empowers them to an often arbitrary, No. Though later reduced to marriage the main female character begins as a fiery orator, and women share the uprising, if only as spies, nurses and support for the gun-crews. Mistress also manages an expansion of sexual frontiers, adding the hero's `line marriage,' a sequential polyandry/polygamy, to the power of women's choice.

The patriarch too is subdued. The hero, a polyglot computer technician, conspires for freedom with an old political exile and a self-aware computer nicknamed Mycroft Holmes. The "Professor" is far less tyrannical than the hero of Farnham's Freehold, and in the end he dies, giving the Oedipal narrative its proper conclusion: father superseded, male subject settled with his own wife. But "Mycroft," the hero's

machine alter ego, grows two other personae: "Adam Selene," the video figurehead of the revolution, and "Michelle," as whom h/she speaks to the female hero. All three are destroyed in the climactic battle, although the ending insists that "he can't really be dead; nothing was hurt - he's just *lost*" (Mistress 288). Nonetheless, the hero is also preparing to leave Luna and his marriage/family. From one view, Mistress suggests the feminine side of a male psyche released from the closet. From another, a male subject achieves maturity only to fragment in a group of unstable, untenable identities.

Mutating the Counter-Culture: Bradley 1961-70

Coterminal with Stranger, Marion Zimmer Bradley published The Door Through Space (1961), Ur-text of her central SF Darkover series. A writer as copious as Dean Koontz with almost as many pseudonyms (Clute and Nicholls 155), Bradley reached print with "Women Only" (1953), but "[b]ecause I was eager to sell, I soon learnt to write about male doings." Into the '60s she saw women writers "trying to write the same kind of thing as the men - but we had to do it better" ("Responsibilities" 29). Her preface sites Door in the swing from hard science to space opera (Door 5), a view Thomas Clareson seconds (Understanding 233-34); Bradley's dating to when "Sputniks clutter up the sky" (5) ties the shift to the Russians' early space triumph, a traumatic moment for the American psyche (Stephen King, Danse 21-26). But where Heinlein turned to sexuality, Bradley sought a less accessible interface with the unknown, articulating a non-possessive wonder, "a need and hunger for... The world beyond the stars. The world we *won't* live to see" (Door 6).

In her own texts and associates' anthologies the resulting series has run for over thirty years. It is actually a future history, looping back in time, reconsidering characters, rewriting events, and filling gaps through the anthologies. With a `red' old sun, Darkover is almost perpetually winterbound; framed by what Le Guin calls the "incredibly regressive" colonial schema of a Galactic Empire ("American SF" 98), its feudal society, to Joanna Russ a staple of backward-looking "space opera" ("Image" 82), employs a version of Campbell's psionic topos that closely parallels Andre Norton's Witch-world series. Darkovan telepaths use blue jewel `matrices' in an

alternate technology, which learns to ban its terrible weapons in a clear parallel to the atomic bomb.

As Linda Leith notes (31), a Terran/Darkovan, Coloniser/Colonised tension is central to the series; so Door opposes the Terran "spaceport and ... white skyscraper" (12) to a "clutter of low buildings" (7) and "an untidy slum ... reeking with the sounds and smells of human and half-human life" (15), traditional European images of a colonial city and its chaotic native quarter (Ching-Liang Low, "White" 84-85). The ex-Secret Service narrator who "had known how to melt into this kind of night... a worn shirt-cloak hunched round my shoulders... not looking or sounding or smelling like an Earthman" (Door 16), resurrects heroes like Kipling's Strickland, who can out-dress and out-know the natives on their own ground (Ching-Liang Low, "White" 94-96).

Bradley mutates this tradition in Darkover proper. In The Sword of Aldones (1962), the protagonist is an embittered half-Terran damaged by working with a `bad' matrix, openly hostile to "the hated Empire people" (2). Now the Terran skyscraper is contested by "the tall spire of the Keeper's Tower" (10). But Darkovan society is divided over joining the Empire, which wants Darkovan technology, and between ordinary people and the telepathic ruling Comyn. After helping destroy the `bad' matrix, the hero departs before "the Terrans [took] over ... the only right and logical way to end the story of the Comyn" (183). In Door, Bradley's Coloniser goes beyond the temporary "thrill of imperial penetration" (Ching-Liang Low, "White" 94) to feel "I'd never run away from Wolf again" (141). But though Lew Alton takes a lover and illegitimate daughter away to form a classic nuclear family, he ends by saying "*An exile may be happy, but he is an exile, no less*" (Aldones 184). Bradley has remarked that Lew Alton is her own "voice" in the series (Headnote, "Blood Will Tell," 180); as Colonised rather than Coloniser, he may express a woman writer's longing for an Elsewhere beyond the limits of masculinist SF.

This Elsewhere materialises in The Bloody Sun (1964), Star of Danger (1965) and The Winds of Darkover (1970). Set a generation or so earlier than Aldones, all

three change its end to produce the staple series plot: rather than showing Darkover only through white male Terran eyes (Jacqueline Pearson 13), an apparently Terran hero finds native ancestry and is assimilated, often with a lover, on Darkover. As Bradley fleshes out Darkovan culture, cross-cultural dressing becomes an occasion, not of asserting power or `knowing' the colonial Other, but of reaching comfort and accepting a "deeper ... self" (Bradley, Star 57). If, as Leith argues, male, rational, technological, bourgeois, heterosexual Terra (contemporary America) opposes female, feudal, instinctive and (later) homosexual Darkover (32), this permission to assume a female self helps explain the high proportion of women readers (Bradley, Introduction Amazons 13). But though each text's closure promises Terran-Darkovan amity, perhaps because of the psychic power in the accepted-stranger plot, it also limits the productive imagination: so Bradley rarely gets beyond meeting and *rapprochement* into purely Darkovan life.

Along with feminised colonialism goes a shift in SF female stereotypes. In Aldones, the traditional `native' temptress of Door remains a siren with "the eyes of a wild beast" (6), opposed, with another "pert" (7) sexpot, to three virgin/victims, one vampirised by the ultimate villain, an ancient Keeper or matrix warden. As with King, old powerful women are evil in masculinist SF (Russ, "Image" 83). The `bad' matrix too is imaged as a female demon, its `sword' broken in the climactic battle by that of a male deity. But these figures are modified through the '60s by a woman's version of the sexual revolution, that couples female romance and masculinist SF discourse, centring on the series' consistent link of the psionic topos and sexuality.

In Aldones physical sexuality is displaced onto Lew Alton's "Gift" of forcing psychic union or "rapport" with another's mind. Though this can kill men, he shrinks from the virgin Keeper: "torturing a woman like that" is "worse than rape" (162). The mention of rape, and the accounts of achieving rapport, a mixture of extreme pain and total intimacy, suggest a female fear of intercourse, transmitted by a hero who is, to use Robin Roberts' concept, "codedly feminine" (16). When the matrix-smashing trio do achieve rapport, Lew finds it an "extremely pleasant" "togetherness" (Aldones 165).

Where Heinlein speaks of "plurality-in-unity" - that is, subsumption of identity - Bradley's hero articulates the desire that Rubin's female interviewees voiced repeatedly: that sex be a connection rather than an act, a rapport, a relationship (100; 111-12).

In Aldones, too, the '50s stress on virginity (Lillian Rubin 24-25; 37) appears in the rule that Keepers must be virgin to work with matrices. Lew Alton's first lover dies from breaking the rule, and when male power is threatened by a new Keeper on Comyn council, marriage is proposed as the remedy. In The Bloody Sun the '60s tie of sex and revolution that suddenly made it "time" to "smash the virginity mandate" for young women (Rubin 47) is anticipated when reaching technological parity with Terra entails breaking the tradition of Keepers' virginity: "[t]he cost is too great, in human terms" (Sun 189-90).

The Bloody Sun also shows a diluted permissiveness with its non-monogamous telepathic circle, which in sharp contrast to Heinlein foregrounds a "Terran" male's possessiveness. But despite Bradley's claim that his partner has "the first independent love life" in SF ("Responsibilities" 33), she swaps lovers in answer to male demands. Feeling male "need and hunger," "`Can any woman worth the name ... not - answer it?'"(Sun 130).

In The Winds of Darkover the fearful virgin and sexual therapist become a mountain girl who can escape a stormed castle, rescue her raped sister, and equably consider sleeping with a brother; her society accepts delphic marriages. But despite the proliferation of female heroes (Betty King 107-8) as male writers "turn[ed] a thematic corner" (Clareson, Understanding 231) with strong, sympathetic female leads, like Samuel Delany in Babel-17 (1966), and Alexei Panshin, who re-wrote Podkayne of Mars in Rite of Passage (1968), Bradley still saw the SF market as so male dominated that she only now dared "take a chance on a female protagonist" ("Responsibilities 29-30). The girl actually shares the novel's focus with the usual Terran male. But "if she had even inadvertently roused desire in him, common decency ... demanded that she give it some release" (Winds 119). As in Terran America, by

1969 Bradley's women are freed to say, Yes, but still disabled from saying, No.

The Day of the Revolution: Bradley 1971

Despite this *oeuvre*, the SF text that launched the gender revolution was Ursula Le Guin's The Left Hand of Darkness (1969), which examined feminist claims for gender's cultural basis as literalised in the androgynous Gethenians. Only after actually reading Left Hand (Arbur 33) could Bradley produce The World Wreckers (1971). Chronologically, it closes the Darkover series, as the updated threat of a galactic corporation's attempt to `develop' the planet is thwarted by a trans-species orgy that conceives a new generation of psychics. Wreckers displays the "reckless" (Stableford 220) hybridising of '70s SF, adding ecological awareness to an emphasis on trees and a tall, fair, long-lived alien race straight out of The Lord of the Rings. But it also shows Bradley's first debts to feminism.

Beyond vocabulary like the telltale "gender," and an even more datable "patriarchal society" (Wreckers 73), Bradley revises the Free Amazons. In The Planet Savers (1962) their ancestress was a foil for the hero (Amazons, "Introduction" 7-8): a feisty mountain guide modelled on the tough women of '30s writers like Arthur Barnes and Stanley Weinbaum (Betty King 38-40; 52-59), she falls in love with the Terran hero, to repeat the Edwardian romance topos of strong woman defeated by stronger man (Dixon 126-29). But in Wreckers the Free Amazons are a gynocentric "freemate" couple who choose "to do a man's work and take a man's freedom" (73). Bradley's chief debt to Le Guin, however, and her transit to the gender topos, is with Keral, the chieri androgyne.

This figure can be sited precisely when derisive '60s catch-cries of "Is it a boy or a girl?" yielded to the bisexuality of '70s cult figures like David Bowie: a "tall girl/no, boy/no, girl, with masses of long, loose fair hair, slender, sexless figure - human?" (Wreckers 58). Though Heldreth calls `his' relationship with the Terran hero a love affair between two males (139), like Gethenians, the chieri are in fact hermaphrodite. But a `female' chieri reverts to the sexpot stereotype as she flaunts sexuality, is bashed by a pick-up who thinks she is a transvestite, displays wild psychic

powers, and before `her' return to female form and a monogamous relationship, is called a "psychotic whore" (121); while the chieri read as male has a central role in the telepaths' regeneration and the Terran hero's assimilation on Darkover.

The pair's first love-making couples masculinist SF discourse - medical comments on the physical change to female, repeated images of the chieri as fearful virgin - with a female romance stress on connection and tenderness. Le Guin denies her male narrator and androgynous native hero the final step from intimacy to intercourse: to their break-through of communication, respect and reaching out to the alien, gender is one more kind of boundary. Bradley deliberately went beyond this (Leith 34), to mesh her chieri in the reproductive imperatives of a plot where only telepathic children can save Darkover. So s/he both sleeps with and conceives by the alien; but Bradley does seem to lower the gender wall when the human, falling asleep in his lover's arms, reflects:

> He still did not think of Keral as a woman; and yet - oh, hell! Why struggle for labels? Keral was Keral; and he loved him; and he didn't care. (Wreckers 169)

In privileging the `male' love affair, however, as in its physicality, Bradley reveals a lasting double bias. Her retention of topoi from the sexual revolution produces biological rather than culturally based treatments of gender; and though claiming that she now wrote "as I wished, as a woman" ("Responsibilities" 33), her leaning to homoeroticism often disadvantages women characters.

Fighting the Gender Revolution: Heinlein 1970-3

In contrast to Bradley, Heinlein published nothing between 1966 and 1970, the high-tide of '60s liberal fervour (Chafe 487), when the Moon-walk fulfilled one of his "fondest dreams," while social disorder and military breakdown embodied some of his "worst night-mares" (Franklin 172). But since I Will Fear No Evil (1970) concerns an aged billionaire's brain transplant and personality transfer into his young female secretary's body, it marks Heinlein's engagement with the gender topos, and implicitly, with feminism.

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The SF bent for intellectual examination of current topoi allows Le Guin, Bradley and Heinlein's texts to record, more immediately than any of the Gothic writers, a specific moment in the synergy of feminism(s) and cultural trends: in this case, a moment when, as Catherine Belsey puts it, a contest for meaning "disrupts the system of differences on which sexual stereotyping depends" (190). Belsey matches the disruption figured by Shakespeare's cross-dressing comedy heroines to the contest of dynastic and nuclear family forms (167-180). The SF texts catch the moment in late '60s America when feminist women and long-haired counter-culture men again contested the meanings of masculine and feminine. "*[M]an* I must say, having said *he* and *his*" writes Le Guin's narrator, destabilising the equation of sex and gender (<u>Left Hand</u> 11). Bradley's chieri physically enacts the free-fall alterity of unsettled sexual difference. Heinlein's novum offers a golden approach to the question, Is gender physical? But though he does speculate briefly about the impact of hormonal cycles on male thinking, he is hamstrung by an inability to overstep the sexual revolution, and by his presiding patriarch.

This figure bridges the equally topical Generation Gap, coupling nostalgia for an idyllic '30s past, lost in a "terminal" dystopia (Franklin 173) beset by over-population and anarchy - a common conservative perception of late '60s America (Chafe 414) - with a determination to show the swinging young that "your generation had learned [nothing] mine had not" (Heinlein, <u>Evil</u> 192). Such trendy endorsement of anything from adultery to lesbianism and paedophilia can sketch masculinist problems: "`Do you know how *good* it is to be touched? ... For over a quarter of a century ... Except for an occasional handshake I don't think anyone ever touched me'" (243). But though s/he seduces his lawyer, his accountant, their doctor, their bodyguards, the nurse, her ex-husband and his new wife, the spiritual import of sex in <u>Stranger</u> is gone. Nor does the text reach the accepting tenderness of "Keral was Keral; and he loved him." Yet Bradley is far more explicit. Heinlein's awkward sex scenes have been remarked (Panshin 151; Sarti 129), and erotica here consists of locker-room chat like "`kissing Brother Schmidt is more emphatic than spreading most gals'" (<u>Evil</u> 170).

Such "smart-aleckyness" (Tiptree, "Journal" 3) actually signals an inability to move with SF's cutting edge. Instead, the single allusion gives Heinlein's view of feminism:

EQUAL RIGHTS FOR WOMEN!!!...

> See his look of surprise when you step right to a ... urinal and use it with a smile. Get Dr. Mary Evers' EQUAL-NOW Adapter - purse-size - ... comes in nine lovely, feminine, psychedelic patterns. (Evil 379)

This stance compounds the problems of the original novum. Firstly, where Bradley and Le Guin's androgynes can enact the cultural mobility of gender, Heinlein's personalities are stuck in one biological body, which needs interminable legal discourse to settle its identity. When this is fixed as the patriarch's, a wall of wealth erases the problems of work and survival a double-gendered woman might meet in material reality.

More importantly, the Utopian moment is ephemeral. Le Guin only kept her Gethen-ian hero unfixed by refusing `him' sex, and then killing `him'; the fluidity of Bradley's chieri is only intelligible by reference to previous stereotypes. But Bradley and Le Guin can access the new gender theories produced by feminism. Eschewing this resource, trapped in the sexual topos, Heinlein's glimpse of a double-gendered subject collapses in masculinist cliches, some as hoary as Tiresias: "for a woman [sex is] so much *better*" (267). Occasionally this intersects with feminist theory, as in a startling parallel to Cixous, that women's sexuality is "our *whole* body" (296); but women are also instinctual (205), "a belly with a time-bomb inside... They either quit being shy ... or they go crazy" (187-8). The ideal woman remains that bourgeois dream, "a perfect lady in public ... utterly inhibited in private" (347), while men are manipulable, fragile, much shyer, and smart men prefer being cuckolded to "losing a wife [they] value" (211). In fact, even in the '80s, young men who "`know ... it's just a stupid, stereotypic way of thinking'" still struggle with "`the fact that a girl would be as sexually active as me'" (qtd. Lillian Rubin 118). And the `swing scene' Heinlein promotes led to '70s "recreational sex" that many women regretted (110). Ironically,

those who recalled it most positively were women who still considered themselves feminists (113).

From a psychoanalytic perspective, Evil regresses further, since although Heinlein's father-fixation marries the h/emale to another patriarch, s/he is impregnated with his/her own sperm. This elides both mother and male subject. Having emigrated the pregnant h/emale to the Lunar colony, the closure saves the baby, but the h/emale - the patriarchal solipsism - dies or implodes itself: "[a]n old world vanished and then there was none" (Evil 414).

After this collision with the gender topos, Heinlein retreated into wilder visions of sexuality. Possibly "the poor guy [became] liberated too late in life to forget it" (Tiptree, "Journal" 4). Yet by 1972, in sharp contrast to Evil, he was urging women's inclusion in the space program, because "they're paying half the taxes; it's as much their program as ours" (qtd. Sargent xli). So Time Enough For Love (1973) pays lip-service to feminism, with comments on the inclusive "he" pronoun (161) and women's (past) inequality (162). Yet the one remote female ruler is denigrated as an "old bat" (374), and "old harridan" (394) as men continue to rule and make the laws (372; 402), while women shuffle guest arrangements and fulfil the masculinist dream: that ALL women want sex and babies as often as possible.

The result is a series of trangressive Oedipal fantasies. In the future, Lazarus Long, a near-immortal resurrected from Methuselah's Children (1941), a literal patriarch who is ancestor of all he surveys, is repeatedly begged to sleep with cloned, adopted, rejuvenated or descendant daughters. This future is itself regressive. David Samuelson notes Heinlein's persistent "frontier metaphor[s]," using space and the future to revive the individualism of "American pioneers" ("Frontier" 32). But the '60s bring a steady shift into a future-past. Where Stranger sketches late colonial discourse, making Smith "sole owner of the planet Mars" (26), potential victim of a colonial land-grabbing melee, in Freehold nuclear holocaust restores the time-frame of the Frontier, that potently mythicised period of American history. Mistress retreats to the War of Independence, the establishment of American identity, while Evil invokes the

Mayflower emigration. But Time Enough For Love recedes into an ideal colonial future-past, where humanity moves out to steamroll the indigenes on boringly Earth-like planets across the galaxy.

In this future's past Lazarus Long enacts the supreme Oedipal transgression: by time travel he reaches his biological mother, whose "idea of heaven would be to take *both* you and [your father] to bed at once" (578). This "hussy" (556) evokes Heinlein's strongest sex scenes, attempts at sensuality and even a "storm of lust" (506) in the protagonist; having slept with her, restoring the taboo, he `dies' immediately. The following section, which revises Stranger as the hero learns that he is God, may be narcissistic solipsism (Franklin 195; Letson 215-16). It is also the ultimate resumption by the paternal monster that haunts Heinlein's male subjects: the patriarch becomes The Patriarch. Or perhaps, the Patriarchy. If so, the last words offer feminists a chilling prospect, as the resurrected P/patriarch is told "`You cannot die'" (Time 607).

Where revived pre-Oedipal desire can decentre Female Gothic texts, for Heinlein it seems to produce disintegration in character and *oeuvre*. Whether from heart problems (Peter Nicholls 192), possible disillusion (Franklin 199), or imaginative failure, he did not publish again till 1980. Nonetheless, Evil is a far cry from the coterminal SF backlash whose gyno-phobic palpitations outdo Carrie. In Philip Jose Farmer's Image of the Beast (1968), ruthless female aliens chain the protagonist in a permanent state of erection and use his orgasms' energy to rebuild psychic mechanisms for escaping the planet (Heldreth 134-42). In Gender Genocide (1972) Edmund Cooper sees the last men hunted down and shot by rabid feminists, and Thomas Berger's Regiment of Women (1973) reduces men to breasts and panties while women stride about wearing the trousers and the power (Landon, "Eve" 70-73).

The Pursuit of Gender: Bradley 1972-81

A parallel backlash opens Bradley's most productive and powerful period. When her publisher persuaded her to continue the series after The World Wreckers (Arbur 33), Bradley returned to beginnings with Darkover Landfall (1972) which

endorses reproductive imperatives in both biological and ideological senses. When a Terran starship crashes on Darkover, hallucinogenic drugs produce another orgy to wreck the ship beyond repair, and the Swiss Family Robinson mythos again becomes a colonising/survival narrative. Post-colonial respect for natives and environment melts before desire for "`our world'" (Landfall 83), and the demands of `survival.' But since this equates species and individual, human women must again reproduce fast, according to "colony rules." A ship's officer accidentally pregnant, a model new career woman, learns her demand for abortion is a "failure of maternal behaviour" due to overpopulation, once called "`Women's Liberation'." After "about" four children she will recover "mental and emotional health" (112-113). Having thus solved the issues of abortion, women's careers and feminism, not to mention the traumas of pregnancy, Bradley ends with the colony established and the woman happy after "fourteen years of childbearing" (159). Seldom has a male writer so baldly endorsed the patriarchal/ colonial view of women as a passive labour-producing resource. That same year, writing the "trite" female romance Bradley despises (Introduction, Keeper's Price 10), and probably reacting to the same feminist assault on motherhood, Whitney decentred the romance to focus on a mother in Listen For the Whisperer; Bradley's surrender to masculinist discourse indicates the difficulties that can actually face a woman writer in `progressive' SF.

These difficulties reappear in The Heritage of Hastur (1975). Here the pre-story of Sword of Aldones, Lew Alton's first encounter with the `bad' matrix, is inter-leaved with a *Bildungsroman* where his fellow saviour, Regis Hastur, finds his telepathic Gift, accepts he is homosexual, and forms a lasting relationship. This time the Terran empire becomes a dream of travel and escape renounced for Darkovan responsibilities. The easy broaching of homosexuality contrasts with Sturgeon's mild but contested '50s version in "The World Well Lost" (Delany, Introduction, Uranian Worlds xx). It also differs strongly from the awkward, trendy but glancing mentions in I Will Fear No Evil. Linked again to telepathy, homosexuality in Heritage becomes part of an overall stress on connection - "living with your skin off" (28; 373; 376) - rather than physical

sensuality.

Bradley's text does parallel the construction of Kirk and Spock's liaisons in the female Star Trek fanzines. Patricia Lamb and Diana Veith consider such stories women's attempts to visualise an ideal relationship between "heroic equals," impossible between genders, and to imagine men both powerful and tender - a true female romance dream. Moreover, "masculine sexuality is appealing to most women" ("Romantic" 252-5). Joanna Russ lauds K/S zines as pornography for women, by women ("Pornography" 95-6), but agrees with a K/S writer that most women "don't like their own bodies enough" to find them erotic (85). Perhaps women are now alienated from bodies seen as a "legal, moral and religious battleground" (Penley, "Brownian" 154). But while Bradley's male lovers show little sexuality, the contrast of their `good' homoeroticism with the sadistic homosexual who mistreats Regis' lover matches the views of '80s heterosexuals, who firmly rejected all S/M except bondage "in play" (Lillian Rubin 129). If this is a favourable treatment of homosexuality (Riemer 148-50), it may be argued that like the K/S zines (Lamb and Veith, "Romance", 252-53), Heritage is written by and for the female heterosexual. So, as growing girls reject devalued mothers (Chodorow, Feminism 64) and Bradley herself scorned female romance, the text perpetuates the cultural bias that makes women less interesting and important to write about than men.

This bias is enforced by the treatment of `real' female sexuality. For Regis women exist to provide a substitute heir. The siren from Sword of Aldones brings to the telepathic link, "*A savage animal, dark, sinuous, prowling an unexplored jungle. A smell of musk... claws at my throat*" (Heritage 226). This traditional feminine colonial menace loses the hero to her demure virgin sister, but the latter is killed by the matrix, which itself presents a fearful image of repressed female rage and power: "a looming, towering form of fire, a woman's form, chained in gold, rising, flaming, striking, walls crumbling like dust" (242). This becomes a leit-motif for Aldones, Heritage, and Sharra's Exile (1981). The combination of chains, fire, and the "rage" the matrix evokes in its users, strongly recalls those classic images of women's fury in Jane Eyre.

One wonders if Bradley too is haunted by a female rage and power that, in SF as in the patriarchy, can only be contemplated safely chained.

The Shattered Chain (1976) reverses the motif to reach overt feminism in a full-scale portrait of the Free Amazons. Here again, however, Bradley colonises an imaginative space that Joanna Russ built with an Amazon Utopia in "When It Changed" (1972) and Suzy McKee Charnas with a female survivor in Walk to the End of the World (1974). In their wake, Chain is coterminal with SF classics like Piercy's Woman on the Edge of Time (1976) and Tiptree's "Houston, Houston, Do You Read?" (1976) all riding the mid-'70s wave of feminist theory and fiction caught by Michaels' House of Many Shadows. Like Michaels, however, the feminist SF writers match feminism's rise, while both the Female Gothic and the positive Male Gothic writer anticipate Bradley's favourable response.

As a colonist of this imaginative space, Bradley never mentions struggling as McKee Charnas did in 1972-3, trying to build a strong female character from feminist theory and experience ("Woman" 103-4). Anne Kaler derives the Amazons from twelfth-century Beguine sisterhoods, via the "Sisterhood" that Bradley borrowed from Patricia Mathews for Two to Conquer (Introduction, Free Amazons 13). But this text appeared in 1980; the "unidentified source" (Kaler 72) of Amazon life in Chain is actually '70s feminist culture, from ritually short hair to doctrinaire `trashing' of femininity, which Chain deploys as smoothly as Landfall used masculinist survival dogma. With its three women who break their chains and help the next to follow, the first Darkover novel without a male protagonist also shows what Sally Miller Gearhart considers a feminist refusal to give any character centrality ("Future" 300).

First a Comyn woman cuts her hair and rides with a Free Amazon company to rescue a childhood friend and her daughter from literal chains in "the Dry Towns." During the escape the friend dies in childbirth, and the noblewoman returns wistfully to married life; but she also defies male authority to let the girl foster with Amazons. Grown up, this girl `frees' a female Terran intelligence agent to forget a bad marriage and go native. Finally, the Free Amazon quits her order for the Terran's husband, while

the Terran becomes an Amazon, pledged yet again to promote Terran-Darkovan amity.

Though Sarah Lefanu classes Chain with Bradley's The Ruins of Isis (1978) as anti-feminist, forcing female characters into submissive roles to balance inferior male characters (44-45), such notables as Russ ("Recent") and Miller Gearhart ("Future" 296) do not question its feminism, and in a Darkovan context it is positively radical. Beside developing the Free Amazons, it remodels the wicked ruler and virgin/wanton stereotypes as a wife, a divorcee, and a sexually active single woman; and while the divorcee says No to her ex-husband, the Free Amazon decides, When for herself. Moreover, rescuing a female child is, to Russ, a properly feminist mythos ("Recent" 79) which occurs amid depictions of women repelling bandits, travelling freely, and bonded in loving sisterhood.

The flaw in this view is the bifurcate closure, which highlights the tension in Bradley's work between masculinist and feminist SF. Despite her own remark that "Jaelle will dump that turkey soon enough" (qtd. Arbur 28), leaving the Free Amazon with a man re-inserts her in what Russ calls the only women's plot, "the Love Story" ("Heroine" 9). Nevertheless, the Terran girl joins the Amazons whose pledge frames the text: a vow not to marry formally, not to take any man's name, to bear children only as they choose, and to be loyal only to Amazon "sisters" (Chain 3). When the last words envisage in her departure "the image of a great ... door, swinging wide on a sunlit world" (287), the final bias does seem feminist.

Landfall and Chain mark the parameters of Bradley's contradictory, often bitter relationship with feminism. In Bradley's narrative, she "won her credentials" as an SF writer when women were not a "protected" "minorit[y]" (Headnote, "Somebody Else's Magic" 64), but had to be "better than our male competitors" ("Responsibilities" 29). "[T]rendy `Women's Lib' types ... try to tell us that women in science fiction ... all started in the 60s with Joanna Russ and Ursula LeGuin (sic)," but "`Taint so" (Headnote, "Conscience"). She repeatedly denies finding any gender discrimination in SF (Introduction, Renunciates 10; Introduction, Keeper's Price 8; 11), yet also says that in the '50s "there was no way to write about women doing things" ("Responsibilities"

29), while in the '70s she "could write as she wished, as a woman" (33). Bradley's 1993 version offers no alternative to feminist intervention in the freeing of women writers; in 1985, she dates it from the influx of female readers after Star Trek, whereupon "the first great breakthrough" was The Left Hand of Darkness ("Responsibilities" 30). Yet Star Trek novels did not feature female heroes till the '80s (Betty King 206); Le Guin's response to feminism (Le Guin, "Redux" 7) renewed Bradley's own creativity (Arbur 33): and Bradley has acknowledged the input of feminist fanzines to The Shattered Chain (Rosinsky 113).

Bradley also complains of being "thrash[ed]" by feminist critics ("Responsibilities" 35), especially over Landfall (Arbur 27; Leith 34). Such "thrashing" appears largely to comprise a review and some letters in the feminist fanzine, The Witch and the Chameleon. But feminist topoi, particularly in the '70s, are also political issues; and as Salman Rushdie found with The Satanic Verses, textualising hot political issues opens both text and author to more than literary criticism. Having entered this arena in 1972 with a denied abortion, if Bradley found politicised critiques unpalatable, they should have been no surprise.

The Shattered Chain does begin a phase when Bradley attempts to give her work a gynocentric dimension. In The Forbidden Tower (1977), Two To Conquer (1980) and Sharra's Exile (1981) she augments masculinist narratives with women's presence and women's issues. Set some four or five generations before Sword of Aldones, The Forbidden Tower has twin sisters, one rescued from "catmen" in The Spell Sword (1974), married to a staple male Terran hero and his Darkovan double. The latter becomes Keeper of a psychic circle, or Tower, a role barred to men. In a relationship that James Riemer considers homosexuality between heterosexuals (147), Bradley uses the Terran male to defamiliarize Western masculinity, as he tries to cope with Darkovan customs like wife/ sister-sharing and marital group sex, and particularly with sexual acceptance of his double.

Sharra's Exile again gives The Sword of Aldones a homoerotic dimension with a fresh picture of Regis and his lover. But its focus is rehabilitation of the sadistic

homosexual from <u>Heritage of Hastur</u>, culminating in a sacrificial death to let the `good' prevail. Bradley comments on receiving many stories where this figure finds "a woman he could love and trust" (Headnote, "A Proper Escort" 206). Such response echoes her own revamping; but again, the favourable treatment of homoeroticism is at the women characters' expense.

The ex-Keeper's sister in <u>Tower</u> does remodel the sexpot stereotype as a loving sister and willing lover to both men, and in <u>Exile</u> Lew Alton's lover becomes a sympathetic portrait of a wife and mother of his deformed child. But in both cases female sexuality is contained by biological wife or mother roles, and in both novels the virgin/victim and old woman/ villain endure. They are unchanged in <u>Sharra's Exile</u>, while <u>The Forbidden Tower</u> traces the ex-Keeper's struggle against her virginity and conditioned frigidity. This is finally solved by another orgy, needed both to consummate her marriage and consolidate the circle for psychic battle. Her husband approaches this via a moving scene where his Darkovan double's breakdown dissolves his final homophobia and he "hold[s] Damon with the fierce protectiveness he had felt from the first toward him, but had never known how to express" (<u>Tower</u> 372). But when his wife protests her lack of choice, demanding, "`Have I no more rights in the matter than a horse led to the marketplace?'" all her Keeper can say "tenderly" is, "`I did not make the laws'" (386). Women are back to the obligatory, Yes; and the only time one tries to say, When, she is overridden.

In <u>Two To Conquer</u> (1980) a version of the female power being outlined by essential-ist feminism accompanies an expansion of the staple male double's narrative to foreground women's concerns: in especial, rape. The Free Amazons' ancestry is traced to the merger of a warrior sisterhood and a recluse priesthood, amid repeated mention of a Goddess supposed to defend them both. Like Michaels in <u>Black Rainbow</u> (1982), Bradley has colonised essentialist myth-making; but her Goddess cannot prevent the abduction and rape of the central female characters. Bradley uses the non-realist SF mode to punish the Darkovan rapist, when he relives his victims' experiences through his wife's matrix, an effect so shattering that he instantly reforms. But the

rapes are presented mostly through male eyes, subverting the critique as do Koontz's `bad' male fantasies in <u>Night Chills</u>. So does a happy ending where both men marry, one to a raped woman consoled by her resulting son. Rape in this text is mostly met, as Lefanu says of Bradley's other work, with "a plea to men for love and understanding" (45), a passivity in sharp contrast to the vigilante execution in Michele Belling's coterminal "The Rape Patrol" (1979). At a time when Whitney had reinstated pre-Oedipal desire and Michaels was rupturing the Female Gothic formula, the imperatives of a masculinist plot and the dynastic politics of Bradley's feudal world disable her attempt to advance women's issues; women can now resist with hope of success, but they still cannot safely say, No.

Fighting the Patriarch: Heinlein 1980-85

While Bradley produced an SF text a year almost throughout the '70s, it was 1980 before Heinlein published `<u>The Number of the Beast</u>', for a record SF advance of half a million dollars (Franklin 199). A minimal plot of aliens pursuing a time machine sends the inventor, his daughter, son-in-law and new wife on a Space Family Robinson trip that approaches postmodernism with both alternate and intertextual universes, such as Oz or Edgar Rice Burroughs' Barsoom. The humour of this "cotton-candy apocalypse" (Franklin 199) suffers less from preaching than techno-babble about the time machine, but again, a frequent term in both text and critics is "solipsism" (Peter Nicholls 194-95; Franklin 199-212).

Franklin derives the text from the late '70s spiritual malaise that produced <u>The Stand</u>. Heinlein, however, "solves both the story and his own problem with history" (199) by equating history with fiction. In fact, the text only misses a postmodernist deconstruction of narrative because it tenders a pseudo-scientific theory of "fictons" that compose all thought (`<u>Beast</u>' 370-75). But while `<u>Beast</u>' appears a solipsistic climax to the '70s work, against the '80s texts it opens a phase where, in psychoanalytic terms, Heinlein attempts the reconstruction of a non-paternal subject. And as Bradley approached lesbianism through homosexuality, he does it with women first.

In The Stand, the reproductive imagination of Male Gothic re-stereotypes women despite Apocalypse; even when disengaging from historical `reality', Heinlein can make a productive, or in his case Utopian leap. His female characters have been critiqued as "girls ... [not] *women*" (Tiptree, "Journal" 5), not "genuine female[s]" (Gaar 80), "caricatures" (McCaffrey, qtd. Sarti 111), and even when tough and intelligent, for being "meek and obedient" (Sarti 113) to the hero. Here, for the first time his women override the men, even ordering them to "`PIPE DOWN!'" in tones that "jammed his words down his throat" (`Beast' 223). The real story of `Beast', and possibly a figure for the contest of feminism and the patriarchy, is the travellers' endemic leadership dispute; and the eventual `captain' is the older woman. Not only do the two women dispute or defeat male authority, they also change group decisions, like refusing to stop voyaging when pregnant. In this masculinist *mea culpa* the main and most punished offender is the time-machine's inventor, the patriarch.

Thus `Beast' becomes not merely an "offering... to ... women's liberation" (Franklin 203), at a time that matches both the height of Michaels' liberal approval and feminism(s)' political strength, but a yet more astonishing rebellion against the father-figure that has tyrannised Heinlein's fiction. Inside Lazarus Long's universe, paternal authority is re-asserted in a respectful *detente* of woman captain and patriarch, and rebellion absorbed in partner swapping and more pre-Oedipal fantasies. The closure, at the tongue-in-cheek convention of "Eschatological Pantheistic Multiple-Ego Solipsism" (`Beast' 537), with its plethora of real SF writers' names and Heinlein characters, has a significant lack of women on both counts. Nevertheless, `Beast' is a startling shift from the '70s novels, more so in comparison to the conservative swing in Male Gothic. However solipsistic, from a feminist or psychoanalytic view it is less an end than a promising new start.

Friday (1982) takes rebellion a step further, in a belated chase after the gender train with Heinlein's only female hero, actually an "AP" or android, enhanced to be faster and stronger and deadlier than a man. Amid sexual and political adventures that

take her from killer Intelligence agent to off-world (pregnant) pioneer, Friday fulfils a format scorned by Bradley as the "perfect [male] female": "tough and mean, but ... good in bed." Bradley sees the prototype in F.M. Busby's Rissa Kerguelen ("Responsibilities" 36), but again, it goes back to Edwardian romance. In SF her feminist ancestry derives from Joanna Russ's Alyx, in "Picnic in Paradise" (1968). But Friday adds the usual Heinlein woman's obsessive sex drive; and she passes the novel under male tutelage, first of a father figure rejoicing in the nick-name of Kettle-Belly, then disappearing into the colonial sunset with a male AP even faster, stronger and deadlier than she. Quasi-feminist female power is aired, and proper male superiority regained. If Friday voices "what it is to be an outsider ... discriminated against ... filled with doubts and anger" (Dickinson 130), from an uncharitable view, Heinlein, like Bradley, has merely colonised the women's voices found by feminism. As a "codedly masculine" hero, however, to reverse Robin Roberts' term, Friday is not merely a (sort of) assertive female, but shows Heinlein at last completing a non-paternal subject's Oedipal narrative. Moreover, the novel is set in a near future of multi-corporation mayhem rather than a distant intertextual `fiction,' implying that he has re-engaged with current history.

In Job: A Comedy of Justice (1984) and The Cat Who Walks Through Walls (1985) Heinlein engages the male subject proper. In Job the protagonist and his woman suffer afflictions in worlds and time, not encountering a father-figure till the very last, when a supreme God who resembles the protagonist's family vet fines "Yahweh" for cheating on Job, and the couple end happily ever after. For once Heinlein appears to sustain his male subject, even if ultimate authority remains with The Patriarch.

With Cat, Heinlein assembles a mix of former characters, including Lazarus Long and the hero of The Moon is a Harsh Mistress, to help a new male protagonist on a raid to retrieve the once self-aware computer, "Mycroft." The protagonist forms a fairly convincing relationship with a deadly but less aggressive female than Friday. More interestingly, among the usual sexual shenanigans he achieves *detente* with

Lazarus Long, overcoming illogical resentment to accept the graft, from Lazarus' clone, of a new foot. This purging and symbolic acceptance of filial debt might signal genuine equality with the father; but the raid strikes an ambush and the plot collapses without closure, in the presumed death of all the characters.

It is hard not to read this as Heinlein's last, most nearly successful attempt to construct a fully adult male subject, and its collapse as the final defeat; especially since To Sail Beyond the Sunset (1987), his last novel, returns to tired transgressive sexual fantasies in a pre-story of I Will Fear No Evil. From this view, Heinlein's *oeuvre* after 1960 reveals an extremely influential use of the sexual topos, and a `liberated' male SF writer's interest in unorthodox sexuality. But an attempt to dissolve masculinist ego boundaries brings first a paternal subsumption of the male subject, and then inability to engage the gender topos. The consequent retreat into sexual fantasy only exacerbates the collapse of the male subject, which disintegrates in satisfied pre-Oedipal desire. Comparison with Bradley on one hand and Female Gothic on the other suggests that dissolution of ego boundaries and revived pre-Oedipal desire may only empower women writers: indeed, that male writers, at least of Heinlein's generation, cannot achieve a relational female subjectivity and survive.

This is supported by comparison with Frank Herbert, another notable of the Old Guard. It is remarked (Hand; Youngerman Miller) that Herbert's Dune, a novel as historic-ally powerful as Stranger in a Strange Land, also repeats female stereotypes, especially with the sinisterly powerful old women's sisterhood, the Bene Gesserit. In The Dosadi Experiment (1978) Herbert produced a woman warrior, only to have her literally subsumed into the body of the male protagonist, and the last Dune novel, Chapterhouse: Dune (1985) foresees the Bene Gesserit rising to overrun the galaxy, with a barely repressed hysteria that recalls the SF backlash of the '70s. However belatedly or destructively, Heinlein does attempt to reach connection and, eventually, endorse feminism. He seems a writer trapped the wrong side of the Oedipal complex, whose sexual liberation never freed him to "step outside the father's house," as Robin Roberts puts it (2), into the productive realms of feminist imaginative space.

Moving in with the Sisterhood: Bradley 1982-5

Like the Male Gothic writers, both Heinlein and Bradley reach the height of their positive response to feminism in the mid-'80s, again presenting the phenomenon of a lag between the cultural image of feminism(s) and the political/historical reality. Heinlein's early '80s novels are matched by the first three '80s Darkover novels, which mark a full if belated entry into gynocentric imaginative space; this anachronism is clearest in depictions of the Free Amazons, where apparent use of the Beguines (Kaler 74-87) produces images of early '70s feminists. Such a community, with rigid rules about hair and clothes and doctrinaire prohibit-ions on interactions with men, appears in Hawkmistress! (1982), whose female hero becomes a Free Amazon, before she declines both marriage and the sisterhood and sets off to explore her telepathic Gift in a remote Tower.

The Amazons themselves are foregrounded in Thendara House (1983) which links The Shattered Chain to City of Sorcery (1984), answering reader demand for more Free Amazon material. Associate anthologies still draw more Amazon stories than "all the other [themes] put together" (Headnote, "An Object Lesson"), but by 1985 women were actually adapting Amazon matronymics and life-styles. Bradley noted, "it is a rare s-f convention where some would-be Amazon fails to ask me to accept her Amazon Oath" (Introduction, Amazons 12). Hoda Zaki denies SF is truly Utopian because it lacks "a new vision of politics" (Phoenix 116), and brings no attempts to "produce a utopian society" (35). Denfeld's work indicates that separatism moved feminists to do so, without entirely happy results. Bradley's readers appear to have combined SF and feminist impulses, but without an actual study the outcome remains unknown.

In Thendara House, interleaved narratives follow Jaelle, the Free Amazon, into the Terran base, and Magda/Margali, the Terran intelligence officer, into the Amazon Guild House, dovetailing as both ride to rescue a foolhardy Terran male from a Darkovan blizzard. Since he is another intelligence officer hunting Darkovan secrets,

these adventure and spy-story elements frame the women's stories within the series' staple thriller plot, but again reverse the Terran-Darkovan male double. Female heroism would be further augmented by tenderness, as Margali nurses Jaelle through a resulting miscarriage, did not all three need rescue by someone else.

Nevertheless, the expression of women's concerns goes far beyond Two to Conquer, since both Jaelle and Margali's stories use what may be properly called feminist mythoi: Jaelle leaves a man who tries to make her a career-appendage, possession and child-bearer, while Margali, already escaped from heterosexual marriage, defends a refugee from domestic violence, reaches a loving lesbian relationship, and swears a "freemate" marriage bond with Jaelle. Excepting the "freemate" marriage, these are commonplaces of feminist experience, transformed into mythoi not only through biographies like those of Betty Friedan, Kate Millett and Joanna Russ, but in fiction like Lisa Alther's Kinflicks (1976), Marge Piercy's The High Cost of Living (1978), and Michele Roberts' A Piece of the Night (1978). With the exception of Michaels' two early '80s novels, the Female Gothic writers cannot access such mythoi. Yet though Bradley wrote pseudonymous lesbian novels in the '60s, contributed to lesbian journals (Garber and Paleo, Biographical Note) founded before gay liberation (D'Emilio 460), and could depict gays in SF by the '70s, it was twelve years after Russ pioneered all-female Utopias in "When It Changed" (1972) before Bradley could produce major lesbian characters in SF. Again, she colonises rather than producing this important feminist space.

Like the portrait of the Guild House, with its echo of consciousness-raising sessions that more closely resemble revolutionary brain-washing, Bradley's deployment of such material is as much belated as praiseworthy. And as the miscarriage both expands and short-circuits the use of male narrative to present female heroism, biological concerns subvert the feminist mythoi: at the novel's close, both Jaelle and Margali have joined the psychic circle from The Forbidden Tower, and are planning to have children there. If not inserted back into the female "Love Story," both have re-entered the pre-feminist, biological women's narrative that Bradley has not

managed to discard.

Closing the sequence, <u>City of Sorcery</u> also climaxes Bradley's colonisation of feminist imaginative space, as it turns a Quest, that staple of masculinist and imperial romance, into a search for the legendary city of the Goddess Avarra, a Darkovan women's Utopia. Apart from a few anonymous bandits, male characters vanish at the journey's start: as McKee Charnas stipulated for a feminist novel, questers, friends and enemies are all women. Moreover, Margali and Jaelle abandon their children and their quasi-family for the quest, joining Margali's lover, Camilla, and a black-skinned Terran woman, Bradley's first coloured character. The closure is Bradley's most interesting and perhaps most feminist work. After the obligatory trials and sufferings, including Jaelle's death in battle against female sorcerers, the surviving questers are offered access to the city. Margali and Camilla accept, and the novel closes with the question: "The end of a quest? Or a beginning?" (<u>City</u> 423)

Here the polysemous senses of Utopia coincide, as the Utopia of legend in a fictional Elsewhere becomes a narrative Nowhere, opening multiple possibilities from the closed end of a masculine Quest like <u>King Solomon's Mines</u>; these wonders are not charted, loot gathered, or explorers returned safely home. As with Michaels' <u>Someone in the House</u>, plot pressure is eluded, an escape, italicised by readers' demands for a sequel (Bradley, Headnote "If Only"), into the Utopian free-fall sketched by Russ and Boumelha. The novel thus follows feminism well beyond the substitution of female characters or the insertion of women's concerns in a male mythos; it remodels such a mythos in the most difficult of feminist interventions, resisting closure, against the pressure of both plot and reader demands.

At the same time this closure takes Bradley's major Amazon characters *out* of Dark-ovan society, leaving the problems of women's oppression and inequality unsolved. Thus the Utopian plot shift erases feminism's political Utopian dimension, the potential for productive imagination to conceive of political action, even the transformation of Bradley's Elsewhere into a Somewhere where the feminist "good place" may be realised.

Linda Leith considers the staple Darkovan plot "leads typically to conservatism and defeat" (32). If Bradley could have rewritten Sharra's Exile as radically as she sculpted plots in City of Sorcery, the series' chronological closure might indeed offer a great door "opening on sunshine." But though strongly attractive to readers, the Free Amazons remain a historical *cul-de-sac*, achieving only a bleak separatism, a detour on the Darkovan road. Bradley's last individually authored Darkovan novel, The Heirs of Hammerfell (1989), underlines this by returning to the staple male double plot, set in the Ages of Chaos. It seems a feminist No-where is as far as her productive imagination can go.

The Darkover sequence shows a writer who learnt to depict women on masculinist terms, with an enduring taint of biological essentialism. An early critical comment, "`You can always tell a Bradley story - someone has a baby'" (qtd. "Responsibilities" 29) holds true even for City of Sorcery. As a result, Bradley's interaction with feminism is a colonising rather than a pioneering of women's space, as appears in the dating of her `feminist' novels, the persistence of female stereotypes, and the need to depict male homosexuality before approaching lesbianism. Yet she does engage the gender topos more empoweringly than Heinlein; and the Darkover sequence reworks colonial, masculinist SF stereotypes into a framework where young women writers find a "`safe space in which to try creativity'" (Bradley, Introduction, The Keeper's Price 12).

Sympathetic readings (Hornum; Wood; Shwartz) agree that Bradley writes "of women as they are, and of men too" ("Responsibilities 36): that is, constrained, limited, and "accepting the system as it is" (Leith 33). To Bradley, following her Darkovan proverb that, "the world will go as it will, and not as we will have it," women "must avoid writing of unworkable all-women utopias" ("Responsibilities" 36). But SF is precisely the genre where the productive imagination can struggle to construct women as they might be, even in "unworkable" worlds. Such acceptance of limits leaves Bradley less a feminist writer than a study in the problems of women writers trying to unlearn a masculinist discourse. Together, she and Heinlein illustrate the problems and potential

of a positive engagement with feminism for writers whose work was strongly shaped by pre-feminist SF.

- Section 9 -

JOANNA RUSS AND URSULA K. LE GUIN: "WHEN IT CHANGED"

In Joanna Russ's Nebula-winning story, `when it changed' is at the return of men to Whileaway, a Utopian all-female world. In contrast, the *oeuvres* of Russ and of Ursula Le Guin mark what has been proclaimed a women's arrival, leading the '70s influx of new female SF writers, like "Jayge Carr, Cherryh, Lee, Lessing, McIntyre, Sargent, Vinge and Yarbro" (De Bolt and Pfeiffer 98). But unlike such contemporary Nebula winners as Anne McCaffrey, Russ and Le Guin were also the first women to make feminism both a topos and a conceptual frame in writing SF. Consequently, they have attracted more critical attention than any writers treated so far, with interviews and articles from the SF community and SF-oriented academics, but especially feminists, that map in considerable detail their paths through the synergy of feminism(s) and SF.

Unlike Bradley, both these writers resisted the pre-feminist literary climate, within or without SF, and had financial freedom to sustain such resistance. Where to Bradley "*the editor is always right*" (Introduction, <u>Towers</u> 12), Le Guin wanted to write "what I wanted to write - not what some editor wanted" (McCaffery, "Le Guin" 157). But though she wound up publishing in SF, since "the other genres weren't interested" (153), she "never did synch with John Campbell" (Le Guin, Headnote "April"): that is, with the hegemonic SF editorial mode. Hence she was thirty-two before Cele Goldsmith, who inherited editorship of <u>Fantastic</u> during the "collapse" of SF magazines around 1960 (Del Rey 188-89), bought "April in Paris" (1962).

Russ too resisted '50s "'Great Writing'," with its repeated "stories about fucking in bars and fistfights and war ... and I didn't know anything about those things so I couldn't possibly write about them." Hence she turned to SF, "something nobody knew anything about" (McCaffery, "Russ" 191). From "Nor Custom Stale" (1959) she mixed more realistic work with horror and fantasy. But the crucial shift was

> from writing love stories about women in which women were the losers, and adventure stories about men in which men were the winners, to writing adventure stories about a woman in which the woman won. (Russ, Frontispiece, <u>Alyx</u>)

The inaugural story, "Bluestocking" (1967), was actually written in 1963 (Delany, "Alyx" 191), coterminal with <u>The Feminine Mystique</u>, and like McKee Charnas, Russ found it was "one of the hardest things I ever did in my life" (Frontispiece <u>Alyx</u>). So Le Guin says of <u>Malafrena</u> (1979), conceived in the early '50s, "the men's story was easy, but I had a terrible time with the women." She "needed to become a conscious feminist to understand why [they] were acting this way" (McCaffery, "Le Guin" 159).

Though Le Guin and Russ have become accepted as pioneers of feminist SF, taken together, these *oeuvres* highlight the opposition adumbrated by Michaels and Whitney, the hegemonic divergence in "taxonomies of feminism" (Katie King 124). Both writers are white, middle-class, tertiary-educated feminists; but it is precisely along the hegemonic liberal-heterosexual/radical-lesbian axes that their *oeuvres* part company. Where Le Guin follows a '60s liberal trajectory from race to gender issues, picking up later essentialist feminist viewpoints and contending throughout her work with the liberal bias to individualism, Russ pioneers feminist imaginative space with the production of radical and lesbian perspectives that brilliantly anticipate historical trends; yet like radical feminism proper, with its early explosion of activity, she `burns out' before the '70s end.

Rising Slowly: Russ and Lesbian Subversion, 1967-1970

Russ's radical-lesbian position appears first in her pre-feminist shift to woman-centred narratives. But though she is in fact an `out' lesbian who has chronicled the painful experience of growing up lesbian in '50's America, to explain one in terms of the other invokes a dilemma that has gay/lesbian theorists producing titles like "The Death of the Author and the Resur-rection of the Dyke" (Reina Lewis) and "Believing in Fairies: The Author and the Homo-sexual" (Dyer), as post-humanist erasure of the author crosses same-sex identity politics. This problem is compounded by resistance to the fundamental feminist stress on

personal exper-ience. Nowadays, Sally Munt writes, "The personal is the one discourse we ... love to hate" (xv). And Linda Kauffman adds: "The older I get, the less I'm able to construct a moral even to my own story that doesn't lie with every word" (263). But to focus on the *oeuvre* raises the question posed by Bonnie Zimmerman: "When is a text a `lesbian text'?" ("Overview" 455). The answers parallel ongoing feminist debates over the meaning of `lesbian.'

Some three strands of definition emerge: the erotic/genital is briskly enunciated by Catherine Stimpson:

> [A lesbian] is a woman who finds other women erotically attractive and gratifying. ("Zero" 97)

Next, as articulated by Adrienne Rich, there is the political notion of the "lesbian continuum:"

> a range - throughout each woman's life and through history - of woman-identified experience; not simply ... genital sexual experience [but] forms of primary intensity between and among women. ("Compulsory" 648-9)

This has been contested chiefly as transhistorical and linguistically naive (Ferguson, "On `Compulsory Heterosexuality'" (163); Reina Lewis 22-27). Partly from such opposition comes the positional lesbian, as enscribed by Monique Wittig ("One" 11-14), Teresa de Lauretis ("Eccentric" 138-45) and others, made a metaphor for female imagination by Marilyn Farwell ("Toward" 110-18), and found as a theoretical consensus by Bonnie Zimmerman:

> a disruptor of heterosexuality, a presence standing outside the conventions of patriarchy [who] exposes their gaps and contradictions ... Her desire functions as excess within the heterosexual economy ... she positions herself outside these institutions, or creates space within them. ("Lesbians Like This" 4)

Such space is also "narrative or textual."

Zimmerman questions the possibility of getting "outside" patriarchy or heterosexuality (5), a view supported by Annamarie Jagose, who sees `lesbians' as both resisting and complicit with the systems of discourse and power that construct them (276-87). De Lauretis eventually formulates the feminist and/or lesbian position as "historically determined and yet subjectively and politically assumed," a "conceptual and experiential space carved out of the

social field, a space of contradictions, in the here and now, that need to be affirmed but not resolved" ("Eccentric" 144). Given these erotic, political and positional senses, Russ's work can be measured as lesbian in a more than biographical way.

Crucial to this work is "Bluestocking," which introduces Alyx, a female hero revising the sword-and-sorcery tradition of writers like Robert E. Howard and Fritz Leiber (Delany, "Alyx" 193-94), a shift whose ground-breaking nature is confirmed by male SF specialists. Damon Knight thought "nobody could get away with a series of heroic fantasies ... in which the central character ... is a woman" (qtd. Dozois, Introduction, "Nobody's Home" 397). Although this is "obvious enough now" (397), after Alyx's "pervasive" and "liberating" effect on producers of female heroes (Clute and Nicholls 1035), Harlan Ellison understood its radical nature when he commented in 1974 that women SF writers were "making us examine tenets and shibboleths we knew were immutable" such as "the mightily thewed warrior trip" (qtd. Pamela Sargent lxii).

The Alyx stories create a narrative space within this "trip," firstly since Alyx is not a striking, feisty female like Bradley's first Free Amazon, but a "small, gray-eyed woman," a "neat, level-browed, governessy person" ("Bluestocking" 9). But in all the stories she plays the traditional warrior: in "Bluestocking," like any mercenary, she contracts to help an aristocratic maiden flee a marriage-sale. Fighting pirates, she dispatches one by throwing a dagger "squarely in his stomach," then duels with another: "in a burst of speed she took him under his guard at a pitch of the ship and slashed his sword wrist" (19-20). The action is fast and technical, a typical swashbuckling episode. But in the heat of it, as Alyx throws the dagger "with her left hand," the text interpolates, "- and the left hand of this daughter of Loh carried all its six fingers -" (19). At its most masculinist, "Bluestocking" forces the warrior narrative to produce a woman's space that is not `womanly.'

Elements of "Bluestocking" also give primary intensity to a women's relationship. Against two fighting episodes there are five or six interactions between Alyx and Edarra, first

seen as "a young woman, dressed like a jeweler's tray and surmounted with a great coil of red hair" (10), "sulky and seventeen" (12). At sea, their first interaction ends with a physical brawl (16). In the next, Alyx begins to teach the girl sword-fighting, then lops her hair (18). As in The Shattered Chain, this motif in Russ's work signals escape from or elusion of the feminine role, but here its publication antedates Bradley by nine years.

This intensity disrupts the heterosexual economy, here figured in female romance mode. When Edarra is "humaniz[ed]" (18), the masculinist motif of a tamed shrew, "it was Alyx who did not speak and Edarra who did" (20). But when Alyx is injured fighting a fire, a classic romance wounding of the hero, she does offer a confidence; she says, "`I had a daughter'" (23). Not only is this unthinkable for a male warrior, it introduces the positive mother-daughter relationship so persistently connected with lesbianism. Both image and element are absent from the relationship between female warrior and sorceress in Phyllis Karr's Frostflower and Thorn (1980); in "Bluestocking" they accompany a deepening of the bond to same-sex eroticism.

Thus, Edarra's reversions to "a little girl" (24; 25), acquire erotic value when she leans over the side, "hair dangling about her face" while "occasionally she yawned, opening her pink mouth" and Alyx "watched surreptitiously," feeling "uncomfortable" (18). Again Alyx plays the hero, down to wielding the male gaze, but again, her gender destabilises the cliche. And as Edarra lies weeping after a later quarrel, Alyx "began to stroke the girl's disordered hair, braiding it with her fingers, twisting it round her wrist and slipping her hand through it and out again" (25). This extension of what is clearly sensual, if not an actual caress, eroticises the mother-hero as a figure not-man and not-woman, yet possessing the agency of desire.

At the same time the caress comes between Edarra's story of her traffic with her "first suitor" (25), and Alyx's concession that when they quarrelled she was "remembering a man" (26). And voyage and story close with the sight of fishing boats, at which the relationship becomes heterosexual competition. "`He's probably too young for you'," says Edarra (27),

while Alyx responds that, "'some men prefer the ways of experience'" (28). Hence the story appears to re-insert the pair firmly into the heterosexual economy; except for the closing lines:

> (`You old villain!' whispered Edarra, `we made it!')
> But that's another story (28).

The innuendo in, "We made it," and the remark, "That's another story," insist that, beyond the disruption achieved by resorting to the pre-Oedipal in Female Gothic, the same-sex eroticism of Russ's story remains.

Russ's formulation of her shift from "love stories about women where women are the losers" omits the symmetrical fourth term, "love stories about men where men lose;" this might well describe the other Alyx stories, including <u>Picnic on Paradise</u> (1968). Transferring her female hero to SF, Russ matches the dates of Wittig's Amazons and Michaels' insurgence in Female Gothic, and anticipates <u>Sexual Politics</u> by two years. As an agent of the "Trans-Temporal Agency" in a technological cosmos, Alyx helps some tourists survive the snowy "holiday planet" of Paradise. Here she clashes more openly with masculinist stereotypes, such as the heroic Arctic explorer whom she kills for letting her lover die. Her passages with this lover also disrupt heterosexual norms. Firstly, to signal opting out of a society where sensitivity has become caricatured, his name is "Machine." This comes to signify a view of male sexuality developed in <u>The Female Man</u>, sketched here in a quarrel about sex. He says, "'I like you. I did the best I could.'" Alyx responds, "'I don't want - a performance. I want *you*'" (<u>Picnic</u> 124). Rubin's interviewees, men and women, echo the conflict into the '80s (105-08). It does not surface in Bradley's work, with its link to female romance, which is postulated on erasing just this problem; but in <u>Picnic</u>, though Alyx concedes in proper feminine fashion, "'I love your performance. Perform me'" (125), Machine first loses composure when he has to admit emotional involvement, and then loses his life.

Meanwhile, patterns of mother-daughter attraction percolate below the heterosexuality, centred on what Kathleen Spencer considers the key story of Russ's *oeuvre*, the rescue of a

female child ("Rescuing" 167). In "Bluestocking" it is Edarra, in "The Barbarian" (1968) a girl baby. In <u>Picnic</u> it is the thirty-three year old but immature Iris, whose mother dies on the trip. But though Alyx saves Iris, as Spencer points out, when Machine dies Iris mothers the shattered Alyx (170). The text closes with Iris headed Moonward for "a conventional weekend with a strange young man;" but she cries to Alyx, "'How will you manage ... you're just a *baby*!'" (<u>Picnic</u> 161). As Spencer notices, the rescue mythos has become reciprocal; but the disruption of heterosexual bonds remains.

Such resistance to masculine norms reappears when Russ discusses the dedication of <u>And Chaos Died</u> (1970) to Nabokov and S.J. Perelman. The novel is a strongly written pass over the SF fold, with a gay Indian protagonist marooned on a future Earth amid a population with psionic powers. "Muffled but ambitious" (Clute and Nicholls 1035) summarises critical verdicts. But for Russ

> What I had difficulty admitting, even to myself, was that the books that profoundly shaped my literary sensibility - the novels of the Brontes, which I ritualistically read and reread ... or of Virginia Woolf, which I devoured guiltily (they were `too feminine') had influenced me as much. (McCaffery, "Russ" 189)

Yet in double contrast to Bradley, who despised female writing and could only write as a woman after others cleared the way, the Alyx stories show that Russ did not only resist the masculinist imperative, but had already begun to carve out of it a female and feminist imaginative space.

Blowing in the Wind: Le Guin and Liberal Causes, 1962-69

In counterpoint to these radical-lesbian excursions, Le Guin's '60s work exemplifies the interventions of a white liberal heterosexual feminism. Drawing on her unfinished PhD. in medieval French (McCaffery, "Le Guin" 157), "April in Paris" turns on the use of magic and the universal nature of loneliness. Despairing of his studies, a fifteenth-century French alchemist invokes a demon but summons a lonely twentieth-century French scholar. With methodology and cause established, the ending is inevitable:

> they set forth to get breakfast. The alchemist and the interstellar archaeologist went

first, speaking French; the Gaulish slave and the professor from Indiana followed, speaking Latin, and holding hands ... It was April in Paris, and on the banks of the river the chestnuts were in bloom. ("April" 36)

The use of magic, the twist on a cliche and the whimsical romanticism go far to explain Campbell's rejections. More characteristic of Le Guin's work is the millennial trust that chasms of race and culture can be bridged through universal human longings, and in a human ability to make such connections, very often through a heterosexual, cross-cultural love affair.

Le Guin's mid-'60s cluster of novels, Rocannon's World (1966), Planet of Exile (1966) and City of Illusion (1967) all retain a male protagonist. In the 1978 preface to Planet of Exile, Le Guin defended the Taoist "`action through stillness'" of the heroine, yet admitted that, writing in 1963-64, "I `didn't care' whether my protagonist was male or female." This was "culpably careless. The men take over" (140-41). Yet such heroes persist throughout Le Guin's most notable SF novels; she has no female protagonist till 1974.

During this period Le Guin's work also follows the trajectory of an American '60s liberal. Planet of Exile, where the start of a centuries-long winter forces technologically sophisticated black aliens into alliance with white `natives,' may be read as a glance, however veiled, toward the Civil Rights campaign whose brutal reality opened the decade. While it betters Heinlein's efforts at anti-racism in Farnham's Freehold, the text's pre-occupations and narrative solutions are both liberal and female/feminist. As in "April in Paris" and much women's SF, technology is minimised, but again chasms of race and culture are bridged, this time by telepathy. And again, the connection centres on a heterosexual, cross-cultural love affair.

Nowhere are the consequences of this less radical position clearer, or in the long-term view more limiting, than in Le Guin's *magnum opus*, The Left Hand of Darkness (1969). Le Guin derives its topical impulse from the feminist "ground-swell" about 1967, when she felt a need, which she parallels to that of Millett and Friedan, to "define and understand the meaning of sexuality and the meaning of gender, in ... our society" ("Redux" 7). Though feminism

provides both conceptual frame and topos, Le Guin is in classic liberal fashion moving from race to gender issues. Her "thought-experiment" was the planet Gethen/ Winter, whose people have a monthly six-day oestral period of sexual activity, and otherwise are sexually inactive androgynes (7-9).

The defamiliarising 'eye,' Le Guin's Earth observer, Genly Ai, is ambassador for a galactic confederation, which one Gethenian king greets with paranoia that exiles Ai and his chief supporter, the `prime minister' Estraven. Via a tour of Gethenian society and a trek over a huge glacier, it also brings them to a deep rapprochement, achieved when Estraven goes into oestrus, but the travellers sublimate sexual tension as "a great ... assurance of friendship ... that might as well be called ... love." Genly Ai goes on in a much quoted passage:

> But it was from the difference between us, not from the affinities ... that love came: and it was itself the bridge, the only bridge, across what divided us. For us to meet sexually would be for us to meet once more as aliens. (Left Hand 168)

Told from both viewpoints, the incident defamiliarises human sexuality, as Estraven remarks Ai's permanent "kemmer" (158), and Ai realises he has denied Estraven's femininity (167). In both versions tension and embarrassment are resolved by emphasis on loneliness and connection. Estraven sees them as "equal, alien, alone," then connects them by Le Guin's poetic version of Taoism: "Light is the left hand of darkness/ and darkness the right hand of light" (158-59). Genly sees this difference as their "only bridge" (168). Leaving the glacier, Estraven is shot by frontier guards. The ensuing public furore ensures Gethen's entry into the galactic confederacy, and the novel ends at Estraven's "hearth," where `his' `son,' fulfilling both `men's' dream, asks Ai, "`Will you tell us about the other worlds out among the stars - the other kinds of men, the other lives?'" (202).

A bare outline erases much of the novel's subtlety and power, including its multiple voices, from Ai's narration to Gethenian myths to a former observer's scientific reports and Estraven's glacier journal. This Nebula and Hugo winner brought SF at a step from the

pre-occupations of the sexual to awareness of the gender revolution, and by breaking the equation of sex and gender roles, expounded a basic feminist tenet. It is thus a classic example of "reasoning about" feminism in fiction, at a far more intellectualised level than Michaels' coterminal work. It also made Le Guin's name, changed the genre's face by winning high respect for a woman writer, and took SF to the level of `high' literature. No SF novel has drawn more academic attention, nor, after early debates over the narrative form, more adulation. Much has been exposition of "formal, generic and thematic matters" (Bittner 40), or sourcing of its Taoism (Bain) and androgyny (Hayles; Brown). Such approaches read with the novel's thesis, affirming it as "a truly civilised parable on human love and trust independent of ... maleness or femininity" (Suvin, qtd. Bittner 36). The liberal-radical divide in feminism is highlighted when less favourable feminist critics are led by Russ herself.

In 1972 Russ was already complaining about the omission of family structure and child-rearing, a stricture Le Guin endorsed in 1989; about the "fiery, tough ... proud," that is, masculinised hero, about confusion over the pronoun `he' between the "male" human observer and the "native hero" who "*is masculine in gender*" - and about the numerous sexist assumptions voiced by Genly Ai ("Image" 90-91), such as, in the very central scene, "`women are more alien to me than you are. With you I share one sex, anyhow'" (Le Guin, Left Hand 160).

Responding in the much-reprinted essay "Is Gender Necessary?" Le Guin wrote that she imagined a culture with "no physiological sex distinction. I eliminated gender to find out what was left," which would be, "presumably, simply human" ("Gender" 163-64). The slippage between sex and gender already implies conceptual problems. Le Guin went on to defend her use of "he," because "I utterly refuse to mangle English by inventing a pronoun for `he/she'"; she did not consider this "very important" (168). But where Bradley resisted feminist critiques, by 1989, in the revised version, Le Guin was writing, "*I now dislike [invented pronouns] less than the so-called generic pronoun he/ him/ his, which does in fact*

exclude women from discourse," and she considered the issue "*very important*" ("Redux" 15).

Russ also criticised "the great love scene" as nominally homosexual, but in fact "between a man and a woman, with the label `male: high status' pasted on the woman's forehead" ("Image" 90). Later, Patricia Lamb and Diana Veith saw its denied intercourse as a betrayal of Le Guin's "androgynous society." To them, Ai's fixed human masculinity will always force Estraven to become female, as does Bradley's androgyne. But the persistent male pronoun, and Estraven's roles as prime minister and political schemer, make `him' appear male. Hence the scene becomes homosexual, and to refuse intercourse is homophobic ("Again" 223-29). In fact, Le Guin's remark that she delighted in a "manwoman" taking "`male'" roles ("Redux" 15), implies that to her Estraven represents woman's entry to the male world. Hence intercourse is again impossible, for by Le Guin's own rules it would return Estraven to the inferior woman's place.

By 1983, however, Jewell Parker Rhodes could critique not merely pronouns but the gender-based stereotypes on which Le Guin polarised her society. As Rhodes writes, "Do we truly know that women are `decentralizing,' `flexible' and `circular'?" (114) Nor are these stereotypes questioned by Le Guin in her re-vision. And while she does insert a *mea culpa* for her assumption of Gethenian heterosexuality ("Redux" 14), it is Rhodes who trenchantly critiques the novel's foundation stone, the concept of androgyny itself.

To Rhodes, "androgyny as a possible utopian device aimed at exploding our culture's sexual restraints" actually reinforces and encourages sexual stereotypes (109). As she points out, the figure not only implies that men and women alone are imperfect, but depends on stereotyped masculine/feminine qualities; historical versions have privileged "the male completion model," while such theorists as Jung actually "discourage the female completion model." Thus, "the myth represses women while offering a glimmer of utopian self-completion" (110-13).

In this critique Rhodes draws on articles from a key 1974 issue of Women's Studies,

devoted to androgyny. Marilyn Farwell summarises its findings as she describes how feminists seeking a model of female creativity first adapted and then discarded the androgyne for precisely Rhodes' reasons, just as they abandoned the patriarchally compromised mother-figure (Farwell, "Toward" 104-09). In 1989 Ellen Bayuk Rosenman noted that the <u>Women's Studies</u> issue marked "the turn of feminist opinion against androgyny" (648). Rhodes, then, is writing against the '70s liberal promotion of androgynous equality, yet refusing '80s valorising of the traditional feminine.

These readings take androgyny as closure, completion, rather than fluidity, as I see it in the historical moment of the novel's publication. Here both denied intercourse and Estraven's death become strategies to avoid refixing, and hence the most `feminist' solution; but this only re-emphasises the concept's flaw for feminist use. From today's view, <u>Left Hand</u> is weakened by a greater acceptance than Russ's of contemporary thinking, inside or outside feminism. There is exculpation in that androgyny was then a cutting-edge feminist concept: in 1972 Adrienne Rich could still write, "I am the androgyne/ I am the living mind you fail to describe/ in your dead language" ("Stranger" ll.15-17). By 1977, "There are words I cannot choose again:/ *humanism   androgyny*" ("Natural Resources" 13 ll.1-2). There is explanation in Le Guin's continued bent for Taoism, where feminine yin and masculine yang are seen in Utopian balance: in practice the yang's qualities are privileged. There is further explanation in Le Guin's linking of the text with Virginia Woolf ("Redux" 8), and her comment that Woolf was the only feminist she had read at the time (McCaffery, "Le Guin" 164). No discussion of androgyny in <u>Left Hand</u> mentions Woolf. Yet it seems that Le Guin "[thought] back through [her] mothers" (Woolf 69), and based her formulation of the gender topos on the discussion of androgyny (89-94) in <u>A Room of One's Own</u> (1929). For a text Le Guin once claimed was about "betrayal and fidelity" ("Redux" 8) it is ironic that the shift of second-wave thinking should see such fidelity betrayed.

As <u>Left Hand</u> looks back to its mothers, it may have mothered both Bradley and Russ.

In 1986, Russ said she wrote "When It Changed" soon after a 1969 colloquium that included Kate Millett and Betty Friedan. Audience demand then led her to begin The Female Man (McCaffery, "Russ" 201). But the Afterword in Again, Dangerous Visions (1972) derives "When It Changed" from pondering the pronoun problem in Left Hand of Darkness, whereupon, "[w]eeks later, the Daemon suddenly whispered, `Katy drives like a maniac,' and I found myself on Whileaway" (280-81). In this version Le Guin empowers Russ to take the giant stride from sketched lesbian eroticism to a full-blown radical separatist vision: an all-female Utopian world.

Rising Very Fast: Russ and Utopian Production, 1972

"When It Changed" heralds what Utopian critics consider the post-'60s revival of the "literary utopia" (Moylan, Demand 10), remodelled as a "critical" (11) or "open-ended" form (Somay 26) which combined Utopia and dystopia: most conspicuously, it gave the static Utopian vision flaws, history, and change (Moylan, Demand 41-52; Ruppert 121-49). Moylan links this upsurge to the rise of a counter-culture, a bloc "deeply infused with the politics of autonomy, democratic socialism, ecology and especially feminism" (Demand 11). Nan Albinski finds it a shift in Utopian literature from a "dystopian path" to an "optimism" due directly to feminist "eutopias" (159).

Such Utopias punctuate the '70s, a parallel to feminist valorizing of women and of lesbians, as in Rita Mae Brown's Ruby Fruit Jungle (1973). Often-cited examples are Dorothy Bryant's The Kin of Ata Are Waiting For You (1971), Mary Staton's The Legend of Biel (1975), Piercy's Woman on the Edge of Time (1976)   Donna Young's Retreat: As It Was! (1979), and Sally Miller Gearhart's The Wanderground (1979). "When It Changed" is their pilot sketch, again far ahead of its time: not merely the first all-woman Utopia since Perkins Gilman's Herland (1915), but the first positive matriarchy, opposing dystopic matriarchies produced both by men, such as John Wyndham's "Consider Her Ways" (1956) (Sargent l) and women, such as Pamela Kettle's The Day of the Women (1969) (Albinski 143).

"When It Changed" does sketch a typical feminist Utopia (Khanna, "Frontiers" 99-101; Keinhorst 91-92; Bartkowski 77-78; Rosinsky 36-41; Gearhart Miller, "Future" 299-307; Pearson; Zaki, "Utopia" 121-22). It is, to use Russ's own words, "[c]lassless, without government, ecologically minded ... quasi-tribal in feeling and quasi-family in structure ... sexually permissive" in order to "separate sexuality from questions of ownership, reproduction and social structure" ("Recent" 76). It is also peaceful, with stress on travel and job freedom (82), and often lesbian separatist, "because men are dangerous" (77).

So "When It Changed" adumbrates a farming society, a lesbian nuclear family, technology recovering after a "plague" that eradicated men, women who travel alone at night, and a double "professional" and "geographical" parliament. Masculinist elements are casually appropriated. The narrator's twelve-year-old daughter is soon expected to "[knife] her first cougar or [shoot] her first bear," while the narrator has "fought three duels" (272). Here the male freedom Le Guin delighted in is fully `woman's.' But Russ goes beyond Left Hand, whose narrator comes to see `humans' as "a troupe of great, strange animals" (199) and overreaches James Tiptree's acerbic "The Women Men Don't See" (1973), where a woman leaving with aliens tells the protesting narrator, "`I'm used to it'" (331). On Whileaway, men *are* the aliens: "bigger than we are," "heavy as draft horses," "obviously of our species but *off*, indescribably off," "apes with human faces" (273). For the first time in SF, the equation, human = white-masculine, is deconstructed, by a feminist writer's Utopian production of a female gaze.

At the same time, "When It Changed" is Utopian in presenting this woman's world at its moment of dissolution. Despite the women's obvious competency, the men insist patronisingly that Whileaway is "`unnatural'," "`missing something'," with "`only half a species here.'" And "When one culture has the big guns and the other has none" the outcome is predictable (276-77). Moreover, the invaders are Russians. It may be the lack of threat to male SF readers in this matriarchy so conveniently overrun by the American Other, that won

"When It Changed" a 1973 Nebula.

Over the Top: Russ 1975

Such a threat is realised in <u>The Female Man</u> (1975), written from 1969-71, which elaborates Whileaway as one strand of a full-blown critical Utopia. The nuclear lesbian family becomes communal groups with up to four mother-child pairs at once; all labour is technologically based, and transport is by walking or teleportation. Girls go to school at five, roam from ten to seventeen as a rite of passage, then work till thirty, when they thankfully take five years to have children. In old age labour is more mental, but all travel and `work' continuously, having casual or permanent sexual relations along the way (<u>Female Man</u> 49-54), and celebrating anything from unhappy copulation to birth, death, and the solstices (102-03). As is customary, government and economics are shadowy; there are peace and safety officers, duels and brawls, and one old woman is shot for unexplained reasons after leaving the community (143-45), but such violence appears isolated rather than the norm.

Where most Utopias oppose a faulty, explicit or implicit present to an improved future (Ruppert 7-8), Whileaway contrasts with three dystopic worlds: a quasi-realistic America still in the Great Depression, a present-day '70s and a future of outright Men-Women war. Each is represented by a face of the "cluster" protagonist (DuPlessis 182), Janet, Jeannine, Joanna and Jael, with the text cutting continually between them, again in contrast to the usual single visitor's viewpoint (Ruppert 14), or linear narrative. Gary Morson sees all Utopias as "boundary works," sited between genres (qtd. Ruppert 41); like Delany ("Alyx" 193), Moylan notes Russ's mix of realist novel, polemic essay, lyric, epic, fable (63). DuPlessis calls the text an "apologue" rather than a novel (242). <u>The Female Man</u> is actually a greater cyborg than <u>Frankenstein</u>, coupling not only literary techniques and genres but fiction, science and polemic, and its productive imagination expands but also eludes postmodern, SF, feminist, Utopian and even lesbian frames.

Thus, the "twisted braid" (Bartkowski 51), or "montage" (Moylan, <u>Demand</u> 83), or

polyvalent (Robinson 116) narrative is Utopian to feminists like DuPlessis, Robinson and Rosinsky, since it denies both closure and linear narrative. But such features are also claimed for lesbian texts (Harris qtd. Zimmerman, "Overview" 457; Engelbrecht 102) while the refusal of narrative credibility appears strongly postmodern. Yet H.G. Wells used a fractured opaque narrative in A Modern Utopia (1905) (Ruppert 124-31). And though The Female Man appears twin sister to Bertha Harris' Lover (1976), which fragments character and narrative in a classic valorizing lesbian text (Stimpson, "Zero" 108-10), Russ's nearest stylistic mother is the SF writer Pamela Zoline. Just such dissolution of personality and discourse marks her well-known "The Heat Death of the Universe" (1967): this text that "out-New-Waved" the New Wave, to quote Thomas Disch, for whom it was explicitly written (7-8), would have been familiar to early readers like Russ (McCaffery, "Russ" 200).

Again, the use of alternate worlds is a common SF trope, and their `scientific' explanation marks an SF text. But its "thought experiment" transgresses into polemic with Joanna, whose biting satires also force the novel back into realism:

> Burned any bras lately har har twinkle twinkle A pretty girl like you doesn't need to be liberated twinkle har Don't listen to those hysterical bitches twinkle twinkle twinkle. (Man 49)

Speaking in such voices, the novel was seen as "[u]ltra-militant ... propaganda" (Del Rey, qtd. Fitting, "Men Only" 113) and "a barrage of polemics" (Lupoff, qtd. Fitting 110).

Male readers are also caught between lesbian separatist Whileaway and the war-world of Jael. Here Manland's `women' are sex-changed babies or transvestites (Man 167), while in Womanland, the "rosy, wholesome ... assassin" (187) Jael, with steel fangs and claws, makes a sex-toy of her cyborg Davy, "the most beautiful man in the world" (185). But she kills a male "Boss" who harasses her during negotiations, because, "`I don't give a damn whether it was necessary or not ... I liked it'" (184). Even in 1985 a male critic could only explain this lapse of business sense by branding Jael mad (Schuyler 58-59).

In Jael and Joanna The Female Man speaks the first release of "five-thousand-year-

buried anger" (Morgan, "sisterhood" xv) in early '70s feminism. Russ notes that at this time, becoming a feminist, "I remember wondering if I was going to live through the anger" (Perry 291). But though the text's wrath culminates with Jael, its more terrifying image is the quieter voice of Joanna, recording

> I committed my first revolutionary act yesterday. I shut the door on a man's thumb. I did it for no reason at all and I didn't warn him; I just slammed the door shut in a rapture of hatred and imagined the bone breaking. (Russ, Man 203)

Joanna and Jael are fictional parallels to Valerie Solanas' notorious potshot at Andy Warhol, or the equally notorious S.C.U.M. Manifesto (1968). And The Female Man echoes Robin Morgan's famous essay, "Goodbye to All That" (1970):

> Goodbye, goodbye for ever, counterfeit Left, counter-left, male-dominated cracked-glass-mirror reflection of the Amerikan Nightmare. Women are the real Left ... We are rising with a fury older and potentially greater than any force in history, and this time we will be free or no one will survive. (68)

So Russ's repressed Jeannine says, "goodbye to The Girls, goodbye to Normality, goodbye to Getting Married, goodbye to ... being Some Body, goodbye to waiting for Him" (Man 209) before inviting Jael's war-women into her world. And Jael discloses that

> `Whileaway's plague is a big lie ... I, I, I, I am the plague, Janet Evason. I and the war I fought built your world for you ... and the Whileawayan flowers nourish themselves on the bones of the men we have slain.' (211)

But though of its time in this fury, in its violence The Female Man transgresses not only the pacifist vision of feminist Utopias, but essentialist claims for women's innate peacefulness and superiority to men. Moreover, its lesbian elements violate the late '60s liberal feminist taboo on what Betty Friedan called the "lavender menace" (Cruikshank 152).

Russ also eludes the '70s search for "innate" or essential lesbianism (Zimmerman, "Overview" 457), offering a variety of "socially situated lesbian identifications" (Andermahr 146). Janet Evason's society does not understand the negative connotations of the word. Joanna and the teenage Laura enact the agonies of "coming out" when the positive lesbian identifi-cations of the '70s were being formulated. These reshaped what Barbara Ponse calls the gay trajectory: the lesbian- or gay-constructed biography that moves from baffled

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unhappiness to identification and acknowledgment of one's sexuality (124-7). Such unhappiness marks the biographies of '50s lesbians like Bertha Harris and Russ herself, and is renewed in the feminine figure of Jeannine, who in one story line flings herself desperately into matrimony. The tragic choice of wretched difference or miserable marriage is a staple of '50s lesbian "pulp" novels (Weir and Wilson 102-08). Yet when Laura takes the initiative while the older Janet recalls a cross-age taboo on Whileaway (Man 63), Russ echoes Joan Nestle's remark about "the lustful crushes of young Lesbians on older women, many more of which have been consummated than we encourage to be discussed" (193). While carving a lesbian space within feminist thinking, The Female Man transgresses lesbian taboos as well.

As Utopian literature proper, though The Female Man is made a high point of feminist speculative fiction (Nancy Walker 179-84; Bartkowski 49-98; Lefanu 185-92), it does elide questions of ethnicity (Miller Gearhart, "Future" 307). To Anne Mellor it fails as an abstract rather than a concrete, realisable Utopia, in Ernst Bloch's terms ("Utopias" 242-51). Yet if using male figures may help to contest feminism with "biased heterosexual males" (Barrow 84), Peter Fitting argues that all-female Utopias force male readers to confront the need for change, while offering a world without male values rather than without men ("Men" 103). To Bulent Somay, however, The Female Man is too "doctrinaire" (27). This combines its Utopian locus and horizon, losing the potential for change in Le Guin's The Dispossessed (1974). In fact, The Female Man separates its Utopian locus, a place explicitly "not *our* future" (7) from its horizon; for it sets responsibility for change squarely in the hands of the reader as political agent. "Go, little book" says the envoi, echoing Troylus and Criseyde,

> [d]o not mutter angrily to yourself when young persons read you to hrooch and hrch and guffaw ... Do not get glum when you are no longer understood, little book ... Rejoice, little book!
> For on that day, we will be free. (214)

That is, Russ's Utopian horizon is set beyond the literary space, within the material, political future of feminism itself.

Back in the Forest: Le Guin 1971-1974

During this Utopian explosion, Le Guin moved from race and gender issues to visions of nuclear and ecological destruction. In The Lathe of Heaven (1971), Taoism supplies the novum of a hero who literally re-dreams the world, first after an atomic holocaust, then through bewildering social shifts in response to orders from his power-hungry psychiatrist. Though a love affair with his black woman lawyer supplies both stability and tenderness, and the theme of connection persists, again, the focus of power and action is a male.

Le Guin did produce a far-reaching revision of a colonialist SF motif with "Vaster than Empires and More Slow" (1971). In much male SF, colonisers or explorers find the planet/environment threatening to the point of xenophobia: in Farnham's Freehold as in `The Number of the Beast', Heinlein's people take guns even to the latrine. In Isaac Asimov's "Sucker Bait" (1954), an apparently idyllic planet nearly kills a survey team before the danger is isolated by the crew's outcast `database' genius (185-91). Le Guin's exploring team fractures under the silent threat of a wholly vegetable planet, until the crew's outcast, this time an empath, makes a truly giant leap into rapport with the equally terrified planetary conscious-ness. The story closes with "the team's reports, and ... [the records of] its losses: Biologist Harfex, dead of fear, and Sensor Osden, left as a colonist" ("Vaster" 199).

Osden's `colonisation' is actually absorption by the native world. Here Le Guin shifts masculinist colonial discourse to the "willingness to identify with the alien" that "resurfaces again and again in ... science fiction written by women" (Allen and Paul 179), which recurs with writers like C. J. Cherryh, and becomes respect for the colonial environment in most later SF. This motif of absorption is in stark contrast to the traditional colonial conquest performed by Bradley in Darkover Landfall a year later.

The Word For World Is Forest (1972), written in 1968, again voices concerns of the counter-culture rather than explicit feminism. An obvious parable of the Vietnam war, its story of a peaceful forest planet and people literally and metaphorically raped by a colonial/military

invader offers a bleak ending in which, despite the invaders' expulsion, their legacy of hatred and murder remains. The novel's "preachment," as Le Guin ruefully termed it (Introduction, Word 152), enunciates feminist stances: ecological concern, anti-militarism. Yet in an imagined society where "the women ran the cities and towns" (Word 35), men do the Dreaming on which their decisions are made. Women remain scanty shadowy figures whose abuse equates them with nature through the parallel environmental rape. The viewpoints and central characters, both good and bad colonists and the native "Athshean" who eventually organises their defeat, are all male; and only males, either good or bad, become "gods" (122).

Such male protagonists are seen by Sarah Lefanu as "a dead weight in the centre of the novels," and "caught in the stranglehold of liberal individualism" (137). She reads Le Guin's work as flawed by such lasting emphasis on individuals/characters, which aligns it with the realist novel. The feminist philosopher Andrea Nye considers liberalism inherently masculinist (5-26); on these terms, it is not merely SF or realist traditions that limit Le Guin, but, ironically, her liberalism itself.

That heterosexuality is also involved appears perhaps most clearly in the most criticised element of The Dispossessed (1974). Le Guin's second major work and seal on her academic acceptance is read as the best of the critical Utopias (Somay 36; Anne Mellor, "Utopias" 251-59). It incorporates change in a realisable Utopia, encompassing a critique of consumer capitalism, Third World poverty and totalitarian Marxism on the planet Urras, and a vision of anarchic liberty under threat of bureaucratic stagnation on Anarres, its sister `moon.'

More conservative than The Female Man, The Dispossessed links its worlds through the male protagonist, Shevek, a theoretical physicist whose search for intellectual freedom takes him from Anarres to Urras and back, and whose discovery of simultaneous communication - the `ansible' - provides the ultimate bridge of time and space. In this novel the metaphor changes to levelling those essential Utopian features (Ruppert 27), walls. Much has been made of the two worlds' balance, the elegant alternation of Urras in the present and

Anarres in flashback, of quest patterns (Cogell 155; Brennan and Downs 125), wall imagery (Philip Smith 88-89) and other formal or thematic unities (Turner, Nudelman, Bierman, Watson qtd. Bittner 39-44). Much has also been made by critics like Somay and Ruppert (141-49) of the importation to Anarres of flaws, change and history, and that the novel closes with Shevek returning home to institute change which the reader must imagine. More feminist-oriented writers, again, have led the critiques.

Gerard Klein argued that "because she is a woman," Le Guin could recover Utopian potential in The Dispossessed and hence "surpass the crisis of her environment" which had made SF the dystopic vision of a disempowered technocratic middle-class ("Le Guin" 97). Samuel Delany, however, complained of sexual discrimination, noting that Shevek but not his female partner Takver has a gay affair ("To Read" 234-35), while LeFanu finds homosexuality is seen as adolescent, and critiques the female characters. Takver is left at home while Shevek is off "changing the future of mankind," and Shevek's unmaternal mother is portrayed as hard, cold and hostile (141). Further, as Tom Moylan notices, despite her painstaking construction of a society where sexual association is free and children supposedly community raised, Le Guin "valorizes the nuclear family," since Shevek and Takver keep their children with them. And a central moment in their relationship is when Takver confesses to Shevek that she "'need[s] the bond'" that is, monogamy (Dispossessed, 154). Moylan remarks that "while Le Guin's Utopia expresses a libertarian and feminist value system, the ... contradictions in her text betray a privileging of male and heterosexual superiority and of the nuclear, monogamous family" (Demand 102).

At the same time LeFanu notes Le Guin's popularity with both feminists and women who do not read SF (131-32). With Left Hand of Darkness she feels this is because "the problematics of sexual desire are, quite simply, eliminated" for both men and women (140). In The Dispossessed such problematics are evaded through the romance dream of a strong, monogamous, heterosexual tie. For heterosexual women, such a relational, personal, homely

backbone to the novel off-sets the esoterics of anarchism, so carefully drawn from the work of figures like Kropotkin (Tower Sargent 3-13; Philip Smith 77-85) and the physical privation of Anarres' bleak quasi-communist world.

Against The Female Man, The Dispossessed does appear both tardy and conservative, especially since Le Guin read Russ's work in manuscript (Moylan, Demand 57): it may well have been the source of the Anarresti's hard work and constant travel. This tardiness appears in Urrasti amazement at "equal work" (22) on Anarres, and their physicists' "genuine surprise" (68) that a well-known Anarresti colleague was a woman. But as Moylan notes, despite this liberal feminist discourse none of the novel's women, even Odo, is an actual feminist (Demand 113). Centre stage, and the work of saving the world, belongs to the heroic male. As with Left Hand of Darkness, The Dispossessed suffers from the shift in feminist perspectives against Le Guin's heterosexual/liberal, by default masculinist politics.

Nevertheless, The Dispossessed secured women's new place in SF writing, and Le Guin's place as perhaps the premier SF writer of the '70s: in 1975 Science-Fiction Studies chose her for its first author-dedicated issue, while by 1980 at least three collections of Le Guin criticism had been published (Bloom; De Bolt; Olander and Greenberg). Individual studies have followed (Bucknall; Cummins, Understanding Ursula K. Le Guin; Spivack). She was also spokeswoman in a major '70s controversy over the nature of SF, advocating `soft' SF (Slusser 238-43) and "characters" (Lefanu 132) against Gregory Benford, who championed `hard' SF and `ideas' as central to the genre. Like the Khatru Symposium on "Women in Science Fiction," (1975) the debate signals the new visibility of women's and liberal feminist perspectives in SF.

In contrast, The Female Man was rejected by numerous "hardcover publishers," although according to Russ it had "an enormous number of favorable reviews," including those from (presumably SF) fan magazines, many by women (Perry 297). But others echoed the book's own forecast: "bitterness and propaganda," "very bad" (Charles Brown, Richard

Lupoff, qtd. Fitting, "Men" 110), and despite Russ's praise from gurus like Ellison and Delany, Gardner Dozois claims that it made her the *bete noire* of SF (Introduction to "Nobody's Home" 399). Yet Russ was a lodestar for feminists who transformed SF with collections like Anderson and McIntyre's Aurora: Beyond Equality (1976) and Pamela Sargent's Women of Wonder anthologies (1974-76), fanzines like The Witch and the Chameleon and Janus/Aurora, and feminist SF conventions (Moylan, Demand 59-60). Nevertheless, though its sales top 500,000 copies (McCaffery, "Russ" 178) and The Female Man was one of its series' best-sellers (Perry 206), the rarity of Russ's work in chain stores in comparison to Le Guin's speaks soberingly on their relative readership.

Womanspeak: Le Guin 1975-85

The Dispossessed was doubly important for Le Guin, because afterwards, Anarres' founder demanded "a story ... about herself" (Headnote, "Day"). Le Guin recalls her mother asking "Why don't you write about women?" But until the mid-'70s she "[didn't] know how." "What I needed was ... feminism" ("Fisherwoman" 234). Mario Klarer reads The Dispossessed as a "double-voiced" narrative speaking men's and women's language. But in bringing Odo from the political to the personal, from a philosopher's statue to "the six-year-old, the sixteen-year-old, the fierce, cross, dream-ridden girl ... the tireless worker and thinker ... the lover" to the old woman who remembers flowers but in seventy-two years "had never had time to learn what they were called" (275-77), "The Day before the Revolution" tells the real woman's story behind The Dispossessed.

Such women's narratives strengthen through "The New Atlantis" (1975) The Eye of the Heron (1978) and "Sur" (1982). Elizabeth Cummins finds in Le Guin's work a continual return to California, where The Lathe of Heaven and "The New Atlantis" mark two "drastic" destructions of Euro-American civilisation ("Land-lady" 159). Where in The Dispossessed Moylan sees Shevek empowered intellectually by sexual encounters (Demand 109), in these texts women gain agency when a lover and/or male hero is destroyed. Odo becomes a

philosopher after her lover Taviri is killed. In "The New Atlantis," a Californian dystopia that outlaws both marriage and science is physically wrecked by the rise of a new Atlantis, a putative Utopia. The emotional focus is the release and re-arrest of the narrator's scientist husband. But as the scientists test a banned but revolutionary power cell, it is she who shows them its lost future, when "[t]he strings of the viola were the cords of my own voice, tightened by sorrow, tuned to the pitch of joy" (43). And as California crumbles she packs up her viola and goes after her husband, an agency denied to Takver, who must wait on the sidelines until her wandering physicist comes home.

So the emotional focus of <u>The Eye of the Heron</u>, set on a prison world colonised by South American criminals and exiled pacifists, is the pacifist leader Lev, a young man killed in the two sides' confrontation, "slight and rawboned, with thick, black, bright hair" (115) like Odo's "dark, spare and fiery" lover ("Day" 268). Both deaths are symbolised by images of broken hands (<u>Eye</u> 216; "Day" 263). Like Odo, however, the criminal leader's daughter Luz first defects to the pacifists, then becomes decision-maker for those who migrate to fulfil Lev's dream.

With "Sur" Le Guin reached a fully gynocentric re-vision of heroes, and of a founding narrative in both SF and her own work. In "Heroes" (1986) she traces the roots of <u>The Left Hand of Darkness</u> in a thirty-year long fascination with Antarctic explorers, "heroes to me, all of them" (171). But where <u>Left Hand</u> made space for a manwoman hero by remodelling these biographies, along with Poe's ancestral SF "Narrative of A. Gordon Pym" (1838), "Sur" tells the story of the *Yelcho* expedition: nine South American women who reach the Pole before Amundsen.

Marleen Barr reads "Sur" as positioning the WASP male "Sir" under erasure (158-59), in a story that in "women's" fashion will be left to moulder in an attic, or told as a secret to children (Le Guin, "Sur" 265; 284). And even then

they must not let Mr. Amundsen know! He would be terribly embarrassed and disappointed.

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There is no need for him or anyone else outside the family to know. (284)

One might well argue that this places the women's great deed also under erasure, and that such modesty is traditionally feminine. That again, Le Guin valorizes rather than deconstructs traditional gender stereotypes, and that "Sur" thus continues a shift from liberal to essentialist feminism.

Gregory Benford critiques both "Atlantis" and <u>Heron</u> as reactionary, claiming that the dissidents of New Atlantis "retreat to classical music and romantic humanism" ("Reactionary" 80), and that Le Guin evades the issue of violence in <u>Heron</u> (78-79). In fact, the dystopia in "Atlantis" falls from rejecting the dissidents' science. <u>Heron</u> does take the solution of migration, on a world where, as with Rider Haggard's version of Natal, the landscape is splendid and the natives invisible (Ching-Liang Low, "His Stories?" 101). But Benford ignores both Luz's agency and the view of violence emerging in the novel:

> `sometimes ... [men] are so stupid, so stuffed with theories ... They go in straight lines only, and won't stop. It's dangerous to do that ... It seems to me that where men are weak and dangerous is in their vanity. A woman ... is a centre. But a man isn't, he's a reaching out.' (<u>Heron</u> 169)

Hence Benford is himself shirking an issue; for what Le Guin adumbrates is the view of violence found in essentialist writers like Andrea Dworkin and Susan Griffin: a *male* problem, to which women's only solution is to move out.

Such essentialism marks Le Guin's '80s non-fiction, when in her 1986 Bryn Mawr Commencement address she distinguishes "the father tongue," a "public discourse," "spoken from above," and "the mother tongue," which may appear "inferior, banal, vulgar," but "expects an answer." It "connects" (147-49). In "The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction" (1986), she opposes the story "about bashing, thrusting, raping, killing, about the Hero," which is linear, "starting *here* and going straight *there*," to the novel as "a sack, a bag," a woman's invention, in which the Hero "does not look well" (168-69). These monolithic male/female divisions, and the valorizing of stereotypic femininity, echo Griffin and Daly and French theorists like Cixous, and contrast sharply with Russ's refusal of `lesbian' essentialism.

Le Guin does address the '80s feminist move to specificity and locality, evident in Rich's "Notes Towards a Politics of Location" (1984), with a turn to native North American material, as in "A Non-Euclidean View of California as a Cold Place to Be" (1982). Utopias have been "the big yang motorcycle trip. Bright, dry, clear, strong, firm, active, aggressive, lineal, progressive." But a yin utopia would be "dark, wet, obscure, weak, yielding, passive, participatory, circular ... peaceful, nurturant ... and cold" (90). To reach this essentially feminine Utopia requires decentring white Western thought. Utopists, then,

> would do well to ... get off the motorcycle, put on a very strange-looking hat, bark sharply three times, and trot off looking thin, yellow and dingy across the desert and up into the digger pines. (98)

To Donna Haraway, pondering feminism, science and postmodernism in 1991, "the subjects are cyborg, nature is coyote, and the geography is elsewhere" (Penley and Ross 4). In the '80s the image of the North American Trickster also permeates Le Guin's writing, and on her third return to California, in her "home-world" (Cummins, "Land-Lady" 155) she constructs a (native) American world with her major '80s novel <u>Always Coming Home</u> (1985).

In radical contrast to Haraway's work, however, the binary balance of Taoism endures. <u>Always Coming Home</u> is praised for its return to American roots (Bassnett 52-53) and its depiction of pacifism versus militarism (Wytenbroek 339). Combining life-stories, recipes, songs, illustrations, and descriptions of cultural practices from dancing to jokes and medicine along with comments from "Pandora," a perhaps-editorial voice, it produces a "medicine bundle, holding things in a particular, powerful relationship" (Le Guin, "Carrier Bag" 169). These "things" provide an ethnography of the Kesh, a people who "might be going to have lived a long, long time from now in Northern California" (<u>Always</u> 1). In the best traditions of essentialist feminism and feminist Utopias, they are classless, quasi-tribal, sexually per-missive, living in extended families and close harmony with nature, with freedom of movement and work for women. Though both use modern technology, the opposing Condor are a stereo-typic patriarchal society, hierarchical, possessive, degrading women, focussed on

and eventually destroying themselves by war.

Le Guin averts a confrontation between pacifism and militarism, having the Condors destroyed by internal factors; and like The Stand and Motherlines, Always Coming Home evades the problem of over-population. The text's focus is Kesh life, which leavens idealism with individual biographies, like the unhappy love of the visionary Flicker for her forbidden cousin, and the strained childhood of North Owl/Woman Coming Home/Stone Telling, the closest to a central voice or protagonist. Her mother is a Sinshan woman, her father a Condor commander, and the three episodes of her journey from the Valley to the Condor city and back approximate a narrative backbone in the text. Always Coming Home is perhaps the best example of a feminist novel with a community as protagonist. Its lauded refusal of linear narrative (Khanna, "Utopias" 132-37) is seen by Robin Roberts as the kind of postmodern *ecriture feminine* called for by Cixous and Irigaray (150). Jim Jose considers it a political gain for feminism (182-83); on all fronts it appears a triumphant advance from masculinist or even liberal SF.

Nevertheless, as Roberts explicitly states, the value systems of Kesh and Condor are "identified from the very beginning as masculine and feminine," exemplifying "the values articulated" by essentialist feminists (151). And again, the subversion of narrative structures and the valorizing of `feminine' qualities does not blur or erode the oppositions themselves.

The presence of men also underlines the novel's dearth of primary positive women's relationships. Flicker and Stone Telling are major female characters emotionally centred on men. Stone Telling's father dominates her childhood; he releases her from the Condor city; her true coming home to the Valley is her marriage to Alder, a male doctor. In contrast, her female relationships are strained or hostile. Again, though mention of same-sex marriages occurs, none are actually depicted. This heterosexual conservatism is in striking contrast to the primary women's relationships in Bradley's City of Sorcery, published that same year.

Further, although Roberts lauds the absence of racism found in earlier feminist

Utopias (106), Kesh culture is based on those of peaceable, agricultural, matrilineal North American tribes like the Hopi and the Navajo. The real political question then becomes: is it a homecoming to re-vise European masculinist SF and Utopian literature against the feminist and/or feminine qualities of a non-European culture that is not your own?

Such concerns grow acute when Le Guin's work is set against technically similar texts by native North American writers, like Leslie Marmon Silko's Almanac of the Dead (1991). Gareth Griffiths considers that "the act of constructing the speech of the already silenced may ... be ... best characterized ... by a metaphor of violence, however `liberal' in intention" (73). Conversely, Donna Haraway accepts Trin T Minha's remark that "each to his authentic place is apartheid" (Darnovsky 79). In SF's allotopic Elsewhere, Le Guin does not speak for or silence Navajo of the Here and Now; yet the text is certainly an "inscription of ourselves displaced" (Griffiths 72). Appropriation of Native American mythology continues with the Hugo-winning "Buffalo Gals, Won't You Come Out Tonight" (1987), just as essentialist gender divisions mark the yet more award-laden Tehanu (1990). By the '80s' end, such a post-colonial/essentialist position appears to have become Le Guin's `home.'

Down the Other Side: Russ 1977-1985

As Always Coming Home appears the climax of Le Guin's feminist SF, The Female Man is in many ways the apogee of feminist intervention in SF: responding "directly to politics with a work of art" (Delany, "Russ" 104), shattering more cultural expectations and literary conventions than any other feminist SF and indeed, most feminist fiction, and anticipating Le Guin's escape from the shackles of male hero and linear narrative by over ten years, it was also an apogee for Russ. In We Who Are About To... (1977), written at the same time, the focus narrows to the deconstruction of patriarchal tropes, values and narrative inside literary space.

Russ's springboard is the Swiss Family Robinson mythos of wrecked-in-space. Bradley and even Le Guin are complicit with the patriarchal/capitalist framework of this

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mythos, so ably deconstructed by Pierre Macherey (159-248) in The Mysterious Island and in Robinson Crusoe itself. Like Defoe, Bradley loads her colonists' dice with expertise and material from the outer `world,' and enough people for a viable gene pool, while in Heron Le Guin's world is imposing but basically hospitable. Russ starkly refuses both options. Her castaways are three men and four women; they have no expertise, few tools, several ailments, and the women are either too old or too young to breed safely, if the world were hospitable. But as Russ bitingly points out, even Earth is not truly so:

> Think of the Arctic. Or Labrador. Of Southern India in June ... of tsunamis, liver fluke, the Asian brown bear. Kind old home ... Think of Death Valley [-] in August. (We 20)

In an environment offering only dubious air and water, Russ undoes the SF mythoi of survival and colonisation. The men quickly begin to speak about reproducing, then realise the only remaining law is force, whereupon one knocks the woman `leader' down. The narrator, however, accepts that they have been `dead since arrival.' She refuses to play settlement games or to become brood-stock, and eventually absconds, presumably to die alone. Pursued, she kills most of the others; and she closes her havoc by shooting the youngest castaway, an allergy-ridden twelve-year-old girl, in the back of the head.

Kathleen Spencer is uncomfortable with this "extreme and ambiguous" version of saving the female child ("Rescuing" 176), but as Judith Spector observes, Russ's narrator refuses to place her gender - being a mother - above her genre - being human (371). Russ remarks that her stories push banal plots and ideas "until [they] *crack*" (McCaffery, "Russ" 183). The banality being pushed here is clearly a woman's `fate worse than death.' But Russ's deconstruction of her own mythos insists, with implacable logic, that there is no rescue for anyone. Having disposed of masculinist pretensions to world conquest in the first third of the novel, she turns the rest to monologue as the narrator practices *ars moriendi*, the art of dying.

Here the linear structure of the Robinson Crusoe mythos wholly dissolves. Instead of action, struggle and closure, community problems settled, strong women overcoming grief, or even the ritual outlined for helpers in Always Coming Home (87-91), Russ's reader must

share the actual process of dying: the grab-bag of reminiscence, hallucination, longing, the exaltation of recalling Handel, and a bravura confrontation of epistemologies: "Over here the Phoenix Reaction and God as Engineer. Over here entropy, suffering, death" (We 164). In Darkover Landfall, the masculinist survival narrative is endorsed at the expense of feminism. In Heron, Le Guin's pacifists move out to settle a mythic frontier. Russ takes "entropy, suffering, death" to its nadir. The text closes as the narrator palms a lethal ampoule:

> *Death is not part of life; death is not lived through*
> (I'll buy that)
> Got this thing in my hand. O.K.
>   * * *
> well it's time. (170)

Although its narrative is allusive and elusive, sliding into flashback and shifting from viewpoint to viewpoint, The Two of Them (1977) marks a further falling curve, since the linear plot survives, and the characters neither blur nor blend. The story of male and female Trans-Temporal agents who spy on Ka'abah, a parody Islamic world based on The Arabian Nights (McCaffery, "Russ" 180), interlocks the rescue of a female child with versions of `The Man Question' that confronted late '70s feminists, and gives a radical and separatist if not eroticised lesbian response.

As a mirror of '50s America, "a very bad place ... something like this place" (Two 4), Ka'abah depicts traditional patriarchal oppression, with women locked indoors, surgically beautified, tranquillised, and constantly judged and/or driven mad. "`Daddy used to warn me about going mad'," (138) says twelve-year-old Zubeydeh, whose demand to be a poet invokes the fate of her aunt Dunya. When "`We kept taking her papers away from her ... then ... we knew we had done the right thing, because she went mad'" (84). Here the threat of female insanity is not averted as in Female Gothic; as Chesler's analysis argues, and Schuyler's view of Jael's killing affirms, a ruling of `madness' appears both patriarchal failure to comprehend women, and the means of its enforcement. The threat is epitomised by Dunya's fate, as she crawls round her cell walls in a direct echo of the madwoman in Perkins Gilman's "The

Yellow Wallpaper" (Howard 164).

Such threat is not limited to Ka'abah, whence the agent Irene rescues Zubeydeh. As Spencer notes, this is again a reciprocal and complex rescue, for Zubeydeh forces Irene to face her own subjection to her male partner, Ernst Neumann, who freed her from a repressive quasi-realistic America. But when she shows radical tendencies, wanting to burgle her Agency's files or to rescue Zubeydeh's mad aunt and schizophrenic mother, this kindly, "earnest new man" (Russ, Two 5) stops her computer access and then prepares to take her back for "treatment." Irene must kill him to escape.

Though the novel plays with the idea that Ernst did not really die, it reneges: "I made that part up" (175). Instead, it drops Irene and Zubeydeh in a strange home-world, "a thirty-year-old divorcee with a child to support" (176). This sketches the recent feminist topos of the divorced sole parent, twisted to dystopic visions in Zoe Fairbairns' Benefits (1979) and parodied in Esme Dodderidge's The New Gulliver (1979). But Ernst embodies the second part of "The Man Question": how to deal, not with an unregenerate patriarch, but with a well-meaning `liberated' man. Read against '70s feminist history, The Two of Them appears both a parable of men's response to radical feminism, and a harbinger of separatist answers to `the Man Question': in feminism, even liberal men can have no place.

Where the female hero's trajectory traced by DuPlessis must end in death or marriage (1), the "two" of Irene and Zubeydeh produce a contemporary cultural grouping and feminist alternative. The actual ending reaches a vision of revolution that typifies Russ's writing in its appropriation of both patriarchal and feminist allusions. In a grey world that can only be "aunt Dunya's soul," Russ restores the voice, not of Stephen King's colonised Scheherezade, but that of her sister Dunyazad, the "mad, dead, haunted woman who could not tell stories" (Two 181). Yet, appropriating Isaiah and echoing Adrienne Rich's "When We Dead Awaken" (1971), a carpet of bones stirs when this voice asks: "*Shall these bones live*?" (Two 180-81) Irene, the text hints, will find other "unimportant, powerless people" (178), and "something

will be created out of nothing" (181). To June Howard this something is "the long moment of women's ... struggle which is our own historical moment." And she again finds the text's Utopian horizon moving beyond literary space, as it sends Irene, Zubeydeh and us "back to our work" (167).

Despite this call to political action, the text lacks the valorizing of erotic lesbianism in The Female Man. Zubeydeh specifically demands that Irene treat her only "as a daughter" (Two 156). Yet On Strike Against God (1980) is a positive non-SF `coming out' novel, where a female academic approaches a younger woman, who briefly deserts her to consider things, but returns with love and an antique gun, "Blunderbess." With this, in a fine re-vision of the dream-tomboy in "When It Changed," she teaches the older woman to shoot (On Strike 195). To Spencer, Russ abandons SF conventions here because "her imagination can now find room for stories of women loving women, of women at the centre of each other's lives, in our ordinary mundane world" (180). One might add that with the rise of lesbian-centred and separatist movements Russ was again, if less noticeably, in the forefront of feminist thought.

The rescue mythos moves further in the popular (Perry 301) 1982 story, "The Little Dirty Girl," where the first-person narrator comes to accept a turbulent eight-year-old ghost:

> I thought that she was fine, that all of her was fine: her shit, her piss, her sweat, her tears, her scabby knees, the snot on her face, her cough, her dirty panties... all of her was wonderful, I loved all of her. (Russ, "Girl" 16)

As Spencer remarks, this "love and total acceptance" is transparently a self-rescue (181), and on the heels of Strike, may be read as including lesbianism. Spencer's view of such texts contradicts the narrative of SF critics like Dozois, who sees Russ leaving SF in response, he implies, to opprobrium generated by The Female Man, and to the attacks of new "radical writers" on "Souls" (1983) (Introduction, "Nobody's Home" 399).

In either case, after The Two of Them physical illness reduced Russ's output (McCaffery, "Russ" 193; Perry 287). But while Strike and "Dirty Girl" are positive views of lesbianism, the stories in Extra(Ordinary) People (1984), though equally brilliant in their wit

and reduction of SF cliches, and though "Souls" won the 1983 Hugo, seem somewhat repressed in comparison. Such a hint of stagnation marks "What Did You Do During the Revolution, Grandma?" (1983) This letter describing a Trans-Temporal Agent's mission to a feudal planet actually expands a reminiscence by Jael in <u>The Female Man</u> (188-91), but centres on the conflicts of a roleplaying `butch.' Surgically altered, dressed as a male demon, the narrator sees "some great Lord of Hell, swarthy, talon'd, cruel and empty-eyed." The vision has "put the inside outside" and her "knees buckle." But horror modulates into, "Need I tell you that Ashmedai is beautiful?" (125)

Ashmedai roysters through the feudal court, avoiding an amorous princess, trying to prevent a rape by nobles in a wicked scene where she claims that a peasant woman is menstruating and hence unclean, except to demons, then has to fake `intercourse.' Russ double-edges the comedy when her husband kills the woman for carrying a demon-child; but for all its wit, its absurdifying of cliches, and its re-echo of Russ's perception that gender is a matter of social construction, of performance rather than essence, the text's repressed lesbianism contrasts strongly with the positive relationships among Free Amazons in Bradley's <u>Thendara House</u> (1985), forays into imaginative space pioneered twelve years earlier by Russ herself.

This contrast sharpens against what Russ has called the sub-genre of lesbian SF, a field she also mothered. She encouraged Miller Gearhart to publish <u>The Wanderground</u> (Perry 305); McKee Charnas' <u>Motherlines</u> (1978), a separatist world with loving and erotic women's relationships, is dedicated to "J.R.," and recent SF shows lesbianism, in a term Catherine Stimpson borrowed from Barthes, with zero degree deviancy: that is, with "moral or emotional indifference" ("Zero" 97-98). In Laura Mixon's <u>Glass Houses</u> (1992) as in Melissa Scott's <u>Dreamships</u> (1992) and <u>Burning Bright</u> (1994), a lesbian protagonist is taken for granted in a way Russ never actually achieved.

Radical and Heterosexual Trajectories

Russ's *oeuvre* most strikingly parallels the history of what Alice Echols calls American radical feminism proper, with its enormously productive and extreme activity from 1969-71, a time that produced not merely ground-breaking works like "When It Changed" and brilliant deconstructions like We Who Are About To..., but the height of Russ's productive imagination with The Female Man. Patrick Murphy's view that, "In virtually every case, her novels ... have inverted and innovated the genre materials" (5), supports LeFanu's judgement that she is "the single most important woman writer of SF" (173). Not only did she open women's and/or feminists' imaginative space earlier than any other writer, she went further than most others have dared, transgressing not only masculinist but feminist taboos. In many ways, her texts' anger and uncompromising answers to the problems of feminism exemplify the radical American and English feminist positions, as their production parallels the explosion of radical ideas in early '70s America. She also shares the limits of this early feminism: from within, an explosion that is not sustained or extended as one would so much wish. From without, great praise from feminist critics and readers, but a tendency to be ignored or overlooked by the majority to whom radical feminist initiatives have been less cause for excitement than for alarm.

Le Guin's work describes a lower and more troubled trajectory, slow in escaping the masculinist constraints she always struggled to resist, becoming more handicapped than liberated by its liberalism, and relating to feminism more as user than producer. The Left Hand of Darkness deploys feminism as topos rather than politics, while Le Guin's lasting enamourment with "a philosophy of binary systems" (Lefanu 145) first biases her work toward masculinism, and then ties it into essentialist feminism. At the same time, Le Guin has played an enormous part in opening women's writing, women's issues, and eventually, feminist perspectives, to audiences varying from orthodox male SF readers to academics to women readers outside the SF ambit, who, because of her reputed difficulty or dissenting political views, would not have read Russ. Yet if their comparison illustrates the differing

problems of radical and liberal feminists in SF writing, they remain pioneers of the productive

imagination, whose leadership was equally vital to the opening of feminist imaginative space.

- Section 10 -

JOHN VARLEY AND SAMUEL R. DELANY: THE GATE TO WOMEN'S

COUNTRY

In Sheri. S. Tepper's post-Holocaust novel, the Gate to Women's Country lies between towns, where most women live, and garrisons, where most men are warriors, ostensibly protecting the women - from other garrisons. The groups meet only at festivals. At five years old, all boy children are sent to the garrison; at fifteen, they may return to Women's Country. To do so earns warriors' scorn, physical attacks, and apparent loss of status and paternity. But children are actually sired only by those who return; and though they mourn sons and lovers, the women's `breeding committee' will manoeuvre garrisons into reciprocal slaughter to save their eugenically produced hope of future peace.

Tepper's Elsewhere offers a grim if less radical solution than The Female Man to the vexed question of men's role in any `concrete' feminist Utopia; but with it goes an over-simple view of return to Women's Country, or how men can share in feminism. For feminists, this problem crystallises in the praxis of Reclaim the Night marches and Women's Studies curricula: do we admit or exclude men? For men who write, it is partly figured in academic interactions with feminism.

Where popular fiction writers like Koontz, King and Heinlein had reacted to feminism by the early '70s, in the early '80s Alice Jardine still found a "silent Majority" of male British and American academics who ignored feminism. There were a few genuine "allies" (Men 55-56), including heavyweights like Wayne Booth, Jonathon Culler, Robert Scholes and Terry Eagleton (Showalter, "Critical" 117); but even among men "really trying, really reading and changing" (Jardine, Men 56), there remained "a definite *Odor di Uomo*" (58): "almost as if they have learned a new vocabulary perfectly, but have not paid enough attention to syntax or intonation" (56).

Thus, while deploring rejection, feminists actually resisted male academic entrance to Women's Country. The women contributors to Men in Feminism (1987) (Jardine 56-61; Braidotti; Morris) repeatedly doubt men *can* be feminists. Others feared men would make feminism a "cognitive skill" devoid of personal or political context (Showalter, "Critical" 119), or saw it as another appropriation (Modleski,

"Feminism" 127-8). These responses' implicit or explicit base is the fundamental feminist stress on women's experience. By the mid-'80s, however, Ann Snitow feels `womanness' can be limiting (11-12), while Munt and Kauffman's jettisoning of the personal is moderated by arguments that experience must be theorised (Scott 250-52; Butler, "Contingent" 17). By 1990 Sandra Harding turns standpoint theory on itself to argue that "women cannot be the unique generators of feminist knowledge" (154). If white straight feminists must learn black, Third World and lesbian standpoints, then if "feminism cannot legitimate male feminists" its own expansion is in doubt (145). Such men may not claim a spurious authority (158) but are to turn feminist insights back, as Jardine demanded, on *their* sexuality, *their* problems: "What is *the Man* hiding?" (61).

This demand has been extravagantly fulfilled. The first male academic turn to feminism and its reception matches the early '80s moment when Segal considers the British Establishment did begin `listening' just as feminists despaired of being heard (Future 40). But if, by the late '80s, "anyone worth his [sic] salt in literary criticism today has to become something of a feminist" (Peter Brooks, qtd. Gaines, "White" 14) `he' is more likely to join the burgeoning fields of gay or masculinity studies, both heavily indebted to feminism. Thus theoretically dubious academic attempts to enter Women's Country appear a necessary historical step in expanding the study of `Woman' to that previously genderless, invisible, humanist subject: `the Man.' Yet given the enduring gendered power gradient in academia, especially if reinforced by separatism in American Women's Studies (Denfeld, passim), this trend may in fact repeat the damage separatism has done the movement elsewhere.

The gate is considerably less strait when male SF writers engage the gender topos. Those in opposition can air gynophobic nightmares like Cooper's Gender Genocide (1972), while those "really trying" to enter can deploy topoi that by 1972 were fast being fictionally processed, produced, in Ricoeur's sense, in feminist forms. Given the power gradient in literature as in the academy, such attempts may be read as appropriation or colonisation. But in SF, feminism was both a political stance and a

topos, a site of debate open to all. As Bradley's work illustrates, even female writers had to colonise the imaginative space opened by feminists like Le Guin and Russ. Moreover, to ban men from this space poses a ludicrous dilemma: must they repeat traditional `bad' constructions of women, or do they forego all female characters, thus perpetuating the most-critiqued flaw in SF?

In comparison to Male Gothic writers, even the favourably disposed Koontz, John Varley's and Samuel Delany's engagements with feminism(s) illustrate SF's outward-reaching, Utopian potential. Against Heinlein, they are exemplary entries to feminist imaginative space, and taken with Bradley, suggest the option is open to men and women. Like Russ and Le Guin, they also chart the avenues that feminism in SF opened along the heterosexual/ homosexual axis, this time for men. Combined, their work echoes the trajectory of male academia, from attempts to enter Women's Country, limited for the white, heterosexual Varley by the shift to essentialist feminism, to Samuel Delany's progress from anticipating or `reasoning for' feminism(s) as Russ did in the early '60s, to using feminist thought, in the '70s, as the gate to an imaginative space of his own.

Engineering Feminism: Varley 1974-1986

John Varley's earliest stories already show the fruits of feminism's literary pro-cessing. "Retrograde Summer" (1974) extrapolates human settlement of Mercury, with imaginative bio-engineering and accomplished deployment of hard science in the exotic environment. A skin-fitting "null-suit" that resists vacuum is applied by opening the top of the head, disengaging the nervous system, and seating a valve under the rib for air flow. Speech is also outdated; the suit picks up sub-vocalising. As the plot shows, however, this slick cyborg embodies a ground tenet of second-wave feminism. Mystified by meeting a sister in a time where one adult/one child is mandatory, the narrator finds his `mother' on Mercury is actually his sex-changed `father' from Luna; he was cloned after divorce. Where King's coterminal Carrie made the New Woman an Imaginary bogey, Varley engages the gender topos in what David Brin calls engineering hard SF: SF concerned with technical implications (12-13). In classic SF

fashion, physical sex change then literalises the crucial feminist argument that gender is culturally produced.

The casually foregrounded given of frequent and easy sex change accompanies the figure of cloning through much of Varley's SF. Fox, the narrator of "Picnic on Nearside" (1974), experiences a rite of passage while leaving the moon's Farside to view the Earth, whence humanity is now exiled. But he goes in a tantrum because his mother forbade his first sex-change: "`You're too young'" ("Picnic" 237), while his best friend has just become a girl. Unlike Bradley, Le Guin and Heinlein four years earlier, for Varley this concept of variable sex/gender is a processed, available given, to be deployed alongside scientific facts about Mercury. He slips Women's Country into hard SF, and the resulting stories brought him high critical praise. The hard SF bent of these stories does bring far more technological exposition than in "April in Paris" or "When It Changed," and here the gender topos is, as feminists feared, less a political stance than an exploitable novum. But later sub-texts enact a "really trying" man's deeper adaptations to feminism.

"The Black Hole Passes" (1975) produces a bravura version of an engineering SF female hero. Jordan and Treemonisha are male and female data collectors posted in small space habitats to monitor "the Ophiuchi Hotline," an alien signal that pours information into human space. They pass the time by games, arguments and sexual fantasies; but when a small black hole wrecks both habitats, it is Treemonisha who cobbles up a drive to save Jordan from death. Using Jordan's viewpoint, the text also presents the terror and helplessness of the subjective event as a *male* experience, while the equanimity with which Jordan accepts rescue is not only astonishing in male SF, especially hard SF, but a highly liberal response to the New Woman. Judith Kollman remarks Varley's "weak" male characters (74). Yet if Tree-monisha repeats the belief of <u>Alien</u> that white women will `make it better'(Lowder Newton), Varley also envisions a future where women can play engineers and heroes as acceptably as men. Against the strong woman's fate as heroine or rape victim in <u>Night Chills</u>, just a year after, "Black Hole" again illustrates the Utopian potential of SF.

Going beyond feminist-oriented characterisation, "The Phantom of Kansas" (1976) uses clones for a striking re-vision of androgyny. It restages The Phantom of the Opera in a future where Fox from "Nearside" is a famous female creator of weather spectacles in giant "Disneylands" or artificial environments. Fox has four times been cloned and regained her recorded memories after attacks by a mysterious murderer. As she performs this "Environmental happening," he challenges her to a weather duel. She wins. He proves to be her male clone, abandoned by thieves of her "memory cube," jealous of her talent, and battered by their previous fights. But this time he cries, kneels down, and offers himself to be killed ("Phantom" 29.) Yet Fox cannot do so, because "he was *me*"(30). When she hears his story, and he asks "quietly, helplessly," "`You mean you're not my enemy now?'" (37) the rapport turns sexual. "We were made for each other, literally," so at times, "I was unsure of which one I was" (38). Finally the Central Computer colludes in their flight off-Earth, to where clones and originals can legally coexist.

The conceptual freedom of SF, the clone trope itself, is again in striking contrast to Male Gothic, where men's dream of losing boundaries is viable only in the moment of orgasm. And though the heterosexual couple still provides a happy ending, when Varley drops the conquering male hero, the gender topos lets him play with masculinity, femininity, the very idea of identity. In a re-vising of androgyny, the myths of the other half and the companionate marriage are realised. Yet though male/female clones are the ultimate narcissistic solipsism, they also anticipate lesbian sub-plots (Farwell, "Heterosexual" 93-98) where heterosexual/same-sex, even Self/Other divisions blur.

The sub-text of "Phantom" offers an extreme enactment of the guilt liberal men might have felt in the early '70s, when feminism's denunciatory phase was at its public and theoretical height. Heinlein performed such a fictional *mea culpa* with `The Number of the Beast' in 1980. Varley goes on to have Fox's double both confess his crimes and literally beg for punishment. Then, however, the Self/Other blurring sustains a narrative solution where men - the patriarchy - are forgiven. Male and

female selves, men and women, feminism and patriarchy are reconciled, in a Utopian male version of Women's Country which, if it is not Heaven, is literally off-earth.

Such baroque extrapolations of identity through the gender topos continue in Varley's first novel, The Ophiuchi Hotline (1977). Its hero Lilo, an outlaw genetic manipulator, runs through some six clones, of whom one plays the goddess Diana on a future Earth, another meets the owners of the Hotline, and the third helps liberate a prison-camp asteroid where scientists provide a clandestine war effort against the Jovian "Invaders" who occupy Earth. The text closes with the prisoners, all three Lilos and a doubled male lover headed for a rendezvous at Alpha Centauri. There, in a solipsism where androgyny becomes a female trinity, they will meet "`Some people we know'" (Hotline 237).

The novel moves further into Women's Country with its treatment of sexuality. Unlike Heinlein, Varley was not liberated too late to forget it, and most of his fiction takes plentiful and/or experimental sex for granted. Hotline, however, outgrows the mechanical experimentation of I Will Fear No Evil and reaches past '70s swinging sex to voice the hope of so many among Lillian Rubin's female interviewees:

> the beginnings of that sort of feeling that could one day transform a simple act of recreational copping into that thing which is subtly and so vastly different - the act of love. (145)

Simultaneously, Varley extrapolates the gender topos to the point where Lilo's enemy Boss Tweed, a Lunar politico who created the prison-camp, is "unmasked" in both senses: ousted, `he' sheds the physical persona of "a male human being" (189) to become a feminised androgyne. Then the he/she pronouns elide and a "nude woman" (192) hurries off to resume her war. This narrative use of the topos matches a vision of commodified bio-engineering that offers "electric testicles," and makes, "`Breasts seem popular this year ... Nearly everybody has at least two'" (129).

The flair, hard SF bias and irony of this probably all-too-prophetic vision of trivialised technology make Hotline a notably accomplished as well as amusing

adaptation of feminism. This is particularly clear in comparison to hard SF by other male writers, like Niven and Pournelle's Lucifer's Hammer, which that same year dismissed "Women's Liberation" as a happy casualty of a post-disaster world. In contrast, the rendezvous at Alpha Centauri enacts the ultimate reaching out to an Other who is also Self; and this time, will prove a gynocentric whole.

Reversing this vision of strong women, Vivian Sobchack sees in coterminal SF films like Close Encounters of the Third Kind (1977) a narrative solution to the '70s erosion of patriarchal power which translates and transforms the patriarch's body, in the Elsewhere of space, into the childish, non-threatening father/alien (15-27). A parallel is the weak father figure emerging in Female Gothic. In Varley's work too, strong women produce `weakened' men. But Sobchack sees patriarchy re-asserted in a shadowy nuclear family, ruled by the absent but god-like father/alien. In both "Phantom" and Hotline Varley solves the question of men in feminism by taking his male bodies off world. Yet in Hotline clones and cloning preclude not only the heterosexual couple, but the father's godly absence, his sexual re-production, and the actual or virtual nuclear family.

Titan (1979) marks the apogee of Varley's "really trying" to endorse feminism. The story of a NASA spaceship captured by a sentient wheel-artifact world is both classic engineering SF and an exemplary entry to Women's Country. While most of the women are heroes, nearly all villains are male. More importantly, the protagonist and ship captain is a female hero who avoids both masculinised and feminised stereotypes. Cirocco `Rocky' Jones may fight and couple as proficiently as Heinlein's Friday, but the subjective narrative shows the self-doubts of a woman commander. If this is a codedly feminine version of men's problems, it does show how feminism had eased the dearth of strong female models with which McKee Charnas contended in early '70s SF. Cirocco's portrait goes far to justify Elizabeth Lynn's comment that Varley is "One of the few male writers ... who can create living, breathing ... women characters" (Varley, Picnic Covernote).

Titan extends political correctness with the human villain, "Gene," a parody of

the `right stuff' Aryan astronaut, who eventually rapes Cirocco and, in a sharp parallel to Michele Belling's coterminal "The Rape Patrol" (1979), is promptly attacked, mutilated and tossed off a spoke of the wheel-world by another woman. This is a striking contrast to the treatment of rapists in Bradley's Two to Conquer, published a year later.

Titan anticipates Bradley more powerfully in its depiction of lesbianism. When the female astronaut Gaby falls in love with Cirocco, her avowals and constant gifts at first appear childish or pathetic. But by the close, Cirocco and Gaby have clambered up a 300 kilometre spoke to confront the god/consciousness "Gaea," endured cold, rape, and multiple hardship, and built a love both sexual and comradely. It is tempting to see their ice-cave interlude as The Left Hand of Darkness re-visioned, a step past Le Guin's limiting androgyny into the affirmative lesbian visions of the '70s. Indeed, Titan is a lesbian novel on all three theoretical counts: it presents erotic attraction between women, and gives primary intensity to a women's relationship. If, like "Bluestocking," it then re-inserts Cirocco into the hetero-sexual economy with a transient male lover, there is none of the voyeurism that makes lesbian love a stock pornographic element (Suleiman 11). But Titan best deconstructs heterosexuality in its treatment of female heroism.

The difference between a female hero and a heroine is stressed by SF critics: a heroine is a male-dependent reward, assistant or rescuee for the hero, lacking agency (Betty King xvii). But since a hero "makes things happen," a female hero "control[s] ... her own destiny and initiates the main events of a story" (Wells 146-47). Teresa de Lauretis, however, applies Lotman's equation of male/active, female/passive roles with narrative spaces; operating in an active space, heroes of either sex can always only be male. The female role is as obstacle, ending, reward, and the heroic mythos is the male Oedipal story (116-24). But what if the hero, reaching its closure, finds the heroine "[does]n't live there any more?" ("Desire" 153) de Lauretis does not suggest where she *might* now live, but Marilyn Farwell argues that Lotman's fundamentally heterosexual schema can be disrupted by figuring female desire in a space of "sameness." Though a

woman in a male space, like Ripley in Aliens, produces "tensions" ("Heterosexual" 93-95), to Farwell only a relationship with Rich's primary intensity between women will deconstruct the opposition (97); in Titan, Varley does so. But where "Bluestocking" links Alyx and Edarra by the `chance' - fire, pirate attack - usual in female romance, drawn perhaps from women's perceived helplessness, Varley's Gaby pursues an active courtship. She gives Cirocco gifts and avowals, she rescues her; she becomes a hero too. The opposition is deconstructed by a play of active/passive between the two women, using male narrative patterns that, paradoxically, produce a fluid `lesbian' heroism.

If Titan gives male readers no strong pro-feminist role models, or any solution to the problem of patriarchy and feminism, it did offer female SF readers a text that finally combined hard SF extrapolation with portrayals of strong women, and even a positive depiction of lesbian love in a highly conservative sub-genre of male-authored SF. Historically, it preserves a moment when liberal feminism, hard SF praxis and the ambience of '70s sexual license met to give a male writer a Utopian window into Women's Country.

That window rapidly closed. By 1978 the British women's movement had already fractured (Segal, Female 54), while Gyn/Ecology (1978) empowered essentialist thinking. In 1980 Audre Lorde's "Open Letter to Mary Daly" opened the race schism in American fem-inism, and the Revolutionary Feminists' notorious pamphlet on political lesbianism fulfilled the separatist prophecy formulated by The Two of Them. So in SF, Elizabeth Lynn's gender-bending in "The Man Who Was Pregnant" (1977) had by 1980 become condemnation of "male violence" in "The Gods of Reorth" (Garber and Paleo Item 533), matching the lesbian essentialism of Donna Young's 1979 Utopia, Retreat: As It Was! (Item 931) That Titan remains a euphoric liberal endorsement reveals both the author's male investment and the colonial nature of his engagement. It is Russ who was at feminism's cutting edge.

Wizard (1981) attempts a narrative reconciliation with essentialism. Cirocco is now a resident wizard at war with her `employer' Gaea; the narrative focusses on two

new characters. Robin "the Nine-Fingered," a dig at The Lord of the Rings, is an epileptic seeking a cure from Gaea. Born in a lesbian witch society whose Lagrange habitat literalises separatism, she provides some wittily defamiliarised feminist discourse. "`I ... see that you're ashamed of your peckish enslavement,'" Robin tells a lesbian prostitute who explains her sexual preference, "`but what's a lesbian?'" (Wizard 46)

Next to Robin, however, Varley sets Chris, one of his "most fully developed and strongest" (Kollmann 72) male characters; and their interactions make clear that the sub-text exactly opposes The Two of Them. Having encountered men and heard other views of Earth, Robin concludes that although society remains unequal, "the system of repression and exploitation was not [so] bad." Varley endorses separatism - Chris considers her way of life "`needs no defence'" - but all the same, "`[my mother] was off base to say that all men want to rape all women all the time. And to say that all men are evil'" (Wizard 349). This alludes directly to the slogan from Against Our Will, "all men are potential rapists," a view then developing through action and theory like the Reclaim the Night initiative, into what Faust, Segal, and later Denfeld would critique as "the rape crusade." But if Varley condemns rape, he has a strong investment in keeping some male foothold in Women's Country.

Wizard does attempt to investigate male problems. Chris is a chronic amnesiac also seeking a cure from Gaea, but during his lapses he has a passionate affair with a `female' Titanide. Eventually he can admit the liaison, and becomes a surrogate father to her purely Titanide child. This re-asserts the nuclear family; but unlike the films, Varley does not give Chris patriarchal authority. Yet though sleeping with the alien and quasi-bestiality does not kill the female, as in "The Lovers," it is Chris who stays to `possess' the world of Titan, an Elsewhere for the male subject who, as Sobchack notices in the films, can thus avoid the `real' world's responsibility (27).

The new roles of Cirocco and Gaby raise problems that centre on the female hero. Where Titan could undo both the Oedipal trajectory of the quest and the romance closure of the heterosexual couple, Wizard sets Cirocco and Gaby against a tyrant as

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blatant as Percy Shelley's Jupiter, with Gaby taking the role of Prometheus. Her death exposes the difficulty of substituting female heroes in unmodified male plots like "the mightily thewed warrior trip." The inequity of such "equal rights" reappears in law, where American women who kill sleeping husbands are charged with murder for premeditation; yet few women can openly assault a man and win (Tavris 111-12). So to kill a male Prometheus recalls heroes like Cuchulain and Christ; to kill a female Prometheus removes the agency so recently won by the female hero, the kind of Indian-giving practised on their strong women by King and Koontz.

Demon (1985) tips the balance further toward a male bias, as Varley collides with the question, to paraphrase Russ, "What (More) Can a [Female Hero] Do?" Beyond the relatively gender-neutral mythos of the Fabulous Voyage in Titan, Wizard shows Varley forced back, by the paucity of female heroic mythoi, on traditional male plots that emphasise hierarchy and dominance. This intensifies in Demon, when Gaea finally falls. Unlike Shelley, Varley cannot conceive of nobody replacing Jupiter; so a risen Gaby is drafted into the godhead, substituting the death of a king, an old patriarchal mythos, for that of monarchy itself.

More notably, the novel centres on Robin's baby son Adam, `sired' in a parody of the immaculate conception, by Gaea, perceived by her as a vessel for reincarnation, and by Cirocco as an escape from her Jehovah-like role as sole fertiliser of Titanide `eggs.' But it is Chris who goes into Gaea's camp to protect the kidnapped baby, while the women fight the war. As with Koontz's treatment of his strong women, feminist discourse is turned against itself. For the first time Varley adopts the reactive patriarchal stance apparent in films like Kramer vs. Kramer (1979) or Mrs. Doubtfire (1992), where unmaternal mothers are shown up by caring fathers. For Varley, Demon affirms that feminism remains "women's project" (Cary Nelson 161). Though he can colonise feminist space and speak its discourse with verve and brilliance, he cannot produce further mythoi; and when the historical shift of feminism bars men from Women's Country, he is driven back on the narrative reconciliations or patriarchal resolutions of those outside the Gate.

This limitation echoes the fall-off of Varley's output after <u>Demon</u>, with one collection of short stories and no novels before <u>Steel Beach</u> (1992). <u>Millennium</u> (1983) divides its narrative between a man of the present and a woman of a dystopic future, with another patriarchal re-solution as they take ship to a different future where she will bear his child; but the overall balance is destroyed by her sex-robot, Sherman, who, unlike Jael's Davy, turns out to be Jesus, operating to save humanity for a patriarchal God who may now "*get that vacation ... on the seventh day*" (216). The Nebula-winning "Press Enter #" (1984) offers a strong image of a female Vietnam War survivor, while <u>Tango Charlie and Foxtrot Romeo</u> (1986) has a woman media celebrity and police officer conspire against male authority to save the female survivor of plague on a space station. But neither breaks new ground, and in both texts the central female character dies. Like Russ, it seems Varley ended his innovations in the '70s.

Again, Sobchack's remark that "real solutions to patriarchal bourgeois crises will be ... revolutions born on the margins of dominant culture" (25) seems relevant. As with Koontz and King, if white Western men can follow feminists, "as things stand now" they "cannot occupy the margins" (Weed 73) where feminism begins. Moreover, despite some homosexual experiments in "Beatnik Bayou" (1980), even Varley's sex-swapping, Titanide-swiving male characters remain heterosexual. Like Le Guin, therefore, his productive imagination falls on the heterosexual/liberal axis. And though he can colonise feminist imaginative space, he cannot go beyond its frontiers to produce a space for "sameness" in male rather than female desire.

Marginalising Mythology: Delany 1962-1968

While Varley has been neglected by critics and omitted from a study of major SF writers (Bleiler, <u>Critical Studies</u>), Samuel Delany is more visible in academia than any writer except Le Guin. Though, like Le Guin, he began publishing in SF after mainstream rejections (McCaffery, "Delany" 89), unlike Varley or Le Guin, he is both gay and black. But while a black *oeuvre*, like a woman's, may be defined by authorship: "I *am* black. Therefore what I do is part of the definition" (75), a gay *oeuvre* is harder to specify.

Though Delany has recently seen problems in constructing "something so rigid" as identity for those in marginal positions (Dery 746), identity is central to many gays (Edwards 137; Murray 116). Being gay is not a sexual activity but "a social identity," "actively chosen" (120), chiefly by the "key ritual" of coming out (Herdt, "Coming Out" 31), and it is a political necessity (Bredbeck xix; Dyer, "Believing" 200; Medhurst 207). It does bring problems, paralleling those of feminists with the monolithic concept of `woman,' both with postmodern theories of the subject and with the erasing of gay differences (Ed Cohen 72-75), to such an extent that Bredbeck wonders if there can be a "gay literature." If so, does identity precede the text, or the form precede identity? (xvi)

Gay theorists appear to favour the former. If "authorship is identity in the textual sphere," then for marginalised groups like gays "[i]s it always a good idea to slaughter the Author?" (Medhurst 206), while to Richard Dyer, "if the poor old text alone has to bear the burden of being lesbian/ gay, one will come up with few lesbian/gay texts" ("Believing" 189). Since at nineteen Delany acknowledged his homosexuality to his wife, Marilyn Hacker (Motion 93), and to a therapy group in the mid-'60s (372-73), then came out as a writer in the '70s, his is a gay *oeuvre*. But to be black and gay sets up a conflict that resonates throughout his writing. Marked by an attraction for mythology common to '60s American writers (Mathieson 22), this *oeuvre* moves from narrative re-solutions of white/hetero/ patriarchal myths to a deconstructive, postmodern revolution that produces a space for male same-sex desire. Where Varley's work precedes early academic incursions into Women's Country, Delany goes on to parallel the move toward gay studies, and as for gay theorists, feminist interventions play a crucial part.

Such interventions begin in the pre-feminist '60s, during Delany's relationship with Hacker and his first work in SF. Delany was drawn to SF as a black middle-class child moving between Harlem and his exclusive school in Park Avenue, on "a journey of near ballistic violence" ("Necessity" 26), yet finding writers like Richard Wright anachronistic, because, "in a world ... clearly exploding with racial change," they

seemed to say that "what made it so awful also made it unchangeable" (28). But though he distrusts Utopian ideals ("On Triton" 302), Delany found in Heinlein's Starship Troopers the truly Utopian image of a Filipino hero who only mentions his race two-thirds into the novel: "ethnic background ... had become that insignificant!" ("Necessity" 30)

This "dazzl[ing]" glimpse of how a better world would "actually ... look" (31) shares a stress on integration and equality typical of the early '60s Civil Rights movement, and the influence of Martin Luther King (Chafe 308-09). But though equally conscious of `high' literature, even borrowing structural patterns from writers like Proust (McCaffery, "Delany" 99), Delany was also drawn to SF because it "seemed to offer a *slightly* wider range of interesting women characters than straight fiction" ("Symposium" 27-28).

Blacks and feminists do share problems and strategies: Booker T. Washington wrote in 1901 that "the Negro youth must ... perform his task even better than a white youth... to secure recognition" (qtd. Sidonie Smith 37), and Robert Fox in 1985 considered that "blacks especially have a critical stake in future worlds" ("Delany" 94). But Delany is also notable among postmodern black male writers for giving women "strong, affirmative roles" (124). In 1961, as Heinlein provided a male icon of female sexuality, Delany experienced a feminist epiphany when Hacker noted the difference between men's and women's pockets, and after marriage and years of adolescent friendship, he found "we had been raised in two totally different cultures" (Motion 107-08). Characterisation seemed the "`tiny part'" of women's inequality that he could "handle without getting my hands dirty," so with Hacker he worked out templates: echoing McKee Charnas, women should have strong female relationships, and, recalling Virginia Woolf's room, clear economic "anchors." And anticipating Wells, they should have agency, to further the plot among other things ("Symposium" 31-32).

Hence Delany's first publications were well ahead of their time in being both feminist-influenced and oriented. But he quickly found Charnas' and Le Guin's problem: "almost always the `natural workings' of the story" would "conspire to

exclude ... the women" (McCaffery, "Delany" 96). So in <u>The Jewels of Aptor</u> (1962), set in an apparently post-Holocaust world, a male company's quest to steal the mysterious jewels interacts with three Argos, or priestesses, of a White Goddess drawn from Robert Graves. The company include a white poet and sailor, a dark four-armed mutant, Snake, and a black sailor, Iimmi, equally vital to the quest. The White Goddess is supplemented by the black god Hama and his black high priest, revealed as mentor and father of the youngest Argo. Delany perceived his Argos as in "dialog with Graves" (qtd. McEvoy 24); the quiet interposition of black men and gods is typical of his '60s work, which remodels but does not shatter white patriarchal myths. The Argos, however, fill Lotman's type of female role as obstacle/instigator, counsellor and quest object. Though the child Argo is a precocious inventor who shares the final jewel theft, at the crux of her efforts she has to be rescued by a male.

Women are similarly trammelled in <u>The Fall of the Towers</u> (1963-65), where a society crumbles amid wars whose simplest level is a human-alien alliance against another extra-terrestrial; society also fights itself, in a huge computer hoax where drugged soldiers die in dreams of battle "beyond the Barrier" - a radiation barrier left by a past war. Where the quest in <u>Aptor</u>, however, spawns debates on chaos and order (155-56) and the corruption of power (134-36), in <u>Towers</u> the hero is obsessed by questions of freedom and responsibility: what can, what should I do?

The temporary answer is, join the alien alliance; the final solution is an interracial society aiming for stellar travel. Jon Koshar is not black, but his questions echo those of Claude Brown, who had escaped slavery but not racism: "where does one run to when he's already in the promised land?" (qtd. Sidonie Smith 156). Koshar too is an escaped convict, who can never be truly free. His solution, like his name, is correct in white hetero/patriarchal terms: fight the Other; rescue and marry a woman, and help build an integrated urban Utopia.

The women in the novel are similarly re-inserted in `proper' roles. The duchess Petra has rank and power, and leads the human conspirators, but dies in the city's final fall. The acrobat Alter is economically independent and physically powerful, but she is

tortured by the insane Queen Mother and has to be rescued from a shark tank by Jon. Jon's sister Klea is a brilliant mathematician who sees through the computer `war' but goes mad rather than expose it, and minor characters, like the Queen Mother, lapse into stereotype. Compared to <u>Farn-ham's Freehold</u> the text is strikingly progressive, but as Seth McEvoy notices, the women's common end is marriage (40-41). Like Jon, they end up safe back in the modified hetero/ patriarchy.

<u>Babel-17</u> (1966), coterminal with <u>Empire Star</u> (1966) and <u>The Ballad of Beta-2</u> (1965), more clearly contests white male myths. As a black gay writer in SF, Delany shares women's marginal position; his protagonists are from minority cultures (Weedman, <u>Delany</u> 12), and often artists or criminals. In <u>Babel-17</u> he added a '30s template cut by another marginal writer, Stanley Weinbaum (Betty King 52-60). So Rydra Wong is not only Oriental, but a woman poet, and <u>Babel-17</u> was also the first novel with a female protagonist to win a Nebula. Preceding even Russ's Alyx into print, the first pre-feminist female SF hero was created by a man.

Delany's poet protagonists can in fact seem appropriative rather than a compliment to Hacker's admired `higher' writing (<u>Motion</u> 140). Her poems supply the novel's epigraphs, and if Wong is not a direct portrait (McCaffery, "Delany" 95), even without Hacker's critical input to Delany's early manuscripts (<u>Motion</u> 253), she clearly owes much to mere propinquity. Yet though Wong is a strong *figure* of resistance, Delany cannot bend her actions to match.

Thus during another galactic war Wong is enlisted to decode a saboteur's language, Babel 17. Delany also contests the hard-SF bent to physical sciences, here fusing post-humanist linguistic theory with extrapolation from computer languages: what-if people constructed reality through a language without concepts of "I" and "you?" Wong's search for such a speaker leads her into baroque Earth slums for a spaceship crew including "triples," or humans who work in triangular sexual relationships, and via various adventures to the Butcher. He is executive killer on a free-lance warship; he also cannot construct a sentence using "I." He speaks like "`Algol, On-Off, Fortran'" (<u>Babel-17</u> 143), computer languages. Learning Babel 17 in

turn, Wong finds herself thinking fast and cleanly as a computer. But when, having given the Butcher the concepts of "I" and "you," she enters his mind, they fuse as an autistic entity who must go home and call on Wong's male psychiatrist to separate them. The Butcher then remembers he is heir to an arms baron, and he and Wong set off to end the war. Throughout the novel Wong lacks any female support system; her spaceship has a male captain, she needs male help at crises, from the Butcher to her psychiatrist, and with this happy heterosexual ending, subsides back into the Love Plot castigated by Joanna Russ. Again, the `natural workings of the story' set women in their `proper' role.

Another repression marks the Butcher: tall, powerful, shaven-headed, wearing grafted cocks' spurs that signify lower class violence, and the "blood bruise" of a convict's mark (84), but "massively graceful" and "amberhaired" (142), he ends a sanitised upper-class heir. But his apparent criminal origins and paradoxical attractiveness mark a successor to the strong sailor Urson in Aptor and an ancestor of the criminal males who persist through Delany's *oeuvre*, culminating in Gorgik the slave Liberator in the Nevèr_on cycle. These are figures of powerful erotic significance, here channelled safely into heterosexuality.

The Motion of Light in Water (1988), a memoir of this period, suggests that bitten fingernails like the Butcher's were a sexual fetish of Delany's own (59), making Rydra a codedly masculine hero. Such ambivalence marks the relationship of feminism and the gay movement, divided by claims of feminist homophobia and gay misogyny (de Lauretis, "Queer Theory" vii-viii), linked by lesbians who share both affiliations (Cruikshank 36) and suffering common oppression, if heterosexuality is necessary to patriarchy and homophobia almost a necessary consequence (Sedgwick, Men 3). In the historical sequence of `liberations,' the gay movement succeeds and draws on Civil Rights and second-wave feminism (Cruikshank 61-2), with its quasi-official starting date the Stonewall bar riot on June 27, 1969. So enunciation of black and feminist stances precedes explicit representations of gays in Delany's work. Despite the lingering on pictures of physically massive and often criminal masculinity,

gayness is first foregrounded in the Nebula-winning story "Aye, And Gomorrah ..." published in Harlan Ellison's <u>Dangerous Visions</u> (1967).

This vignette of de-sexed spacers hustling "frelks" (121), or ordinary people wanting kinky sex, is metaphor rather than literalisation, and it constructs gay difference in normative terms, as a perversion of heterosexual desire. Despite the strong tone of anguish in the narrator's dealings with a woman frelk, the story does sketch a gay culture in a way Varley never achieves, but it is enunciation rather than affirmation of such difference, drawing on '50s stereotypes, where, as for lesbians, gay love could only end in tragedy (McCaffery, "Delany" 77). The story also rejects the fantasy of Bradley and her co-writers, where a homosexual comes to love and trust a woman. Instead the impotent narrator must leave his pickup without sex, retreating to the hustler's zone of "Flower Passage" (130); where, ironically, he finds only spacer friends. Orthodox, heterosexual and hence female desire is elided, but without making a space where same-sex desire can operate.

Other complex ambiguities surface between blacks and women in "We, in Some Strange Power's Employ, Move on a Rigorous Line" (1968). The narrator Blacky, handsome, attractive to women and proud of it, embodies the belligerent stances of Black Power, led by activists like Malcolm X, split from the Civil Rights movement in 1966, summed up in the slogan "Black is Beautiful" (Chafe 318-19). His "Gila monster" (Delany, "We" 157) crewed by "devils" and "demons" (185) wipes out an anachronistic Hell's Angels' `roost' by compulsory power connection. Blacky breaks the Angels by attracting the leader's woman, then duels with him in approved male fashion; but when he is in danger, at his command his white fellow "demon," Mabel, electrocutes the enemy. Reversing the usual racial pattern, the Angels are white but outside the system. Though he is a far cry from unobtrusive Iimmi in <u>Aptor</u>, this concession puts Blacky inside, even if the system is represented by a woman's power. Yet the text dwells on the outlaw pleasures of the roost, and closes with a nostalgic return to the site, mourning an excess, an anachronism, a social threat not comfortably destroyed.

While Delany led an active homosexual life throughout the '60s, only after Babel-17 does his writing begin to foreground such gay and black issues. He thus anticipates the academic turn toward a `men's space' by some twenty years. In SF, however, he helped found rather than colonised Women's Country; if his first work is indebted to Hacker, by the mid-'60s he was in turn "a whirlwind of critical influences" (McCaffery, "Russ" 200) for the newly-met Russ (Delany, "Alyx" 206), at a vital formative stage for feminist SF. Russ still frequently quotes Delany's SF theory, while Delany has often drawn creatively on her fiction, and continues to teach and promote it critically, a publicity much needed outside feminist circles. In the novels after Babel-17, however, his own attempt to open a `men's space' is initially made at the expense of female characters.

This appears in The Einstein Intersection (1967), his second Nebula winner, where the two stories' turn from closure and white myths becomes denial, and the central pre-occupation is `difference.' This interrogation of mythic generation (McCaffery, "Form" 27) is expressed through the troubles of aliens on an earth mysteriously cleared of humans, but inheriting their myths and reproductive pattern. As the novel repeats, neither fits. Monsters, non-viable births and mutants parallel a classic feminist strategy of re-writing patriarchal myths. Lobey, the narrator, fights a Minotaur with hands and meets a Christ born of truly immaculate conception, who stays dead when crucified. Billy the Kid and the Beatles are also invoked; but when "Kid Death" kills Lobey, Lobey resurrects himself. This offers a way to re-write the central myth of Orpheus; yet at the novel's end he has only a hope of raising either his dead Christ or his lost Eurydice. The novel flatly refuses to construct a new myth, promising only that the future will be "`different'" (159).

The text's rich mythical allusions and re-writings, its restrained demands for toleration of difference, from genetic freaks upward, its picture of a hero "ugly," brown, and calli-pygous, "a figure like a bowling pin" (7), subvert the white male patriarchal quest. Women, however, are relegated to traditional roles. The village leader La Dire is a wise woman. Friza, Lobey's Euridyce, is mute, and exists only to

instigate his quest by her death. And "the Dove," whose sexuality becomes the icon of necessary promiscuity in the equally archetypal Sin City of Branning-at-Sea, is a splendid blend of Harlow and Monroe as "the Great White Bitch." But if her attraction to "a young spade writer" is "obvious" (Gregory Corso, qtd. Einstein 110) - the white woman as the "most desirable love object in world culture" (O'Neale 141) - she remains a Monroe stereotype.

In Nova (1968), an equally rich, more daring cross of mythology and space opera, the Grail Quest becomes a flight through a sun's heart as it goes nova, to gather the economic grail that upholds galactic civilisation, the metal illyrion. This civilisation is torn between galactic corporations, represented by the quester, Lorq Von Ray, and Prince Red, a tradition-al SF villain with a black hand, or prosthetic arm (Gordon 199). Much of the text, however, comprises self-reflexive discussions on novel-writing between two ship's crew, the would-be writer Katin and the musician Mouse. Though Von Ray kills Prince and wins the illyrion, he also kills Prince's sister Ruby, his female reward, and is blinded by the nova. Having thus refused mythic closure, the novel ends in a denial of narrative itself, with Katin's plot half-sketched and a sentence incomplete.

Again, this narrative daring contrasts with the presentation of Ruby, the only major female character, a stereotypically beautiful object of desire who turns villain to support Prince. She also plays a traditional role in the homosocial triangle defined by Eve Sedgwick; adapting the work of Levi-Strauss on "the traffic in women" to the figure of the eternal triangle, Sedgwick sees women both as bartered between men and as the conduit of homo-social desire (Men 57). Such figures are sketched in Babel-17, written when Delany and Hacker were involved in a triangle with another male (Delany, Motion 391-439). But where the triangle in Nova is one of contest and violence, torn apart by the wreck of the Grail myth, its erotic form defines the central relationship in Delany's next SF novel, offering partial solution to the problem of a married bisexual male who cannot yet enunciate same-sex desire.

The City and the Closet: Delany 1975-77

Dhalgren (1975) also has a renewed female presence, drawing on feminism. It has been called "a labyrinth with many dead ends" (Fox, "Delany" 97), and read as a black writer's double vision of white society (Bray), but its form rather enacts a clash of gay, black and `women's' axes, imaging a black gay pro-feminist male's conflict in the contemporary field of radical causes (Cruikshank 71). The form draws on Delany's own dyslexia, which makes words and pages spin "on a turn-table" (qtd. McEvoy 1) and "my subway station turn up on the [wrong] side of the train" (McCaffery, "Delany" 87). Such dislocations mark the novel, from the title, maybe a minor character's surname, to the geographic and temporal dislocation of the city Bellona, here American, otherwise on Mars. Its streets and buildings shift daily. Its skies hold, briefly, two moons and a monstrous red sun. Its observer is known only as "Kid," and the narrative voices draw on a notebook that may not be his, changing format, fragmenting at last into incoherency. Written at the same time as The Female Man, this text also withholds narrative credibility: did two moons appear, or is Kid, who has been in a psychiatric ward, simply mad?

Delany is a consistently urban writer; as Utopia or dystopia, the city was to him one of four fundamental SF scenarios ("On Triton" 303), and Bellona is the ultimate urban dystopia, not a remote Elsewhere as in The Fall of the Towers, but a near future modelled on the urban decay he witnessed in Harlem (McEvoy 7), a close parallel to Heinlein's projection in I Will Fear No Evil. But Delany sees it from the young side of the generation gap. Written partly when he shared a commune "at the height of the 1960s counter-culture," (Emery 102) the novel's 879 pages are a catalogue of sexual experiment that eclipses Heinlein's, from gay oral sex to male and female gang-bangs, the apparent black rape of a white girl, and sexualised homosocial triangles.

In Bellona, where law and order have vanished, such sexuality caps a realisation of "freedom" (McEvoy 109) as envisioned by the '60s counter-culture. As its figurehead, the narrator is a practising bisexual: "`When I was fifteen or sixteen it used to bug hell out of me'," but, "`now I don't worry'" (Dhalgren 341). The central

relationship is his triangle with a blond street boy and a white girl who doesn't "`mind being a `homosexual bridge'" (790). In the most explicit scene she forms a literal conduit for homoerotic desire: "`Moving. Inside your cunt, on my dick, I can feel him'" (646). But later the narrator muses that, "If I'm starting to have to fantasize girls in order to come with guys, maybe I'm not as bisexual as I [thought]? I know: I'm a closet monosexual" (754).

In fact, while the white girl provides a black male's greatest sexual prize, for Hispanics (Carrier 217) as for blacks in the white and youth-oriented gay scene (Peterson 153; Edwards 69), a blonde youth is the acme of desire. The triangle, then, is the best of three worlds, though most of the explicit sex is between the men. Like The Female Man, however, Dhalgren portrays socially constructed types rather than essential gayness, from the `masculine' white engineer whose oral sex introduces the Kid to Bellona, to a `drag-queen' bar dancer and the young black, Spider, who visits the park nightly to "`[get] his pipes swabbed out'" (Dhalgren 799). Only around the narrator does this register of positive homosexualit(ies) waver into ambivalence.

The many women characters form another register, owing much to early feminism. Though Kid's girl Lanya approaches the Heinlein or Koontz type of `liberated' woman, always willing and sexually adventurous, she is also shrewd and intelligent, and most kindly treated of the white women, who lose against powerful blacks like Dragon Lady, leader of a "scorpion" street-gang, or Madame Brown, a lesbian psychiatrist whose colour, in an echo of Starship Troopers, is only confirmed at the end. The renewed women's presence accompanies a radical feminist assertion of female sexuality, as when the text adds a female gang-bang of two men to a male gang-bang that the woman later claims as "`*mine*'" (758). The male session, however, is described in minute detail, while the women's is a brief second-hand account. Women also form the literal margins of the novel. Entering Bellona, Kid meets women who, the reader learns, formed an all-woman commune; but this is a Utopia, site of the female gang-bang, source of birth-control pills, its inhabitants speaking but invisible, the house only seen first-hand when it is deserted, presaging the ruin that strikes

Bellona at the novel's `close.'

Nonetheless, the novel's key mythic demolition rests on a feminist-developed assertion of female desire. June is daughter to a stereotypic middle-class housewife, bent ludicrously on "making a home" for a white nuclear family amid the city's ruin. This subverts the values of order, reason and rigidity associated with whites in colonial writing (Ching-Liang Low "White" 84-5) and mainstream cinema (Dyer, "White" 7-8). But June wrecks the central motif of the most mythicised "taboo coupling" (Gaines, "Competing" 31- 2) in American culture, where "at the precise intersection of domination and sexuality is the issue of rape" (Sedgwick, Men 8-9) - that is, black-white rape. It is around this image that the discourse of the Ku Klux Klan is built, with the need to `protect white women' operating to conceal the mechanics of white male power over both white women and black men. It justifies lynching (Jacquelyn Hall 344-47), and upholds the myths of prodigious and animal black sexuality. Conversely, black men have desired white women, "I'd jump over ten nigger bitches for one white woman" (Eldridge Cleaver, qtd. Sidonie Smith 115), found their desire degrading (105), and used it, as rape, for a counter-declaration of power: "It delighted me that I was defying and trampling upon the white man's law ... that I was defiling his women" (106-07).

Both these interlocking accounts ignore the potential of *women's* desire. In Dhalgren the old image of "the biggest, blackest buck in the world" publicly raping "some little blonde-headed seventeen-year-old girl" (79) crowns Bellona's initial collapse. But the girl *desires* the encounter; which then, of course, can no longer be called rape. Worse still, June seeks her attacker, "circling and circling" (235), killing a brother over his pornographic poster image, wrecking the family. This white nightmare of errant female desire betokens apocalypse, for if June makes contact, "`Blam! The sky gonna go dark and the lightning gonna go roll over the night ... and buildings gonna come toppling ... and people gonna be running and screaming in the streets!'" (237) The close implies that such contact has been achieved: lightnings play as the city, the image of white patriarchal society, literally collapses, and only Kid and some

of the street-gang blacks escape.

The obverse of this mythical intersection is the black man "George Harrison," next in the sequence of erotically powerful males, and a more complex site of competing desires. He first appears in a pornographic wall poster:

> a muscular black ... against some indistinct purple background, legs wide, one fist before his bared thigh, one against his bare hip ... [His] bared genitals were huge. (47)

This new and powerful black presence invokes the nudes of Robert Mapplethorpe, a site of critical contests: are they white exploitation and objectification of black male bodies, the perpetuation of myths about black sexuality, or destabilisation of heterosexual white canons? (Mercer 2-15) And who can look at them? (Gaines, "Competing" 29-31) Here George is the object of a white gay gaze, but he is also at the focus of June's white female gaze. As his image proliferates, dominating the city, it becomes a statement of black revolution, as does his appropriation of a white rock-star's name, and the naming of the ephemeral second moon after him.

Delany both mythicises this new god and humanises him as a speaking subject, straight but sexually tolerant (Dhalgren 238), complicit, like Mapplethorpe's models (Mercer 10), in the poster making, giving Lanya his side of the `rape'(233-35). He heads the range of black characters, which again avoids the danger of a single mouthpiece or stereotype (Julien and Mercer 5). Delany has remarked that his work shares "the virulent anti-white critique that informs all aware black writing in America today" (McCaffery, "Delany" 74). So both Dhalgren and the pornographic novel The Tides of Lust (1973) display an increased and assertive black presence, and in both texts, "black potency ... is called upon to overturn order" (Fox, "Politics" 54), here with George as its figurehead.

In Dhalgren this accompanies a consistent devaluing of whites. The eminent poet who praises the Kid's work is finally dismissed as a "*gassy Nautilus*" (425). Roger Calkins, the invisible newspaper editor and *de facto* city governor, is afraid of George (538). The white family cheat Kid of his wages. Occasionally the critique rises, like

The Female Man, into open rage, as when the black activist Paul Fenster, usually given only lukewarm approval, attacks the gay white engineer. Being gay

> `is a whole area of culture and the arts you fall into just by falling into bed ... Being black is an automatic cut-off from that same area unless you do some fairly fancy toe-in-the-door work ... You ... haven't wanted a black soul for three hundred years. What the hell ... makes you think you can appropriate it now?'(327)

As the passage admits, however, being black and being gay do not coincide. In the '60s, recuperated black identity was synonymous with black manhood: Eldridge Cleaver scorned James Baldwin for homosexuality, a failure of masculinity equated with "reject[ing his] African heritage" (qtd. Sidonie Smith 113). Black gays must still choose between a black identity that represses their sexuality, or a gay identity that exposes them to racism (Peterson 150-55), and gay and lesbian black leaders usually remain closeted (Cruikshank 94). Here, though Delany depicts blacks from George and Dragon Lady to Paul Fenster and the black woman who attacks George for raping June, Kid is half "Red Indian," again figuring an unresolved gay/black ambivalence.

The story of a wandering narrator who has had a break-down, lost his name, been involved with a white woman and joins a street-gang, does draw on the `black trajectory' outlined in autobiographies by Cleaver, Malcolm X, Claude Brown and Horace Cayton. All had breakdowns, as did Delany himself. Brown ran with a street-gang in Harlem, where Delany grew up, as Kid does in Bellona. And the search for identity that pervades black male autobiographies is the focus of Kid's time in Bellona. Horace Cayton, who, like Delany, came from a black middle-class family, had a breakdown in which he too literally could not remember his name (qtd. Sidonie Smith 151).

In the end, Dhalgren cannot orient along either a black or gay axis; rather the novel appears broken across the two great fractures in American society, those of race and hetero/ homosexuality (Sedgwick, Men 10; 3). Even as the re-shaped myth of black-white rape remodels June, like much white feminism it elides the black, sexual,

speaking woman subject (Spillers 78-83; Radford-Hill 159-67), and like George's name, it re-inserts all three into the white heterosexual system that, like lesbians, they cannot get `outside.' So when the city/ system falls, Kid and the novel collapse with it. Escaping, he deserts his lovers, and language itself fragments: "In or on, I'm not quite where I go or what to go now but I'll climb up on the and wonder about Mexico if she, come, waiting" (878). The end of the last sentence is displaced to open the text, so that Bellona's dying becomes a Mobius strip, eternally replayed.

Dhalgren reached print with relative ease compared to Russ's work, and has been Delany's most successful commercial novel, selling nearly a million copies in the US alone (Clute and Nicholls 317). In SF it won high praise (Weedman 14) but also fierce criticism, and a bare Nebula nomination. Rather than the `difficult' language, this may be because it failed audience expectations for more Nova-type space opera, and, perhaps more importantly, did not give Bellona a rational, scientific explanation (McEvoy 110-12). Hence non-SF readers form 90% of its audience (102), and there have been repeated doubts that this postmodern cyborg is SF at all (Prince 28; Budrys, qtd. Weedman, "Delany" 14).

Both Nova and Dhalgren have been called central or pivotal to Delany's *oeuvre*, either as forcing or exhibiting radical change (McEvoy 78-9; McCaffery, "Delany" 72). But against the '60s line of white myths and narrative re-solutions first modified, then uneasily left open, then denied, Dhalgren appears a terminal destruction, wrecking both myths and the system where they operate. In contrast, The Female Man is both dystopic and productively Utopian. Feminism ennabled women like Russ and Adrienne Rich, as it united gay and femin-ist trajectories in a political/sexual coming out; but where lesbian theory and fiction form a `women's continuum' with feminism (Sedgwick, Men 2-3; Dyer, Now 230), the hetero/ homosexual fracture is replicated in the lack of a `men's movement'. So for Delany the dystopic nadir of Dhalgren must precede production of even a "heterotopia." It is then a sequence's end rather than its pivot; the new sequence opens with Triton (1977), which, like gay theory and activism (Bristow 4; Dyer, Now 231; Cruikshank 36), leans

on feminism as it begins to construct as well as destroy.

Triton is set in 2112 on a moon of Saturn whose city, Tethys, is part of the Outer Satellite Federation, at war with older societies on Earth and Mars. To Tom Moylan it is the apogee of the critical Utopias, escaping tradition to decentre Utopian society and activists and observe the "impact of the revolutionary system on the individual," "through a negative lens" (Demand 162). Though its final aim is to preserve individual "subjective reality" (Delany, Triton 269), Tethys is urban, sometimes dirty, with a dubiously omniscient government, and rife with odd religious sects. But where sexual freedom collapses in Bellona's destruction, victory in war, though at enormous human cost, preserves in Tethys more than a Utopian glimpse of a sexually free and tolerant world.

Like gay theory, this vision is infused with feminism. Firstly, it shares with Varley's work the ennabling '70s use of the literalised gender topos. To be happy on Triton, where sex and sexual orientation can both be engineered, "all you have to do is know what you want" (116). These options extend heterosexual fluidity to a plethora of lifestyles, from clubs where eleven-year-old girls seek fifty-five year old men, a tolerance of child sexuality found only among pro-sex feminists (Gayle Rubin, "Thinking Sex" 290-91), to gay or lesbian co-ops, hetero or homosexual communes, and an unlicensed sector without written law. A specific feminist debt marks the image of a white heterosexual male with one sagging teat from wet-nursing his commune's children (Triton 282). So Piercy literalises equality in Woman on the Edge of Time, where artificially bred children are suckled by both men and women; and both extrapolate directly from Shulamith Firestone's The Dialectic of Sex (1972), which based women's `liberation' on escape from reproductive constraints.

The women of Tethys also embody early feminist visions of social and sexual liberty; Audri is a `boss' at work and a mother in a lesbian commune. Sam appears a big, handsome, exuberant black male, sexually potent, but also a highly intelligent Government eminence, switching between an all-male co-op and a heterosexual commune with a white "harem." But Sam was once a washy blonde lesbian whose

white objects of desire all wanted six-foot blacks. When black and feminist axes thus conflict, as Fox notes of Delany's work ("Politics" 53), again the black *woman* disappears. Such problems are eluded with The Spike, renowned white "micro-theater" playwright, discerning bisexual lover, at ease with her body as in any social situation, and capable of a resounding No at need. Her intelligence, independence, creativity and flexibility are a strong contrast to Bron, the protagonist.

Bron is an alternative '70s feminist project, a devastating critique of the white male heterosexual. Delany's second unsympathetic protagonist, he is a "six-foot, blonde iceberg" (<u>Triton</u> 253), the epitome of white masculinity, who attracts both male and female desire. But as is noted at length (Moylan, <u>Demand</u> 176-84; Massé, "All" 53-63), in Tethys Bron is "a closet sexist who can't take the pace" (Hacker, Introduction, <u>Female Man</u> xxii). His unhappiness echoes white male problems in the '70s, losing ground in a society where women rioted in apparent sexual, social and theoretical liberation. In contrast, Bron parodies masculine virtues. Sexually rigid, obsessed with appearances, socially inhibited, he avoids friendships and sees love as possession. "`I love you'," he tells The Spike. "`Throw up the theater'" (<u>Triton</u> 209). He wants all her attention, yet ignores an account of her deepest love affair. And after trying to rescue some women during war damage, Bron combines his worst fault, his liar's remodelling of events to his vantage, with a heroic enunciation of the male virtue/need to be "alone":

> `Well, I just guess women, or people with large female components to their personalities, are too social to have that necessary aloneness to act outside society. But ... we need that particularly *male* aloneness ... so that the rest of the species can survive.' (257)

This is hegemonic Western masculinity rampant, selfishly refusing connection, making its flaw a virtue, parroting the discourse of masculinity endorsed by <u>The Stand</u>. But unlike Koontz, King, or even Varley, Delany refuses narrative solutions. Bron, the seventy-year-old gay Lawrence tells him, is not the great white hero but "a pervert," "a logical sadist" looking for a "logical masochist" (253-54). And since women have not

long been treated as human, they are "`a little less willing to put up with certain kinds of shit than men'" (253). So, after a "kiss-off" ("On <u>Triton</u>" 298) letter from The Spike, Bron makes the ultimate male sacrifice. To ensure such males an understanding woman somewhere, he becomes a woman himself.

This sex change is less happy than Fox's. Despite abject pleas, The Spike, and Sam, his first choice of lover, reject him. No others appear. Eventually Bron refuses an offer from Audri, who really loves him (313), and in the process, pretends he rejected The Spike. But this lie "he finally hears himself speak" (313). The novel closes with an equivocal dream where he tells his male self, "I shall destroy you ... As *you* destroyed *me*!" (<u>Triton</u> 328), but after which he fears dawn "would never come" (329-30). Presumably, Bron must now face his lies and remodel himself, or his personality will collapse.

Bron may be Delany's *mea culpa* gesture to feminism. Like Varley's, the sex-change, so much more accomplished than Heinlein's, can also be seen as a pro-feminist man's wish to share the dizzily expanding imaginative space of '70s feminism. To a gay male, this expansion might evoke longing rather than threat; to a gay black writer, Bron can mean considerably more.

Firstly, Bron presages an exit from the dilemma evaded in <u>Dhalgren</u>, isolated by Peterson, and reiterated in <u>Light in Water</u>: "A black man...? / A gay man...?" (328; 335; 368) Unlike <u>Dhalgren</u>, <u>Triton</u> has only one black character. Bron, then, is a step toward a gay-black identity. But the novel also resists the cult of white masculinity evoked by gay liberation, which brought '70s "clone culture" with its over-muscular, over-`hung' image, and its coded, anonymous, non-stop sex (Levine 76-79). Instead <u>Triton</u> shares feminist critiques (Edwards 47) and anticipates gay resistance, from a '70s American lament that, "Most of the time ... [tricks] don't even say hello ... next time you see them" (qtd. Levine 78), to a '90s British academic tired of men who cannot "*relate emotionally and sexually to another person at the same time*" (Edwards 1).

Hence <u>Triton</u> is a passage through Women's Country at a far deeper level than Varley's. Combining the '80s academic initiatives, it absorbs feminist work on women,

then uses it to construct and critique black and gay men's issues. Yet though Delany has produced an Elsewhere of sexual tolerance, Bron is not an `out' gay. Another explicit feminist intervention had to open the gate into a space of acknowledged same-sex desire.

Undoing The Collar: Delany 1978-1989

As Bron's original was a Russ character (Moylan, <u>Demand</u> 176), a preface for <u>The Adventures of Alyx</u> directly inspired the Nevèryon cycle (McCaffery, "Delany" 94). Where <u>Triton</u> is in the future, these tales concern the end of slavery in an empire on the margin of pre-history, technically in the sword-and-sorcery sub-genre. And where Kid could "articulate ... social margins" (qtd. McEvoy 120), in this "despised younger cousin" of SF (McCaffery, "Delany" 91) used for his first erotic fantasies (<u>Motion</u> 40-41), Delany created a series that is all margin. Here his deep involvement with postmodern theory flowers in a narrative praxis that can affiliate the conflicting axes of sexuality, history and race, to produce a new (form of) mythology.

Though postmodern concepts like Derrida's "archetrace" of writing and Lacan's "absent fathers" form outcrops of content (Delany, <u>Nevèryona</u> 416; 515), as Kathleen Spencer notes, Derrida also provides a central narrative strategy, the destabilising of hierarchical binary oppositions like man/woman, fact/fiction, text/appendix ("Deconstructing" 74-75). This produces firstly a complex and cumulative blurring of margins, as readers' comments mingle with prefaces and appendices by "K. Leslie Steiner" and "Professor S. Kermit," personae who wrangle over a "Codex" written before Linear-B, on which the series is supposedly based (Delany, <u>Tales</u> 9-22). As Spencer also notes, these ground the series in `fact,' then subvert the effect because they are (partly) fiction (84). This enacts Derridean ideas of supplementarity and intertextuality: no text can be independent, or have an `outside.'

The four books also perform the deconstructive concept of decentring. Like an SF future history, they refuse linear temporal progression, a sequential mythos, or a single hero, circling instead past the figure of Gorgik, the slave Liberator:

> a towering, black-haired gorilla of a youth, eyes permanently reddened from rockdust, a scar from a pickax flung in a barracks brawl spilling one brown cheekbone. His hand were huge and rough-palmed, his foot soles like cracked leather. (<u>Tales</u> 41)

Here is a clear heir to the Butcher, in a line running back to sword-and-sorcery "homoerotic fantasies" (<u>Motion</u> 40-41). But his presence does not link tales as does Alyx's. Instead minor characters become protagonists and once-major characters flit through other stories, forming a vast chain of people the reader knows; until with a repetition of "The Tale of Gorgik" that opens the series, it circles back to its centreless end.

The series further denies generic expectations, from self-reflexive characters' comments and "gritty realism" (Spenser, "Deconstructing" 71), to individual tales' refusal of climax and resolution. "The Tale of Gorgik" traces his youth and enslavement, his release and time at the Empress's Court; it then truncates Booker T. Washington's black success story, closing a brief account of later years with the remark that Gorgik was, for his time, "a civilized man" (<u>Tales</u> 96). Delany also blurs Here and There, most strongly in "The Tale of Plagues and Carnivals" which matches AIDS with a plague in Nevèryon. As the text seesaws between the two, a New York acquaintance sees the Liberator in a movie theater (<u>Flight</u> 464); and the book ends when `Delany' meets Gorgik's lieutenant Noyeed, flown on a dragon "across never" to the New York shore (475). Such `high' theoretical elements bring multiple liberations when coupled with `low' elements of fantasy, a term central to discussion of Nevèryon, whose polysemy crystallises about the iron collar that is firstly the sign of a slave.

Fantasy was the series' first bookshelf marker. But in Nevèryon slaves are made as well as born, and the normative skin colour is brown: whites are barbaric even when free. The fixed black/white racial dichotomy of historical American slavery thus dissolves, amid a `fantasy,' prefigured in <u>Triton</u>, of reversed racial superiority. So Gorgik, a slave freeing slaves, replaces white Civil War icons with a brown marginal hero, himself marginalised by narrative structure in the first book, and by the second literally mythicised - in Derridean terms, his `meaning' varied or disseminated - amid

conflicting tales of his behaviour, his lovers and lieutenants. The study of myth's generation in The Einstein Intersection becomes self-reflexive generation of a marginal mythology.

To Gorgik as Liberator the collar assumes double political significance, for he is pledged to wear it until every slave is free. But the cycle is also Delany's literary coming out, since Gorgik is his first primarily homosexual central character: on the margin of pre-history, `gay' in its proper historicised sense does not apply. And by the series' third tale, the collar is a sexual fetish. Free Gorgik buys a small white slave of his own for sex, but "if one of us does not wear it'," he explains, "`I will not be able to do anything'" (Tales 196).

Here `fantasy' may signify firstly in the psychoanalytic sense, as "a setting" for desire (Laplanche and Pontalis 26). In coupling Delany's erotic fantasy figure to the senses of bondage in black and S/M contexts, however, the collar evokes a `low' side of postmodernism. Biographical work on Foucault has begun to stress the relevance of his gay S/M activity to texts like Discipline and Punish (James Miller 251-84). If Nevèryon's Symbolic order comes from Derrida, then in Kobena Mercer's phrase (1), Foucault shares its homoerotic Imaginary. A description of Gorgik's "five or six loose belts" that "slant his hips at different angles," one attached to "a net of mail that went between his legs ... to pouch the rougher and darker genital flesh" (Delany, Nevèryona 63) also precisely fits Mapplethorpe's 1977 photograph, "Patrice." In the series' sexual fantasies, theoretical and aesthetic productions of gay and postmodern culture intersect.

Though gay and feminist communities are sharply divided over S/M, pro-S/M gay theorists do agree with lesbians like Gayle Rubin that S/M is as much about consent or indeed, "total trust" (Edwards 75-82), as about pain and degradation. So the collar, willingly donned, becomes a sign of slavery `conquered,' but also of liberated transgressive sexuality, and then of a doubly transgressive same-sex desire. Russ sees women's repression internalised as sexual cues in K/S stories: Kirk and Spock agonise over sex because women have sexualised delay ("Pornography" 86-87). So here,

whatever Delany's personal preferences, the sign of black historical repression becomes a facilitator of desire. And in this softened Elsewhere Delany can `come out' to confront and remodel - mythicise, fantasize - the central trauma of Afro-American history, which his forward-looking SF has resolutely suppressed.

Like gay liberation, this is a '70s project, a historical recuperation inspired by Black Power, most famously in Alex Haley's <u>Roots</u> (1976). Delany's work also contests an underside of popular '60s fiction, the white "racist fantasies" (Mercer 11) initiated by Kyle Onstott's <u>Mandingo</u> (1959). Though read subversively by gays and white women, texts like <u>Black Stud</u> (Tralins, 1969), <u>Black Ivory</u> (Rockman, 1972), and <u>Rampage</u> (Tralins, 1969) can perniciously reinforce hostile constructions of blacks. They are animals out of primeval Africa, only fit to fight and fuck. There is repeated stripping and whipping of black male bodies, invariably massive, splendid and well-hung, for whom the fascinated white male gaze admits suppressed homoeroticism. The genre also reinforces the asymmetry of taboo couplings: white men use black women at will; white women who couple with black men are branded sluts and the men are terribly destroyed. Fox critiques the S/M in Nevèryon as a "thoroughly repulsive... psychosexual parody of a relationship... involving large masses of people... under conditions of the most overt compulsion" ("Politics" 52). But in Nevèryon, Onstott's stereotypes collapse, exploitable historical accuracy is nullified, and gay S/M transgression makes heterosexual taboos risible.

These liberations do have a cost: the highest is the progressive marginalising of women as the series' erotic and narrative focus narrows on gay characters, gay tragedy like the AIDS outbreak, and the space of same-sex encounters at the "Bridge of Lost Desire." In the first book, Gorgik is balanced by the tale of Old Venn, a female genius with a real male mathematician's name. Venn's protegee links her to Madam Keyne, a rising capitalist in the next tale, which brings in Raven, a true Amazon from the matriarchy of the "Western crevasse," who wields a two-bladed sword, relates a cosmogony where "`man" is the broken mate of woman (<u>Tales</u> 225-34), and plays heroic rescuer.

Rather than the first gynocentric reworking of a "male fantasy" (Spencer, "Decon-structing" 68), Raven is sixteen years behind Alyx, and four behind the first women's sword-and-sorcery anthology, Jessica Salmonson's Amazons! (1979) Her culture may be a savage mirror reversal of ours (81), but it follows Russ on female violence, counter to strengthening essentialist attacks on men. Delany signed the "pro-sex" petition at Barnard (Vance 452), a year before publication of Nevèryona (1983), aligning himself with FACT, but also with Segal, Denfeld, and much later feminist opinion. It also aligns him with Varley. Even without a heterosexual investment, for Delany as for the gay movement, Women's Country was a support/resource not readily renounced.

Nevertheless, its relinquishment appears as increasing female exclusion in Delany's later '80's work. Whether following Kristeva's view that `woman' is a purely positional concept (Moi 163-64), or to avoid appropriation, Raven's culture remains a Utopian image, outside narrative, while she dwindles to stories and glimpses whose images of warrior potential frame Nevèryona. Yet the female protagonist finds the exclusive women's space of Madam Keyne's house as uncongenial as Raven's matriarchy. By Flight from Nevèryona (1985), though Raven's troop rescues the protagonist of "The Tale of Fog and Granite," he can only feel "empty" (139), "terrified" (140) of her "dispossessing power" (141). In "The Tale of Plagues and Carnivals," the longest coherent narrative is of a man's search for traces of the male inventor Belham; Venn's fame is wholly erased. And in Return to Nevèryon (1989), the only major woman's role is as a traditional object of male desire.

This exclusion carries into Stars in My Pocket Like Grains of Sand (1984), about the love, in a galactic civilisation, of a small blonde aristocrat for a tall dark ex-slave. Stars uses the '80s topos of the Net, or global communication, and a postmodern narrative praxis; hence "knowledgeable" SF readers reject the text (Bartter 337), and attempts to read it outside a cultural context grate. Separating the lovers to prevent "Cultural Fugue" may utilise quantum particle theory (334), but it provides a metaphor for the effect of accepting gays in present society. Stars also parodies

homophobia with a ban on tall-short love affairs, and bows to feminism with "woman" as the generic noun. But "he" denotes desire (271); and portraits of a disapproving nominally female aristocrat (421-25) and a biological woman who tries to enter a gay sex "run" (373-76) emphasise the bent to female exclusion. Read against the '80s essentialist/separatist ascendancy, this appears motivated from both gay and feminist sides.

The women most often silenced in Delany's *oeuvre* speak in the work of Octavia Butler, the major black woman SF writer. First published in 1970, she anticipated popular black texts like Jewelle Gomez's vampire novel The Gilda Stories (1991) and Jewell Parker Rhodes' Voodoo Dreams (1993), whose heroes also reclaim Afro-American women's historic-al experience. White men's right to black women's bodies as "a cornerstone of patriarchal power" (Jacquelyn Hall 342), a sign of black male subjugation, a source of slave-power and sexual pleasure (Omolade 362-63), is documented outside Onstott's fantasies. But black women's "culture of resistance has ensured the survival of our race and our community" (Radford-Hill 168), and by the 1960s, black women could resist black men as they had learnt to resist white men, "internalizing a reputation for toughness and strength, for resiliency and resolve" (Omolade 373).

This "myth" of the black "matriarch and wild woman" (373) fits Butler's Amber in Patternmaster (1976), who helps her man overthrow a patriarch but will not marry him, and who he perceives as "really dangerous" (169). In Wild Seed (1980) the twisted chain of black/white procreation traces the Patternist dynasty back to Africa, to an `immortal' male and a black woman who survives his body-swapping on a reproductive trail as tortuous as anything in Horner. As Mary Salvaggio points out (21), Butler's women *are* survivors, as black women saw themselves (Radford-Hill 168; Omolade 370). A black woman's view of carrying white children reverses the usual alien-human equation in Dawn: Xenogenesis I (1987), where the hero Lilith agrees to bear an alien child in hope of saving humanity. More vividly, in "Bloodchild" (1984) a codedly feminine boy hero learns that he must carry the young of his alien

foster-parent; otherwise both `parasites' and humans will become extinct. Like Bradley's, Butler's heroes operate within women's biological parameters; like Bradley, Butler writes of women "as they are;" but though her women speak from a history of oppression that makes compromise a survivor's bitter necessity, they can envisage a better future bought with their sacrifice.

That Delany's work elides such black female subjects may signal respect for a voice he refuses to colonise; less consciously, it may perpetuate black men's noted preference for white women (Gaines, "Competing" 31; Peterson 158). Delany himself married one. By a bitter irony, this bias would be reinforced by involvement with second-wave feminism, whose elision of black women is also amply documented.

Delany's early pro-feminist views, his interactions with Hacker and Russ and his attempts to contest literary tradition, make him less a migrant than a co-founder of Women's Country in SF. From `men's space' he continues, in fiction like "The Tale of Plagues and Carnivals," or critical writing like "Street Talk/Straight Talk" (1991) to make room for women's view. Yet he also parallels gay theorists in his reliance on feminism to break ground against heterosexuality. When the axis of race crosses this `gay trajectory,' as in Dhalgren, it is feminist input that re-initiates a Utopian productiveness. Publication dates affirm Delany's remark that his work reflects the concerns of American culture (McCaffery, "Delany" 76) rather than trail-breaking. To white feminism, however, he is a true "*Compagnon du Route*" (Jardine, Men 54): though he is at home in Women's Country, his road goes on, using his discoveries there, toward an Elsewhere of his own.

The Road Past Women's Country

If Varley and Delany have not found feminism so threatening as many male writers, their interactions show the complexity of a positive relationship. There is firstly the struggle to re-work literary tradition, shared, as Le Guin and McKee Charnas' comments show, by men and women. In SF, for both men and women, this largely meant entering the Women's Country of feminist imaginative space. The emphasis on women's subjective experience problematises such debts, and as

feminism evolved, men found Women's Country less and less welcoming. A second problem is the intersection of racial, class and sexual axes. If Varley's heterosexuality limits him against Delany, Delany's feminism disadvantages his black women; and even for Delany, Women's Country is not, ultimately, a home. Yet if men cannot belong there, both writers demonstrate that it offers a spacious imaginative resource.

- Section 11 -

A LETTER: <u>DARK STAR</u>/<u>DIAMOND MASK</u>

For Marilyn Hacker

You are the silent third

In their stars' bright embrace; on whose eccentric orbit

Absence your passing maps - Persephone in eclipse.

Married 1961; 1974, divorced.

Those thirteen years, where were you

While he wrote and talked and surfed?

Babel-17, Nova, Dhalgren,

Triton, the Nebulas; the New Wave his Bombora,

Christmas with Tom Disch, the Brunners at breakfast,

Derrida, Foucault, Baudrillard,

London, Istanbul, Greece.

Your name (at last) last in Dhalgren's dedication.

"A number of useful suggestions" in Neveryona's thanks-for-the-idea

Last.

And - once - (in "Shadows") falling asleep with you:

"like teaspoons,"

With "the baby" trampling "the small of [his] back."

Iva Alyxandra. Your carrying, his get. A mutated hero's

Name from Joanna Russ.

He dedicated Iva half Neveryona;

You gave her Separations:

"Girls and boys I'll never/ bear you/

crystallize/ behind my knees," -

"You mean to hurt, and you are hurting me,

not drafting texts on what is good and right" -

Your pain comes off the pages

Tearing holes in art.

Where was he when you wrote that?

Back cruising public toilets in New York?

And where was she, those thirteen years

They busted the Old Guard? They wrote, they worked, they talked,

She's in five dedications. She cites his thoughts,

He explicates her work. And yet

You gave your child her hero. You gave The Female Man its preface,

You wrote its exegesis - Quark, Chrysalis -

Nine years after, you write again, to her:

"Carissima Joannissima,"

And speak of being solitary, yet contented,

to her, "once almost my lover,/ happily my friend."

Where were you both, then, when you won a prize for Presentation,

The year your marriage came apart? Was it the year

You lost a man and took a woman in his place?

Oh, incestuous, paparazz' temptation

To grub it up, to hound old hurt and scandal,

Into biography's smut -

Was the holocaust fire or ice?

Now I mouth the words

In library dust, in another country,

Twice a decade past. Fossils, lost forms, the die gone.

What were you trying to say?

The three of you, setting word-traps

For all anfractuous reality,

What did you mean to catch?

In The Jewel-Hinged Jaw, when he brings people

Shouldering through the theory's foam,

When New York rises in Neveryona,

And at the Hudson's edge, Noyeed encamps?

Or with Jael the killer, or diving into marriage,

The fifties tragedy, silent lesbian,

Trapped Jeannine? Or giving benison

To The Little Dirty Girl?

"It's Important To Believe"...

That you were there, that your words mattered -

Planet to Space, Pilot to Navigators,

"One road is closed/ to women and conspirators" -

"Orpheus and animus,/ drawing back to journeys now,

leaving me on shores behind" -
Your trophies deck his pages -
Now, in the '80s, you're an ideal reader -
But where is your own wealth?

If the personal's political
Is there person in politics?
And in the printed words, the writing,
Is either left? Is it no less a masquerade
Than Joyce's legendary author,
Invisible, behind creation, paring fingernails?
The more you write, the more I write back,
The further apart the words push us.
Our "I" is William Wordsworth's,
Old auto-mythographer, first emotional stripper,
Original simulacra-maker. And thus already spake
The Deconstructor: meaning, intellect, life,
Forever deferred. Ever discarnate,
Word out of flesh.
You, her, him, me,
Silent or speaking, we remain
Dark Star/Diamond Mask.

Anima to animus and Orpheus,
Turn back. Build us another place.
Dark star, defy the Lord of Razor Makers,
Cry that we meet, however we make our faces,
That we can cross, mould and remould our traces,
Never us/not-us, paths ever/never crossing,
Paradox's unsolution, writing, reading, writing
In your, her, his, my, our
This transitional space.

- Section 12 -

C.J. CHERRYH AND LARRY NIVEN: <u>THE DESCENT OF ANANSI</u>

In West African mythology, the spider-Prometheus Ananse intercedes between men and gods, invents agriculture, and is finally punished for his tricks (Bastide 531). In Larry Niven and Steven Barnes' <u>The Descent of Anansi</u> (1982), he is feminised as a space shuttle (always "she") saved from sabotage by an elegant engineering SF deployment of the `thread' or wonder-cable it carries down from an orbital research facility. The idea comes from the woman shuttle pilot, who thus evokes Spider *Woman*, the Pueblo Indians' Thinking Creatrix (Weigle 346), a figure revived by feminist myth-makers (Caputi 426). In this chapter the `descent' of Anansi/e from male to female, from myth to SF, from god to mechanical ruse, becomes a figure for descent from sophisticates, experimentalists and trail-breakers like Russ, Delany and Le Guin, to the interactions of feminism with centrestream writers like Larry Niven and C.J. Cherryh.

"Centrestream" sites these writers generically between experimentalists and politicised writers like Delany and Russ, between the extremes of hard and soft SF, and the poles of fame and neglect. Neither are academic favourites. Both are white, presumably heterosexual, and remain biographically obscure. Unlike all the preceding writers, neither has openly espoused, engaged, or attempted to explore the opportunities offered by feminism. Yet both have dealt with its cultural and literary presence while producing considerable SF *oeuvres*, winning several awards, and remaining consistently on chainstore shelves.

Larry Niven's is the most reactive SF *oeuvre* in the study. "[O]ne of our finest practitioners of hard science fiction" (Finholt and Carr 461), he typifies `right-wing' male writers like Gregory Benford, who put ideas before characters, hard before soft science, and range in politics from libertarian to reactionary. Pro-technology and often hawkish, he represents the white centre on (minimised) issues of race, gender and sexuality. His work comes closest to a Male Gothic or conservative academic response to feminism: exclusion for as long as possible, followed by fairly open resistance, then lip service or uneasy acquiescence with previous shifts in the habitus.

No Sex Please, We're Astounding: Niven's Early Fiction

Niven's '60s fiction is both classic hard SF and something of an anachronism. Following Heinlein, he constructed a future history, Known Space, with a dystopic near-future where convicted parking offenders may be disassembled for state organ-banks ("The Jigsaw Man," 1967), and a far-future diaspora where human star-colonies buy FTL from aliens (A Gift From Earth, 1968). Early stories like "The Coldest Place" (1964) and "Becalmed in Hell" (1965) optimistically endorse space-flight - a man on Venus by 1975 - extrapolate rigorously from hard science, and turn on ingenious engineering solutions. His plentiful aliens are usually hostile and can out-gun humanity. Blacks are non-existent. Women and gays are disposed of in one story, "How the Heroes Die" (1966), where women on Mars could have stopped a man killing a gay who propositions him, then an avenging brother, then himself. The gay is "little loss" (57). The homophobic violence goes unquestioned, while women, echoing a particularly chauvinist scientific proposal of the '50s (Richardson 49-51) would be a mere comfort facility for the `real' men. The other stories omit women, but in novels like The World of Ptavvs (1966) and A Gift From Earth they fill traditional marginal roles as sex objects, helpers or rescuees, and possessors of psychic powers.

At the time Heinlein had already turned from hard SF with Stranger in A Strange Land (1961), while as early as Childhood's End (1953), Arthur Clarke was constructing the enormously superior benevolent aliens of 20001: A Space Odyssey (1968), and Herbert formulated the ethos of conservation in Dune (1966). Sex-taboo breaking was at its height, as Delany's Babel-17 produced its linguistic speculations and Oriental female hero, while Le Guin and Russ founded feminist SF, and Pamela Zoline confounded the New Wave with "The Heat Death of the Universe." In this context, Niven's work appears an anachronistic retention of the approaches and enthusiasms of `ghetto' SF.

Women enter Niven's short fiction with "Cloak of Anarchy" (1972), where sabotage of police surveillance in a "Free Park" offers a micro-version of Dhalgren,

seen from the white centre. If authoritarian force fails, rape will signal civilisation's collapse. Men run wild, women are victims, or like the narrator's girlfriend, turn to shivering protectees. Again, there is no mention of race or alternate sexuality, or thought of women defending themselves, in sharp contrast to coterminal figures like Delany's Dragon Lady, or the women of "When It Changed." The view endures in suppressed hostility and fantasies of restored male ascendancy in Niven and Pournelle's Lucifer's Hammer (1977), and its mirror-twin, The Stand.

By 1970, with The Left Hand of Darkness a Nebula-winner, Heinlein had engaged the gender topos, Bradley had taken up Le Guin's lead and Russ was writing The Female Man. Niven's Hugo and Nebula award-winning Ringworld (1970), however, left women in roles fixed since Frankenstein. Ringworld is an engineering SF *tour de force*, the precursor of Titan, that postulates an artifact world, a ring 600 million miles around. Its explorers include Louis Wu, a thoroughly assimilated `Oriental' hero, a feline "Kzin" alien, and "`the girl'": "she who stands for ... that half of humanity" otherwise backgrounded (McKee Charnas, "Woman" 103). This `girl' was bred for a `lucky' gene. But "when a woman has extrahuman abilities, they are the problem" (Allen and Paul 171), and the luck of Teela Brown could "make a hash of all the laws of probability" (Niven, Ring World 263). It emerges that the entire Ringworld expedition, three species' manipulation, stupendous technology and much male tribulation, occurred just so Teela Brown could ride happily into a barbarian sunset with a "hero" (259) stupider than she.

Shown consistently as a stupid, unfeeling, or irrational sexpot, Teela exemplifies the "misogynistic paradigms" (Robin Roberts 13) of male pre-feminist SF, a stance male critics still accept. To Thomas Remington in 1982 Teela was "non-human" (100). Reading Ring-world as a re-vision of The Wizard of Oz with Wu as Dorothy, he comments that Niven "omitted the witches," who are "good and bad for no logical ... reason" (104). This is certainly true; witches are good or bad for ideological reasons. But Remington's complicity with the genre blinds him to the Wicked Witch's avatar, not as "the universe itself" (104), but in Teela Brown's luck,

which makes a puppet of Louis Wu. In 1990 James Hicks still unquestioningly read Teela as shallow, "feminine" (152) and manipulative, ignoring this luck's dominance, which the novel spells out (<u>Ring World</u> 263). From a feminist viewpoint, it evidently symbolises women's feared and hated `unhuman' powers. The male characters' fury at their manipulation may be sardonic humour, or conceal genuine resentment. That Teela has blind luck rather than active powers may also be a response to the then highly visible presence and apparent advances of feminism; here the `happy' ending points out how little use such over-fortunate creatures can make of their gifts.

Kicking and Screaming: Niven and Feminism in the '70s

In Niven's major '70 novels the suppressed anger of <u>Ringworld</u> informs two main approaches to `the Woman Question,' overt resistance, and gynophobic metaphor. <u>The Mote in God's Eye</u> (1974), his first collaboration with the even more hawkish Jerry Pournelle, anticipates the dichotomy Lowder Newton charted in <u>Alien</u>, where `Woman' becomes `human'/female monster. In the film, the `human,' Ripley, has a central part and heroic agency. As expanded from Newton's sketch (295), the Alien encapsulates male terrors as the gigantic walking *vagina dentata*, the metaphorical female Other, the monstrous-feminine (Creed, "Imaginary" 54-68).

Niven and Pournelle's `human' is more marginalised, given traditional roles in a space opera of First Contact with aliens whose spacecraft, launched on a laser beam through a red star's edges, produced the "mote in god's eye." After rescue from a rebel prison camp, she becomes a hitch-hiker and token woman on the battle-cruiser sent to meet the "Moties." She has academic expertise, but is a `soft' scientist, a sociologist, sharing tolerance of the Moties with the ship's chaplain. Events prove both almost fatally wrong.

The Moties perpetuate a phobic view of aliens as old as Wells's <u>War of the Worlds</u>, but typical of Niven, and apparent in American SF well after texts like <u>The Puppet Masters</u> (1951) (Clute and Nicholls 16-17). Smaller than humans, with an asymmetrical, three-armed, tool-maker's physiology, they are alarmingly appropriative of human technology that will let them `out' in the Galactic Empire; but more fearful

is their reproductive capacity. In the Motie life-cycle, "`[c]hild, male, female, pregnancy, male, female, pregnancy ... If she doesn't get pregnant in time, she dies'" (Niven and Pournelle, Mote 349).

From the nineteenth century on, as Robin Roberts notes, SF has Othered women as the female alien, whose worst threat is precisely women's reproductive power (9). Hence, though over-population is a '60s topos, the Moties' reproductive menace identifies them as metaphorical women, and the sub-text becomes a gynophobic response to the rampant '70s feminist who is overrunning her few male `masters.' This fear is less candidly admitted than the motive for King's bogeywoman in Carrie, published the same year (Danse 198) .

Pournelle's militaristic input intensifies the novel's boundary phobias. The first thought that the Moties may be "`brighter than we are'" is "`frightening'" (Mote 71). Control or extermination are the only conceivable alternatives. Eventually they must be excluded from the Empire by technological quarantine, pre-emptive action, and suppression of the liberal enemy within. The reproductive problem motivates their need to invade; over-population has repeatedly destroyed their civilisations, a fall not deadly to women, as in The Stand, but due to them. The Moties' technical ability, which appears a softening of women's exclusion from science and technology, is then an up-dating against the New Woman, who supplements reproductive threat with male expertise.

Clever male scientists eventually deduce the Moties' secret, and they are quarantined. Some hope of *detente* does appear in the export of Moties for "study" by the sociologist and her military aristocrat husband, a promise partly fulfilled in the long-awaited sequel, The Gripping Hand, a.k.a. The Moat Round Murcheson's Eye (1992). Here humans have solved the Moties' problem with a hormone to turn them permanently male. Even without this phallocentric solution, the sort of deconstructive analysis that exposed ideology masquerading as scientific laws in "The Cold Equations" (Huntington, "Hard-Core" 52-56), can decipher the Moties' cycles as covert gender politics. At the simplest level, why did no Motie civilisation practice

infanticide? Not to mention genetic engineering, or a simple abortion pill? The glib explanation that "`any such instinct'" would be "`bred out o' the race'" (Mote 350) reveals both a patriarchal outlook and cultural naivety. The historical and generic context offers a clearer reason: Moties follow the hoary SF tradition of fearsome female aliens, here enacting a parable of female/feminist menace as reactive, if less blatant, as Gender Genocide.

Attempting more open resistance, Lucifer's Hammer (1977) ends with an interestingly fractured response to feminism. It views the fall of civilisation from a white centre, after a comet wrecks the urban world. Californian survivors defend a rural stronghold, upholding authority - their leader is a Senator - and technology; they preserve a nuclear power plant. Despite the similar multiple-strand plot, the text is less reactive than The Stand, ending with a community rather than a nuclear family, and if it lacks gays or Hispanics, blacks and Russians do appear. Nuclear couples are still *de rigeur*, however. No black women survive, `bad' blacks star as looters and cannibals, while white women and the token black astronaut are excluded from decision-making. In sharp contrast to Delany's treatment, and five years after Heinlein abandoned such sneers, feminism earns one paragraph as the fad of a `liberated' Washington hostess promoting funds for artificial womb research. There is a vague sense of essentialism: for "six months" there was "nothing for it but to blame men for everything bad that had ever happened" (Niven and Pournelle, Hammer 70). But at the comet's approach men prepare to assume their proper role:

> Frank was concerned for Joanna. He didn't think Mark could protect her. And Joanna, with her kung fu training and her Women's Lib self-confidence, probably thought she could protect herself. (151)

In the event, Frank is at once shot by looters, leaving Joanna to ride shot-gun, literally, on the rescue of Harvey, a major male character who has similarly failed to save his wife.

In the same way the dying Senator's daughter assumes his authority for the climactic decision over the nuclear plant, while `his' woman's driving skills save

another major male character. Most notably, Harvey's neighbour Marie, first portrayed as a cold-blooded socialite, does not echo his collapse on losing a spouse. She takes over their forces in the final `war,' sleeps with him, confiding that she always wanted to, and then remarks, "`It's a man's world now ... I guess I'll just have to marry an important one'" (597). Which she does. Though the text calls this capture "by a witch" (628), it also comments, via Harvey, that the captive will be "a happy man" (598).

There is a good deal of probably unconscious sexism, as when the woman driver, a qualified accountant, is reduced to a maid at decision-making meetings. Yet the attempt to construct women overall as weak, dependent protectees is continually disrupted, mostly by such female agency and efficiency, that derives chiefly from the near-future setting. Its very fidelity to '70s America unwittingly reveals how much middle-class white women had gained from feminism. All the women can drive in disaster conditions; Marie and Joanna can shoot, Elaine was a business manager. It is the men who emerge as absent in crisis, superfluous, or manipulable. More ironically, the text's very adherence to the tenet that women need men as protection against men often applies a judo throw. Russ's solution to `the Man Question' in 1977 was, Shoot them. In Lucifer's Hammer, men do the shooting themselves.

Though relatively progressive in comparison to The Stand, Lucifer's Hammer comes off poorly against Delany's social experimentation and tolerance in Triton, a year before, Le Guin or Varley's depiction of strong women reaching full agency in "The Day Before the Revolution" (1975) or The Ophiuchi Hotline (1977), or Bradley's interrogation of Western masculinity in The Forbidden Tower (1977). Its contradictions do show how women's image had altered in the habitus, and the disruption this causes when SF writers leave the safe tradition of presenting women in some distant future as metaphoricised aliens.

The point is reinforced by The Ringworld Engineers, Niven's 1979 sequel, where such a far-future allows Teela Brown to become the ultimate Alien. Niven combines the setting and characters of Ringworld with the novum of his 1973 novel, Protector. Its aliens proved to be "third-stage" super-humans, bent, in true patriarchal

fashion, on wiping out all blood lines but their own. These "protectors" now prove to be the Ringworld engineers. But where the "Brennan-monster" (Protector 93) figures the Oedipal nightmare, the murderous father, Teela Brown as Protector invokes the yet more terrifying and deeply entrenched ogre of the pre-Oedipal Imaginary, the Powerful Mother. Here, outdoing Stephen King with Annie Wilkes, she is an outright alien. As Annie's masculine strength and violence twist her story into an Oedipal killing, Teela Brown's `benevolence' demands that Louis Wu and his companions kill her as a rite of passage - which she wishes them to achieve. Maternal nurturing becomes grotesquely entwined with fear of the phallic mother. In a traditional SF frame, for a writer like Niven, using a male hero, the only closure can be inheritance of the parent-monster's kingdom by such a mother's violent death.

Ringworld Engineers is a startling contrast to Varley's lesbian heroes and alien-human *detente* in Titan (1979), the treatment of homosexuals and women's issues in Bradley's coterminal work, Delany's `coming out' in Tales of Neveryon (1978), or Heinlein's attack on the patriarch in `The Number of the Beast' (1980). If Teela Brown is a humanised version of the Alien monster, a female hero comparable to Ripley had not yet swum into Niven's ken. Alone among these writers, he ended the '70s resolutely declining all but the most superficial commerce with feminism.

Indian Giving: Niven and Feminism in the '80s

In his bent for the phobic side of SF, Niven's work parallels Stephen King's, both in the use of traditional female monsters, and in the timing of their reactions to feminism. The gynophobic panics of Carrie and The Mote in God's Eye appeared in 1974, and the fantasy erasures of feminism in Lucifer's Hammer and The Stand in 1977 and '78. The match continues in the '80s, as both writers must accommodate pro-feminist shifts in the habitus. King first shows a new attitude to domestic violence in Cujo (1980). For Niven, it is the token presence of women and blacks at the boardroom table in Oath of Fealty (1981).

This text views urban decay and violence from the white centre, extrapolating an arcology whose inhabitants are united by medieval "fealty" in a vigilante state. The

"Saints" of Todos Santos pity violence-ridden Los Angeles. They have high technology, no crime, problems only with intruders, and are enlightened enough to include as leaders a white woman and black male. Hispanics, or gays of either gender, are still inconceivable.

Oath of Fealty expands the strategy for dealing with empowered marginal figures sketched in Lucifer's Hammer: Indian giving, a ceding and reclamation of power. Thus the black male is a decision-maker, but he decides to kill intruders who turn out to be unarmed teenagers. This haunts and disables him psychologically through the novel, while making trouble with the city outside, which leads to his arrest, so the white males have to rescue him from jail.

The token white woman decision-maker has similar power; she is the finance wizard, a male role, and she appears clear-thinking and decisive through much of the action. Near the climax, however, she is kidnapped, kept hostage, and before another white male rescue, raped. She ends up safely insulated in a heterosexual couple with the arcology's white chief. The Indian-giving strategy admits, *post facto*, the new image blacks and women have acquired, then cancels it by restoring their traditional helplessness.

Niven's collaboration with the black writer Steven Barnes shifts this strategy notably in The Descent of Anansi (1982). It also marks the point where Niven and the Male Gothic diverge: where King gestures ineffectively to feminism and Koontz's strong women dwindle through the '80s in a return to Gothic tradition, Niven, like Heinlein and Bradley, becomes relatively more progressive. In this process, however, his collaborators are important. The Dream Park sequence, written with Barnes, gives women more agency and accepts them in more `heroic' roles, with far less Indian-giving, than his work with Pournelle. In his own pair of '80s novels, The Integral Trees (1983) and The Smoke Ring (1987), Niven tends to forget women, or hurriedly tack on correct sentiments, as when The Smoke Ring ends with a male character back from the action, to marry a woman who will "go where he would, and try to beat him there too" (315).

The Descent of Anansi comes nearer the race-reversals Delany produced in Dhalgren and Triton. Though the shuttle descends from a space station run by white men, and is attacked by South American criminals, its crew are a white man and woman and a male Eskimo. The woman is both the shuttle pilot, a role of surprising agency for Niven, and a golden-haired vision who invokes black desire for the acme of womanhood. Engineering her plan to save the shuttle, the Eskimo, her one-time husband, gets the hero's kudos and wins her back, while the white male, her interim lover, is feminised firstly in the subordinate or watcher's role, and then by being named Marion.

A year after Bradley's most feminist text, City of Sorcery (1984), Niven and Pournelle's Footfall (1985) is coterminal with Le Guin's Always Coming Home and Heinlein's The Cat Who Walked Through Walls. The stronger and more comfortably handled roles for women in Footfall also match women's heroic agency in SF films like The Terminator (1982), and Aliens (1986). If Russ was invisible and Delany had withdrawn to men's space, while Michaels' Female Gothic voices the `women's backlash,' Male Gothic, centrestream SF and SF cinema were still transmitting '70s feminist advances, producing the mid-'80s high-point for the cultural image of feminism.

Footfall combines the disaster motif of Lucifer's Hammer with a phobic First Contact that threatens Earth itself. The aliens use `meteor-strikes' that, among other targets, wipe out India, but their ship is punitively damaged by a heroic American earth-to-space onslaught named Michael (Project Archangel). Here the alien/female equation is weaker; the aliens are traditional octopoid monsters nicknamed "snouts," and only in the final combat is their ship called indiscriminately "the Mother Ship" (Footfall 615; 667), "Big Mama" (630; 656; 670) and "that mother" (661; 672). In probably unconscious contrast, the American gunships call Michael "Big Daddy" (644). `Normal' women, however, help American and Russian prisoners play guerrilla on the alien ship, while another female sociologist votes to accept conditional surrender, but a woman Marine colonel refuses to transmit it. Finally, a woman and

man take the alien surrender together.

This belated form of gender equality does not so much shift masculinist paradigms as achieve what Hester Eisenstein calls patriarchal feminism: "the assimilation of feminist aspirations into the ... values [of] a death loving male culture" (Gender 80). Niven and Pournelle's usual hostile aliens must still be fought to death or outright victory, the Marine colonel is a glorified switch-board operator, and women are banned from Michael: "`those idealistic young men are supposed to be fixing what the snouts shoot ... [not] rescuing idealistic young women  instead'" (Footfall 604). Among the aliens, however, females function as controls on males, who, unmated, will go `rogue.' The "snouts" are astounded that unmated men stay sane. That the winning "male" spaceship, conquers a "Big Mama" where females also clinch decision-making, offers a sub-text in curious contrast to King's The Dark Half. There the married and `liberated' Thad Beaumont expels his unmarried `rogue' half, but here the all-male human crew defeats the `married' aliens. If gender equality has been thrust upon women, liberation is still not an option for Niven and Pournelle's men.

Marking the increased '80s backlash, Niven, Pournelle and Barnes' The Legacy of Heorot (1987), parallels Koontz's reduction of his strong women. This re-version of Beowulf pits off-earth colonists against fearful predators titled grendels. The actual predator is female, the third stage of the life-cycle, and feeds on the smaller second-stage males. Pournelle's militaristic input has the colonists fighting like soldiers "for their wives and husbands and children" (Legacy 220), despite the admission that by upsetting the grendels' life cycle, they have unleashed the predators. This militarism sites the text with the Rambo movies (1984-87) as another myth of the `return bout' and military redemption for Vietnam. Hence its hero is a despised retired soldier who leads the colonists to victory. To point the moral, "Charlie" is the first defeated grendel's name.

Indian giving becomes blatant with "Charlie's" heroic female destroyer. In this distant future, non-realist givens are again available, providing the convenient notion of "Hibernation Sickness" which reduces the hero's once intelligent mate to a loving

child-bearer. "Charlie's" destroyer, too, was supposed to be the colony second-in-command, but revived as a widow noted for bitchiness and hysteria. Hence she faces "Charlie" when sent off with the colony horses because she is "`not much use in a fight'" (276). Her tale is told in retrospect, to women only, and in her own words. Modesty then makes victory a matter of fortunate fumbling. Nor, as a result, does she reclaim her job. Finally the text employs another given, the choice of women "[p]reprogrammed" (312) to want children, to deny her the reward of either a man or a child. Instead the other women tell her, "`There aren't enough [men] to go round.'" She is refused a child because, "`Babies need fathers'" (348). Again, cultural naivety and Western ethnocentrism override logic that says a decimated colony, possessing sperm and frozen embryo banks, would value women eager to reproduce above rubies, and let nuclear family traditions collapse. Instead women's biological advantage is cancelled, to saddle them with a masculinist sexual possessiveness.

The relative softening toward women in Niven's '80s work appears a consequence of his collaborators' alignments, and an acceptance of feminist gains, rather than a pro-feminist stance. His work's rigidity and traditionalism on gender, race and sexuality contrast strikingly to the verve and invention with which he handles scientific ideas and extrapolation, a gift which made "The Coldest Place" talked about even when its novum was already superseded (Delany, "Russ" 110) saw <u>Ringworld</u> reprinted ten times between 1973 and 1984, and has kept his work on popular bookshelves into the '90s. Like King or Koontz, he reacts to feminism's cultural image rather than to firsthand knowledge of its actions or theories. Unlike Heinlein, who draws on the same `ghetto' traditions but was not afraid to explore both the gender topos and alternate sexualities, Niven's work exhibits less a response to twenty-five years of feminism than a determination to go on as if it never occurred.

C. J. Cherryh: Feminist, Feminised and Women's SF

Where Niven is easily located within the `hard,' masculinist, and perhaps central tradition of SF, siting Cherryh's work highlights the competing taxonomies that relate women's SF to second-wave feminism. Thus Robin Roberts distinguishes

feminist Utopias from feminist SF; implicitly, the Utopias are '70s writing, separatist, essentialist, so gender-focussed they become racist (87-91), while feminist SF "stresses the benefits to men and women of sexual equality" (91-92). Such SF is marked by a gender war, stress on alternative science and the mother/daughter relationship, and "a feminist goddess" (111). Roberts gives such SF a tradition at least as old as Andre Norton's early '60s Witch World texts, whose jewel-based technology and matriarchal society anticipate Bradley's Darkover (93-96).

To Sarah Lefanu, however, feminist SF is "informed by the feminist, socialist and radical politics" of the '60s and '70s (3). Utopias are not a separate strand; and it may be subversive "to insert a female subject into a preponderantly male discourse" like SF (23), but it does not necessarily question "the social and literary construction of women as gendered subjects" (24). Such acts of revolution require "a subversion of the narrative structure that holds the protagonist in place" (35). Hence where Roberts sees reversing or blurring binary oppositions as feminist, Lefanu finds such reversals inadequate for "feminist ends" (45). Even emphasising `feminine' values, as in the "soft" SF of Le Guin (89) or Miller Gearhart, is not enough. To Lefanu, the "best women writers" of SF are those who speak "from a position of relativism, questioning not just an apparent reality but its very construction" (87). They include Angela Carter, Tiptree and Russ (94). Although Lefanu claims to avoid "a hierarchy of feminism" (95), her discussion reduces the others to "a feminised body of work" (93).

In 1993, Joan Gordon distinguished the overt feminist SF of Russ and McKee Charnas from a covert form of feminist SF, a "female" opposition to the "male" '80s cyberpunk movement. Produced by women like Connie Willis, who disavow feminism as a form of political correctness ("Willis" 5), this SF does actually "assume, apply, and subsume" feminist thought. Gordon terms it "post-feminist crypsi sf" (5). Meanwhile other recent accounts contest Lefanu by arguing that there were always *women* in SF (Bradley, Headnote, "Conscience"; Frank, Stine and Ackerman, xi-xv; Willis, "Women").

Three features are common to these taxonomies. First is a persistent slippage between "feminist" and "women's SF." Second is a historical shift that produces competing traditions. So Lefanu follows Sargent, Russ and Le Guin in the earlier feminist critical tradition, that resistance to masculinist SF paradigms comes with second-wave feminism, while Willis and Bradley voice a recent resistance seconding Roberts, whose `feminist' SF extends their pre-feminist `women's' tradition (94-113). Thirdly, both Roberts and Lefanu repeatedly mention heterosexuality and liberalism, for which Lefanu criticises writers like Bradley and Le Guin; while Roberts as often distinguishes "feminist SF" as concerned with sexual equality and integration (90-92), implicitly favoured above the separatist Utopias.

What re-emerges is the familiar radical/lesbian, liberal/heterosexual feminist dichotomy. In this light, the competing taxonomies may be remodelled, not as either/or categories, but as a continuum between two poles entitled feminist and women's SF. Toward the radical/lesbian pole, marking feminist imaginative space, appears more and more overtly politicised work by writers like Russ, produced chiefly in the '70s, often sophisticated, including lesbianism, and offering separatist or no solution to a gender war. This end of the continuum extends to writers like Sheri S. Tepper in the '80s; it is "feminist SF."

Toward the liberal/heterosexual pole appear writers more or less involved with the pre-feminist tradition. Though Lefanu finds an enduring and important oppositional strand within SF (4), which was readily accessible to women, it is Roberts and Willis who trace a female tradition from after World War II. Thus, though Le Guin's heterosexual liberalism sites her toward this pole, Roberts' `feminist' writers, like Joan Vinge, take as foremothers women like Andre Norton (94), '50s and '60s writers elided from earlier feminist accounts. This tradition is now seen to share the oppositional stance, may anticipate feminist contests with masculinist paradigms and tenets, and runs from the '50s to join second-wave feminism in the '70s, reappearing in the '80s as covert or `post-feminist SF.' Amalgamating Willis and Bradley's `women,' Roberts' `feminist,' Gordon's `covert feminist' and Lefanu's `feminised' categories,

writers toward this pole may be seen as producing "women's SF."

This schema is relative, approximate, and diachronous as well as synchronous. Beyond women's SF, the continuum runs on to "men's" and masculinist SF. From the '70s onward feminist, women's and men's SF intermingle as the latter two absorb feminist innovations like a lesbian presence and female protagonists, while with writers like Delany and Varley, "men's" and feminist SF overlap. Diachronously, *all* the writers shift toward feminist SF, because they all become involved in the synergy with feminism(s); but there are diachronous shifts within *oeuvres*, as writers move toward, into or away from feminist imaginative space. Writers of women's SF do tend to a common trajectory, as shown by Bradley and Le Guin: they move from male to female protagonists, to wider sexual tolerance, including overt lesbian elements, and they recuperate hostile female stereotypes.

Although C.J. Cherryh began publishing in 1976, and is thus the first writer who could be called a true heir to feminist imaginative space, her work is easily located toward the pole of women's SF. Her pseudonym recalls the pen-names of writers like Norton, Leigh Brackett, or C.L. Moore; like Vinge, she takes Norton as foremother (Roberts 94), and Lefanu critiques her with Bradley for using "a traditional science fiction narrative framework" (88). Within this frame, Wolmark considers Cherryh can destabilise "conventional definitions of difference and otherness" to produce "open-ended narratives" (Aliens 72). To both Lefanu and Wolmark, however, patriarchal and capitalist assumptions remain unquestioned, and the reader's sense of dislocation is in doubt (Lefanu 88). Thus both critics consider Cherryh raises questions common to `feminist' writers, but cannot take them very far.

Because Niven lies outside feminist and most academic orbits, Wolmark and Lefanu do not remark the divergence from his paradigms even in Cherryh's first novels, or her ongoing if covert dialogue with feminism. Unlike Varley, however, Cherryh cannot apply the processed givens of feminist SF, but like McKee Charnas, must construct them for herself. Like Bradley, she re-works stereotypes, moves to female protagonists and eventually glimpses variant sexualities, but this process is less

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overt resistance than a mutation focussed in three main areas: the traditional female ruler/tyrant character, the alien-human relationship, and the nature and/or gender of protagonists.

The Mutant Queen: Cherryh in the '70s

In Cherryh's prolific output these processes are not easily separated or sequenced, but '70s mutation is clearest in treatments of the powerful female alien. Subsequent changes in the alien-human relationship are pivotal to Gate of Ivrel (1976), her first accepted novel, Hunter of Worlds (1977), actually written first (Stan Nicholls 24), Brothers of Earth (1976), and the coterminal Faded Sun trilogy. These texts also show how far from masculinist paradigms Cherryh's writing starts.

Aliens in SF date from the late nineteenth century (Clute and Nicholls 15), forming an obvious analogy for the colonial Self/Other opposition, and Carl Malmgren's discussion of SF aliens closely echoes post-colonial constructions of the colonial subject. So Edward Said speaks of Orientalism as a "man-made" process by which post-Classical Europe represented the Near Orient as at once dominated and seductive (57), familiar and wholly new (59), and always "something more than what was empirically known" (55). This idea of excess, of ultimate "unknowability" has founded claims that no SF alien can be truly so (Beehler 32; Benford, "Effing" 14): any intelligible figure must fit writers and reader's cognitive maps. Malmgren argues, however, that aliens may indeed "[encode] a degree of excess ... that cannot be mastered," but they may be also more anthropocentric, extrapolated from "actualities" (17). In Said's terms, either the wholly novel, or the familiar re-recognised.

Malmgren divides the "human aliens" into Other-as-Enemy and Other-as-Self, and notes Stanislaw Lem's critique of American SF, in particular, for reducing alien encounters to a single paranoid option, an "Us or Them mentality" (17-18). The Mote in God's Eye and Footfall clearly fit this category, which Malmgren links to evolutionary logic (19) - that is, social Darwinism; it then descends from nineteenth-century colonialism. Its opposite category demands the ability to "reconceive the Other as a Self" (20). This signals cultural relativism, if from a neo-colonial perspective,

since aliens can never become post-colonial subjects. The dichotomy again matches the processes of alienation and identification and conflicts of "fear and desire" that constitute colonial stereotypes (Bhabha, "Other" 25).

To Malmgren, the frame of Other-as-Self can oversimplify issues like linguistic correspondence and conceal naturalised ideologies. Yet although he notes that the concept of otherness begs the question "other than what?" (17), his own use of "human" ignores the query "*which* human?" Most notably, he and the post-colonial theorists all omit gender difference. Yet the core of many alien encounters is exotic sexuality (Heldreth 132-40), and the seductive and/or dangerous female alien is a legacy from European colonial fantasies (Clareson, "Emergence" 17).

In contrast, women SF critics have repeatedly read the alien as a figure for women, the Other-at-home, the most disturbing difference. Where Ursula Le Guin considers SF erases both the social alien, or lower classes, and the sexual, or women ("American SF" 98-100), Robin Roberts traces a long line of powerful and terrible female aliens in male-authored SF. To Susan Gubar, C.L. Moore's alien temptresses are self-portraits: in an inexorably patriarchal world, "the `different' term is the female, seen now in all her alienation" (21). Others have taken the figure beyond representation to experience. To Judith Hanna (122) as to Joanna Russ (McCaffery, "Russ" 207), being a woman is to be an alien.

As Said remarks, however, ideas must be studied in "their configurations of power" (5), and Malmgren also omits to note that the human/alien opposition is again hierarchical, and in gender terms, yet again expresses the power gradient. This does emerge with treatments of aliens in SF. Writing like Heinlein from the white male centre, Niven and Pournelle find aliens inexorably Other; race, class and gender all demand that the alien be separated, competed with, dominated. Subjectivity is predominantly human; like the villain in Male Gothic, the alien has a voice only to underline its threat.

Women, blacks, and the Jewish Stanley Weinbaum upset this configuration. Wein-baum invented kindly aliens; Varley, leaning on feminism, and Delany, himself

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marginalised, produce aliens who achieve rapport, may be superior, can sleep with humans and survive. Though ignoring racial difference, Gubar (16-17) and Allen and Paul (179) agree that women are repeatedly willing to identify with the alien, and Russ remarks that women writers begin alien encounter stories *in situ* because "[t]he whole idea of going ... to an alien world makes sense only if you're not an alien in your own" (McCaffery, "Russ" 207).

Le Guin and Russ increased such destabilisations in the early '70s, as Le Guin upset the colonial conqueror's discourse in "Vaster Than Empires and More Slow" (1973): the planet absorbs the human colonist. With "When It Changed" Russ reversed both the gender perspective and alterity: women looked, men were aliens. Though Cherryh is less overt and far less politicised, her '70s novels consistently reverse the human/alien hierarchy, and often dissolve the single human/alien opposition as well.

Thus Brothers of Earth strands a human male protagonist on an alien, pre-industrial world, internally riven, but threatened most by human weaponry. The correlation of humans with war, violence and bad technology echoes but outdoes Bradley's Darkover novels, moving toward essentialist condemnations of male violence. Again, where Niven and Pournelle's humans dominate or defeat aliens, Cherryh draws on Le Guin to extend Bradley's staple plot: the protagonist is happily absorbed into an alien household, on a planet returned to alien control.

In Hunter of Worlds and the Faded Sun trilogy of Kesrith (1979), Shon'jir (1980) and Kutath (1980), the binary opposition dissolves to leave humans one among three or four species, by no means strongest, and first seen in alterity. Kesrith establishes the alien mri's subjectivity and a mri-regul alien opposition, before introducing a human foil; the mri retain the reader's sympathy throughout. In Hunter of Worlds the protagonist is, and the point-of-view remains, almost wholly alien. Humans are only one of three races physically weaker than and subject to other aliens, the iduve, with a role just larger than that of a third species, the amaut. In both cases the humans, and in Hunter of Worlds the protagonist as well, are absorbed without gaining superior status in an alien community.

Already it is clear that Cherryh's human-alien pattern is neither Us-or-Them nor They-are-Us. A more striking and lasting trait in her work is the accompanying reversal of gendered power relationships. Here Brothers of Earth is most traditional; the male hero constantly faults an artificially produced `human' female ruler whose policies eventually lose her power, kill his alien wife, and cause civil war. She redeems herself by refusing to use nuclear weapons to save her life. As in the '40s and '50s pulps (Robin Roberts 46-60) the powerful female alien is seen in alterity and defeated, the traditional masculinist SF view. Cherryh's first mutation is to let such aliens retain power.

Thus in The Faded Sun Melein, the chief female mri character, comes to rule her species, a combination of female roles like visionary and high priestess with true executive agency. Her supernatural powers are her people's greatest advantage, and the male characters, mri or human, offer her anything from respect to awe. Like the Fremen in Herbert's Dune series, with their desert planet, veils, head-cloths, and raider/warrior culture, the mri adapt the romanticised Orientalist representation of the Arab or Bedouin, memorably endorsed in The Seven Pillars of Wisdom. But in Dune the human hero dethrones similar priestess visionaries, then fulfils Laurence's fantasy by leading rather than inciting the Fremen in a holy war.

In theory if not practice, The Faded Sun is also closer than Bradley to feminist SF. The mri are a functioning matriarchy, their planet's eventual rulers, while even Bradley's Free Amazons remain an enclave of gynocentrism. The gender balance ostensibly tips further, since for women "all castes were open" (Sun 70) while men can only be scholars or warriors. In practice, women warriors or scholars are rare, and child-bearers a contented background blur. Again, the one powerful regul female is no sooner seen than shot, while as in contemporary America, the token human woman scrabbles for leverage halfway up the power structure, until Cherryh kills off the male upper hierarchy.

Lynn Williams sees all Cherryh's powerful women as aristocrats who reaffirm a place atop the *status quo*, while males and lower classes offer unquestioning loyalty

(86). In fact, the woman tyrant's fall in <u>Brothers of Earth</u> will bring alien factions to parity, while Melein's ascendance leaves the mri at the bottom of the species hierarchy. <u>Hunter of Worlds</u> comes closest to Williams' hypothesis, as the iduve's female leader retains command of the main spaceship, and the iduve remain dominant species, but here Cherryh's linguistic background produces true cultural aliens, divided, like human societies, by language discrepancies that, lacking the naivety of the Other-as-Self pattern, they may recognise but never bridge. Extrapolated from sentient felines, the iduve mate with violence and entirely lack maternal `instinct' as defined by Niven and Pournelle. Most notably, as Mary Brizzi remarks (33-34), they understand neither love nor hate (Cherryh, <u>Hunter</u> 34). Consequently they are "at a loss" (244) when the kallia protagonist defies them out of pity (57-58), or a human jeopardises a planet to save a child (104). If their leader is beautiful and exotic (18), she remains ruthless and autocratic; the kallia may come to understand her, but she will never understand them.

The correlate of this mutation is, as in Varley's work, a gallery of spectacularly weaker males, and again, the first casualty is human superiority. In <u>Brothers of Earth</u> even the male hero is morally inferior; in <u>The Faded Sun</u>, an elite human soldier lacks mri endurance, while both kallia and humans are at physical risk from the iduve. This produces a hierarchy based on mutated Western aesthetics. At the top, mri and iduve are slim, golden and hairless, or indigo-skinned and amethyst-eyed, yet physically powerful, a cyborg of current male model and exotic female alien. At the bottom, amaut and regul resemble Jabba the Hut, embodying the current Western abject of obesity. Bernadette Bosky makes a similar correlation of evil and physical grossness in King's work (138). In between, the novels' alien perspectives make human women dumpy, old and overweight or vulnerable to violence, while men are hairy, feeble, and ugly as well as unintelligible. The white male norm has become not only visible but openly criticised, while the feminised alien ideal usurps its ruling power.

Both Williams and Brizzi remark this reversal; but where Williams blurs it into aristocratic affirmations, Brizzi finds an endorsement of "the complementary nature of

feminine and masculine characteristics" (32), echoing '70s feminism's favour for androgyny. The relationship is actually an intricate cross-coding that turns men to codedly feminine weak protagonists and women to codedly masculine powerful aliens.

Thus in Hunter of Worlds the male protagonist, Aiela, is not `married' to the iduve leader Chimele, as Brizzi argues (33). The bracelet used for communication and punishment is rather a symbol of (potentially sexual) bondage, like the collar in Neveryon. Aiela is `married' by an equally imposed telepathic link to a female kallia and a male human. More importantly, like the human male Duncan in The Faded Sun, Aiela weeps, feels helpless, is physically weak, compassionate, rashly heroic in word and deed, and prevails against power and physical force by a cross of moral strength and wilful disobedience. In short, he is a classic female romance heroine.

Cherryh thus couples SF and female romance more complexly than Bradley. At a crude level of reader identification, her powerful aliens offer female readers a vision of sustained dominance which avoid the subjective trials of Varley's Cirocco Jones, while with culturally more attractive men they experience feminine vicissitudes of weakness and helplessness, yet reach acceptance and respect. Her many male readers, up to such illuminati as Darko Suvin (Pukallus 256), can keep women in alterity while vicariously admitting un-masculine tears, terror and helplessness, and still eventually prevail. Such evidently attractive males persist through the Morgaine trilogy, the Chanur Series, singletons like Cuckoo's Egg (1985), and Cherryh's Hugo winners, Downbelow Station (1981) and Cyteen (1988). Among the most feminine is Bren Cameron in Foreigner (1994), whose name recalls the useless gun symbolised by "Sten" Duncan in The Naked Sun. Cherryh's plots also repeat Bradley and Whitney's Gothic trajectories: the codedly feminine male is torn from his home-place, tried and tormented, and finally absorbed by rather than conquering an alien community.

If the power gradient favours men, then to signify power in a role reversal, women must be codedly masculine. When Russ anticipated Segal's formulation of hegemonic masculinity, she ended by describing a "real He-man" as "an alien monster" ("Alien" 137). So Cherryh's female aliens, notably Chimele, are autocratic, enigmatic,

and cruel if not outright violent to inferiors; precisely the behaviour found by Modleski in heroes of '70s Harlequin romance (Loving 39-44). To the masculinist SF view of Woman-as-Alien, Cherryh couples a female romance view of men: alien, violent, more powerful, inexplicable, coped with by negotiation, manipulation and surreptitious disobedience. In romance, male brutality is finally elucidated as the outbreak of incommunicable desire; this justifies the emotional poverty masculine models have forced upon men (Tavris 263-71). But in Hunter of Worlds the cultural gulf remains uncrossable: iduve and kallia continue aliens, the `common-sense' view of sex difference perpetuated in titles like Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus (John Gray, 1992). The sense that only explanation, rather than change, is possible, repeats the complicity of female romance; but as Williams fails to notice, in Cherryh's novels, things *do* change. Humans win respect from and help save the mri; the kallia have agency and gain iduve respect. Most of Cherryh's books adjust the existing order towards justice, that end invoked by feminists like Eisenstein (Gender 68) as by Michaels' heroines. What emerges is a diluted version of liberal feminism: a meek hope that women (humans) will become more accepted, rather than changing or destroying male (alien) society.

Cherryh's next mutation is to humanise her powerful female alien. In the Morgaine trilogy, Gate of Ivrel, (1976), Wells of Shiuan (1978) and Fires of Azeroth (1979), Morgaine and her helper Vanye are on a quest to close Gates, or instant matter-transfer points, a remnant of bad alien technology. Here the proximity to fantasy invokes powerful masculinist stereotypes descended from medieval romance. One such cluster, the witch, the `bad' queen, and the *belle dame sans merci*, are incorporated in the figure of Morgaine herself. But unlike the iduve, Morgaine is not set beyond a culture/language barrier.

She does appear alien: "Frosthair" (Cherryh, Chronicles 34) among dark people to whom fairness marks the non-human qhal, her name invokes the Arthurian Morgan Le Fay, a lethal enchantress, prototype of Keats' Lamia. The latter too is evoked by the metaphor of a "gliding serpent among... scuttling lesser creatures - more evil than they,

more deadly, and infinitely beautiful" (61). The threat of erotic power is deepened by the technology that she alone can use, and by her authority over Vanye, which add the menace of the female tyrant and witch. But here the stereotypes begin to decay, first by simple role-reversal. Morgaine, not Vanye, is the leader, the quest hero, and wields the magic sword, romance emblem of phallic power. But this sword is a portable Gate, hated by Morgaine, lethal to her friends, and inimical, when they share a bed, to Vanye's desire: "a companion older than he, and evil ... no other could be closer" (356).

More subtly, Cherryh mutates two hostilely depicted aspects of powerful women, Morgaine's authority and her rationality. She is introduced as a usurper or coercer, who "claims" the outlawed Vanye against his will, by an unwomanly "lord-right" (33-34). As decision-maker she does remain absolute, yet she also treats him with anomalous courtesy, tends his injuries, or tempts him sexually. This disruption strengthens as the relationship develops. By the second book Morgaine will explain her autocracies. By the third, understanding has brought Vanye to render loyalty rather than submission. And at the most crucial and to Vanye most personal of her decisions, to kill or spare his alien-possessed cousin Roh, Morgaine trusts him to plead mercy's case.

As Morgaine's authority is initially resented, it is also read as "that madness" (42). In the first book she is moody to the point of feyness (59); at least once Vanye "stared after her... knowing her mad" (99). But Cherryh disarms the patriarchal judgement by deriving this irrationality from Morgaine's quest. A hundred years out of her time, the Gate destroyers' sole survivor, she can neither trust anyone nor respect conventional morality: "`I have no leisure to be virtuous'" (98). She is ready to kill Vanye when she thinks him possessed by a qhal. In the second book she does attack an unarmed girl, starts civil war to reach a Gate, and would deny the sufferers egress to another world because "`their time is finished ... It comes to all worlds'" (388). When they do escape she finally sees them destroyed.

Here rational power becomes Machiavellian ruthlessness, while Vanye's role

changes from the voice of sanity to that of conscience, or in mediaeval terms, "pity," the "supreme Christian virtue" (Burrows 47). By the end of the conflict over Roh, the opposition of ruthless masculine rationality and intuitive feminine mercy is wholly reversed:

> `Never... have I power to listen to heart more than head. Thee's my better nature, Vanye. All that I am not, thee is.' (675)

Yet she then gambles that Roh can subdue his possessing qhal, risking the success of her entire quest. It is, she tells Vanye, neatly summing up their conflicting views of honour, "`the most conscienceless thing that I have ever done'" (681).

The coterminal Tales of Neveryon and the far earlier Adventures of Alyx suggest what sophisticated exploitations Cherryh did not make of the sword-and-sorcery genre, while McKee Charnas' Motherlines simultaneously exploits a comparable low-technology horse-borne society to produce an all-woman but powerfully "critical" Utopia. Nonetheless, at a time when Niven was demonising Teela Brown, Cherryh shows a woman wielding power as Niven never would; she humanises a stock hostile representation as Bradley still could not, two years later in Sharra's Exile; and if she keeps the male protagonist, she now begins to eat as well as have her cake, for unlike Chimele, Morgaine can change as well as be understood.

Cherryh in the '80s: Battlestar Foemina

While the Morgaine trilogy comes nearest to Brizzi's thesis of androgynous complementarity, Morgaine remains un-human. Cherryh's '80s texts, however, engage explicit women's issues, often shaped in feminist terms, construct female subjectivity, and produce powerful, often human female protagonists. The first of these, Raen in Serpent's Reach (1981), becomes an alien matriarch; but in Downbelow Station (1981) human women achieve both power and interiority. This novel also first justifies the remark that Cherryh's work is full of women "battlefleet commanders, space pilots, [and] soldiers" (Wolmark, Aliens 72); not coincidentally, it is coterminal with Oath of Fealty and the height of Female Gothic engagement with feminism. Its variety of

strong women's roles also registers the '70s invasion of male professions, as American women engineering graduates increased thirteenfold (Marcia Cohen 376) and women's law-school entries by 500 percent (Chafe 435).

In good SF fashion, this major shift accretes over rather than superseding '70s patterns, allowing a notably helpless male, a mind-wiped prisoner of war and sometime sex-slave, to find agency, respect, and a place in the "Alliance:" the faction of station and space-Merchant families spawned by an Earth/space-colony war. But the multiple-plot structure reduces this former protagonist to one among a cluster of subjectivities, among whom Cherryh can at last imagine women with both humanity and power.

All these women play important roles in the Alliance victory. The '70s alien matriarch shrinks to the bedridden wife of a patriarch whose "Brahmin" (Lynn Williams 86) family runs Pell space station, and whose death leaves her titular family head. She does suggest the crucial stand-off led by a gentle female alien, whose '70s predecessors were killed. New figures are her human daughters-in-law, one of whom mobilises her Merchanter people's ships to make "`the third side of this triangle'" (Cherryh, Downbelow 359) and break an Earth/Colony stalemate for final victory. The most interesting of these women, however, is the Earth-Fleet carrier captain, Signy Mallory.

Like Morgaine's name, "Signy" recalls legend, the sister/mother of the Volsungs Sigmund and Sinfjotli, just as "Mallory" invokes a famous mountaineer. Like Morgaine, Mallory is powerful, ruthless, cruel, with black moods (27), but she is more vicious. To the abused prisoner she is a nightmare (151). She is also bitterly disillusioned with the war and the atrocities forced on her, so that despite Williams' claim (89), after betrayals by Earth and her Fleet commander, her one loyalty is to her own crew. For the first time, however, these "sordid" (Downbelow 27) acts are made explicable, for unlike Morgaine's, they are seen through Mallory's own subjectivity.

Mallory's story also shifts toward the Gothic pattern, since she deserts the Fleet, her lifelong home, to help the Alliance, and half-agrees (430-1) to become its military

protector. Mallory's is not passive exile, however, but active rebellion. Nor is she an aristocrat, but a ranker risen to third in the Fleet hierarchy. Her rank and its problems enact the `glass ceiling' meeting women in real life; a parallel is Joan Vinge's police commander in The Snow Queen (1980). Both are stuck halfway up a corrupt hierarchy, and both writers use their genre to find a non-realist solution. In a more pointed allusion to the real-world problem, Mallory cripples the Fleet and helps found a new order when she understands herself sold out by the two men above her. When she calls the second-in-command "*Whore*" (392) she is not, as Williams thinks (90), possibly including herself.

A clearer enactment of such women's problems, with strong feminist elements, appears in Forty Thousand In Gehenna (1983). Here the human-alien pattern mutates to a cultural relativism that is almost deconstructive, and close to an essentialist critique of male violence. On Gehenna, in striking contrast to The Legacy of Heorot, stranded colonists encounter sentient quasi-reptile "Calibans," who do not "manipulate" but "interact" with their environment (368). An aggressive patriarchal human group led by a man and studied by male off-planet observers confronts a more pacific "*well-ordered*" (414) group led by a female with a woman observer. Like the geneticist Barbara McClintock, the woman discards traditional scientific practice (Grosz and De Lepervanche 22-27) and learns to read the Calibans. Meanwhile the reports of "Dr. Genley," an ironic nod to The Left Hand of Darkness, deploy strategies straight from Russ's How to Suppress Women's Writing (1983) as they jibe at her lack of data or doubt her sanity. Like the anthropologist Boaz in The Faded Sun, she is caught halfway up a male hierarchy, and again Cherryh employs a narrative solution; this time the aliens kill the male observers and ruler and demolish his settlement. Calibans "write the world" (363) by building patterns that include human/Caliban settlements, and they prefer the women's "Word" (364).

The later Chanur series approaches `the Man Question' from an '80s but liberal feminist viewpoint that causes a major shift in '70s patterns. Again the powerful female warps Lynn Williams' thesis: like Mallory and Melein, the hani Pyanfar Chanur keeps

her captaincy and has unquestioning loyalty from her ship's crew, but her clan has rivals and hani rank with humans near the bottom of an alien hierarchy. Far more importantly, Pyanfar is alien, female, powerful - and the protagonist. For the one human character, this turns '70s cross-coding to something near Russ's gender reversal. As Wolmark first pointed out ("Alternative" 52), this weak male, denied interiority, alone among the hani, is the real alien. But atop this Cherryh loads an '80s feminist discourse of female superiority. Hani females run their society and their spaceships because males are too strong, unstable and violent to be let outside the house.

If this reversal draws on essentialist approaches to the question of male violence, ironically, Cherryh's lasting liberal/heterosexual bias moves her toward the opposing position: rather than shoot or erase men, she changes both men and society. The last three books enact this in microcosm, as Pyanfar takes her husband Khym to space, risking her clan and her race to show that male violence and irrationality are "custom, not hardwiring" (<u>Legacy</u> 120). When Khym protests "`I can't take this dealing with strangers... I *ache*, Py. That's biology. We're set up to fight'," she retorts, "`You're *scared*'," and challenges him to "`be un-masculine'" (<u>Venture</u> 93), to work at "`boring, long-attention-span jobs'" (95). Her victory as personal leader of a reformed interspecies "Compact" owes much to his success. The series closes with an obvious reversion to cross-coding, as a young male hani going to space is given "`a right to be there'" (<u>Homecoming</u> 397).

This solution presages gender equality, as hani females combine rationality, power and subjectivity, traits that hani males may come to share. The 1992 sequel, <u>Chanur's Legacy</u>, models the backlash as male and female hani progressives struggle to hold ground against centuries of prejudice: "Change happened and you thought it was forever, and immediately there were all the enemies of that change making common cause and meeting in the cloakrooms" (39-40). If the series offers open-ended hope, the sequel picks up feminist reverses in the '80s, stressing that such progress is neither sure nor irreversible.

Again marking the mid-'80s as a pro-feminist apogee, <u>Cyteen</u> (1988) reverts to exploration of women's problems in less overtly feminist terms. A notable generic cyborg, it couples SF with a *Bildungsroman*, murder mystery and domestic melodrama, as Cherryh explores "Union," the faction that <u>Downbelow Station</u> left as a sinister far-space of birth-labs and clones, focussing on the "claustrophobic" central research complex of Reseune (Gwyneth Jones, qtd. Wolmark, <u>Aliens</u> 79). The text is actually less "confused" (79) than diffused, as it tries to present Union's history, politics and personalities, and to explore a cluster of nova on human thought and modes of dominance through multiple points of view. From this welter emerges a new mutation of Cherryh's "central concern" (72): <u>Cyteen</u> shifts the alien/ human Other/Self opposition as do lesbian theorists, to produce, in a "disruptive space of sameness" (Farwell, "Heterosexual" 93) an interaction of Self/Other-self (Engelbrecht 90-93). This emerges clearly in Cherryh's first homosexual partnership, in the human/artificial-human (azi) comparison, and with the topos of clones or "Parental Replicates."

Lacking a gay culture or identity, Cherryh's same-sex couple are properly homo-sexuals, heterosexual women's constructions like Bradley's characters. If their portrayal is positive, as against the hostile glance in <u>Downbelow Station</u>, for SF this is a very belated tolerance; and Cherryh has yet to breathe a hint of lesbians. In fact, their passivity and suffering would disqualify both as romance heroines. Only after a book of martyrdom by villains, Reseune administration and very powerful women, do they achieve modest respect and a moment's agency before being absorbed back into a renovated Reseune.

That one of these men is the central male character and spends much time suffering from or fending off powerful women's sexual victimisation is a more contemporary if tangled refraction of late '80s sexual politics. A codedly feminine male can convey another camouflaged version of sexual harassment, while offering female readers the covert pleasure of seeing men in women's place. Yet if the text closes with a heterosexual/liberal compromise, as powerful woman tells gay man, "`you need me

the same as I need you'" (<u>Cyteen</u> 678), her failures to seduce him contradict Bradley's fantasy of a homosexual finding a woman he can love and trust. The final effect is that same-sex love and trust appears unbreakable, while (straight) women must settle for second best.

More consciously developed is the human/azi comparison, which produces much of the novel's extrapolation. If the azi, multiple clones with engineered consciousness, are "the dark side of technology" (Wolmark, <u>Aliens</u> 77) in <u>Downbelow Station</u>, Cherryh fully humanises them in <u>Cyteen</u>. The two homosexuals, "born-man" and azi, openly debate their different modes of thought. Groping toward Marxist and Foucauldian concepts of ideology and fragmented subjectivity, Cherryh founds her extrapolation on the biological "hardware" of endocrinology. Receiving their basic "psych-sets" through "tape" from birth, azi are excellent with detail but have "`no shades of truth'," while "born-men" learn at random by averaging experience - "the flux" - are affected by hormones, and "`can come up with two contradicting thoughts and believe both of them'" (<u>Cyteen</u> 154). Throughout <u>Cyteen</u>, and particularly as the gay relationship develops, Cherryh humanises this non-human Self until inferiority vanishes and the pair function as complementary equals. Such social status for all azi is implicit policy for the new Reseune; again, the codedly feminine or human/not-human achieves limited equality, acceptance and respect.

Where same/difference becomes most vivid is with the central topos of "born-men" clones, Parental Replicates. The gay main character is his father's "PR," but this relationship is overshadowed by the female clone-couple, the two Ariane Emorys. Wolmark's most reductive reading of <u>Cyteen</u> is to miss the intricacies of this Self/Other-self opposition when it is read as a mother/daughter relationship.

Even women SF writers mostly elide the maternal relationship; Bradley rarely develops it past birth, and only Varley has examined a mother/daughter clone: in "Lollipop and the Tar Baby" (1977) the `daughter' must die or kill her `mother' and take her identity (231-5). This violent metaphor for reaching female subjectivity, with

the mother read as a vampiric, suffocating Medusa-monster, has been dated from the '50s and '60s, most probably from the cult of motherhood. It appears in R.D. Laing's psychology, as in `high' '60s literature like Lessing's Landlocked (1965) and Atwood's Lady Oracle (1968) and persists in feminist writing like Irigaray's "And the One Doesn't Stir Without the Other" (Palmer 112-15; Meaney 15-51). At her close, Irigaray glances toward escape: "what I wanted from you, Mother, was this: that in giving me life, you still remain alive" (67). That is, that mother and daughter separate peacefully.

Cherryh's female replicates both intensify and disrupt this struggle. The clone topos makes explicit "Ari" Junior's efforts to define herself against a woman who is literally Self/ not-Self, closer than a mother (Cyteen 308), a biological twin, with "so much in common" (494) that it is perilously difficult to find "`something that was only yours'" (467). She must fight for her clone's legal identity, and does assume her power, yet she is "*not* like her predecessor" (490). She learns from Ari Senior's mistakes, rights some of her wrongs, and appears ready to carry her work to a `good' end. Here the daughter's *Bildungsroman* mutates the hostile '60s pattern, for Ari Junior is/is not Ari Senior, yet has achieved individual equilibrium.

Killing Ari Senior before the cloning, Cherryh eludes at one stroke the biological tie and daughterly guilt. She also fragments the mother figure: Ari Junior has a loving relationship with a `good mother' surrogate whose loss in childhood, to match Ari Senior's life, she never forgives. The substitute male `stepmother' is one of the villains who may have murdered Ari Senior, who manipulate even Ari Junior's menstrual cycles, and finally try to murder her. However unwittingly, this gender-switch foregrounds the arguments of feminists like Rich and Chodorow, that patriarchy controls and warps motherhood and the mother/ daughter relationship (Palmer 96-97).

Most importantly, this fragmentation allows Cherryh to recuperate the hostile mother: in this, as in contemporary `high' fiction which also focusses on the relationship (112), she draws, however tacitly, on feminist theory. Ari Senior begins as a fearful blend of monster-mother and powerful woman, cruel, devious, "chief architect of Union" (186), whose manipulation has "shifted the entire course of

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humanity" (472). But Ari Junior re-cognises the pivotal sadistic sex scene as a psychological "intervention," part of a long-term plan to neutralise the gay male's clone-father; the accompanying trauma was the villains' work. In the same way, Ari Senior's long-term plans reveal a high moral concern for the azi; like Morgaine and Mallory, she changes from an alien tyrant to a flawed human being. And where Irigaray's mother and daughter form "living mirrors" (61), in a striking divergence from such `archetypal' images of the relationship (Palmer 115), when she understands why her surrogate mother died, Ari Junior smashes the mirror in her room (Cyteen 406). Thus, rather than making clones exact replicas, (Wolmark, Aliens 78), Cyteen actually reasserts liberal individualism: lives cannot be re-lived; a replicate is not the original. If Ari Senior becomes rather too benevolent, the "conventional" denouement (80) remains unique in SF as a fulfilment of Irigaray's hope for the safe division of mother and daughter's subjectivity.

Cherryh's last '80s novel, Rimrunners (1989) is far less dense, taking a single pro-tagonist from loss of one ship community to acceptance in another, and drawing closer to contemporary reality, with an all human cast and a wholly male command hierarchy. It is also Cherryh's first novel set in space's `lower class,' and in fact, the only one with a human woman as both sole viewpoint and protagonist. Bet Yeager - evoking Chuck Yeager, the heroic test pilot of NASA mythology - is an Earth-Fleet marine marooned at Pell; tough, devious, deadly with weapons or unarmed, she kills a rapist, bluffs her way aboard a "spook" spy-ship, and wins a place there, defending her weak male lover against crew and officers alike.

Yeager is a belated version of the female SF hero who emerges in the wake of second-wave feminism, a figure in tension between competing elements. First is the Amazon who Russ's Alyx freed from the sword-and-sorcery genre, who is at base "independent of men" (Lefanu 34). At its most `feminist' this element produces Bradley's Free Amazons and McKee Charnas' Riding Women in Motherlines (1978). It is contested by the liberal discourse of gender equality, where the heterosexual female hero proves herself by outfighting men. Variants fill the SF continuum, from Heinlein's

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Friday through Piserchia's girlish Jade in Star-Rider (1974) to Ripley in Alien and Varley's Cirocco Jones. Gynocentrism reasserts itself in versions of Russ's "feminist mythos": where Vonda McIntyre's hero rescues a daughter halfway through Dreamsnake (1979) and finds a lover at its end, for Janet Kagan's hero in Hellspark (1988) a daughter is enough. In Rimrunners, however, Cherryh couples the female hero and the Female Gothic plot: though Yeager is rough, tough and heterosexual, she shares the codedly feminine male's loss and exile, before both win a place, in a tenuous sexual triangle, among an improved community. Cherryh's stock plot, then, may offer another mythos for female heroes: a variant Oedipal trajectory that brings the hero communal acceptance rather than individual selfhood and nuclear coupling with a reward/heroine.

Overall, Cherryh's work follows the pattern of a strange attractor, re-covering the same ground from new angles, rather than a linear trajectory. In comparison to Bradley or Le Guin, she shows how tardily and timidly "women's SF" may occupy feminist imaginative space. Her sense of race and queer sexuality is marginal, and class appears only with Rimrunners. She has never produced a Utopia. Though her aliens mutate gender stereotypes, they are mostly polarised colonial Others, noble savages like the mri, or grotesques like the regul; and in the '90s, when writers like Greg Bear and David Weber, and even Niven and Barnes are producing female protagonists with Achilles' Choice (1991), Cherryh has returned to male protagonists. For her as for Niven, the mid-'80s thus appears the apogee of her engagement with feminism.

Nevertheless, Cherryh consistently diverges from the masculinist paradigms defended by Niven. She deals with women's issues, has produced women's mythoi, and with Cyteen, recuperates a women's relationship invisible in SF. That Cyteen won a Hugo indicates considerable reader approval, and her novels stay in print, giving this covert feminism another large audience. Her conservatism is due less to SF narrative conventions, as Wolmark argues, than to political positioning. If to her, "reform rather than revolution is the best solution to political problems" (Lynn Williams 91), for a

centrestream heterosexual liberal this is less remarkable than predictable.

- Section 13 -

WILLIAM GIBSON AND LOIS McMASTER BUJOLD: "THE GERNSBACK

CONTINUUM"

In William Gibson's well-discussed story, a photographer commissioned to picture the "raygun Gothic" ("Gernsback" 38) of Streamline Moderne architecture begins to hallucinate an SF pulp future: "an idealized city that drew on *Metropolis* and *Things to Come ...* soaring up through an architect's perfect clouds to zeppelin docks and mad neon spires" (46). The people are blonde and ideal; the picture has "all the sinister fruitiness of Hitler Youth Propaganda" (47). A friend explains that the terrified narrator has seen "a semiotic ghost" (48) of "outdated futures" (Andrew Ross 101) conceived when cults of science and technological invention formed a "positivist religion" (105); the story closes by observing that the present "`could be worse ... it could be perfect'" (Gibson, "Gernsback" 50).

"The Gernsback Continuum" undoes '30s futurism with a witty and sophisticated reversal of SF tradition, whose self-reflexive critiques, such as "the rockets on the covers of the Gernsback pulps [fell] on London in the dead of night" (41), elude Niven or Cherryh. The story also epitomises Gibson's own fiction: stylish, spectacularly sensitive to cultural currents, often called "the apotheosis of postmodernism" (Csicsery-Ronay, "Cyberpunk" 182), yet based on and ultimately feeding back into SF. Bujold's work is almost a complete contrast. Both, however, first published in the '80s, when, as Michaels' novels indicate, feminism had reached "a stage of denial" (Gordon, "Willis" 5) and feminist SF went underground. But while Bujold subsumes feminism(s) and Gibson reacts against its perceived influence, both *oeuvres* are shaped by the Gernsback continuum: that enduring idea of the "Jules Verne, H.G. Wells and Edgar Allan Poe type of story - a charming romance intermingled with scientific fact and prophetic vision" (Gernsback, qtd. Clute and Nicholls 311).

Moments In The Net: Gibson, Cyberpunk and Cyberspace

Like <u>Stranger in a Strange Land</u>, Gibson's first novel, <u>Neuromancer</u> (1984), is one of those rare texts that achieves historical agency. If <u>Stranger</u> provided ways of thinking the sexual revolution, <u>Neuromancer</u> enunciated the information revolution: with its coinage of `cyberspace,' a simulation of schematised data where computer

operators can move symbolically by "jacking in" to "the matrix" via a direct brain/machine interface, it "crystallized" the "new commmunity" (Allucquere Stone 95) of the knowledge revolution forecast by '60s Marxists like Daniel Bell (Whalen 77). In Ricoeur's terms, Neuromancer fictionally "produced" this "epochal ... shift" (Pfeil 88), a revolution of intellectual paradigms (Haraway, "Manifesto" 161) as of technology, whose "dominant" image substituted the computer chip for "girders and gears" (Tichi xi-xii). Marking its role in this shift, Neuromancer has become "a massive intertextual presence ... in ... scientific and technological discourses in the large" (Allucquere Stone 95).

Consequent lavish but disparate attention has spawned discrete `Gibson narratives.' Beyond technocultural histories like Stone's, cyberculture stories enthuse on the topos of cyberspace; a sub-culture emerges with magazines like Reality Hackers (Fitting, "Lessons" 299) and the devotees of IRC (Internet Relay Chat). J.C. Herz charts this community, most often teenagers of the `X Generation' able to afford a computer and modem, who enjoyed the addictive late-night pleasures of flame wars, MOO and MUD-sites, and to whom, again, "Jesus was a Gibson" (qtd. Herz 17).

Gibson is in fact the only writer in this study to acknowledge what is arguably the major technocultural shift in '80s Western society. On the one hand this affirms the intellectual alertness of SF; on the other, as Suvin points out, it maps the scope of such a "revolution" ("Gibson" 363), limited at that point to white Western `plugged in' (usually) young males. These aspects recur when with rave reviews, the Hugo, Philip K. Dick and Nebula awards, and production of a new topos, virtual reality, Gibson and his *oeuvre* enter the SF narrative of Cyberpunk, the pre-eminent movement in '80s SF.

Named after a 1980 story, "the Movement" (Shiner 18) is often reduced to the text and reception of Neuromancer. The name, proselytised vehemently by its chief ideologue, Bruce Sterling, was repudiated at times by most of the writers - at times - grouped as cyberpunks. The nucleus is usually seen as Sterling, Gibson, Lewis Shiner, and John Shirley, who met in the late '70s feeling that "`a new axis [had] been formed'"

(21). After Pat Cadigan, outer orbits include Greg Bear, Rudy Rucker, Lucius Shepard, and others found in the definitive anthology, <u>Mirrorshades</u> (1986). An authoritative SF narrative sees SF galvanised by debates between cyberpunk partisans, led by Sterling's aggressive claims of newness, and "feminists" or "humanists" (Delany, "Zelazny" 12), but by 1987 (12) or 1989 (Shepard 118), the movement was considered over in SF.

As cyberpunk reached general awareness with articles in <u>Rolling Stone</u> and the <u>Wall Street Journal</u>, academic interest had just begun (Fitting, "Lessons" 295). From scattered articles in '86-'88, the literary bell-curve tops out in the early '90s. SF-oriented articles (Westfahl; McGuirk; Alkon; Suvin, "Gibson") contextualise the novel/author/movement as innovator or preserver of some tradition, from Burroughs, Pynchon, Leiber, Bester and Stapledon to Bodin and Poe. If <u>Neuromancer</u> did enunciate a new "structure of feeling" (Suvin 363), SF elders criticised its lack of political vision (357), the movement's general quality - "one writer (Gibson), one critic (Sterling), and a lot of hangers-on" (qtd. Delany, "Zelazny" 29) - and Gibson's work as a "literature of surfaces" (Benford, "Science Fiction" 214), lacking "range" (Aldiss 525). SF narratives did include the sequels, <u>Count Zero</u> (1986) and <u>Mona Lisa Overdrive</u> (1988) which by general consensus lost narrative speed and intensity and suffered plot weaknesses (Suvin, "Cyberpunk" 357; Whalen, 77; Eriksen 45-46; Sponsler 636-42).

A related academic narrative concerned Gibson's "residing mysticism" (Delany, "Cyberpunk" 33), which produces `happy' endings as the mercenary in <u>Count Zero</u> forms a nuclear family in an idyllic natural setting, and dead lovers meet in cyberspace in <u>Mona Lisa Overdrive</u>. Critiques compact in the remark that Pat Cadigan's <u>Synners</u> (1990) "*resists* Gibson's mystical, quasi-religious solutions" (my italics) (Moylan, "Cyberpunk" 5). Claims of postmodern instability in the later "feminized" texts (Olsen, "Shadow" 286-87) contest unfavourable comparisons of cyberpunk, usually meaning <u>Neuromancer</u>, with other attempts at transcendence like Romanticism (Glazer 161-63; Voller).

Focussing on Gibson's second achievement, extrapolation of a culture for his topos, the largest academic narrative ties him to postmodernism. Neuromancer embedded cyberspace's glittering non-reality in a "sleazed-out global village of the near future" (McCaffery, "Gibson" 130). Published the same year as "Postmodernism, Or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism," this "desperate dystopic vision" (Benedikt 1) fictionalised theorists like Jameson, Kroker, Lyotard and Baudrillard. Neuromancer was read as bricolage, a style where "surface *is* content" (Hollinger 213), with flat characters (Christie, "Science Fiction" 46), contempt for history, and a cluttered landscape whose "*superspecificity*" (McCaffery, "Gibson" 135) derived, like its tense, "technopoetic" (130) style, from the detective novels of Dashell Hammett. To enthusiasts, cyberpunk was "the only art systematically exploring [Baudrillard's] `desert of the real'" (McCaffery, Introduction 9), continuing the "implosive" SF Baudrillard found in J.G. Ballard's Crash (Csicsery-Ronay, "Cyberpunk" 189-90). Most often it is blurred human/machine boundaries (Sponsler, 631-33; Olsen, "Shadow" 287; Pfeil 88) that make cyberpunk/Neuromancer "the supreme *literary* expression ... of postmodern-ism" (Jameson, Postmodernism 419).

In this narrative, cyberpunk/Gibson/Neuromancer become embroiled in debates on postmodernism itself. Rare voices (Rosenthal; Mead; Fitting, "Lessons") consider the machine/human blur has positive potential. More often it evokes the "fashionable despair" (Fitting 307) of Kroker and Baudrillard, covert in Sterling's vision of body and mind "invasion" (Preface, Mirrorshades xi), rising to frenetic relish for this future that collapses on the present in a junk world of meat puppets and simulacra (Csicsery-Ronay, "Futuristic" 29-33). Cyberpunk is accused of accepting this future's corporate hegemony (Easterbrook; Whalen) more often than it is made the rearguard of postmodernism (Olsen, "Cyberpunk").

Such treatments of Neuromancer/Gibson/cyberpunk follow the text's own omissions. In sharp contrast to coterminal work by Varley, Bradley and Delany, one glimpse of a lesbian is Gibson's sole '80s approach to alternate sexuality. The disempowered (Dery 751) black Rastas in Neuromancer and the sentimentalised

(Csicsery-Ronay, "Antimancer" 81) voodoo practitioners in <u>Count Zero</u> raise the same questions as Le Guin's cultural appropriations in <u>Always Coming Home</u>. As Tom Moylan notes, these apparently Utopian Others are reduced to "happy helpers" ("Global" 190) in "heterosexual male territories" (191). And *if* cyberpunk is a new class voice (Huntington, "Newness" 141) its failure to politicise, let alone revolutionise (Hollinger 216-18; Wolmark 111-15; Nixon 229-31; Shepard 116), matches the absence of a bourgeoisie between the street and the corporations in Gibson's work, affirming views that, like Modern Gothic, cyberpunk is actually a white middle-class "suburban romance" of inner-city life (Andrew Ross 146).

That <u>Neuromancer</u> and a fistful of Gibson's stories like "The Winter Market" (1986) and "Burning Chrome" (1985) are so often equated with cyberpunk (Latham 266) and then used to tie cyberpunk to postmodernism is partly because, like Jameson's essay, they do capture a specific historical moment. Writing <u>Schismatrix</u> (1985), Sterling felt "in a very late '70s or standard punk sort of way, that there was no way to resist the remorseless drive of technology" (McCaffery, "Sterling" 232). Though this echoes Baudrillard's "Simulacra and Science Fiction," its despair speaks for much of early '80s America, from disenchanted Democrats to affluent youth and counter-culture groups like feminists. But academic subsumption of Gibson has fossilised what was only a momentary negative stance (Delany, "Cyberpunk" 33), a deconstruction that had to collapse (Hollinger 217). By 1985 Donna Haraway had published the empowering vision of "A Cyborg Manifesto," while Sterling already saw the Third World "retrofitting" Western technology for ecological resurrection, as in "Green Days in Brunei" (Shippey, "Semiotic" 213).

The shift is presaged in Gibson's remark that, "When I hear critics say that my books are `hard and glossy,' I almost want to give up writing ... What I'm talking about is what being hard and glossy does to you" (McCaffery, "Gibson" 145). His later work severely dislocates the academic postmodern narrative, amid a consensus of deterioration (Suvin, "Gibson" 356-58; Hollinger 217; Eriksen 46) that can become as irate as Csicsery-Ronay's "turns the dry Cartesian patrix of cyberspace into a sloppy

swamp, and the high-tech future is colonized by the retrofitted archaic gremlins from the *anima mundi*" ("Futuristic" 39).

The fall is explained as inability to narrate a true alien, the AI entity forged at the end of <u>Neuromancer</u> (Christie, "AIs" 178), or as technical flaws. Gibson lapses into modernism with multiple viewpoints (McHale 163), or tries to re-produce the distance between real and simulacra lost in the postmodern fusion of <u>Neuromancer</u> (Csicsery-Ronay, "Antimancer" 82-84). Or, picking up Brooks Landon's point that cyberpunk must move beyond linear narrative, and hence cannot be restricted to prose (243-44), Claire Sponsler argues that Gibson achieved a postmodern surface, but with a cause-and-effect linear plot and characters who remain "free-willed, self-aware, humanist subject(s)" (636-67).

By now it is tempting to see Gibson as his own Boxmaker in <u>Count Zero</u>: an "autistic artist" (Csicsery-Ronay, "Antimancer" 85), momentarily part of a beyond-human entity, now making exquisite but incomprehensible junk bricolages. Beyond the apparent misreading of his project, the excessive stress on <u>Neuromancer</u> has deformed constructions of both postmodernism and SF. As hip-hop videos (Andrew Ross 114-15), the cyberculture and Haraway indicate, all postmodernism is not despair. Nor is all SF imploding, or even cyberpunk, as the coterminal publications of Heinlein, Bradley, Cherryh and Niven indicate. There is even a metanarrative (Luckhurst) of Gibson's reception as another case of academics trying to canonise SF on the strength of an isolated master work. <u>The Left Hand of Darkness</u> is the obvious predecessor that Luckhurst omits.

Fragments of a Hologram Hero: Gibson's *oeuvre* and Feminism

The feminist `Gibson narrative' intersects these stories at several points. A notable reader debate occurred in the feminist fanzine <u>Aurora</u>, when Sterling's claim that late '70s SF was "confused, self-involved and stale" (Preface, <u>Burning Chrome</u> 9) was read by Jeanne Gomoll as a classic suppression of women's writing: "dumps an entire decade [of women's SF] out of memory" (7). Sterling felt he had been "gutshot out of context" (Letter 7), but readers strongly seconded Gomoll. Nicola Nixon's

academic article drew a similar male response: "the sort of criticism ... that revels in overkill ... Gibson and Sterling ... have to be obsessed with the length of their dicks. Gimme a break!" (Pierce 440). In contrast, Delany has repeatedly remarked cyberpunk's "silent and unacknowledged appropriation" of feminist SF ("Cyberpunk" 29, "Zelazny" 12; Dery 762; Tatsumi 137; 176-77).

Though Joan Gordon thought cyberpunk a way for basically essentialist feminist SF to escape its pastoral utopias ("Yin" 199), the feminist narrative is largely synchronic and negative. Cyberpunk appropriates but cannot achieve the feminist revolutionary agenda (Wolmark, Aliens 120-21; Nixon 230-31). It perpetuates the Cartesian hierarchical split of mind/body (Rothfield 37-38). The general view is voiced by Pamela Sargent:

> a largely male-dominated new form of SF that has all the infatuation with technology characteristic of much past work is being hailed as the forerunner of future SF. (Gunn 514)

As Gordon observes, "[c]yberpunk isn't exactly a direct line to feminist thought" ("Yin" 197). Nowadays, a diachronic narrative of this connection begins most simply with Gibson's actual work.

Beyond the apparent echo of Russ's Jael in Gibson's steel-nailed street samurai, Molly Millions, a glance at "Johnny Mnemonic" (1981), affirms a debt to Varley (Delany, "Zelazny" 12; Suvin, "Gibson" 354), and hence to feminism by paternal descent. The gusto in Dog's "thick length of greyish tongue, licking huge canines ... a bright mosaic of scars ... a mask of total bestiality" that it had taken "time and a certain amount of creativity to assemble" ("Memnonic" 28) vividly recalls the creative surgeries of Javelin and Boss Tweed in The Ophiuchi Hotline. As Hollinger notes (209), at least one passage in Sterling's Involution Ocean about "a pure hedonistic joy in ... surgical alteration. They switched bodies, sexes, ages" (160) also picks up Varley's literalisation of feminist theory.

Though he rejects comparison between Dhalgren and Neuromancer, Gibson once told Gardner Dozois that he wanted to "do Delany for the '80s" (289), and like

Delany, he is unusual among cyberpunk writers (Nixon 223) in the number of women who increasingly populate the "Sprawl trilogy." Beside the mirrorshaded Molly, Neuromancer has the hero Case's lover Linda Lee, a female "Turing police" officer, and the two women in the Tessier-Ashpool corporate clan, the cloned 3Jane and her ancestor Marie-France Tessier. Their roles, however, show the limitations of cyberpunk borrowings from feminist SF.

Molly is gun girl for the "classic noir caper" (Fitting, "Lessons" 297) that resurrects a burnt-out street-hacker for a conspiracy to steal a valuable Tessier-Ashpool artifact, which is actually meant to unite the Clan's AIs or artificial intelligences. Molly is the strongest argument for cyberpunk women as "good at their jobs ... and ... very tough." Gordon does add that Molly is to some extent "a man in women's clothing, the most facile and least thoughtful representation of the liberated woman" ("Yin" 198). Claudia Springer discovers increasing ambivalence with Molly's descendants in films like Eve of Destruction (1991), where gynophobia emerges in Eve's being made "pregnant" with a nuclear device (724-26), but Tricia Rose finds such figures, like Ripley in Alien, do function as heroes to young (feminist) women (Dery 777).

Beside her violence, Molly's relationship with Case sites her in the liberal/ heterosexual tradition of heroic female `equality,' which can, as Gordon sees, simply masculinise. For instance, Molly's story ends with her alone, differing strongly from that of Cherryh's Yeager. Again, if Carol McGuirk finds an antecedent in Fritz Leiber's "Coming Attraction" (1950) (122-23), Delany repeatedly compares Molly to Jael. Yet however Russ's "afterimages are simply fixed to the sensitive retina" (Dery 762), as Nicola Nixon points out, Jael has a political agenda. She is also "an allegorical figuration of feminist struggle ... active, ruthless and productive rage," whereas Molly is "depoliticized and sapped of any revolutionary energy" (222).

Ann Balsamo's division of men and women along the Cartesian mind/body split in Pat Cadigan's Synners (688), will also fit Neuromancer; the process recalls Koontz's judo throw of his strong woman in The Bad Place. Like Julie, Molly does the body work, while Case uses his brain. And if Case is nowhere such a SNAM as Julie's partner, just as in The Bad Place, at the climax of the action, the raid on the T-A space

habitat, Molly's toughness fails. Captured, tortured, her mirror-lens broken, she must be rescued by the for once physically active Case.

An equally tough woman is the "Turing police" officer who is killed when she tries to arrest Case for helping AIs, as is his lover Linda Lee, who first appears in an almost classic fragmenting of the female body, "features reduced to a code: her cheekbones flaring scarlet ... mouth touched with hot gold" (Neuromancer 15). Such passages are often used to show Gibson's "technonaturalism" (Andrew Ross 155). What goes unmentioned here is the traditional gendering of female object and male gaze.

Having died as the obligatory female victim who demonstrates the toughness of Gibson's underworld, Linda becomes a simultaneous image of the body, "the meat," and a lost object of desire. It is wrenching cyber-experiences of Linda that coerce Case into the conspiracy. In the most intense experience, making love in cyberspace, Linda represents "the flesh ... a vast thing, beyond knowing, a sea of information ... infinite intricacy that only the body, in its strong blind way, could ever read" (Neuromancer 285). The scene explores the novel's central paradox: that to win cyberspace Case has lost Linda; that he can only possess her there, "out of the body;" and that the price may be too high. This concern, clearly important to Gibson himself, is expressed in traditional gendered terms. "Hard and glossy" is men, disembodiment, cyberspace. The "meat" is physical, feminine.

3Jane and Marie-France Tessier fill even more traditional roles. 3Jane is the novel's madwoman in the attic, immured in the clan's exotic space-habitat, indulging in S/M fantasy entertainments, writing semiotic analyses of its Gothic decay (Easterbrook 389). As Nixon points out, Tessier-Ashpool represent aristocratic Europe against the "bad family" capitalism of the Japanese corporations or *zaibatsus*. Nixon traces the pattern to '80s constructions of Japan as simultaneously threatening but copying American capitalism. In yet another "American consolatory fiction" like Rambo, these family/corporation threats are defeated by masculinist, entrepreneurial American capitalism, represented by Case. With 3Jane in charge, T-A is also a

"demonic parody of the `proper' nuclear American family" (223-25) a config-uration made only too familiar by King and Koontz.

Worse than 3Jane is her ancestor Marie-France, the corporation mastermind and creator of the two AIs whose desire to join powers the plot; but their wish is her design. As traditionally as Bradley's Keeper in The Sword of Aldones, the construction of Marie-France insists that old, powerful women are evil in SF (Russ, "Image" 83). This appears in constant imaging of Tessier-Ashpool as a wasp's nest, at times with the T-A logo. Though Neil Easter-brook remarks the cyberpunk usurpation of the Logos by the logo - the image of capitalism - (384-85) he does not add that the wasp-nest, the hive mind, is not simply an image of "primal" horror (Schroeder 158). From Heinlein's Starship Troopers to Stephen King's The Tommyknockers, it expresses masculinist boundary phobia, which in Case's dream approaches Gothic clarity. Like the subsumed twin in The Dark Half, the nest's ultimate awfulness is "[a]lien" (Neuromancer 152).

Though Gibson's later novels introduce female protagonists, they recall Sarah Lefanu's point that "to insert a female subject into a preponderantly male discourse" (23) may not change its gender constructions. As Sterling and Shiner's female protagonists in Islands in the Net (1988) and Deserted Cities of the Heart (1988) are traditionally "intuitive-feminine" (Andrew Ross 157-58), the central female character in Count Zero is a young, helpless girl. Angela is biologically modified by her father to be `ridden' by the *loa*, the voodoo gods cum fragmented AIs who now inhabit cyberspace. Rescued by the male protagonist after a corporate-escape attempt, she is hurried across America, occasionally issuing directions from the *loa* or weeping and curling up against him for comfort, before she ends as a star for the "simstims," the sensurround movie industry, a classic fate for glamorous female "meat."

The other important female character is also overwhelmingly "passive" (Csicsery-Ronay, "Antimancer" 77); a connoisseur (65) not an artist, an "ideal reader" and audience for the Boxmaker (73), operated on or by or against men, from her faithless lover to the grotesque capitalist Josef Virek, 400 kilograms of meat in a

German vat, who sends her after the Boxmaker. Marly thus performs a male Quest; but it is her passivity rather than her agency that foils Virek's hunt, returning her to an art gallery and happy if single insertion in capitalist life. Strong women do flit through Count Zero: Webber, the lesbian mercenary killed in Angela's escape, Rez, the space-tug captain, Jaylene Slide, a female hacker who kills the top villain (320-21). There are also two striking black street women, who pick up Bobby, "Count Zero," for the black hackers-cum-voodoo-priests who are the novel's centre of knowledge and power. But their strength is mostly image; they are servants to the priests, "horses" for the *loa* (163), and victims - one is killed on a cyber-raid (315).

Mona Lisa Overdrive follows three women's stories: Kumiko, exiled daughter of a *zaibatsu* boss, Angela, who escapes the prison of stardom, and Mona, a street-girl who escapes prostitution into Angela's shoes. *Dea ex machina* for all three is Molly, who does the kicking down of doors, shooting villains and hijacking helicopters. Nixon sees Molly maternalised in her care for Kumiko, in contrast to the latter's "helpless and sensitive" suicide mother (223). In fact, the novel reconciles Kumiko to her father by hinting that she sees the suicide was not his fault. In sharp contrast to Bradley's Thendara House, the three have male-oriented ends, as Mona reaches stardom, Angela "dies into cyberspace" (McHale 171) with her lost lover, "Count Zero," and Kumiko returns to the *zaibatsu*. That Molly simply disappears suggests that Gibson could not imagine his masculinised liberal hero figure as a traditional female subject, and so could not give her a `human' fate.

While feminists have concentrated on women and women's bodies, in a fulfilment of Jardine's demands for male feminists, Andrew Ross relates cyberpunk to the '80s "crisis of masculinity" (152); where the exaggerated bodies of Stallone or Schwarzenegger represent a "defensive ... masculinity in retreat," the cyberpunk "techno-body" was both a boy's dream of machine enhancement and a "castrating" nightmare. Like the vision of his body in Neuromancer, passive, muscleless and empty (301), Case's inability to bed Linda in the flesh may then express the "impotence of straight white males in the countercultures" (Andrew Ross 152-53). Though such

impotence is concealed in postmodern readings of <u>Neuromancer</u> as among cyberspace researchers (Allucquere Stone 113), it emerges clearly from the role of `love' in cyberpunk.

Carol McGuirk opens this approach when she sites <u>Neuromancer</u> as *SF noir*, a sub-genre of soft SF where Benedikt's "dystopic vision" is used primarily for "dramatic stylization." But this "heightened intonation of psychic pain" brings no heroic resolution. Clarifying much of the comment on Gibson's style, McGuirk remarks that, "In many of these texts the *only* hero is style" (118-19). In a fertile comparison with Edgar Allan Poe, she quotes D. H. Lawrence: "Poe knew only ... intense vibrations and heightened consciousness. Drugs, women, self-destruction, but anyhow the prismatic ecstacy of heightened consciousness" (qtd. McGuirk 119). But in a longstanding Western connection of women and death (Bassein 44-55), much of Poe's "ecstacy" springs from the loss of or memory of lost women: dreams like Lenore, nightmares like Ligeia. So Gibson's hacker heroes lose or are betrayed by a woman to gain cyberspace in stories like "Burning Chrome" or "The Winter Market." And if <u>Neuro-mancer</u> is "Romeo and Juliet in Chiba City" (Pukallus 259), Juliet is not Molly, as Suvin assumes ("Gibson" 354), but a woman with another "l" name: Linda Lee. McGuirk's theory also clarifies Suvin's complaint that Gibson loses "narrative intensity" with happy endings (355). What powers this *SF noir*, then, is a corollary of masculine impotence, the "psychic pain" of lost feminine objects of desire.

Femininity grows more integral to the Sprawl novels when Nixon considers cyber-space itself: by calling it "the matrix" Gibson evokes not only "erotic intensity" (Heim 62) but an entire gendered discourse. Cowboys "jack in." Hacker programs "bore and inject" (<u>Neuromancer</u> 201) into corporate data-constructs "metaphorically feminized" (Nixon 226) by their sheathing of ICE. Wolmark claims Gibson feminises the urban "Sprawl," but leaves cyberspace for "desire to escape ... the body, which ... is largely a masculine concern" (<u>Aliens</u> 118). Yet Nixon finds the matrix generating feminine forms, from Jaylene Slide's logo in <u>Count Zero</u> to a dead 3Jane in <u>Mona Lisa Overdrive</u>, to the presiding presence of MarieFrance and the *loa*, Mamman Brigitte,

Queen of the Dead. Cowboys and *loa* "ride" female horses, as Case "rides" Molly through her simstim units during the T-A raid. Angela can "dream" the matrix without jacking in. Perhaps the `problem' with the later novels is the "uncheckable transformation of viral software technology into a feminine Other" complete with female ghosts (226-27).

Nevertheless, SF, postmodern and cyberculture Gibson stories all retain the cultural bias, ignoring any relation to feminism. It is no accident that <u>Neuromancer</u> was canonised chiefly by male critics and theorists, for its hardness, slickness and despair. As David Porush observes, Baudrillard's despair is that of a high priest losing power (325). Yet when Molly kills an assassin to save and then live with "Johnny Mnemonic" (1981) she is as positive a female hero as any in Varley, and she appears at the height of both Female Gothic approval, and feminist political clout. What feminist story, then, can explain the later work, ending with Gibson's own erasure of Molly from the script of <u>Johnny Mnemonic</u> (1995) as it became a star vehicle for Keanu Reeves?

Again, such a narrative might notice that in 1981 American feminism was both at its political height and closing to men, just as feminist SF, with Lynn and Young and Gearhart Miller, was turning to separatist, essentialist, pastoral Utopias. Varley was struggling to stay in Women's Country; Delany had already moved to Neveryon. But writers like Heinlein, Cherryh, Niven, Bradley and Le Guin were reaching the heights of their positive response, and as reader complaints suggest (Bradley, Introduction, <u>Amazons</u> 13), male SF readers might well feel shut out.

So for the first time, especially to young male SF readers and writers, feminist SF could appear the *doxa* (Barthes 200), the establishment. And it was a *doxa* against SF tradition: pastoral, female, non-technological, and worse still, out of touch with the new culture and topos of the information revolution. This may explain why Gibson and Shiner found '70s SF "uninteresting" (McCaffery, "Gibson" 140; "Skating" 186). Sterling admires <u>Always Coming Home</u>, but feels no affinity ("Sterling" 229). Shiner read Gibson with relief because the world of "Burning Chrome" was "real" ("Skating"

186). As Gordon demands, cyberpunk grapples with an altered world, but as Gomoll understood, it is also the SF backlash. That it elides "great social movements" like feminism (Andrew Ross 152) argues an "ignor[ing of] mothers" (Tatsumi 177), a reactive rather than no relationship. Ironically, in trying to escape the feminist *doxa*, cyberpunk landed back in the Gernsback continuum of masculinist adventure stories and technological focus, a shift seized upon by equally masculinist theorists of postmodernism.

Gibson's subsequent `decline' can appear a course amid impossible choices. The moment of Neuromancer was gone, and he had no desire to prolong its despair. The strongest SF critiques, from voices as influential as Delany and Suvin, found cyberpunk adolescent, or attacked its sexism; and in the '80s, cyberpunk's countercultural stance compelled acceptance of feminism's higher moral ground. But unlike Delany, Gibson could not move into a `men's space.' That he saw Count Zero as a chance to "do characterisation" (McCaffery, "Gibson" 138-39) implies that he saw his texts in a literary rather than postmodern or SF frame; but in SF this moves his work toward the practice of writers like Le Guin. Yet for Gibson, Women's Country was now unattainable: not simply the *doxa*, non-technological and retrogressive, but from both feminist and cyberpunk sides, ideologically closed.

Conversely, that masculinist literary tradition focuses on characterisation without producing feminist women may partly explain why Sterling has a `feminine' protagonist in Islands in the Net, though he read "a lot of feminist work" (McCaffery, "Sterling" 229) beforehand. And when not sliding back into the "boystown" (Andrew Ross, 152) of Gerns-back's original parameters (107-09), "themes of transcendence" mark SF "at its most conventional" (Hollinger 206). Hence if Gibson's feminized women are `literary,' his turn to transcendence again re-inserts him in the Gernsback continuum.

Entangled with these problems is the question of plot. With Neuromancer Gibson knew "I would need a traditional plot armature that had proven its potential for narrative action" (McCaffery, "Gibson" 137). To Tom Maddox, without this "thriller"

frame, Gibson cannot "*go* anywhere" (47), and Inge Eriksen calls the "soft, unhappy end" of <u>Mona Lisa Overdrive</u> a near "artistic suicide" (46). But despite claims that "white-hot speed" (Olsen, "Cyberpunk" 149) "meticulous superficiality" and comic-book characters are true postmodernism (Christie, "AIs" 173), Tom Moylan considers that "Gibson's texts "fall under the compromising influence of the primary plot and protagonists" (Global 189). Such plots force characters into stock narrative functions, making humanist subjects and masculinist bias almost inevitable. And whether drawn from the detective novel or the spy story (Maddox 47), they expose SF's persistent generic weakness: postmodern or not, cyberpunk has produced a new topos without a new mythos to match.

Allied to this, too, is the inertial momentum of the Gernsback continuum. Delany observes that even "the current cutting edge of science fiction - seems to be committed to narrative in a very simplistic way" (Tatsumi 180). McGuirk adds, "If science fiction ever succeeds in weaning itself completely from its linear, pulp-transmitted adventure fiction plot lines, it will probably turn into something other than science fiction" (126). The reception of <u>Dhalgren</u> says that readers will be Gernsback's gatekeepers. Gibson, then, has been caught twice over in the sinisterly powerful tradition that his own story warns against (Bredehoft 257-60). Reader and market demand, narrative tradition, masculinist characterisation, even the concern with transcendence fall in this continuum, which neither reaction against feminism nor attempts to access women's writing practices could break.

Yet there were alternatives. Gibson did not problematise a formulaic narrative, as Calvino did in <u>If On A Winter's Night a Traveler</u> (Sponsler 636). Nor has he rejected linear narrative, as Le Guin did in <u>Always Coming Home</u> or Russ in <u>The Female Man</u>, or shifted into textual experiment, as Delany did with <u>Dhalgren</u>. Moreover, writers like Marge Piercy, Pat Cadigan, eluki bes shahar, and Gibson's own protegee, Wilhelmina Baird, have produced "feminist futurism" (Csicsery-Ronay, "Futuristic" 44) within the cyberpunk frame. All these writers keep a linear, suspenseful, often hard-boiled narrative, but like Haraway, they seem to consider that "Any transcendentalist move ...

produces death" (Penley and Ross 16). Piercy explores Haraway's empowering vision of the female cyborg. Cadigan keeps cyberspace but sutures the mind/body split by leaving her female protagonist Net capability and a lover in the flesh. Baird's `Junk World' omits cyberspace, again erasing the Cartesian split, then powers her *SF noir* by the psychic pain of a female narrator for male objects of desire. And bes shahar, having stripped her protagonist of body and much identity, precipitates her into new flesh with a rejection of male offers to "make it safe" (177), that leaves her a classic postmodern subject, "who I will be in the next minute" (250), but a gritty survivor, alone and in (some) command of her fate.

The Vor Game: Bujold and Military SF

Where Gibson produced a new topos and cultural extrapolation, crystallized a social movement, was canonised by critics and is globally famous, as of 1995 there are no academic articles on Bujold. The SF encyclopedia says little beyond "funny and humane" (171), and she is unknown outside SF. Gibson is as noted for his breadth of cultural reference (Grant 44) as his style, whose aesthetic lure is visible from the first notorious sentence of <u>Neuromancer</u>: "The sky above the port was the colour of television, tuned to a dead channel" (9). Bujold's prose is transparent, workmanlike, or uses homely imagery that recalls the women's tradition of "domestic" SF. She writes unabashed space opera, with little concern for technology, and she has won two Nebulas and four Hugo awards.

Taken with Kim Stanley Robinson's awards for the Mars series in the early '90s, these seals of reader approval are eloquent testimony to a *non*-implosive, Gernsbackian continuum of SF set in now supposedly "dreary and boring" (Csicsery-Ronay, "Sentimental" 223) outer space. Since Bujold began publishing in 1986, they are also a strong argument for the ineffectual backlash of cyberpunk. And like Charles Platt's diatribe on women's influence in "The Rape of Science Fiction" (46), they suggest how far writers like Le Guin, with her emphasis on characterisation, and Connie Willis, with her bent for satire and comedy, have infiltrated the *doxa* of SF.

This is particularly clear when Bujold's work is classified as military SF.

Though her first Nebula winner, <u>Falling Free</u> (1988), offers some elegant engineering SF with the space-construction of a parabolic mirror, Bujold can turn a neat paragraph on space weapons' evolution when necessary (<u>Vor</u> 267-68). But hardware occupies much more of David Weber's Honor Harrington series, while `serious' examples like Jerry Pournelle's CoDominium series militarise the discourse of rights, portraying heroic soldier protagonists, as in <u>Footfall</u>. What makes Bujold's work "military" is its usual setting in the armed forces of the planet Barrayar, its space opera plots of intrigue and border skirmish, and, by a paradox, its characters. Coupling masculinist and feminist concerns, Bujold writes about `soldiers' from the anti-war, `pro-people' stances common to the peace movement and many feminists.

Unlike Le Guin in <u>The Word for World is Forest</u>, Bujold's pacifism is as covert as her subsuming of other feminism. This sites her with writers like Willis, Karen Joy Fowler and Sheri S. Tepper as "post feminist crypsi SF" (Gordon, "Willis" 5). Where Gibson enacts a masculinist backlash, Bujold echoes Willis's disavowal of feminism (5). She would rather "call myself a human beingist" (Lake 9). Her credo includes "to journey from the self to the other is an improvement ... People are more important than things ... Good and evil are only meaningful as a quality of individuals possessing free will" (11). Given these liberal `women's' concerns, it is no surprise that she largely omits racial Others and restricts alternate sexuality to men. Yet her responses to a male interviewer invoke essentialist feminism: "everything I've written is by definition through female eyes" (9). If male readers miss these nuances, "I don't write like a man, you just read like one" (8). Such `femalestuff' "requires deeper and more original thought to handle than `malestuff'" (9).

This echoes both essentialist feminism and the difficulties of Le Guin, another heterosexual liberal, in writing about women before feminism. Yet Bujold is accomplished in the feminist strategy of recuperating myths, as in her cross of Ariadne and Andromeda in "Labyrinth" (1989), where the hero sleeps with and is rescued by a female Minotaur. If "there are no Utopias without women" (Fitting, "Men" 107) <u>Ethan of Athos</u> (1986) constructs a gay culture/world whose sole female presence is donated

ovaries, while in Falling Free her "quaddies," genetically engineered for space with four hands, turn Dr. Moreau's grotesques to human subjects. Her covert feminism emerges most strikingly in the Barrayar novels, with the renovation of military characters.

Like Le Guin, Bujold produces `malestuff' first. After Shards of Honour (1986) written in 1983, her Barrayar novels focus on Miles Vorkosigan, a classic young, disadvantaged male protagonist winning against enormous odds. Shards of Honour, however, concerns Cordelia Naismith, an "astrocartographer" (12) who finally marries an enemy from militaristic, quasi-feudal Barrayar. This SF version of The Tamarind Seed makes remarkable variations on generic formulas. To begin with, a male subordinate hit by a "nerve disruptor" in the first pages does not die, even with the style of killings in Neuromancer, but becomes a zombie whom Cordelia must tend on a trek through hostile country. At its end, Bujold stubbornly refuses the usual convenient elision of such casualties. Instead she spells out his future, "an endless series of hospital days as straight and same as a tunnel to the end of his life" (86). The novel's closure punctures the formulaic envelope as fiercely as Michaels does in Female Gothic. Space battle in Niven and Pournelle is sanitised by distance, "lovely to see ... ships ... like smooth black eggs... drives radiating dazzling light... Scintillations in the black flanks ... lines of green and ruby" laser fire (Mote 320-21). Bujold extrapolates the human cost with a space burial detail, where the reader confronts the `reality' of death by decompression: a corpse "spinning fiercely, guts split open ... and hanging out in a frozen cascade" (Shards 312).

Beyond the anti-war discourse, Bujold remodels stock figures like the heroic space-fleet commander. Like the one from The Mote in God's Eye, Cordelia's husband Aral suffers military reverses but wins a woman, but unlike Niven and Pournelle's character, he is an ex-lover of the equally military villain. Cordelia herself eventually sums him up as, "`bisexual, but subconsciously more attracted to men ... Or rather - to soldiers ... The first time he met me I was in uniform ... He thought it was love at first sight'" (Mirror 286). This undoes both military and romance cliches, in a manner

characteristic of Bujold but highly unusual in hard or military SF.

The effect increases with the figure of Sergeant Bothari, "`[a] very complex man with a very limited range of expression, who's had some very bad experiences'" (Shards 54). Bothari mutates two stock figures, the tough, bullying sergeant of films like Platoon (1986) and Heartbreak Ridge (1986), and Koontz's uncomplicatedly evil Male Gothic villain. He enters Shards of Honour as a torturer, rapist and possibly serial killer. But where Koontz could only glance toward humanising such a figure, Bujold shapes her monster as a fellow-victim, before Cordelia's own pity makes him her rescuer.

Bothari's role as bodyguard through Miles' childhood is largely over before the next novel, The Warrior's Apprentice (1986), where Bothari lets himself be shot by another torture victim, whom he still `loves.' If Bujold humanises, she does not idealise; the sequence of his `marriage' with this catatonic victim manages the rare feat of evoking repulsion and sympathy at once. It is in Barrayar (1991), chronologically earlier but written later, "to grow in power and control before I could do justice to [its] themes" (Lake 8), that Bujold manages the equally rare double of a characterisation of `high' literary subtlety, based on formulaic elements and slotting neatly into a space opera's linear, suspenseful frame.

Here Bothari's stock bad childhood as a whore's bastard is glanced over, without either exaggeration or sentimentality, while the adult Bothari appears in succession as a true killer, sexually aroused by the prospect of violence, then as midwife for a rescued noblewoman, then, in the climactic scene, as Cordelia's proxy executioner. By the book's close the reader can echo Aral's summary with true understanding. Yet none of this impedes the narrative. Among women's interventions in the Gernsback continuum of action/suspense and technical focus, Bothari's characterisation is a *tour de force* that almost overshadows Bujold's main hero, Cordelia's son Miles.

As Bujold perceives, Miles is actually a codedly feminine hero, a "female in disguise." A four-feet-nine dwarf, brittle-boned from fetal damage on a planet where

`mutants' are a killing matter, winning by "manipulation, intelligence and self control," Miles is "socially disadvantaged," just as women in patriarchal society are made to feel deformed (Lake 8). Atop his problems as an heir of military stars, he is an aristocrat in a service his father has democratised; this introduces class issues from the opposite angle to Gibson, yet sites Miles in the classic outlaw's role, apparently a typical anti-hero. But hardly anything in Jim Villani's description of women writers' anti-heroes fits Miles. He is "highly intelligent" but not "rendered impotent by ... nature and/or culture" (26). If "not brave in the accepted masculine sense" he is anything but "indecisive," though often "lonely" he is not solitary, and he is above all a "charismatic leader" who does inspire "blind faith" everywhere (27). And unlike Frankenstein or Le Guin's Shevek, his sexuality is not "emasculated" (27-28).

As a result, Miles offers both male and female readers an alluring positive identification. For the stereotypic male adolescent he is a lesson in fantasy success, while a female reader finds the true avatar of Le Guin's "manwoman," a hero with all a woman's drawbacks who succeeds brilliantly in male heroic roles. In this subversion of the Gernsback continuum, so striking against a Gibson `hero' like Bobby or Case, humour is critical. Bujold makes Miles both comic and able to laugh at himself, often using his point of view subversively, as when he is propositioned by his eight-foot virgin Minotaur. Warned about lovemaking, she says, "`I have a very high pain threshold'," to which an appalled Miles' aside is, "*But I don't*" ("Labyrinth" 166).

Here comedy and the codedly feminine hero operate not only to humanise the stock hero but to deconstruct gender hierarchies in a manner Gibson never achieves. While a female reader might enjoy the reversal of a larger, stronger woman, a male reader might find comfort in learning heroes too are terrified by female sexuality, yet can make good. So Miles becomes a white male form of Coyote, the conquering trickster, a role helped by his repeatedly ramshackle and often almost comic triumphs in various space opera plots. Thus in The Warrior's Apprentice the "forward momentum" of panic, bluff, trickery and outright lies lets a youthful Miles end a

blockade war as winning admiral in a very questionably acquired mercenary fleet.

In contrast to this women's intervention in Gernsbackian space opera Bujold produces a strand of `female space opera.' In <u>Shards of Honour</u>, `malestuff' is constantly undercut by anti-war views. To Cordelia, young male soldiers are "'[p]oor lambs'," an "`animal sacri-fice'" (84). The burial detail provides a woman's tally of military `losses': "Nine months of pregnancy, childbirth, two years of diapering... Tens of thousands of meals, thousands of bedtime stories'" (309). Cordelia herself functions as a remarkable blend of the liberal/ heterosexual and gynocentric female hero, "`as professional as any officer I've ever served with, without once trying be an, an imitation man'" (58). Ethically determined to protest war and preserve life, she can still command a ship, wield a stunner, spin a nifty lie, and anticipate the men in heading off a mutiny; but foreshadowing Miles, she replaces Yeager's or Cirocco's physical toughness with wits.

Behind Cordelia lies her doubly Utopian home-world, Beta Colony, a brief liberal/ heterosexual vision where men and women share armed service, uterine replicators allow reproduction *in vivo* or *in vitro*, girls' ears and hymens are pierced at puberty, and hermaphrodites live next to licenced sexual therapists. This parallel to Delany's Triton lets Bujold poke fun at defamiliarised sexual mores such as "the barbaric Barrayaran custom of introducing their women to sex with the pain of unanaesthetized defloration" (<u>Barrayar</u> 177). But unlike feminist Utopias, even Whileaway, Beta Colony also leads galactic technology. And Bujold ironises its jingoism and its media during Cordelia's visit home for a wrongly awarded medal from the President, "Steady Freddy," whose name evokes a stock, "I didn't vote for him" (<u>Shards</u> 218).

In <u>Barrayar</u> Bujold moves to Bradley's ground, focussing on biological women's concerns. An imperial usurper's plot ties into the story of Miles-as-fetus, damaged by an assassination attempt on his father, then under threat from his grandfather, who tries to abort the "mutant," then, when Miles is transferred to a "uterine replicator," taken `hostage' by the usurper. Where the pain of loss drives

Neuromancer, the emotional impulsion of Barrayar is the expression of Cordelia's love, fear and rage as she struggles to save both husband and son. But Bujold neatly dodges Bradley's problems in Darkover Landfall by having Cordelia fight against Miles's abortion, rather than facing the thornier problem of whether an abortion should be done.

Though two women do have babies in Barrayar, neither Bujold nor her women accept Bradley's saw that "the world will go as it will." Cordelia saves Miles with Betan technology, then by a rescue raid in defiance of her husband, then by having Bothari execute the usurper on her order. She also has a female support system: the noblewoman whose baby Bothari delivers has befriended her, her female bodyguard guides the palace raid. Finally, the most striking `femalestuff' of the novel is the scene where the fate of Barrayar is decided as Cordelia and the child emperor's captive mother trade the whereabouts of their sons.

This female space opera recalls the '70s all-women post-disaster worlds in James Tiptree's "Houston, Houston, Do You Read?" (1976) and Suzy McKee Charnas' Motherlines (1978), that parallel masculinism in Lucifer's Hammer and The Stand. So too in Body of Glass (1991) Marge Piercy humanises her android warrior in a matrilineal women's family, where Koontz expels his augmented baboon from the nuclear family in Watchers. Yet despite the Hugo that implies reader approval, and Bujold's intent to write more `femalestuff' (Lake 9), the series' structure has marginalised Cordelia as effectively as Bradley did her Amazons. The Warrior's Apprentice signals an ominous resurgence of the Gernsback continuum: in Brothers In Arms (1989), Borders of Infinity (1989), The Vor Game (1990), and Mirror Dance (1994), the hero, however codedly feminine, is the traditional young male, and his very popularity pressures Bujold to continue. Any further `female space opera' will demand a new protagonist, from outside Miles' family. Moreover, despite the increasing depth and subtlety of work like Barrayar and Mirror Dance, much of the series' power comes from Miles' position as *enfant terrible*, heir to a powerful father and prospective heir to a childless emperor. To progress, the sequence must have the

emperor marry and the father die. Despite hints of Miles' approaching maturation (Counihan 23), Bujold's 1996 book, <u>Cetaganda</u>, is an earlier adventure, a chronological retreat.

Further, though Bujold argues that "[n]o feminist, writing a feminist tract" can "change any man's ... fixed mind" but that "a book packaged as militarist SF" might bring in "alien ideas" unnoticed (Lake 9), her need to stress the female aspects of her work suggests that male readers ignore these elements. In fact, they compliment her on "writing like a man" (7), a phrase that must throw her subversive claim into serious doubt.

The Gernsback Singularity

Together, Bujold's and Gibson's work illustrates options of the '80s, when subsumption and reaction succeed overtly politicised or essentialist feminist SF. A similar shift appears in '80s feminist Utopias, like Tepper's <u>The Gate to Women's Country</u> (1988) (Fitting, "Reconsiderations" 39-45; Wolmark, <u>Aliens</u> 87- 100). Though Gibson reacts against feminism's perceived influence and Bujold subsumes feminist material, both are also testimonials to the persistence of the Gernsback continuum. In the reception of <u>Neuromancer</u> and the early discourse of cyberpunk it revealed the endurance of masculinist bias in SF and academia. It reappears in Gibson's turn to transcendental solutions as he tried to escape postmodernist despair without turning to feminism. For the first half of the '90s, despite feminist-based innovations and intent to produce `femalestuff,' Bujold has apparently been pulled back toward the same mold.

From this perspective, neither cyberpunk nor feminism has nor will transform SF. In a characteristic manner, both have rather been accumulated; opened, at times, to men and women alike, as an extra narrative space. Viewed in retrospect, the various interactions of SF and feminism suggest a new metaphor: SF is less a cyborg than a heterogeneous enormity like the space habitat in Cherryh's <u>Port Eternity</u>. With room for allies and wars and dozens of aliens, it scoops up and amalgamates passing ships and spacefarers and bumbles on through the literary continuum, a Junk World

perturbance, a singularity in itself.

- Section 14 -

(A) CLOSURE

Demon: So, we're here at last. How'dja wanna wind it up?

Daemon:....

Demon: Academic business-style? Plenty of jargon? Quite impersonal?

Daemon:....

Demon: Gravid and orotund? Oracular drum-roll and closing enigma, etc. etc.?

Daemon:....

Demon: Well, you must've concluded *something*! C'mon, don't hold out on me - We gonna do this together or what?

Daemon: Oh, very well....

Daemon and Demon:

The texts studied here all responded in some manner to feminism, in ways that support Jameson's hypothesis. If popular fiction "promises, at best, to give narrative and symbolic coherence to popular questions and anxieties" rather than "structural solutions" (Rosenthal 100), it remains a way of reasoning about rather than passively recording experience and society. The writers' diverse individual engagements also argue against the assumption that popular fiction is formulaic, rigid and strait-jacketed, while their speed and flexibility of response contests the still current view of popular fiction as debased copies of high fiction (McHale, qtd. Luckhurst 361). Dates of publication show the popular writers engaged feminism without waiting to colonise high literary formulations. Several times they pre-date the engagements of high fiction with feminism(s), as when Russ's valorizing of lesbianism leads Bertha Harris and Rita Mae Brown's work by three or four years.

Generic traditions did affect this synergy. Overall, Female Gothic was closest in step with the women's movement: feminist ideas and stances are surprisingly often paralleled or anticipated by Female Gothic writers, and the relation between the pair also duplicates later contradictions and oppositions within feminism. Given the more rigid form, Female Gothic writers interacted with feminism as quickly and as strongly as those working in the relatively freer imaginative field of SF.

Male Gothic writers, in contrast, contend with the enormous normative pressure

of the most reactive genre, reinforced by the construction of Western masculinity and feminism's threat, rather than promise, to genre and writers both. Yet Koontz managed striking innovations to accommodate early liberal feminism, while in '90s texts like <u>Rose Madder</u> (1995) and <u>Dolores Claiborne</u> (1992), King has at last been able to produce a female protagonist. That within the time-frame of this study both fall back into the reactive treatment of women, in the widest-selling of the three genres, with the most general and youngest audience, is the strongest argument against feminism's ability to affect its habitus.

SF offers writers at once the widest and the most potentially Utopian of all responses to feminism; at times the writers I consider accepted the challenge with a brilliance no other genre reached. Feminist SF writers have produced some of the most remarkable feminist fiction, while Le Guin and Russ shared the construction of basic feminist concepts such as androgyny. Several male writers responded as readily, if not as effectively, in the white writers' case, while for Delany, feminism repeated in fiction its role for gay theory and activism: it facilitated a marginalised writer's struggle to construct his own imaginative space.

Setting aside this generic differencing, the writers most innovatively responding to feminism, the most productive, in Ricoeur's terms, appear to be those Othered by race and/or sexuality, like Russ or Delany, followed by those, like Le Guin and Michaels, who are Othered by gender, but unlike Bradley, do not suffer heavy economic constraints. Economic-ally, however, all these writers are solidly middle class. The most reproductive writers, in Ricoeur's terms, are those centred by race, sexuality and gender; here there is striking similarity between the trajectory of Niven, another firmly middle-class white male, and those of King and Koontz, who transit from poverty to plutocracy without ever actually joining the middle-class. One might therefore twist the Marxist basis of Hartsock's standpoint theory to argue that, while workers may have a "privileged" viewpoint of capitalism, it is the standpoint of Others in gender, race or sexuality that propels dissidence and resistance, as translated into literary innovation. Such resistance actually requires middle-class economic freedom

to substantiate. In contrast, those writers centred by race and sexuality but economically Othered get the worse side of capitalism. They do or must endorse the economic and class hegemony to survive.

Within the study's time-frame, temporal patterns argue less for generic responses *en bloc* than for different ways, affected by both genre and individual politics, of reasoning in fiction. Firstly, some writers seem to have reasoned *for* feminist(s), just as Heinlein did for the sexual revolution: here SF leads the way, with Russ and Delany renovating character types and formulating techniques to valorise women in the pre-feminist '60s. Next are writers who reason *along with* feminism(s): in the late '60s Ursula Le Guin spectacularly and Barbara Michaels more covertly are working, within their different genres, to explore gender theory and parallel the early feminist critiques of androcentrism. In the early '70s the pattern complicates as writers who reason from other writers, like Bradley from Le Guin, join those who reason in widely different ways *about* feminism, like King, Koontz, and Heinlein, including those at first resistant, like Whitney. Moreover, there are now writers reasoning *from* feminism, like Varley and Bradley, and who use feminist developments for diverging purposes, like Delany in the mid-'70s.

In the '80s some writers, like King and Niven, are obliged to entertain feminist stances *post facto*, while others, like Cherryh, first begin to reason from feminism. Still others, like Michaels and Koontz, turn to reason *against* feminism, and yet others, like Delany and Varley, either stop reasoning or look elsewhere. Moreover, the '80s bring writers like Bujold and Gibson who reason reactively from feminism(s), or draw covertly on its resources. There is no clearcut or static pattern within these different forms of reasoning, but they do show diachronic change, both within and between *oeuvres*.

These aspects of the synergy can be related with extreme roughness to the historical phases of feminism. In the late '60s, the high-tide of the revolutionary decade in America, liberal-minded writers from genres in tune with feminism, like Female Gothic, or flexible in their options, like SF, can enthusiastically endorse feminism(s).

This is also the widely publicised unified phase of feminism, and such writers share its "critiques of androcentrism." Writers constrained by politics or genre, or both, respond later, so that in the mid-'70s, when revlutionary fervor is chilling but feminist theoretic and fictional expansion is at its height, the Male Gothic writers are most favourable, while in the late '70s writers like Whitney, Bradley, Le Guin and even Varley embrace the trend to gynocentrism. Conversely, trail-breakers like Delany and Russ have moved toward separatism or to Men's Country.

The phases of feminism dovetail with general American history in the early '80s, when Reagan's election ends the '70s revolutionary twilight, just as the American women's movement fractures internally. Coterminally, Barbara Michaels achieves in rapid succession her greatest victory over generic restraints, and a repudiation of new feminist trends where she speaks for many women in and outside feminism. In the '80s, a period of confusion but also of feminist expansion, and of increasing economic bleakness and general reactionism, Male Gothic writers mix attempts to adapt with turns against feminism, while the more centrestream SF writers demonstrate a time-lag between political events and their fictional representation: like the film Aliens, the most reactive SF writer, Larry Niven, is most favourable to women in the mid-'80s, when the political height of feminism had passed. This paradox is matched when Le Guin's Always Coming Home and Bradley's Thendara House overlap in mid-'80s SF with the rise of cyberpunk and the new crypto-feminism. This again matches the situation of feminism(s) at large, with liberal feminist discourse and expectations adapted, while separatist and lesbian initiatives are contested within and without the movement, and for many women the name "feminist" becomes anathema. By then Russ and Delany have disappeared or moved into `men's space.' By the end of the '80s, the Male Gothic writers have regressed toward tradition but Female Gothic has acquired a new feminist-based option, and SF has assimilated feminism, in varying strengths and patterns, within its enormous heterogeneous field.

Not surprisingly, the study as a whole yields no easy answer to the question, "Do the fossils of the synergy left by popular fiction argue that feminism has or has not

made a social difference?" The only possible response is, Both. What emerges is the depth and variety of ways in which such fiction models, resists, incorporates, is mutated by and mediates feminist ideas and images. This indicates the question would be better re-phrased as, "*How* has feminism made a difference?" Clearly, even for Male Gothic, the answer here is a powerful, Yes. This apparent frivolity opens the range of feminism's social interactions, as broad in popular fiction as in the spread from rape shelters to academic queer theorists. A simple answer to such diversity is not tenable. What the study reveals is a record of this complexity, and its more astonishing breadth.

If, however, the traditional terms of actor and acted-upon are matched with feminism's own theoretical bent to reveal observers' interests and observees' agency, the question might be reframed as, "What does popular fiction show about the social interactions of feminism?" And here fiction turns a lens back upon feminist history in a manner both encouraging and chastening, as writers model feminist initiatives, mistakes, schisms, and the cultural images they produce. It is not necessary to experience '70s euphoria or '80s separatism: from Varley's joyous gender-switching to Michaels' turn against mothers, their course and consequences are written in the popular *oeuvres*.

Interrogating the relics of the synergy through this lens contradicts the also contradictory assumptions underlying much earlier feminist writing, not only on popular culture, or even about representation, but about the situation of feminist(s). I too have worked from the implicit assumptions that on the one hand, popular culture deforms passive but `correct' feminist material, and on the other, that feminist(s) are a brave band of crusaders beleaguered and misunderstood. Tracing the synergy of feminism(s) and popular fictions argues that in fact, the relationship is truly interactive. Its relics support Denfeld's implicit argument, expressed as criticism of feminism(s), against Susan Faludi's vision of a patriarchal conspiracy, or even the less extreme but generally accepted views, like Virginia Sapiro's, of the '80s as generally reactionary. Rather, the record of the synergy suggests, cultural images of feminism(s) derive not

only from traditional thinking or a patriarchal backlash, but from feminists' own actions. The once sorely needed assertion of female agency must become an acceptance of feminist responsibility.

Thus the thesis is in truth a form of feminist history, sharing both the '90s sense of retrospection, and the new academic shading of non-aesthetic literary analysis into cultural and historical studies. This too is a praxis of feminism(s), whose academic initiatives have, inevitably, forwarded the shifting of traditional fields. As a final step in this process, the various non-academic sections turn the study's lens back on the PhD genre. As feminism destabilises popular fiction, and '80s popular fiction models the destabilisation of feminism, this study works to destabilise its own form. In Judith Butler's words, "[t]o deconstruct is not to negate or to dismiss, but to call into question, and perhaps most importantly, to open up a term ... to a reusage or deployment that previously has not been authorized" ("Contingent" 15). The study's final project, then, is to problematise its own presence; by opening the genre to unauthorised reusage, to have its readers feel the form's fragile, temporal, political nature; to make it understood as a balance-act in itself.

Demon: Whew! Got it over with. Right - now, how do we finish up?

Daemon:....

Demon: Come on! Those are our findings. Now how do we *conclude*?

Daemon:....

Demon: Don't just sit there breathing. Whadda ya want? Good tight official closure? Everything tied up and knotted off?

Daemon:....

Demon: Open, then? In the lap of the gods?

Daemon:....

Demon: A postmodern trendy? Word-play, format-fiddle, multiple voices dissolving into sunset -

Daemon:....

Demon: Then be original! That's the point of this whole thing, isn't it? 'Original

research.' Think up an original end!

Daemon: Aristotle. In species, impossible. Only in type.

Demon: "Everything has a beginning, middle and end." And did God have any choice in the making of the universe, etc., thanks to Albert Einstein, yes. Then for Hel's sake, get a new type!

Daemon:....?

Demon: When is an ending not an ending? How about not even a punctuated [.]

Daemon: Done. Robert Graves's comma.

Demon: Multiple choice.

Daemon: Done. You will recall that piece of Rhoda Lerman's that Rosinsky quoted?

Call Me Ishtar? "They kissed for a long time.
And disappeared into the sunset.
And disappeared into the morning.
And disappeared into the night.
And didn't disappear at all.
Check one."

Demon: Hmph. Roll it over then. Back to the beginning...

Daemon: E.R. Edison's The Worm Ouroboros.

Demon: Hell's delight! Then what about an utter ambiguity...

Daemon: "The Waste Land."

Demon: Unravel it. Just refuse to go on!

Daemon: Who Are About to Die...

Demon: God's eyes! An envoi ...

Daemon: "Goe, litel book"? Chaucer. Troylus and Criseyde. Russ. The Female Man.

Demon: Unravel the language -

Daemon: Delany's Dhalgren.

Demon: Then walk out! Nail up Unfinished Project! Strike!

Daemon:....

Demon: Sack the brownies! Close the sweatshop! Smash the matrix! Cut the -

Daemon: Toss.

Demon:.....?

Daemon: Toss you for it.

Demon: Toss what? For WHAT?

Daemon: These two pennies. Toss.

Demon: There aren't pennies now except in two-up games! WHAT are you talking about?

Daemon:....

Demon: *All* right. Back with Albert goddamn Einstein, and now God *is* gonna play dice. What're you betting? Oh, you'll tell me after. Shoulda guessed. "Time is a child, moving counters in a game. The royal power is a child's." Nah, I hate Heraclitus, even in Wheelwright's translation. What's it say in "At the Rialto"? "It didn't matter which theatre I chose ... This was a delayed-choice experiment and David was already in flight." Might've known quantum theory'd get in there somehow, and via Connie Willis at that. You gonna spin, or I do? Right-ho. Come in, spinner. Toss.

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