

Science Fiction

November 11. Zoline (concluded). Russ. *Star Trek* and Jenkins on fan fictions.

Andrew Goldstone

andrew.goldstone@rutgers.edu

Office hours: Mondays 3:00–5:00

Murray 031

sf-f13.blogs.rutgers.edu

feminist SF

Along about 1967, I began to feel a certain unease, a need to step on a little farther, perhaps, on my own. I began to want to define and understand the meaning of sexuality and the meaning of gender, in my life and in our society... The way I did my thinking was to write a novel.

The fact is that the real subject of the book is not feminism or sex or gender or anything of the sort; as far as I can see, it is a book about betrayal and fidelity.

Le Guin, "Is Gender Necessary?" (1976) in *Language of the Night*, ed. Susan Wood (New York: Putnam, 1979), 161–62

feminist SF

[UKL on the consequences of her “experiment”]: The absence of exploitation. The Gethenians do not rape their world... It seems that what I was after again was a balance: the driving linearity of the “male,” the pushing forward to the limit...and the circularity of the “female,” the valuing of patience, ripeness, practicality, livableness.

Ibid., 165–66

feminist SF

But the central failure...comes up in the frequent criticism I receive, that the Gethenians seem like *men*, instead of menwomen.

This rises in part from the choice of pronoun...The pronouns wouldn't matter at all if I had been cleverer at *showing* the “female” component of the Gethenian characters in *action*. Unfortunately, the plot and structure...cast the Gethenian protagonist, Estraven, almost exclusively into roles which we are culturally conditioned to perceive as “male.” (Ibid., 168)

Custard.

Custard is this. It has aches, aches when. Not to be. Not to be narrowly. This makes a whole little hill.

It is better than a little thing that has mellow real mellow. It is better than lakes whole lakes, it is better than seeding.

Potatoes.

Real potatoes cut in between.

Potatoes.

In the preparation of cheese, in the preparation of crackers, in the preparation of butter, in it.

Roast potatoes.

Roast potatoes for.

Asparagus.

Asparagus in a lean in a lean to hot. This makes it art and it is wet wet weather wet weather wet.

Gertrude Stein, *Tender Buttons* (1914)

SG [Sinda Gregory]: A number of feminists, including Joanna Russ, criticized *The Left Hand of Darkness* as being too “masculine” in its presentation. How do you respond to that sort of criticism?

UKL: As I said, I was writing that novel back in 1967 and 1968, and we’ve all moved on a long, long way since then... I dissatisfy a lot of my gay friends and I dissatisfy a lot of my feminist friends because I don’t go as far as they would like.

Larry McCaffery, interview with UKL [1983], in *Across the Wounded Galaxies: Interviews with Contemporary American Science Fiction Writers* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 165 (h/t Spider)

critique

How might “When It Changed” implicitly critique *The Left Hand of Darkness*?

critique

Sometimes I laugh at the question those four men hedged about all evening and never quite dared to ask, looking at the lot of us, hicks in overalls, farmers in canvas pants and plain shirts: *Which of you plays the role of the man?* As if we had to produce a carbon copy of their mistakes! I doubt very much that sexual equality has been reestablished on Earth. (Russ, 514)

the medium

What specific examples can we give of medium reconfiguring the SF genre? Draw on one of the (many) evolved-human stories we've read to sharpen your thinking about "Where No Man Has Gone Before."

The challenge. Think of television not as an *upgrade* to print but as *distinctive* in terms of capacities, constraints, and modes of production and consumption.

eyeline match

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xPHtvB3Dd8Q>

“what price yummmies!”

Let us for a moment compare *Star Wars* with *Star Trek*. The latter has certainly generated an immense paraphernalia around itself, but the minor industry around *Star Wars* is part of a commercial advertising campaign; that around *Star Trek* originated in the audience itself...

Why the difference? I suspect that, although *Star Trek* is addictive (to judge from its audience and my own experience), it is also, relative to *Star Wars*, politically liberal, morally serious, and in its best episodes so much less addictive than most of the TV competition that the idea-men of the industry...almost instinctively distrusted it. Those hooked on the show not only wanted to watch it, they also wanted to talk about it and think about it. At times *Star Trek* generated not a desire to see more, but a desire to sit still and contemplate, to sit still and be moved—to my mind, sure signs of non-addictive culture.

What adult person, after seeing *Star Wars*, wants to sit still and be moved? *Star Wars* generates only one desire—the desire for a sequel.

Joanna Russ, “SF and Technology as Mystification,”
Science Fiction Studies 5, no. 3 (November 1978): 252.

Star Trek addresses itself to different desires...worthwhile goals, a clear conscience, peers whom one can respect, love, and be loyal to, a chance to exercise one's skills, self-respect, a code of conduct which can be followed without disaste—and excitement and self-importance. All these good things are to be gained by self-control and adherence to a morality...Time and again the crew's fragile but valuable system of command and self-command is undermined by something coming from outside the ship, only to be re-established by somebody's heroic personal efforts (often Captain Kirk's) just before the drama ends.

Ibid., 253

next time

Read Lem: *Star Diaries* excerpt in *Wesleyan*; “Microx and Gigant” on Sakai this evening)