THE WOMEN MEN DON'T SEE

In the previous chapter I looked at debates about whether love, sex, and women had any place in science fiction at all. In this chapter I examine stories about women and science fiction that take for granted that women are part of science fiction. My examination includes a consideration of the competing discourses around the conjunction of "women" and "science fiction." I also construct a history of both "women and science fiction" and the beginnings of feminist science fiction, looking at various stories that have been told about women and science fiction, feminism and science fiction, and feminist science fiction.

Other Stories about Women and Science Fiction

Feminist accounts of science fiction are as much a part of the historical moment in which they occurred as the texts they were engaging with, as we see from James Tiptree Jr.'s "The Women Men Don't See" and the ways in which the story has been discussed. First published in the December 1973 issue of the *Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction,* the story is one of the best known battle-of-the-sexes texts of the 1970s. John Clute, in *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*, calls it Tiptree's "most famous single story" (Clute and Nicholls 1993: 1231).[1]

At the time of publication, its author was not known to be Alice Sheldon by anyone in the science fiction community. The story is told in the first person by the middle-aged Don Fenton, presumably some kind of government operative, which is what many speculated that the "real" Tiptree was:

> Because Tiptree lives just a few miles from the Pentagon, or at least uses a mailing address in that vicinity, and because in his letters he often reports himself as about to take off for some remote part of the planet, the rumour constantly circulates that in "real" life he is some sort of government agent involved in high-security work. His obviously first-hand acquaintance with the world of airports and bureaucrats, as demonstrated in such stories as "The Women Men Don't See," gives some support to this notion. . . . Tiptree's admission to one of his editors that he spent most of World War II in a Pentagon subbasement has contributed to this myth. (Silverberg 1975: xii)

"The Women Men Don't See" received a rapturous response and was nominated for both the major science fiction awards, the Nebula and the Hugo. Tiptree, however, withdrew the story from consideration. At the time "he" said it was because he wanted to give the younger writers a turn; however, it has been argued that Tiptree was reluctant to win an award for the "masculine" feminism it supposedly displayed (Le Guin 1978). Tiptree summarizes the story thus:

> "Hero"—narrator, two plain women (mother & daughter) and Maya pilot crash on a sand-bar in Asuncion Bay. Hero and the mother set off on foot to cross bay and bring back fresh water. That night they are awakened by strangers in military-type vehicles who do not respond to their cries for help. Narrator thinks they are revolutionaries; woman picks up a dropped artefact and deduces that they are aliens. When aliens return for their object next eve, woman persuades them to take her and narrator back for plane. Arriving there, she quickly gets her daughter in the boat and over narrator's horrified protests, begs aliens to take them off earth. They do. Story has lots of struggle, hardships, wounds, tension. Message is total misunderstanding of woman's motivations by narrator, who relates everything to self. Message No. 2 is bleak future for feminism.[2]

"The Women Men Don't See" can be read as addressing the notion that women can only be represented in science fiction in discourses of romance or the domestic. In the story, Don Fenton, the narrator, can only see women sexually. He describes Mayan women thus: "[T]he little Maya chicks in their minishifts with iridescent gloop on those cockeyes [are] . . . highly erotic. Nothing like the oriental doll thing" (Tiptree [1973] 1990: 122). When Fenton first encounters the two women, Ruth and Althea Par-

sons, on the flight from Cozumel Airport, they are merely a "double female blur . . . registering nothing. Zero" (121). On the chartered flight Fenton "see[s] the girl has what could be an attractive body if there was any spark at all. There isn't" (121). The women become visible to him when they crashland together. Fenton's perceptions of the women change when they are the only women present: "[M]y eyes take in the fact that Mrs. Parsons is now quite rosy . . . with her hair loose and a sunburn starting on her nose. A trim, in fact a very neat shading-forty. . . . Miss Parsons is even rosier and more windblown. . . . A good girl, Miss Parsons, in her nothing way" (128–29).

Fenton's perceptions of the women echo the long-running debate within science fiction about women's place within the field. In that debate, a woman is only visible when she is a potential love interest. He misreads what is happening around him because he can only think of women within such a narrow perspective. Women exist for the convenience of men like himself. They exist within a chivalric order: there for him to desire, or for him to rescue. They exist so that he can see his "real" manliness reflected back at him. In "The Women Men Don't See," neither of the Parsons will respond to his desire, and when the opportunity arrives for him to achieve the rescue, he accidentally shoots Ruth Parsons in the arm (143). When it becomes plain that Fenton does not matter to either of the Parsons, a "mad image" of a female conspiracy "blooms" in Fenton's mind, and he imagines "generations of solitary Parsons women selecting sires, making impregnation trips. Well, I hear the world is moving their way" (138). This scenario of a secret conspiracy of women against men is straight from the pages of texts like Jerry Sohl's *The Haploids* (1952), James Gunn's "The Misogynist" (1952), and Sam Merwin's *The White Widows* (1953). "The Women Men Don't See" shifts the terrain of the battle of the sexes away from images of "mad" conspiracies of women against men to that of women "surviv[ing] . . . liv[ing] by ones and twos in the chinks of your world-machine" (Tiptree [1973] 1990: 140).

Robert Silverberg, in his introduction to the Tiptree collection *Warm Worlds and Otherwise*, "Who Is Tiptree, What Is He?," was also struck by the way this story inverts earlier science fiction. He characterizes the story's ending thus: "The thematic solution is an ancient s-f cliche—Earth-women carried off by flying-saucer folk—redeemed and wholly transformed by its sudden shattering vision of women, stolid and enduring, calmly trading one set of alien masters for another that may be more tolerable" (Silverberg 1975: xvi). Nevertheless, he claims, the story proves that men can

"do" feminism, because "The Women Men Don't See" is a "profoundly feminist story told in entirely masculine manner, and deserves close attention by those in the front lines of the wars of sexual liberation, male and female" (xvi).

Terry Carr makes a similar argument in his 1975 editorial "You've Come A Long Way, Baby." In it, he writes that "there are some male writers in the field today who are able to show some insight into the female point of view" (Carr 1975: 125). He cites Tiptree as one of these writers. Carr gives his own summary of the plot of "The Women Men Don't See": the story's resolution, he claims, with the mother and her daughter getting into the "alien's ship and tak[ing] off for spaces unknown" is a sign that "[w]e really have come a long way, people" (125). Carr's sign of the most spectacular "progress" of science fiction is that "The Women Men Don't See" was written by a man. A woman writing a "profoundly feminist story" would not be such a revelation. Carr also discusses Joanna Russ's "When It Changed" (1972) as a sign of the progress of science fiction. However, this story signifies change for Carr, not so much because the story inverts battle of the sexes tropes, but because the story won a Nebula: the story was accepted and lauded by the once "almost . . . exclusive province of male readers" (Carr 1975: 5).

By the mid 1970s, the men who constituted the field of science fiction had grown up and were able to welcome women into their midst. Tiptree's story demonstrated for them not only that men can recognize women's talent but that they can even *understand* women. The revelation in 1977 that Alice Sheldon "was" James Tiptree Jr. undid this sense of progress and caused the story's feminism to be read differently. The uniquely sensitive, though very masculine male author had become a woman. The story's feminism had shifted and was no longer a proof of the adulthood of male sf writers.

"The Women Men Don't See" is frequently referred to in more recent work on feminist science fiction (Barr 1987: 30–32; Cranny-Francis 1990: 29–38; Kaveney 1989: 90; Lefanu 1988: 122–27; Pearson 1990: 18; Boulter 1995: 18–22; Donawerth 1997: 125–27; Roberts 2000: 97–99). For some critics the story has becaome an "exemplar for feminist science fiction" (Cranny-Francis 1990: 26). Once again, this reading seems to be largely dependent on the perceived sex of the story's author—Amanda Boulter, in her 1995 article "Alice James Raccoona Tiptree Sheldon Jr: Textual Personas in the Short Fiction of Alice Sheldon," argues that once Tiptree became Sheldon, readings of "her" stories were caught up with the story's au-

thorship by a writer whose writing life has come to embody a feminist lesson, "demonstrat[ing] that there was no inevitable connection between biology and writing, the penis and the pen." Boulter argues that "[t]his gender deception has made Alice Sheldon a particularly exciting figure for feminist critics of science fiction" (Boulter 1995: 6).

Sarah Lefanu, in her 1988 book-length study of feminism and science fiction, *In the Chinks of the World Machine*,[3] discusses "The Women Men Don't See" in conjunction with Robert Silverberg's now-famous introduction to *Warm Worlds and Otherwise* in which he had written, "It has been suggested that Tiptree is female, a theory that I find absurd, for there is to me something ineluctably masculine about Tiptree's writing" (Silverberg 1975: xii). In his later postscript to the introduction to *Warm Worlds*, Silverberg writes: "She fooled me beautifully, along with everyone else, and called into question the entire notion of what is 'masculine' or 'feminine' in fiction" (Silverberg 1993: 5). Lefanu agrees with Silverberg's postscript: "The notion of what is 'masculine' or 'feminine' fiction must indeed be questioned; it is too simplistic to say that male writers of science fiction concern themselves only with technology or 'hard' science at the expense of development of character and the consequences in social terms of technological development. Such a distinction not only posits a crude sexual dualism—masculine is hard, feminine is soft—which anyway is anathema to Tiptree, but it also denies the connections between the different 'hard' and 'soft' sciences, connections that in good science fiction should be made" (Lefanu 1988: 123–24).

This split between "hard" and "soft" science has its equivalence in "hard" and "soft" science fiction. "Hard" science fiction is frequently portrayed as "real" science fiction because it is more "scientific" than "soft" science fiction.[4] "Hard" science fiction is predominantly mapped on to the male, and "soft" sf, on to the female. Sheldon/Tiptree's authorship of "The Women Men Don't See" makes explicit the fragility of this opposition of "masculine" to "feminine."

The Battle of the Sexes and Feminist Utopias

The dual authorship of "The Women Men Don't See" by Alice Sheldon/James Tiptree Jr. puts it on the cusp between the mostly male-authored battle-of-the-sexes texts of the period up to the early 1970s and the mostly female-authored texts of the 1970s. Joanna Russ, in a 1981 article, calls the

later texts feminist utopias; I maintain that the battle-of-the-sexes texts and the feminist utopias of the 1970s are more closely connected than that term might imply and that they are, in fact, part of the same genre. But while giving the two groups of texts different names, Joanna Russ does, nevertheless, make a connection between the two: "A discussion of these recent feminist utopias would be incomplete without some references to their antifeminist opposite numbers: the role reversal (or battle-of-the-sexes) science fiction novel that assumes as its given the sexist assumptions that feminist utopias challenge and attack" (Russ 1981: 80). Natalie M. Rosinsky makes a similar connection between the two, discussing many of the same texts as Russ, and refers to Russ's "Recent Feminist Utopias." Rosinsky contrasts the feminist texts and "their androcentric chronological predecessors which almost uniformly posit the reestablishment of the 'natural' order of male dominance," noting that Suzy McKee Charnas's *Motherlines* (1978) and Joanna Russ's *The Female Man* (1975) "do not indicate which 'camp' is or will be victorious" (Rosinsky 1984: 65).

Russ and Rosinsky see the battle-of-the-sexes texts and the feminist utopia texts as being in conversation with one another. Indeed, Rosinsky takes the term "battle of the sexes," which Russ uses only to refer to the earlier "androcentric" texts, to refer to what Russ names feminist utopias. Although neither Russ nor Rosinsky includes "The Women Men Don't See" in their discussion, Russ does discuss two other stories "by" Alice Sheldon, "Your Faces, O My Sisters! Your Faces Filled of Light!" (1976), published under the name of Raccoona Sheldon, and "Houston, Houston, Do You Read?" (1976), published under the name of James Tiptree Jr.[5]

Many of the texts that are frequently cited as being part of a utopian tradition in women's writing, like Russ's *The Female Man* (1975) and Suzy McKee Charnas's *Motherlines* (1978), can be read as rewritings of the earlier battle-of-the-sexes stories. As Sarah Lefanu argues, "The stock conventions of science fiction—time travel, alternate worlds, entropy, relativism, the search for a unified field theory—can be used metaphorically and metonymically as powerful ways of exploring the construction of 'woman.' Feminist SF, then, is part of science fiction while struggling against it" (Lefanu 1988: 5).

Joanna Russ's novella *We Who Are About To* (1976).[6] reworks many of the stock conventions of science fiction in just this manner (Lefanu 1988: 180). In an interview with Larry McCaffrey, Russ states that in *We Who Are About To* she is parodying the "whole Robinson-Crusoe-and-the-desert-island business," which she calls an "imperialist myth: you find a place 'out

there' and you make it *yours*" (McCaffery 1990: 190; quoted in Donawerth 1997: 88 n.). *We Who Are About To*, as Donawerth notes, is in direct conversation with Marion Zimmer Bradley's *Darkover Landfall* (1972) and also with all earlier examples of that particular "imperialist myth," such as Randall Garrett's "The Queen Bee"(1958).[7]

In the second issue of the first feminist fanzine, the Canadian *The Witch and the Chameleon*,[8] Vonda McIntyre wrote a long and detailed review of Bradley's *Darkover Landfall*, which criticized the novel for upholding this "old pioneering spirit." Bradley's novel is about a starship of the Colony Expedition Force that crashlands on the wrong planet and is forced to make many decisions about the colonists' future. This involves a decision to treat the women's wombs as communal property to ensure successful propagation of the race. McIntyre's negative review of *Darkover Landfall* attracted many letters in subsequent issues of *The Witch and the Chameleon*. Joanna Russ was one of the correspondents on the subject. In response to Bradley's rebuttal of the McIntyre review Russ wrote, "The question, to put it bluntly, of whether a woman's uterus belongs to her or to the community she happens to find herself in (or rather its male authorities) has been a very hot political issue in the U.S. and some parts of Europe for at least a decade; I am surprised that Bradley didn't expect vehement reactions to a novel in which just this question is the central issue of the plot" (Russ 1975: 15). Russ worked out her views on whether a woman's uterus belongs to her or her community more fully in *We Who Are About To* (1976).

Women's uteruses are central to Randall Garrett's "The Queen Bee" (1958). However, the question of whether their uteruses belongs to themselves or their community, a theme that is at the heart of *Darkover Landfall* (1972) and *We Who Are About To* (1976), is never raised. It is the story's given that a woman's uterus belongs to her community. The story cites "Brytell's Law," a set of interplanetary guidelines for what to do in case of a crashlanding. The fourth and fifth articles read:

> Article IV: . . .the women must be isolated. All precautions must be taken to prevent any confusion as to parenthood.
>
> Article V: In the ideal situation, each female would produce at least one female child and one male child by each male. (76)

In Garrett's story, unlike Bradley's novel, a small party of three women and four men, rather than an entire colonist starship, crashlands on an uninhabited planet. Before raising basic questions of survival they are already

considering how to populate the planet: "If we're careful . . . and if we eliminate as much inbreeding as possible, we can have this planet populated within a few centuries" (73). One of the members of the party, Elissa Krand, does not take kindly to the situation and to increase her autonomy and power she kills the other two women. The men want to kill her, but they cannot as this would mean the loss of the only available womb. After enduring her bullying for a short while they decide upon an ingenious solution: they lobotomise her. The last sentence of the story is: "One year later, the first child born on the planet Generatrix was a lovely baby girl, named Tina" (96).

The baby Tina is named after the one "real" woman of the original survivors. Neither Elissa Krand nor the third woman, Della Thorn, are real women: Elissa Krand is not real because she actively resists the rule of the men, and Della Thorn because she does not want to have sex with the man she has been alotted:

> "Don't worry. I told her I'd give her a week to get used to the idea. That week is up tonight."
>
> "Oh? Think she'll quit being stubborn?"
>
> "If she doesn't," said Folee flatly, "I'm going to beat the daylights out of her." (87)

The next morning at breakfast there is an "odd atmosphere": "Folee had a placid look on his face as he cut into the purple melon on his plate, but when he caught Branson's eye, he flashed a grin that was both wry and rather sheepish. The side of Della Thorn's face was a trifle swollen and very faintly purplish, and she had an odd expression that Branson couldn't quite translate" (88). Murderous rage at being raped, perhaps? Folee's rape of Della is displaced on to the fruit on his plate. The link between Follee cutting the fruit and Folee raping Della is explicit: the melon is "purple" and the sign of Folee's violence on Della's face is "purplish."

In their introduction to *Aurora: Beyond Equality*, Vonda McIntyre and Susan Janice Anderson cite "The Queen Bee" in discussing the kind of stories they *did not* want for their anthology: "If you stretch the point, we thought, this story has more symbolic truth to it than its author may have imagined. Women in our society are conditioned to develop their physical attractiveness as a 'weapon' to 'kill off' other female competition. Confinement to a single role is, in a sense, a sort of psychic lobotomy" (McIntyre and Anderson 1976: 11–12).

There are many parallels between Russ's *We Who Are About To* and Gar-

rett's "Queen Bee." In *We Who Are About To*, four men and four women crash land on an uninhabited planet, and the conversation soon turns to populating the planet. The story is told in first person by an unnamed woman of child-bearing age rather than the third person of the earlier story. In Russ's version the mad selfish woman, Elissa Krand, has become the narrator and creator of the text. Both women are killers, but Russ's narrator kills for entirely different reasons. She finds the urge to populate ridiculous and doomed, telling the others:

> That if we could eat the local macro-life, the local micro-life could eat us.
>
> That we could die of exposure in the winter because we had no way to make heat after our bungalow wore out and that was in six months.
>
> That we could die of heat in a summer whose length we didn't yet know.
>
> That a breech birth could kill. That a three-days labour and no dilation could kill. That septicemia could kill. (Russ [1977] 1978: 17)

The other characters argue with her, replying that "Civilization must be preserved." "Civilization's doing fine," she tells them. "We just don't happen to be where it is" (23). Eventually, and at first inadvertently, she kills them all and then spends her time waiting to die, talking to her vocorder and hallucinating. The womb as communal property, along with a 1950s discourse of reproduce and colonize at all costs, has been overturned and destroyed.

Absence or Presence

> *The current version of women in science fiction before the 1960s (which I've heard several times lately) goes like this: There weren't any. Only men wrote science fiction because the field was completely closed to women. Then, in the late 60s and early 70s, a group of feminist writers led by Joanna Russ and Ursula Le Guin stormed the barricades, and women began writing (and sometimes even editing) science fiction. Before that, nada. . . . There's only one problem with this version of women in SF—it's not true. (Willis 1992: 4)*

The absence or presence of women within science fiction has, until recently, been central to accounts of feminist science fiction. However, the nature of this "presence" within the field has not been stable, any more than the category "women" is stable.

Versions of women in science fiction are shaped by the histories of the people telling the different versions. What historians have read and seen is vital to their construction of history; what you do not experience is often not included, and the context of your experience can be dramatically different from someone else's. Katie King makes this point, in another context, quoting Alice Echols on efforts to generate a black feminist movement, which Echols argues "were less than successful." King describes her reaction: "This absolutely true statement has a strange, hollow echo in my political memories. *Woman Power*, my first feminist reading, was by a Black woman who represented herself at the very 'heart'" of what both she and Echols call radical feminism" (King 1994: 12). King's reaction is reminiscent of the comments of science fiction writer and multiple Hugo and Nebula award winner Connie Willis, quoted in the epigraph to this section. Willis is reacting to a version of the object "women and science fiction" that her own experience contradicts. She had encountered many stories by women writers when she was first reading science fiction in the 1950s. Judith Raphael Buckrich, on the other hand, had not:[9] "I think the 1960s social revolution caused a revolution in writing too and especially in SF which had in the 1950s been very 'boys' own adventure.' Suddenly women such as Le Guin emerged in the US who were using SF to talk about societal structure and sexism and oppression. This made SF attractive to women readers and writers for the first time and I believe has influenced all women's writing here and elsewhere" (Larbalestier 1995: 60).

At stake for both Buckrich and Willis is whether women have been present or absent in science fiction. The question has shaped many accounts of women and sf. Susan Wood observed this phenomenon in the late 1970s: "There are more stories about real women, and real men, emerging in the SF field. And there are plenty of articles about their absence" (Wood 1978–79: 9). Sam Moskowitz, editor of *When Women Rule*, saw women as largely absent from the field of science fiction: "The readers of science fiction are predominantly men. It has been that way virtually ever since science fiction has been written" (Moskowitz 1972: 1). Kingsley Amis not only felt that women were not present; he also thought it was not seen as a matter of concern: "Though it may go against the grain to admit it, science-fiction writers are evidently satisfied with the sexual status quo—the female emancipationism of a Wylie or a Wyndham is too uncommon to be significant" (Amis 1960: 99). Scott Sanders, in "Woman as Nature in Science Fiction," writes that "[u]ntil very recently SF was written primarily for a male audience, about heroes for whom women are toys, threats or enig-

mas" (Sanders: 1981: 42). Curtis Smith, in his preface to *Twentieth Century Science-Fiction Writers*, has a different perception: "[A]t least there are now woman characters in science fiction, and an explosion of science-fiction writers who are women: consider Zenna Henderson, Pamela Sargent, James Tiptree, Jr., Ursula Le Guin, Joanna Russ, Lee Killough, Suzy McKee Charnas, Anne McCaffrey, Octavia Butler, Marge Piercy, Zoe Fairbairns, and many others. These writers have brought speculation about the future of sex roles to science fiction. Science fiction, once totally the domain of men, has reversed itself and is now in the forefront of feminist thinking" (Smith 1986: viii–ix). Joanna Russ, in her article "The Image of Women in Science Fiction,"[10] disagrees, noting that although "[t]here are plenty of images of women in science fiction," there are"hardly any women" (Russ [1971] 1974: 57).

Mary Kenny Badami examines this contested absence in her "Feminist Critique of Science Fiction," which appeared in the academic science fiction journal *Extrapolation*, :

> There is little to discuss about 'the role of women in science fiction' because—Jirel of Joiry, Susan Wood, and Mary Shelley not withstanding—until very recently women have had almost no role in science fiction. But it may be instructive to demonstrate that fact and to explore the various ways in which female sex roles in sf generally add up to The Invisible Woman. I propose to illustrate three theses about the non-role of women in science fiction:
>
> Women have *not* been important as characters in sf;
> Women have *not* been important as fans of sf;
> Women have *not* been important as writers of sf. (Badami 1976: 6)

Badami's threefold division is important because not all of the accounts of women's absence from science fiction are referring to the same kind of participation (or lack of it). In Willis's account, it is women as practitioners, as writers and, to a lesser extent, as editors.[11] For Buckrich it is "women readers and writers" (Larbalestier 1995: 60); for Moskowitz, "the readers of science fiction" (Moskowitz 1972: 1); Russ talks about "images of women" and does not claim that there were no women writing before the late sixties (Russ [1971] 1974: 57).[12]

Badami's distinctions fall into three distinct areas: (1) representation—the illustrations and texts; (2) consumption—the readers and fans; and (3) production—the writers, artists and editors. (These three categories are not, of course, quite as easily separable as I am implying here. They are all

modes of production—of the knowledge of the field and of the field itself. Fans, of course, produce fanzines and conventions and costumes and filk songs and many other tangible artefacts, but these are "amateur" activities although they all inscribe, shape, and document science fiction.) These three categories—production, consumption, and representation—are a hierarchy with "production" at the top. This is made explicit within fandom with the idea of the "pro" versus the "fan" and the notion that all fans aspire to be pros. Economically it is also a division between paid and unpaid work. That consumption is the least valued of the three is apparent in the rarity of discussion of fandom in academic accounts of women and sf.[13] There are many fanzines of the seventies that discuss women and sf,[14] and there were fanzines like *The Witch and the Chameleon* (first issue August 1974) and *Janus/Aurora* (first issue 1975) that were devoted to women and sf. However, Badami is one of the few writing about feminism and science fiction outside of fan publications to emphasize fandom. Susan Wood, who was, as Badami indicates, very well known for her fan activities and was most definitely a BNF (Big Name Fan), did not discuss fandom in her article "Women and Science Fiction," though she did indicate that there were women readers of the genre and quoted a letter from a female reader published in a pulp magazine (Wood 1978–79: 11).[15]

The difference in these accounts of women's participation across the three categories of production, consumption, and representation is one of emphasis. Clearly no one is saying that there were literally no women in science fiction until the late 1960s. However, there is danger in the argument that there were few women in the field, for, as Connie Willis makes clear, the slide from few women and few representations to no women can easily happen. Work that retrieves women writers from the past is important, and an argument that conflates the overwhelmingly sexist writing of a period with the absence of women can actually lead to the forgetting of important women writers. This has been recognized in the existence of a body of feminist retrieval work. Pamela Sargent's *Women of Wonder* series of anthologies of "sf stories by Women about Women" were particularly important in this regard. In her long introduction to the first book, published in 1974, she draws attention to such writers as Francis Stevens, C. L. Moore, Leigh Brackett, Wilmar Shiras, and Anne Warren Griffith (Sargent [1974] 1978: 14–29). Her anthologies make available the stories of writers like Hazel Heald, Helen Weinbaum, Leslie Perri, Margaret St. Clair, Miriam Allen deFord, and Katherine MacLean, who would otherwise be completely unavailable. In *The Witch and the Chameleon* and

Janus/Aurora I found articles devoted to early women writers and a conscious effort to think of women's involvement in science fiction as having a history. These include an entire issue of *Aurora*, the summer 1984 "Invisible Women" issue. Another recognition of this history was the fact that Katherine MacLean, whose first story was published in 1949 in *Astounding*, was the first writer guest of honor at the feminist science fiction convention, WisCon.[16]

Feminists are not the only people engaged in this kind of retrieval work. So much early pulp science fiction is out of print and unavailable that the work of anthologists like Everett Bleiler and Sam Moskowitz in anthologizing and cataloguing previously unreprinted work is invaluable for discovering the early science fiction of both women and men. In their note to their anthology of women's sf from the 1920s to the present, *New Eves*, Janrae Frank, Jean Stine, and Forrest J Ackerman discuss the unavailability of most early science fiction:

> Those eager to read more by these extraordinary writers, and to encounter the New Eves they, and their male colleagues, created, may be disappointed to discover there is no "recommended reading" list here. The reason is simple: with the exception of a rare anthologization, the works of all the women (and men) who wrote science fiction before the mid-1960s are out of print, and considering the current structure of the publishing industry, likely to remain so. Their books can only be found by lucky browsers in used bookstores; whereas stories by women who wrote science fiction before 1950, are simply unobtainable, except to the wealthy, who can afford to pay premium prices for the mouldering pulps that alone contain their work. Even the early books of many writers who began their careers in the 1970s and 80s are now out of print—while those of most current women authors can easily be found in one's local bookstore. (Frank, Stine, and Ackerman 1994: xvii)

When articles appear in prozines or fanzines on women and sf, there are usually letters from longtime male fans pointing out someone or some text who has been left off the list. For example, in response to Sam Moskowitz's article "When Women Rule" in the August 1967 issue of *If*, John Borger of Parkersburg, West Virginia, wrote that "I was rather puzzled by the omission, in 'When Women Rule,' of the matriarchy described in *Search the Sky*" (Borger 1968: 161). Leland Sapiro of Richardson, Texas, wrote in response to "The Invisible Women" issue of *Aurora* (summer 1984): "As to Tom Porter's 'Women SF Writers You Probably Never Heard Of' . . . How about names like Claire Winger Harris, Leslie F. Stone, L. Taylor Hansen, that shudda been listed, but weren't?" (Sapiro 1986–87: 5).

This retrieval work does much to complicate the notion that sf before a certain point was wholly male. However, Sarah Lefanu has observed that there is a complex relationship between the presence or absence of women within the field and misogyny within the field: "[Science fiction] has always reflected and continues to reflect a particular type of authority, that of men over women. The absence of women from much science fiction before the 1970s is only one expression of this: the presence of women within science fiction since the early 1970s does not necessarily undermine it" (Lefanu 1988: 87). Lefanu is not saying that there were no women in science fiction before the 1970s, just that there were few.[17] Her point is that the absence or presence of women in the field of science fiction does not of itself say anything about the feminism or misogyny of the field. As the example of Margaret Thatcher demonstrates, a female prime minister is not necessarily an advance for feminism. So you could ask what kind of presence *did* women have within science fiction, and the answer is extremely varied. Which women, at which moment within science fiction, and where in science fiction?

Many of the letters to prozines by women from 1926 to the 1950s explicitly examine the position of women within the field of science fiction. These letters, and the editorial responses to them, indicate that while women were present within the field, their presence was still frequently viewed as an anomaly. A letter from Naomi D. Slimmer of Russel, Kansas, and her sisters, headed "Five of a Kind," leads the first letter column of *Science Fiction*:

> Am warning you that this is merely a women's [*sic*] (five of them) opinion of your new magazine. Somebody brought home a copy of *Science Fiction* last week and it has gone the rounds. We noted your contest announcement and decided to take a crack at it. If you did not know that women read scientific fiction, give a listen:
>
> There are two housewives, an office worker, a high school girl, and a trained nurse among we five sisters and we all read *Science Fiction* (when we can snag it from brother and two husbands). With one accord we greeted your new magazine with whoops of glee and took turns curling up with the durn thing.
>
> We all read a good many "slicks" and quite a few "pulps," and we

> think you've got something there. Since we like our "pulps" to scare us, chill us, and give us to think, we go for *Science Fiction*. Looks like it might be going to fit the bill. It's going to keep me awake and give me goose-bumps when I'm on night duty (I'm the nurse) and the other four sisters say they expect to read it when the baby is cross or the teacher isn't looking or when the boss isn't in. (Don't think I'm trying to say we'll all buy a copy every issue. I wouldn't kid you)
>
> We read *Science Fiction* to help us picture what the world will be in years to come, or to get someone's idea of life in a different world. We know what present-day life is like on this earth (it's a mess! And *Science Fiction* is about the only way we can forget that fact for a few minutes). (Slimmer 1939: 118–19)

The editor, Charles Hornig, replied: "It gives me great pleasure to start off 'The Telepath' with such a breezy and informative letter as the above. It is a revelation to find five girls in one family so enthusiastic about our humble effort. I have received so many letters from women who read science-fiction just lately, that I must confess many of the fair sex have well-developed imaginations. Their group has grown to such proportions that they must certainly be taken into consideration by the male adherents" (Hornig 1939: 119). Hornig's comments here echo Hugo Gernsback's "strange" discovery, thirteen years earlier, that there were a "great many women . . . already reading" *Amazing Stories* (Gernsback 1926f: 483). But note that the admission of women's "well-developed imaginations" is something that Hornig has to "confess."

In 1953 the editor of *Thrilling Wonder Stories*, Sam Mines, also linked the growth of women's imaginations to what he saw as their growing interest in science fiction. For Mines, women's interest in science fiction was an oddity that had to be explained. He made the following comments in response to a letter from Phyllis Grazer of Tillamook, Oregon: "Seems to be a mass movement of housewives away from the home and garden type of literature towards science fiction. Seriously—letters from housewives saying in effect, 'Where has this stuff been all my life?' are mushrooming. And the key is right up there in Mrs Grazer's letter—it makes their imaginations work" (Mines 1953: 142). Grazer had written that this was "my first letter to you but you can expect many more." Nowhere in her letter does Grazer mention that she is a housewife; Mines just assumes that she is (Grazer 1953: 142).

In the January 1953 issue of *Startling Stories*, Sam Mines wrote the following in response to a letter from a Stephanie Szold of Asheville, North Carolina. In it he is even more explicit about women's presence in science fiction occasioning surprise for him:

> Ten years ago stf fans were practically all male, today with or without benefit of fan activities, a lot of girls and housewives and other members of the sex are quietly reading science fiction and beginning to add their voices to the bable *[sic]* of TEV [the Ether Vibrates—*SS*'s letter column]. And a lot of them, tucked away in more or less remote places are beginning to ask, "Where has this stuff been all our lives?" and "Where can we meet other science fiction fans so we can talk shop instead of feeling alone?"
>
> We confess this came as something of a surprise to us. We honestly never expected such a surge of female women into science fiction. (136)

Zillah Kendall of San Bernardino, California, in the February 1953 issue of *Thrilling Wonder Stories*, writes that she has been reading sf magazines since she "was about 14 years old—(back in the Hugo Gernsback days)." She discusses her opinion of contemporary fans and science fiction and ends with the following: "here's hoping there'll soon be more women writers in SF" who are "willing to admit it" (133). For Zillah Kendall, as for Lula B. Stewart of Harmony, Pennsylvania, whose 1953 letter to *Thrilling Wonder Stories* I discussed in chapter 1, knowing that there are other women in the field is important to their own engagement with the field. Stewart ends her letter saying that now she is "backed by a formidable phalange of femfans, I dare speak up, brave lassie that I am" (Stewart 1953: 133). Winifred Beisiegel of Sparrowbush, New York, is more self-confident, but she also connects herself to other readers, in this case, her mother: "[A]lthough I've been an S-F fan for over 20 years, I still like to re-read some of the earlier efforts. In fact, for that same length of time I've been searching for three oldies read by my mother in her younger days. They were: *The Return of She* by Haggard, *The Muglugs*, author unknown and *The Year of Our Lord*, ditto. . . . From what Mom recalls, they were darned good for that era and the last two named were as prophetic as any Jules Verne" (Beisiegel 1952: 132). Beisiegel stakes her legitimacy within the field with her twenty-year knowledge of it, as well as having a mother who was also an avid reader of the genre.

I have demonstrated that women were active in the field of science fiction before the late 1960s and early 1970s, which is frequently invoked as

the time in which women emerged in the field. Indeed, many of the women who are associated with the 1970s "emergence" of feminist science fiction, such as Joanna Russ, Marion Zimmer Bradley, and Octavia Butler, were already science fiction readers and, in the case of Bradley at least, longtime fans. However, it is equally clear that the period of the sixties and seventies did mark a change in the way some women perceived their relationship to the field of science fiction. They were already a part of science fiction before they discovered feminism, but that discovery changed the nature of their presence within science fiction.

Sf writer Nancy Kress describes her changing relationship thus:

> I discovered SF at the age of 14. The moment is still very clear to me. My first boyfriend was studying to be a concert musician. As a teenage girl, my job was to hang adoringly over his piano while he practised (it was 1962). However, I am, alas, tone deaf. I could hang adoringly for maybe ten minutes, tops. But in his family's music room were bookshelves, and on the shelves were his father's books, and among them was *Childhood's End* the first SF I'd ever seen. One chapter and I was hooked.
>
> Favorite early authors were Theodore Sturgeon and Frederik Pohl. Later, I discovered Le Guin and Wilhelm and other women writers. But for a long time my adolescent mind, had I thought about it at all (which I didn't), would have assumed that writing SF was a male occupation. It took the women's movement of the 1970's to broaden my traditional Catholic-good-girl upbringing, and without the movement I doubt I'd be an SF writer today. (Letter to author, November 1995)

For Jeanne Gomoll, well-known fan and one of the founders of *Janus* and WisCon, the emergence of the women's movement completely changed her involvement with fandom. She sees 1970s feminism as responsible for the transformation of science fiction fandom:

> A lot of women had stopped reading science fiction during our teens, but hadn't really examined our reasons for giving it up. But one of the first things you learn when you read books like *Sisterhood is Powerful*, *GynEcology* or *The Obstacle Course*, is how to see sexism, and when you start looking for it, it's everywhere. It was a time of pointing out the obvious. "Robert Heinlein is sexist," we said. But it was also a time of happy discovery, because just then, Things were Changing. Women were writing new kinds of SF, SF that some of us women were reading and which was bringing us back to the field.
>
> Pamela Sargent published the *Women of Wonder* series (and more importantly wrote the introductory essays that gave us a historical grounding). Vonda N. McIntyre and Susan Janice Anderson published *Aurora: Beyond Equality*. Suzy McKee Charnas, Joanna Russ, Ursula Le Guin, Liz Lynn, Chelsea Quinn Yarbro, John Varley, James Tiptree, Jr./Raccoona Sheldon, Marge Piercy, Chip Delany, Joan Vinge and others were writing brilliant, wonderful stuff, and were changing the world. Terry Garey has pointed out that the best and practically the *only* feminist fiction was being written in the science fiction field. We started writing about the new women authors and set about changing *our* world, specifically SF fandom. There were Rooms of Ones Own at various conventions; there was a Women's apa; there were awards bestowed upon the new generation of SF writers who were more concerned about people's future lives than new toys. We discovered that SF was an essential resource for feminists: it gave us a place to dream about the way we'd like things to turn out. It gave us an arena in which to plan a strategy. (Gomoll 1991: 8)[18]

Susan Wood was one of the fans involved in starting "women and sf" panels and "the rooms of one's own" at conventions. The feminism of the early 1970s was central to her relationship with the field. She writes about the way in which her

> own *click* of consciousness came in 1972, after I had been reading what the library clerk coldly informed me were "boys' books" for some 15 years, happily substituting my female self for their male protagonists. In the December 1972 issue of *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*, I read "The Garbage Invasion," by Keith Laumer. This one, unusually enough, featured a woman. . . . She is *in charge* of the world; Retief is assisting her as "Acting Wildlife Officer" during a crisis. So what happens? She spends all her time calling the crisis "perfectly horrid." . . . When Retief's superior arrives, this woman, who is described by Retief himself as filling "a position . . . of considerable responsibility" with "commendable efficiency" is summarily dismissed with an order to "mix us a couple of tall cool ones . . . " at this point, I threw the magazine across the room. (Wood 1978–79: 10)

This "*click*" of consciousness that Wood describes did not take place in a vacuum. In 1978 Susan Wood was the fan guest of honour at WisCon; and was invited to write a guest editorial for the spring 1978 *Janus*, titled "People's Programming" where she discusses her involvement with "women's pro-

gramming" at conventions, and the process of her transition within fandom from "Honorary Man to Woman Fan," which was made possible by the women's movement (Wood 1978: 4). The process Wood describes is very close to Robin White's account in the earlier "Are Femme Fans Human?" The difference is that in 1968 White was not troubled by being an "honorary man" or being accepted only through her association with her husband (White 1968).

Of course you can be part of science fiction and in conflict with it. Susan Wood's "*click*" of consciousness was brought on by reading a science fiction story she hated. Many women writers of science fiction had a similar experience and as a result went on to write the kind of science fiction they wanted to read. Octavia Butler talks about consuming science fiction from an early age but not always liking what she consumed: "I started reading the magazines—that was my way into adult science fiction. I didn't like them very much, but I kept reading them" (Roberts 1993: 45). In another interview Butler says: "I didn't decide to become a science fiction writer. It just happened. I was writing when I was 10 years old. I was writing my own little stories and when I was 12 I was watching a bad science fiction movie and decided that I could write a better story than that. And I turned off the TV and proceeded to try and I've been writing science fiction ever since" (Beal 1986: 14).

This idea of writing in reaction, of being inspired by what you did not like as well as what you admired, is an important one. Joanna Russ, too had the experience of being an avid reader of science fiction and finding many of the stories filled with women who were only "important as prizes or motives—i.e. we must rescue the heroine or win the hand of the beautiful Princess." Or the women were "active or ambitious" and therefore "evil—this literature is chockfull of cruel dowager empresses, sadistic matriarchs, evil ladies maddened by jealousy, domineering villainesses and so on" (Russ [1971] 1974: 55). As I demonstrated above, Russ used her own writing to transform these science fiction clichés and to provide different representations of women. Anne McCaffrey, in her article "Hitch Your Dragon to a Star: Romance and Glamour in Science Fiction," also discusses her distaste for the dominant "images" of women in science fiction: "After seven years of voracious reading in the field, I'd had it up to the eyeteeth with vapid women. I rebelled. I wrote *Restoree* (1967) as a tongue-in-cheek protest, utilizing as many of the standard 'thud and blunder' cliches as possible with one new twist—the heroine was the viewpoint character and *she* is always Johanna-on-the-spot" (McCaffrey 1974: 282). In doing so,

she rewrote the genre and produced her own version, "a space gothic" (282).

The Great Invasion, or the Great Erosion

There's this revisionist history version where there were no women in the field, and then in the late '60s Joanna Russ and Ursula K Le Guin stormed the barricades and suddenly women came pouring in like the Huns and took over. But that's not true. There were all these women, and I know because I was reading them. They're women like Mildred Clingerman and Shirley Jackson and Zenna Henderson and Margaret St. Clair and Carol Emshwiller, and a whole bunch I didn't know about because they were all really C. L. Moore. The field didn't just have women writers—it had really good women writers. These were wonderful stories, and I don't believe they were overlooked at the time, because when I read them they were all in the Year's Best collections. (Willis 1992: 73)

In these remarks, Connie Willis refers to the way in which women have been figured as invading science fiction in the late 1960s or early 1970s and refutes that version of the story by citing her own experience. While many people did, in fact, link the emergence of second-wave feminism and other social upheavals of the time with the transformation of science fiction, others saw the change as happening long before. Samuel R. Delany, for instance, argues that it was the 1950s that marked a radicalization of science fiction:

> The most striking element in American life in the early '50s was McCarthy's persecution and terrorization of Americans associated with the left, just as the Second World War had been the most striking element of the '40s. Until McCarthy, however, the internal dialogue in science fiction was rather rarefied. Themes such as history, science, and, of course, time were seen as most significant. . . . As McCarthyism became a threat to science fiction's historical plurality, American science fiction began to deal directly with problems in the country. It began to touch on the racial situation, population growth, religious freedom, sexual roles, social alienation, "conformity," and ecology. (Delany 1984: 237)

Very few accounts of women and science fiction name the 1950s as a decade in which there was an "explosion" or "invasion" of women. It is interesting, though, that most of the writers Willis refers to are closely associated with the 1950s. Mildred Clingerman, Zenna Henderson, and Carol

Emshwiller all began their writing careers in that decade. Judith Merril is another writer closely associated with this period. Merril told me that in the fifties there were many stories by women from "the woman's point of view" appearing in science fiction magazines: "I don't remember what I thought at the time, but I do think now that several of us were indeed writing women's point of view for the first time in sf in those years [late forties—early fifties]. It wasn't just me: Idris Seabright, Mildred Clingerman come to mind—maybe half a dozen others at first" (letter to author, 13 October 1996).

Some even put the date before the fifties. According to Sam Merwin Jr.,[19] women began to invade the field of science fiction as early as "some indeterminate point in the nineteen thirties" (Merwin 1950: 6). He tells the story of women's invasion of science fiction in a long editorial in the December 1950 issue of *Thrilling Wonder Stories* (figure 19). In the opening section Merwin establishes the state of the field before the invasion. Women's only method of surviving this men-only world was to be a "Tomboy Taylor." This is the method of survival that Susan Wood referred to above—becoming an "honorary man" in order to be accepted into fandom. The next section is concerned with what he calls "the great invasion" of women. Merwin's evidence for this transformation of the field is a series of women writers rather than readers or fans. He details the effects of the transformation in the third section, headed "Husbands and Wives": the wives transform their "renowned" science fiction husbands into better writers. This is the same story of women as nurturer and mother to men that I detailed at the end of the last chapter. Women are again given the responsibility for making science fiction "grow up." Merwin expands on women's role as angel of the house in the final section, "A Good Influence." This good influence on the males in science fiction occurs because within the heterosexual economy the presence of women means that the men will be more polite and neater. Merwin also locates the responsibility for women's position within science fiction with the women not with the men. It is they who must "blossom" into a full partnership with the men. However, this partnership with men is on the men's terms, as he details in the section headed "Two Schools of Thought."

At the beginning of Merwin's editorial the invasion is located in the 1930s. At the end it has become a "comparatively recent development in stf," which Merwin links to feminism and "woman's emancipation" generally. Merwin is in favor of it not least because it benefits men. He imagines a future in space for both women and men. However, like Dr. Richardson

A DEPARTMENT FOR SCIENCE FICTION FANS

FOR a number of decades the world of science fiction was pretty much exclusively a male world. While boys of all ages and castes, united by the umbilical cord of soaring impersonal imagination, delved into the works of Verne, Wells, Conan Doyle, *Tom Swift* and the like, the girls seemed content with *Little Elsie* or the sub-erotic sublimations of E. M. Hull, Ethel M. Dell and other experts in the manufacture of machine-tooled glamour to provide frosting for the solid cake layers of recipes and fashion patterns and little essays on beauty culture.

Primeval clubs and gatherings of science fiction addicts were strictly Little Scorpion affairs. Only rarely did some space-minded Tomboy Taylor manage to crash them. And as a rule she had to keep her hair short and her mind on the refreshments rather than the boys if she hoped to survive in membership.

Women didn't really exist in the stories of the era either—save as opposite numbers to prophylactic Western heroes and such an occasional *She*-like creature as the late Stanley Weinbaum's Margaret of Urbs. Save for a few seldom-heard-from ladies like Lilith Lorraine and M. Rupert and a very few others, women did little writing in the field.

Yes, for quite a time as time is counted these days, science fiction was a world for men and men only.

The Great Invasion

However, at some indeterminate point in the nineteen thirties something happened. Just how or why it happened lies beyond our current ken but at any rate the girls got interested and began to move in. This metamorphosis—called either the Great Invasion or the Great Erosion depending upon the point of view—is too well and too long established to be regarded as any mere passing trend. The girls are in and in to stay.

A number of women writers, ranging from adequate to brilliant, began to turn out science fiction stories of such excellence that in magazine after magazine they grabbed their share not only of inside short stories but of lead novelets and novels, hitherto an exclusively masculine prerogative.

Certainly the fantasies of C. L. Moore were and are as fine as any in the field. And right up alongside her work we have today that of E. Mayne Hull, Leigh Brackett, Margaret St. Clair, Judith Merril, Catherine MacLean, Betsy Curtis, and Miriam Allen deFord, to say nothing of an ambitious platoon of youngsters who are promising to crash into print professionally at almost any moment.

Husbands and Wives

Naturally, with such a group of talented women writers practising successfully for more than a dozen years, the entire story-perspective on women in science fiction has changed. It is no longer uncommon to find a female chief protagonist in an stf story—and not a two-dimensional valentine or a cold-fire priestess-empress but a female who acts, talks and thinks like a woman alive.

Furthermore both Miss Hull and Miss Brackett married science fiction authors of renown—A. E. van Vogt and Edmond Hamilton respectively—and their influence on their talented husbands has made itself felt in the matter of endowing their menfolks'

6

THE READER SPEAKS

(Continued from page 7)

partnership as yet—but give them time. Certainly they are well on the way.

Two Schools of Thought

There are, of course, two schools of masculine thought and feeling anent this comparatively recent development in stf. One school withdraws into crusty male resentment toward feminine invasion of yet another masculine sanctum sanctorum. The other prefers mixed singles and/or doubles and makes no bones about it.

Personally, as our readers have doubtless gathered by this time, we belong to the latter group. It is our belief that this female uprising, inrush or whatever it may be termed is entirely in line with the world-trend toward woman's emancipation and equality that has endured at least since the fiery pronunciamentoes of Mary Wollstonecraft and her companions.

The girls have won Nobel Prizes, Senatorial seats, Gubernatorial incumbencies and corporation directorships. They have served as front line soldiers, as day laborers, as top executives and horse trainers, as test pilots and parachutists. More and more they have been accepting the toil, the danger and the responsibility of our era, along with its Hollywood contracts and beauty prizes.

It occurs to us that when the first extra-Tellurian frontier is attained it will not for long be an all-male affair. If something big is going on, be it on Mars, Venus or Ganymede, the girls will be in on it.

We rather envy the space pioneers of the future in their lack of solitude. They may at times grow weary of that inner tension which drives some women to talk for talk's sake. But overall they're going to have a lot more fun than pioneers of the dismal past.

female creations with a trio of dimensions. C. L. Moore's sensitivity has been of immeasurable aid in giving depth and reality to the heroines and other she-creatures of her multi-faceted spouse, Henry Kuttner.

Seldom if ever has a single field of fiction been so thoroughly spanned by three such husband-wife combinations as Hull-van Vogt, Brackett-Hamilton and Moore-Kuttner. Should you choose to regard this as an infiltration process, you will have to admit that the girls not only aimed high but got there.

It is our hunch that while the A-bomb, the V-2 rocket and the so-called Flying Saucer have had much to do with giving science fiction a far wider field of reader interest than the authors, editors and publishers conceived of a decade ago, it is these women writers who have played a vital role in making stf acceptable to a more adult market.

The space opera of ten, fifteen or twenty years ago—however clever its pseudo-scientific gadgetry, however vast its galactic scope—was basically little more than an elaborate *Tom Swift* or *Rover Boys* story. Its characters—we use the word in an entirely figurative sense—were mere appendages to its machinery and its dialogue was hopeless *gee-whiz* sub-adolescent.

A Good Influence

We think the girls had a large hand in fixing all that. Space opera—fine, but they wanted it peopled with folk who aroused emotional belief. They got them.

As these writers were establishing themselves other young women began to make their presence felt in the reader's columns of this and other stf magazines. They leaped recklessly into hitherto stag fan-controversies, thereby livening up same not only through the freshness of their approach but through the rebuttals they drew from resenting males.

Fan clubs and fan magazines began more and more to develop feminine brightness and neatness and the boys, forced to look to their laurels, lost much of that lingering dinginess which seems inevitably to accompany the all-male in print or in person. After all, why does the peacock preen? Hardly for other peacocks.

The girls have not yet blossomed into full

(Continued on page 140)

THE READER SPEAKS

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It occurs to us that when the first extra-Tellurian frontier is attained it will not for long be an all-male affair. If something big is going on, be it on Mars, Venus or Ganymede, the girls will be in on it.

We rather envy the space pioneers of the future in their lack of solitude. They may at times grow weary of that inner tension which drives some women to talk for talk's sake. But overall they're going to have a lot more fun than pioneers of the dismal past.

19. Editorial by Sam Merwin Jr., *Thrilling Wonder Stories*, December 1950, pp. 6, 7, and 140

and his ideas for the exploration of Mars, which I discussed in chapter 4, Merwin sees the men as the "space pioneers," and women only as their companions.

According to Merwin, the entry of women into the field can be characterized as "the Great Invasion or the Great Erosion depending upon the point of view" (6). He implies that women are either an invading army, ultimately improving the genre, or an influence that has corrupted science fiction. Brian Aldiss, in 1973, also figures women as the salvation of science fiction:

> I concur with Harlan Ellison; much of the best writing in science fiction today is being done by women (and he didn't even mention Christine Brooke-Rose, author of *Such*, 1966, and a fine modern novelist).
>
> What has made the difference is the disappearance of the Philistine-male-chauvinist-pig attitude, pretty well dissipated by the revolutions of the mid-sixties; and the slow fade of the Gernsbackian notion that sf is all hardware. Science fiction, in other words, has come back to a much more central position in the world of art. The all-male escapist power fantasy had at one time devoured all but what we have called the Huxleyan branch, those writings which occurred only irregularly as specific

social criticism. Science fiction has returned from the Ghetto of Retarded Boyhood; and, truth to tell, it seems not to have suffered from its imprisonment. (Aldiss 1973: 306)

Aldiss repeated his position in the expanded version of *Billion Year Spree*, titled the *Trillion Year Spree*, which he wrote with David Wingrove. They locate the "Great Invasion" in the seventies: "In the seventies there was a great influx of women writers. The revolution they began is still under way and is having an effect on the kind of genre we now enjoy. By the end of the seventies it had become clear that SF was no longer a kind of juvenile men's club. Women were to be seen at the bar. SF's unexpressed half was beginning to speak out. Angrily, skilfully, persuasively, sometimes—as in all new causes—with ill-considered over-emphasis, but in many instances speaking with a new voice, a new intonation" (Aldiss and Wingrove 1988: 465). Aldiss and Wingrove's women "at the bar," like those of Merwin more than thirty years earlier, have done the boys a favor by arriving in science fiction.

It is interesting to look at the pronouns in this passage. Who is this "us" and "them" that are referred to? "They" are, clearly, the women writers. "Their" arrival from the outside is seen here as a blessing, for "they" arrive to civilize sf, turning it into "the kind of genre *we* [boys like Aldiss and Wingrove] now enjoy." Women writers in this passage are like the Victorian angel of the house, taking care of the domestic sphere and making sure the master of the house is comfortable. Women become "SF's unexpressed half." Unfortunately, this acceptance of an "unexpressed," invisible, absent body of women until the "revolution" of the 1970s serves to rewrite and gloss over the complexities of the period prior to this "influx" or "explosion" of women in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

In 1982 Isaac Asimov made the same argument as Merwin in an article for *Vogue* called the "Feminization of Sci-Fi." He argues that this "feminization has broadened and deepened the field to the point where science-fiction novels can now appear on the bestseller lists" (Asimov 1982: 608). For Asimov "feminization" has rescued the field from being the "strongly masculine" one that it once was, where the readers were "almost all young men [who were] . . . to a large extent, rather withdrawn young men who either had not yet come to be at ease with members of opposite sex or were actively afraid of them" (558). It is tempting to read this as a description of the Isaac Asimov of the late thirties who wrote the letters I examined in the previous chapter. He ends his article by arguing that both sexes benefit

from the "feminization of science fiction": "It's as I have always said: Liberate women—and men will be liberated as well" (608).

The sf critic, writer, and journalist Charles Platt gives a less positive version of the arrival of the female hordes into science fiction. His is an account of "the Great Erosion." In a piece titled "The Rape of Science Fiction" (1989), women are among the rapists eroding science fiction's manhood:

> A new "soft" science fiction emerged, largely written by women: Joan Vinge, Vonda McIntyre, Ursula Le Guin, Joanna Russ, Kate Wilhelm, Carol Emshwiller. Their concern for human values was admirable, but they eroded science fiction's one great strength that had distinguished it from all other fantastic literature: its implicit claim that events described *could actually come true*.
>
> Of course, if you had a whimsical, muddled view of the world—if you didn't know anything about science, and didn't care—soft science fiction could seem perfectly plausible. And many new readers related to it in these terms. Unlike the old core-audience, they didn't enjoy mechanistic, technical stuff. They preferred mythic fables about dreamsnakes and snow queens. (Platt 1989: 46)

He ends by saying that Vonda McIntyre and Joan D. Vinge are responsible "for softening and sweetening science fiction, turning literary mind-food into conceptual cotton-candy that corrupted the tastes of naive adolescents" (Platt 1989: 49).

In Platt's formulation the difference between "hard" science fiction and "soft" science fiction is embodied: men are "hard," women are "soft" and, therefore, an eroding influence on the whole field. His arguments are not new, as I demonstrated in the previous chapter. The science fiction writers Lisa Goldstein, Pat Murphy, and Karen Joy Fowler[20] point out this equation in an interview by Wendy Counsil in the August 1990 *Science Fiction Eye*:

> GOLDSTEIN: Well if we're going to be in *Science Fiction Eye* this is something that really pissed me off. Charles Platt wrote an article . . . about who killed science fiction and he mentions Vonda McIntyre and Joan Vinge. And I was stunned! Here are two women who, as far as I know, haven't been writing nearly as much as they should in the field, except for *Star Trek* novels and movie novelization, and Platt is still annoyed that these women won major awards ten years ago. He's

annoyed that "soft science" has crept into the field in these women's work. Like anthropology.

COUNSIL: And biology.

GOLDSTEIN: And biology! I know; it's funny how the definition of "soft science" changes depending on if it's a man or a woman writing it.

MURPHY: It's because biology deals with soft, squishy living things.

GOLDSTEIN: Yeah, if a woman writes about it, *physics* is a soft science. (Counsil 1990: 27)

Goldstein, Fowler, and Murphy comment on the opposition between hard and soft sf:

FOWLER: You know, this whole hard science/soft science debate has begun to trouble me, because as I read more and more hard science fiction, I find less and less hard science in it. I don't understand—

GOLDSTEIN: There's *no* science in it! That Gibson stuff . . . You know Doug [Mr. Lisa Goldstein] reads this stuff and he's a computer programmer. He says the guy doesn't really seem to know anything about computers. . . .

COUNSIL: Even Larry Niven has admitted that he often isn't writing hard science fiction, that he's writing science fantasy, because there is no such thing as travelling faster than the speed of light.

MURPHY: In a recent article in *SF Eye*, Charles Platt talked about science fiction back in the fifties. He claimed that back then science fiction was based on hard science.

Reading that made me start a survey—though the earthquake stopped me—on comparing four magazines from the fifties to four from the eighties. I was going to categorize the stories: Faster than light travel? Science fantasy. A race of aliens living at the centre of the earth? Science fantasy, or just fantasy. I was going to compare the two groups of magazines to see how many hard science concepts there were in the 50s.

The first story I read in a 50s magazine was about aliens from the center of the earth who were using anti-gravity to steal the gold from Fort Knox. I never did find much of a hard science basis to that one.

GOLDSTEIN: But it was written by a man, right?

MURPHY: Yes, it was. No hard science; there was, however, a sexy babe in it. (Counsil 1990: 23)

My own reading of science fiction magazines from 1926 up to the present day confirmed Pat Murphy's impression. Hard science fiction has *always* been underrepresented in science fiction. Indeed the idea of science, closely associated with the masculine, has always been central to the genre but at the same time has always been lamented for its absence. As I demonstrated in chapter 1, a continual theme in many of the letters I read is the absence or inaccuracy of the science in the published stories. The violence inherent in Platt's very title, "The Rape of Science Fiction" becomes in his text a "softening," "sweetening," a "corrupt[ion]." Women become a polluting influence whose very touch defiles.

The changes wrought in science fiction from the late sixties appear quite different in feminist accounts of the period. Rather than use such terms as Aldiss and Wingrove's "influx" and "revolution" and Platt's "rape," Sarah Lefanu writes instead of an "intervention": "Previous to the intervention by feminist writers in the late sixties and early seventies science fiction reflected, in its content at least, what could be called masculine concerns, based around the central theme of space exploration and the development of technology: masculine concerns because access to these areas was effectively denied women in the real world, and science fiction, like all writing is written from within a particular ideology" (Lefanu 1988: 3). This "intervention," however, comes from the inside, not the outside: "Feminist SF . . . is part of science fiction while struggling against it" (5). Lefanu's women in science fiction are neither corrupting science fiction nor invading it.

Connie Willis also finds no hordes of women storming the barricades. There was instead a "tradition" of women's writing within science fiction. She writes in her editorial for *Asimov's Science Fiction* that the fact that there *were* women writing science fiction before the 1960s and 1970s was

> brought sharply home to me when I was looking up the stories I'd loved as a teenager. I'd never paid any attention to what the names of the stories were, let alone the authors, and, as a result, I found myself constantly saying, "there's this great story, I don't know what it was called or who wrote it, but it was about this town where they didn't have doctors . . ."
>
> I finally got fed up with my own ignorance and went back to my hometown public library to look all these stories up in the rebound copies of *Year's Best SF, Fifth Series*, etc., that I'd read them in in the first place.

> . . . I was surprised at how many of them had been written by women: Kit Reed and Mildred Clingerman and Zenna Henderson and Shirley Jackson and Margaret St. Clair and Judith Merril. (Willis 1992: 4–5)

Willis's reading history was crowded with stories written by women that were themselves crowded with representations of women. As a result she "didn't know there *were* any barricades. It never occurred to me that SF was a man's field that had to be broken into. How could it be with all those women writers? How could it be when Judith Merril was the one editing all those *Year's Best SFs*?" (Willis 1992: 8). Willis thus locates herself in a tradition of women writing science fiction. That she is part of such a tradition is so obvious that there is no need for her to say so explicitly. But access to a tradition of women and science fiction depends on what you were reading. It would have been just as possible to have grown up reading science fiction and read *none* of these writers, as was the case for Judith Raphael Buckrich and Nancy Kress.

Sweet Little Domestic Stories

> *If there were any women in the field before that [the late 1960s and early 1970s] (which there weren't), they had to slink around using male pseudonyms and hoping they wouldn't get caught. And if they did write under their own names (which they didn't), it doesn't count anyway because they only wrote sweet little domestic stories. Babies. They wrote mostly stories about babies. (Willis 1992: 4)*

The implication of Charles Platt's arguments in "The Rape of Science Fiction" (1989) is that women do not belong in sf because of their softening influence. In this section I look at the suggestion that much of the earliest science fiction written by women was overly concerned with the domestic and that this is, of itself, a bad thing. Connie Willis refers to this method for dismissing the writing of women in the parody that heads this section, referring to a dismissal that was happening at the time she wrote her editorial. However, this notion of women's sf being "sweet little domestic stories" was already current at the time of their publication in the late forties and fifties. Anne McCaffrey, referring to the work of Judith Merril—whose first and perhaps best known sf story, "That Only a Mother," was published in 1948—writes that at the time Merril's stories were referred to as "diaper stories"

(McCaffrey 1974: 280). The editorial blurb about Carol Emshwiller from the "Author! Author!" section of the February 1958 issue of *Future* magazine also attests that the "diaper" label is not a later development: "Carol Emshwiller's stories do not show the 'typical' characteristics of tales by some female science-fictionists. They aren't attempts to swashbuckle so that readers will think she's a man; nor are they heart-throb-and-diapers accounts such as you find in the slicks. They're individual, and a needed reminder that God created science fictionists male and female, too!" A similar put-down appears in a review of a story by Rosel George Brown; William Atheling Jr. (pen name of James Blish): "Mrs Brown is just about the only one of *F&SF*'s former gaggle of housewives who doesn't strike me as verging on the feebleminded; in fact I think her work has attracted less attention than it deserves" (Atheling [1964] 1974: 128).[21]

Both Russ and Wood continue this dismissal of women's sf stories of the late forties and fifties as being "sweet little domestic stories." However, it is important to put their critique in context. As I argued in the introduction, the idea that science fiction is a genre within which anything is possible is an extremely important one to criticism of the field. If extrapolation about anything is possible, why is there such a failure to imagine anything new?

Russ makes this point in "The Image of Women in Science Fiction": "One would think science fiction the perfect literary mode in which to explore (and explode) our assumptions about 'innate' values and 'natural' social arrangements, in short our ideas about Human Nature, Which Never Changes. Some of this had been done. But speculation about the innate personality differences between men and women, about family structure, about sex, in short about gender roles, does not exist at all" (Russ [1971] 1974: 54). Russ felt that the "new" societies being invented did none of these things. They were either a kind of "intergalactic suburbia . . . the American middle class with a little window dressing" or, worse, a society based on "an idealised and simplified" past where men are men and women are in the background (54–55).

After talking about men writers of sf, Russ discusses science fiction written by women. She divides their work into four categories: The first is "ladies' magazine fiction," "in which the sweet, gentle, intuitive heroine solves an interstellar crisis by mending her slip or doing something equally domestic after her big heroic husband has failed. Zenna Henderson sometimes writes like this" (Russ [1971] 1974: 56). The other three categories are galactic suburbia, space opera,[22] and avant-garde fiction (56). I will examine only Russ's first category, "ladies' magazine fiction." There is a strong

implication in her description of this category that the domestic is intrinsically uninteresting, unheroic, and somehow foolish in science fiction, and that the ways in which it has been written in science fiction only reproduce the stereotype of housewife. This view is shared by one of the best-known female pulp writers, Leigh Brackett: "Domesticity bored the bejesus out of me. Adventure stories were what I liked to read, so they were what I wrote. If I put a woman in any of my stories she was there because she was doing something, not worrying about the price of eggs or who's in love with who!" (quoted in Bradley 1977–78: 17).

Russ's reference to the heroine solving a crisis by "mending her slip" sounds remarkably like Zenna Henderson's story "Subcommittee" (1962),[23] which Susan Wood discusses in her article "Women and Science Fiction." On the one hand, Wood dismisses the story as "silly" and "sentimental"; on the other, she argues that it "makes an important point. The men are automatically suspicious and hostile, thinking only of gaining power over each other. The women, with their shared concern for the nurture of life, quickly establish communication and trust" (Wood 1978–79: 12). Wood's more favorable assessment of the story is embedded in an essentialism that revalues "female" qualities as positive and "male" qualities as negative, rather than the reverse. However, she is still caught in the flipside of those valuations, wherein a concern with many women's everyday domestic lives is viewed as "trivial" and "sentimental" and "boring." At the same time, Wood wants to think about ways in which science fiction can talk about those women "whose primary concern is the family" (12).

Wood's second reading of "Subcommittee," as a text that makes an important point about conflict resolution, is pushed further by Farah Mendlesohn in her article "Gender, Power, and Conflict Resolution" (1994). Mendlesohn argues that the story is "revealing as a critique of power structures and the language of power and, finally, as a study of gender" (124). Earth and alien invaders, the Linjeni, are at war, and Serena has accompanied her husband, a general, to the negotiations. While he spends all day attempting to secure a settlement with the aliens, Serena spends her days looking after her son, Splinter. Splinter makes friends with one of the alien children, Doovey. This friendship gives Serena the opportunity to make contact with one of the alien wives, whom she calls Mrs. Pink. The time the women spends together allows Serena to learn some Linjeni and to discover that this alien people have not come to invade Earth but in search of salt, which is essential to their ability to reproduce. With this knowledge Serena breaks into the negotiations and by displaying the slip that Mrs. Pink made for her, she is able to prove to the men that common ground between humans and the aliens is possible.

Russ characterizes heroines like Serena as "sweet," "gentle," and "intuitive." Their ability to deal with situations is something innate to them, not something achieved by skill. Mendlesohn argues that "at no time is Serena portrayed as intuitive as such: she makes no guesses; rather, she listens and learns" (Mendlesohn 1994: 125). She is operating in a different social milieu from her husband the general . Unlike him, Serena "exists within a world of morning coffee and neighbourliness, with its own mores and codes of conduct. Her reaction to the stranger, therefore, is—metaphorically—to knock on the door with a cake. This is not feminine intuition or any innate feminine gentleness, but it is integral to a complex social community with its own values and demands" (125).

In treating women's sf as "sweet little domestic stories," the early examples of feminist sf criticism by Russ and Wood accept the marginalization of women's writing. These are the very grounds for dismissing women's writing that Russ outlines so brilliantly in her 1983 *How to Suppress Women's Writing* : "[S]he wrote it but look what she wrote about" (Russ [1983] 1984: 48). This kind of dismissal also serves to discourage others from going back and reading some of those "sweet little domestic stories." For instance, I avoided Zenna Henderson, Judith Merril, and other writers of the period because the accounts of 1950s women's science fiction I read made their stories sound dull. It was only after reading Connie Willis's "The Women SF Doesn't See" editorial for *Asimov's* that I finally made an effort to track down some of the "domestic" writing of women in sf in the 1950s.

Roz Kaveney also argues that pre-1960s science fiction by women was overly sweet and concerned with the domestic:

> The women SF writers of this period tended to be marginalised in one of three ways: one, editors were keen on stories which were "feminine" in the sense of being saccharine; the work of Zenna Henderson and Judith Merril does admittedly extend the range of SF material to cover issues like nurture but does so with that sentimentality which the SF of the time tended to confound with emotional truth. Two, women were encouraged to write light jokey fiction like that of Evelyn E. Smith, fiction which keeps a low temperature even in its humour. In some of the work of Evelyn Smith and of Margaret St Clair there is a quiet anger from which Russ probably learned, her own early fiction appeared towards the end of this time and was in more or less that vein. (Kaveney 1989: 84)

There is some evidence to support Kaveney's claim that certain editors expected women to write certain kinds of stories and that it was difficult to publish other kinds of stories. Wood writes that "[i]n 1948 John W. Campbell [editor of *Astounding*] commissioned Judith Merril's first science fiction story, asking her to provide 'the woman's point of view' on scientific developments. The story, "That Only a Mother," deals with the effects of radiation in terms of a mother's blind love for her mutant daughter. The galactic house wives of 2050, happily dusting the robochef in the living unit while hubby tends the yeast farms, might represent a failure of social extrapolation, but they were, perhaps, a little more believable as human beings than all the princesses and priestesses. Perhaps" (Wood 1978–79: 10).[24]

Wood's shift from discussing "That Only a Mother" to talking about the "galactic house wives of 2050" implies that "That Only" is this kind of a story. Certainly the story was presented as being from the feminine point of view when it first appeared. The title page features a sketch of a mother holding a child whose face only she can see, and Judith Merril is billed as "a new feminine science fiction author" (*Astounding Science Fiction* [June 1948]: 88). Connie Willis, however, offers a different assessment: "Although "That Only" does have a baby in it, it hardly classifies as a domestic tale. It's a story about radiation, infanticide, and desperate self-delusion that manages to be poignant and horrific at the same time" (Willis 1992: 8). Perhaps the problem here is the way the term "domestic" is used to be synonomous with dull or everyday for all those things—radiation, infanticide and desperate self-delusion happen within the domestic sphere.

Judith Merril gave me a different account of the story's genesis after I spoke to her at WisCon 20 in May of 1996. Merril told me that Campbell did *not* commission the story:

> In August 1947 I went to Philadelphia for my first science fiction convention. At a very drunk hotel room party [Theodore] Sturgeon introduced me to the great editor, John Campbell. It was friendship—forever at first sight.
>
> "John," I said, slurring only slightly, "John, I wan' tell you, I wrote a story so good I can' sell it to you, 'cause you couldn' pay enough for it." (*Astounding* paid top rates for a pulp, two to three cents a word).
>
> "You' right," he said, with his own bit of a slur. "If you' story is that good, I can' pay enough for it." We beamed at each other.
>
> Next morning I woke up more horrified than hung over—but six months later, when it had finished its rounds of the slicks . . . John did buy the story. It was published in the June, 1948 issue of *Astounding*. (Letter to author, 16 November 1996)[25]

Merril sent him another story, which Campbell rejected, saying that he preferred to see her writing stories from the woman's point of view. Merril was less than pleased by this. She writes:

> The woman's point of view request came in response to the second submission I sent him. I'd have to find the files to give you a title and/or exact quote, but it was a story with a male protagonist.
>
> Yes, which ever it was, it did sell elsewhere. And yes, the request pissed me off. I felt everything I wrote was a woman's point of view, but the only stuff I had (and to this day, have) not been able to sell were my attempts to write the woman's point of view as perceived by the publishing world, i.e.romances, confessions, slick magazine stories!
>
> I did not feel constrained to write woman's point of view for Campbell or anyone else. I submitted everywhere, but the only editor I ever consciously wrote for was Anthony Boucher, and this was largely because he never attempted to superimpose his values on mine. (Letter to author, 13 October 1996)

Other women writers had a different experience. In her article "An Evolution of Consciousness: Twenty-five Years of Writing about Women in Science Fiction" (1977) Marion Zimmer Bradley, for example, writes that in the 1950s "with the failure of both *Web of Darkness* and *Window on the Night* to find publication, I realized that if I were going to write for anyone's edification other than my own, I would have to write about men; I would have to write novels with heroes rather than heroines. This was simply the rules of the game, the economic facts of life in the market" (Bradley 1977: 35).[26] And as late as the 1970s, Joanna Russ and Suzy McKee Charnas had enormous difficulty getting their women-centered novels, *The Female Man* (1975) and *Motherlines* (1978), published.

One of Margaret St. Clair's stories, "Short in the Chest" (1954),[27] does indeed evince the "quiet anger" that Roz Kaveney mentions; however, I would argue that it is closer to biting satire than "light jokey fiction" (Kaveney 1989: 84). St. Clair experienced some difficulty in getting the story published: "In the fifties and sixties sex was, if not quite a no-no, something one had to be careful about. A short, funny story of mine, 'Short

in the Chest,' was rejected by Horace Gold with the comment, 'If you want to put me out of business, Margaret, I wish you'd do it with French post-cards'" (St. Clair 1981: 151).

The story is definitely not a "sweet little domestic story." It is set in a future where everyone in the United States is in the armed forces and all the different services hate each other. A Marine, Major Sonya Briggs, goes to a huxley—a computerized psychiatrist—because of problems she has been having "dighting"—having sex with—a member of Air. She asks the huxley if it is "true that the dighting system was set up by a group of psychologists after they'd made a survey of inter-service tension?" (St. Clair [1954] 1995: 132). The drug they take to get aroused, a "Watson," does not work for her. The huxley she goes to see has a short in its chest and advises her to shoot the next "yuk from Air" she is assigned for dighting. At first she thinks that that "wouldn't reduce inter-service tension effectively" (137), but then she decides to follow the huxley's advice. The huxley, it turns out, "had had interviews with twelve young women so far, and it had given them all the same advice it had given Major Briggs. Even a huxley with a short in its chest might have forseen that the final result of its counselling would be catastrophic for Marine" (137).

A story that is more typical of the kind of writing that Russ refers to as "intergalactic suburbia" than "Short in the Chest" is Garen Drussai's "Woman's Work" (1956).[28] The editor's blurb describes the story as an extrapolation of "the housewife in an age of the ultimate development of competitive salesmanship" (Drussai 1956: 104). In the far future, the housewife's "woman's work" is to deal with the salesmen. As Sheila deals with the first salesman at her door (at four A.M.) and his array of gizmos, such as "a pneumatic float" to lull her into a "state of acceptance," she is always thinking of her husband, Hal, "lying there in the bedroom—trusting her to do her best" (105). At the end of the story it becomes apparent that Hal, too, is a salesman. As he goes off to work, "[s]he looked numbly after him, thinking of the hours ahead till she could escape to the shops and shows that made up her day. Then she straightened up determinedly. After all, this was woman's work" (106). The story then ends the way it started: "The alarm on her wrist was giving off small electric shocks. *Someone was coming up the walk!*" (106).

"Woman's Work" takes for granted that the stereotypical household economy of white middle America of the 1950s will remain unchanged into the future. In Russ's words, "assumptions about 'innate' values and 'natural' social arrangements" are neither "explored" nor "exploded" (Russ

[1971] 1974: 54). "Woman's Work" can also be read as a satire of its present, overdrawing the stultifying pointlessness of middle-class "woman's" work of the period. For all science fiction's utopic striving towards various futures, it will always be as much about its own now as about any imagined future.

It is difficult, however, to know if this reading of the text was available at the time of its publication. *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*, where the story first appeared, did not have a letters column, and I have found no discussion of the story or its author anywhere else. There is a sense in which my historical distance from the text makes it easier for me to read it as a satire of what may have been seen as the suffocating monotony of fifties suburbia. However, I can imagine how a steady diet of the narrow confines of stories like Drussai's could be maddening. The cumulative effect of reading through countless pulp science fiction stories from the 1920s through to the early seventies was that it became much easier to understand what it was that Russ and Wood and McCaffrey were reacting to.

The coding of the work by women of this decade as "domestic" is part of the same move that sees women coded as the "love interest." It reduces women's ability to signify within science fiction outside the bedroom or the kitchen. The acceptance of this coding fits in with the accounts of women and science fiction that figure women as invading science fiction from outside and bringing their feminine concerns such as domesticity with them. This is the same separation between the public and private spheres that I discussed in chapter 4.