

Conversation Pieces
Volume 1

The Grand Conversation

Essays

by

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For a Genealogy of Feminist SF: Reflections on Women, Feminism, and Science Fiction, 1818-1960

To look forward to the history that will be,
one must look at and retell the history
that has been told.¹

Last year at WisCon I sat on a panel organized and moderated by Justine Larbalestier, titled “When It Changed: Feminists Debate the History of Feminist SF.” The other panelists were Jeanne Gomoll, Joan Haran, Nalo Hopkinson, and Eleanor Arnason. Collectively we embodied a mix of scholars, writers, and fans; we also represented two generations: Justine, Nalo, and Joan in the younger generation, and Jeanne, Eleanor, and I in the older one.

Boldly the panel’s title announced differences in opinion about the history of feminist sf. While the origins of science fiction as a genre have long been a bone of contention among the predominantly male writers and critics who presume to speak the history of our genre, what could there possibly be to “debate” about the history of feminist sf? The men argue about which authors and work should be declared foundational: Mary Shelley, Edgar Allan Poe, H.G. Wells, or Hugo Gernsback? Much of the men’s argument hinges on how the genre is

defined, which is to say on what counts as sf and what does not. I personally have never found the malestream history of sf of the slightest interest for the simple reason that although I identify myself very closely with the genre, the official history's persistent marginalization of women writers, whose presence in the genre though acknowledged is considered of slight overall importance, has always made me feel like a tolerated outsider in the way that my professional and personal contacts in the genre don't ordinarily do. Jeanne Gomoll's "An Open Letter to Joanna Russ" famously expresses the most recent erasure of women's contributions to the genre, viz., Bruce Sterling's oft-repeated characterization of 1970s sf as "confused, self-involved, and stale."²² Gomoll observes, "A growing number of people don't remember that SF in the '70s heralded the grand entrance of many new women writers."²³ And she notes that this failure to remember the excitement of feminist sf in the '70s as well as an absence of consciousness that feminist sf's emphasis on character development and human interaction completely changed our expectations of the genre are common throughout fandom.

The panel had no quarrel with the proposition that 1970s feminist sf had been relegated to a marginal, often denigrated presence in the genre's history and surmised that that as well as the current difficulties women writers routinely experience in selling overt feminist sf might be due to a change of attitude toward feminism in US society at large. What, then, did we have to "debate"?

"Debate" was the word Justine chose to use in the subtitle of the panel. "Discuss" would better describe what actually, in the event, took place. In a curious parallel to the debate raging among those concerned with the genre's malestream history, the panel's difference

in opinion focused entirely on the origins of feminist sf. All of the panelists but Justine shared the conventional wisdom that feminist sf had germinated in the 1960s and burst on the scene in the late '60s and early '70s with the appearance of the now canonical works of second-wave feminist sf. Justine, however, asserted that feminist sf's roots extended deep into the 1950s sf scene, a soil she saw as nurturing a new interest in exploring sex roles and relationships and family structures and in challenging masculinist and knee-jerk militaristic attitudes prevalent in "Golden Age" sf.

Significantly, rather than discussing the roots and origins of feminist sf, the panelists chose to concentrate on how each had discovered feminist sf and immediately felt included in it. Jeanne and Eleanor were participants in male-dominated fandom when feminist sf first became identifiable as such, while Justine, Joan, Nalo, and I discovered it as readers and writers isolated from fandom. But in at least one important respect our experiences were across the board similar: feminist sf so engaged us that we each of us felt, on discovering and devouring it, a part of a community—even in the case of those of us who knew nothing of fandom, had never met any authors of feminist sf, and were not yet published writers ourselves. In fact, the material feminist sf community came into actual existence only through the sustained efforts and determination of women like Jeanne and Eleanor.

The most important kernel I took from the panel's discussion was the realization that, as was the case in my own particular experience, on discovering texts that could be called "feminist sf," most women, including those who were not part of the sf scene in the '70s, felt as though they had become part of a "community"

engaged in a spatially expansive, temporally extended conversation. Often when we discovered these texts we shared them with friends, but in any case we felt as though we had become involved in a conversation—which was probably due to the texts themselves tending to be distinctly reflexive and dialogical and constantly demanding of their readers immediate reflections on what it means to be a woman in the world as it is and how different the world could become, depending upon what women might do or become.

While in the European tradition there has often been a role for the exceptional woman as an honorary member of the boy's clubhouse, women, including those allowed to venture into the clubhouse, have often invented the community they need inside their own heads—or on the page, as in the case, for instance, of Christine de Pisan's *The Book of the City of Ladies*.⁴ Much feminist sf of the 1970s and 1980s was all *about* creating communities. Surely it can't, therefore, be any wonder that those women reading outside the clubhouse were able to imagine that they belonged to a virtual feminist community in which one long, great conversation was taking place, any more than that those who were honorary members of the clubhouse did. Later, when such isolated feminist readers/writers encountered the "real" community of fans or began publishing their own work, they became *contributors* to the conversation. At present we have a relatively large feminist sf community with a material existence. The Tiptree Award, gatherings like WisCon, and Internet listservs have become media facilitating the conversation. And although we have achieved a more dynamic, more directly interactive conversation, the imagined community each of us continues to carry

inside her head retains a powerful grip on our individual feminist imaginations.

The panel “When It Changed” implicitly posed the question of what a history of feminist sf might look like. I’d now like to consider that question with respect to the question of what the relationship of such a history might be to a malestream history of sf. The image of the boys’ clubhouse strikes me as an apt metaphor for figuring women sf writers and fans in current malestream histories of sf. (We cannot talk yet about a single, monumental history of the genre since the defining parameters of the genre and the events of that history remain so deeply contested.) The principal approach to all women’s sf texts—and not merely feminist ones—has been to discuss them in isolation from malestream sf. I find it telling that both malestream sf critics *and* feminist critics have been steadily creating—albeit for probably different reasons—what might be called a gynohistory for sf. This gynohistory comes in two forms. Often it appears as an adjunct to the main—malestream—history in the accounts by men writing about the genre, where they lump mention of work by women into one chapter or one section of a chapter. But gynohistory is also produced in feminist criticism, where a set of texts is usually presented in isolation from the genre at large, positioning them within the context of extra-generic women’s writing, with the effect of denying the particular terms and context of their production. (A recent example of this is Jennifer Burwell’s *Notes on Nowhere*, where she cleanly extracts work by Joanna Russ and Octavia Butler from all consideration of the genre conventions and conditions of their production.⁵) The effects of this approach have been, in the instance of the male critics, to restrict women to the status of token, honorary members of the

clubhouse, and, in the instance of the feminist critics, to imply that the end products—the texts—have nothing to do with the clubhouse or their authors’—and often readers’—relations to the clubhouse.⁶

I find this gynohistory approach to women’s sf deeply unsatisfactory. As an sf writer, although I may feel marginalized by the malestream, I am always, finally, aware of writing within the context of the genre, without which my work would make limited sense and, indeed, would probably not be read or even published. Although academic critics may presume that feminist sf enjoys no significant relationship to the (malestream) genre as a whole, the fact remains that feminist sf has been and continues to be genre-contingent and dependent. To my mind, a more interesting construction of the history of women in sf is found in Justine’s work, which I would describe as an integrated approach that looks for women’s presence in the clubhouse and the impact that presence has had in the clubhouse’s history.

Although there *is* now the promise of critical work that will truly bring women into the history of sf, for all that I have been dissatisfied with the gynohistory approach, I feel drawn to return to the still-honorary status of women in the clubhouse and the concomitant dream of community that usually accompanies such a status. As I’ve already noted, this invention of community has taken material shape for present-day feminist sf in the form of meetings like WisCon, dedicated listservs, the Tiptree Award, and even an academic journal devoted to feminist sf. And I would repeat: either before the material reality of this community existed or before they had personal access to it, each of the members of the “When It Changed” panel imagined its existence. The texts and whatever was written about the texts that feminist read-

ers could access constituted its traces. But this imagined community did not spring full-grown like Athena from Zeus's head only with the entrance of second-wave feminism onto the scene.

While I forcefully maintain the necessity of an integrated approach to history, I want also to recognize and explore the long, often disjunct conversation that achieved its apotheosis in feminist sf.⁷ For although feminist sf was born and has ever since been nurtured within the context of the sf genre, its antecedents extend as far back as the nineteenth century, before there existed an sf genre. In *How To Suppress Women's Writing*, Joanna Russ noted "When the memory of one's predecessors is buried, the assumption persists that there were none and each generation of women believes itself to be faced with the burden of doing everything for the first time.... The specter of 'If women can, why haven't they?' is as potent as it was in Margaret Cavendish's time."⁸ And, "Without models," Russ reminds us, "it's hard to work; without a context, difficult to evaluate; without peers, nearly impossible to speak" (93). Although today's feminist sf writers may not be in any immediate danger of thinking they are the first generation, we still cannot overestimate the value of knowing something about the past of our long conversation.

To distinguish an interest in our long conversation from the more proper histories about women's sf that I've just described, I call this a "genealogy" of feminist sf, rather than a "history" or "pre-history." *Genealogy*, in the sense that thinkers like Foucault and Deleuze use the word, is not interested in striking definitions or discovering origins but in retracing a way through discontinuities that convention—viz., whatever current story most people are repeating about the past in question—would see

as set in stone. Most notions of history regard the present as a concretization of the past. Seeing the relationship between past and present in this way is antithetical to feminist interests. Philosopher Elizabeth Grosz suggests that what feminists do need is “the idea of a history of singularity and particularity, a history that defies repeatability or generalization and that welcomes the surprise of the future as it makes clear the specificities and particularities, the events, of history.”⁹ She warns that

The past endures, not in itself, but in its capacity to become something other. This becoming infects not only beings in/as duration but the world itself. This is why feminist history is so crucial: not simply because it informs our present but more so because it enables other virtual futures to be conceived, other perspectives to be developed, than those that currently prevail. In this sense, the astute feminist historian stands on the cusp of the folding of the past into the future, beyond the control or limit of the present (1018-1019).

Grosz’s warning carries a promise: the past, she says, must be regarded as being inherently open to future rewritings, as never “full” enough, to retain itself as a full presence that propels itself intact into the future.... The identity of any statement, text, or event is never given in itself. Neither texts, nor objects, nor subjects have the kind of self-presence that gives them a stable and abiding identity; rather, what time is, and what matter, text, and life are, are becomings, openings to time, change, rewriting, recontextualization. The past is never exhausted in its virtualities, insofar as it is always capable of giving rise to *another* reading, another context, another framework that will animate it in different ways (1019).

It is my constant sense of our feminist sf-present as a grand conversation that enables me to trace its existence into the past and from there see its trajectory extending into our future. A genealogy for feminist sf would not constitute a chart depicting direct lineages but would offer us an ever-shifting, fluid mosaic, the individual tiles of which we will probably only ever partially access. From the late 1970s on, predecessor texts that Russ in 1983 argued that we need began to be rediscovered one book or story at a time. Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Herland* was one of the first; it appeared back in print, startling us all, in 1979. Last fall, I constructed a list of women who had published utopian and sf and fantasy texts beginning with Mary Shelley through 1950.¹⁰ I was able to identify 153 names dating from 1818-1926 and another 98 dating from 1926-1949. Though only a portion of these writers were feminists, all of them demonstrated signs of having been conscious of and fascinated by the possibilities of using fiction to speculate about many of the subjects and themes that still engage us in feminist sf today.

One virtue of allowing ourselves to construct a genealogy is the license it gives us to ignore the concomitant issues of the definition and origin of the genre proper. We need not point to one particular person as the founder of the conversation, nor need we look only at texts that fall clearly within the range of the science fiction, utopia, and fantasy genres. Why do I name Mary Shelley as my beginning? Not because I want to claim her as the definitive one who started it all, much less name her as the author of the first work of science fiction. And here I'll make a confession. Although I've honored Shelley as a worthy writer and have even on occasion been moved to defend her sole authorship of *Frankenstein*, I

avoided actually reading that novel until last October, when in the course of preparing a talk, I revisited Jane Donawerth's *Frankenstein's Daughters* and was struck by her description of the book.¹¹ It is not that I hadn't read Donawerth's description before nor heard other feminists admiring *Frankenstein*. But the impression had been made so forcefully on me that the book was a Gothic in the Monk Lewis and Mrs. Radcliffe tradition, a form I've always found too tedious to read, by both sf critics and feminist literary critics like Ellen Moers who attribute the book's genesis to Shelley's emotional trauma at the loss of a child, that deep down I remained skeptical. Last October I read the novel and was astonished to discover that it presents a passionate argument pitting two different approaches to science against one another—virtually the same argument one still encounters in the pages of academic feminist journals. Inspired to do a quick spot of research on Shelley, I discovered that before and while she wrote the novel she read the work of proponents on both sides of the argument. It may be true that the original imaginative impetus for the story was her horror at what she heard while sitting quietly in an unusually glamorous boys' clubhouse listening to Dr. Polidori describe for Percy Bysshe Shelley and Lord Byron the bizarre experiments on ailing patients and dead bodies he had assisted Dr. Charles Henry Wilkinson to perform. But her journals document the fact that the novel took her several months to write. Unquestionably, a passionate attitude about scientific principles and ethics informed and sustained her work on the novel more than a middle-of-the-night nightmare image of a monster.

I start with Shelley because her work is the earliest I've found discussing the issues that feminist writers

today continue to engage with. I think of her sitting silent, listening to the men's conversation about the work of Humphry Davy, experiments by Galvani, Volta, Adlini, Humboldt, Schmuck, Grapengiesser, and Creve, and the theories Oken and Heidmann developed as a result. We might imagine her, an admirer of the work of Erasmus Darwin, who did not view the scientist's role as that of aggressor and conqueror of the natural world, forming her own opinions on the subject. The story goes that she did not venture any opinions before the men. But anyone who has read *Frankenstein* surely knows that she had them. Of course *Frankenstein* wasn't merely the means to covertly talk back to the men; in the novel Shelley explores many of the ideas she had soaked up from reading her mother's work, and Rousseau, Goethe, Milton, and other philosophers, poets, and political theorists.

It would be impossible for me to compile a list of all the works of sf that have engaged with *Frankenstein*, even if I were only to include those written by women. Now that I've read the novel, I seem constantly to be discovering its traces in even very recently published texts. Surely Shelley numbers among our more powerful conversationalists.

Consider next the example of Annie Denton Cridge, the author of "Man's Rights; or, How Would you Like It?" published in 1870, whose work is sited on a rather different conversational thread than Mary Shelley's. Although we don't know the dates of her birth and death, thanks to Carol Farley Kessler we do know that Cridge and her husband were reformers in Washington, D.C. during the 1860s, advocating cooperative kitchens and workshops.¹² Her brother was a geologist; later, in 1884, her son published a utopia bearing the marks of his mother's feminist influence. My imagination suggests

that Cridge's may be another case of a woman operating in another boys' clubhouse.

"Man's Rights" is a depiction of a sex-role-reversal society reminiscent of Gerd Brantenberg's 1977 *Egalia's Daughters*. Cridge could be said to overdetermine the reader's estrangement by not only having her narrator tell the story as a series of dreams but also placing her society on Mars. Interestingly, she mixes utopian conventions with the sort of detail one expects to find in science fiction. Her first view of the sex-role-reversal society shows men as downtrodden household drudges, "sickly,"¹³ "stoop-shouldered," "unsexed," and with "weak and complaining" voices (5); but the scene soon changes, with technological advances and social restructuring lifting the heaviest of the men's burdens, reflecting Cridge's conviction that technology could make a fundamental contribution to women's emancipation. The narrator takes a tour of the machinery. "I saw what was called a 'self-feeding pie-maker,' that reminded me of a steam printing press, where the paper goes in blank at one end and comes out printed at the other. So the flour, shortening, and fruit were taken in all at once at three separate receptacles, and came out at the other end pies ready for the oven, to which they were at once, over a small tramway, transferred by machinery"(9). She describes, also, the distribution of food to households by caravans of mechanized steam-wagons and imagines dining-rooms and cook-houses and laundries to "accommodate hundreds at once, in blocks, or hollow squares... combining, in a most inconceivable degree, economy with beauty"(9). Needless to say, the steam-powered machinery also washes the dishes and does the laundry.

Kessler reports that Cridge’s “dream vision” “followed the lead”¹⁴ of feminist predecessors who similarly presented their visions of a future US as futuristic dreams, in particular Mary Griffith, whose “Three Hundred Years Hence,” published in 1836, and Jane Sophia Appleton, whose “Sequel to a Vision of Bangor [Maine] in the Twentieth Century,” published in 1848, was a direct response to (the apparently nonfeminist) Governor Edward Kent’s “Vision of Bangor”(3-4). And Kessler suggests that Cridge’s work “anticipates” the amusing 1893 *Unveiling a Parallel: A Romance* by Alice Ilgenfritz Jones and Ella Merchant—which also employs satiric role-reversal in a Martian setting.

Rather than speak of “predecessors” and “anticipations,” I would describe these works as passionate contributions to an ongoing conversation. In Cridge’s text we find that the power of new technology has primed the author’s imagination and recognize the author’s deep interest in finding ways to make social organization more flexible, responsive, and efficient in meeting the needs of all segments of the population. We know of only disjunct contributions to this conversational thread—in which I would include Griffith’s of 1836, Appleton’s of 1848, Cridge’s of 1870, Jones and Merchant’s of 1893, and Brantenberg’s of 1977. And yet we *can* distinguish a thread, however tenuous, representing our imagined community in conversation temporally, and not just spatially, as we have been wont to see it, probably unconsciously.

So far my examples have fit loosely within the science fiction and utopian genres. But an intense interest in the subjects with which feminist sf concerns itself can sometimes be found far outside the genre clubhouse, in mainstream literary texts, erupting in distinctly science-fictional moments. Menie Muriel Dowie’s 1895

Gallia, a “New Woman” novel that was briefly a scandalous cause célèbre in England, contains a short chapter in which three women discuss what we today call “surrogate motherhood,” addressing themselves to the same significant issues that have been raised by feminists in the wake of the “Baby M.” case.¹⁵ The protagonist, Gallia, in the course of playful speculation, argues for the “rationality” of the practice—an idea that has apparently occurred to her largely as a result of the influence of Herbert Spencer’s writing on her thinking. Gallia declares “such a scheme” to be “eminently rational”(113). In chilling language, Gallia forecasts surrogate parenting as a eugenic solution to physical, aesthetic, and mental imperfection. She also declares that

There are people fitted...to be mothers, which every woman isn't; there are women fitted to bring up children, who may not be mothers. Think of this: a man may love a woman and marry her; they may be devoted to each other, and long for a child to bring up and to love; but the woman may be too delicate to run the risk. What...would be the reasonable thing to do? Sacrifice the poor woman for the sake of a weakly baby? No, of course not, but get in a mother! (113)

Gallia’s interlocutors worry about the implications of this “astounding piece of social reform.” Gallia insists that “getting in a mother” would “make enormously in favor of morality”—“by making in favor of health, by making in favor of justice, by lifting a burden from the shoulders of the weak and placing it on the strong”(114). One of her interlocutors asks how the “poor journey-woman mother”(114) would feel about giving up her own child. Gallia replies, “It wouldn’t be her child only, it would be his child, by agreement”(114). And Gallia

then compares “getting in a mother” to “getting in a wet-nurse” to breastfeed another woman’s infant. (114) Finally, one of her interlocutors complains, “It sounds like treating the world as a sort of farm, and men and women merely as animals”(114). Gallia calmly agrees. “At present half the world is not as well treated as the best class of animals, and there isn’t a political economist living who wouldn’t say that if the increase of the lower classes could be taken out of their own hands and supervised on scientific lines, crime as well as a number of diseases could be stamped out”(114-115).

Dowie’s *Gallia* predates the work of Charlotte Perkins Gilman by about ten years, Katherine Burdekin’s by about forty, and Sheri S. Tepper’s by about eighty. Dowie’s protagonist’s eugenicist bent must strike most in the post-Holocaust world as extreme, but in the context of the turn of the twentieth century, it offers an example of the deep and widespread interest in the possibilities that new technology might create for social engineering. *Gallia* is a mainstream literary novel; its single science-fictional conversation is intended to set forth an explicit statement of the protagonists’ principles as an explanation for her subsequent behavior. What I find most interesting about it is the author’s having imagined such a conversation taking place among three young women in a drawing room staring out the window watching the boys go by, and not as a tête-à-tête between Gallia and the male character who is her usual interlocutor in intellectual conversation.

When we think of middle-class women in both England and the US in the nineteenth century, some of us may think of the feminists at Seneca Falls and the many first-wave feminists that were produced in their wake, but most people will think of repressed women

who closed their eyes and thought of England during sex and assumed that decency required covering piano legs with cloth. Presumably some middle-class women may have fit this stereotype. But I tend to think of the nineteenth century as a hotbed of revolutionary ideas and movements in politics, technology, and science. The century inherited from its predecessor the notion that states could change form radically in a matter of months. It hosted thousands of experiments in social engineering, which were often called “utopian.” It saw, with the growth and power of the middle class, a continual stream of migration to urban centers and an enormous leap in literacy, as well as the development of new technologies that allowed the cheap distribution of printed material. And it witnessed an increasing generation of new scientific theory and wide-ranging technological developments. A woman didn’t have to be a feminist to dream of change in the way science fiction has always done.

How inclusive can a genealogy for feminist sf be without becoming meaningless? I’m not sure. I think part of what drives my interest in envisioning such an imaginary structure is not only my excitement at realizing that others have invented community the way I did when I first “discovered” feminist sf in the 1970s on my own, but also my sense that until all of us—men and women alike—recognize that the science-fictional imagination has never been the province of men only, that the issues science fiction loves to explore have always been women’s issues, too, women writers and fans of sf will only be at best honorary members of the genre clubhouse, and usually not even that.

The apparently universal avatar for the science fiction enthusiast is an adolescent boy who is mad for gimmicks

and all things mechanical. This avatar has been with us since the days of Hugo Gernsback and is the reason people continually repeat the cliché that the Golden Age of science fiction is twelve. I'd like to propose a complementary avatar, at least as old: that of the woman passionately interested in challenging the way things are, passionately determined to understand how everything works. Her trace can be found in Mary Shelley, who sat and listened to the men talk and saved her opinions for her fiction. Her trace can be found in Annie Denton Cridge, in love with the potential of steam technology and imbued with radical social ideals and feminism. Her trace can even be found in Menie Muriel Dowie, who depicts ordinary young women engaged in sf discourse while boy-watching.

Feminist sf has always provoked us to imagine our own communities. What could be more in the spirit of feminist sf, then, but to conceptualize a genealogy that explicitly manifests those communities across not only space, but time?

This essay first appeared in the *Foundation: the international review of science fiction*, Vol. 31, No 84, Spring, 2002.

Notes

- 1 Jonathan Goldberg, "The History That Will Be" in Louise Fradenburg and Carla Freccero, eds., *Premodern Sexualities* (New York and London: Routledge, 1996), p. 11. I would like to thank Justine Larbalestier for the extended conversation of which the ideas in this paper are one result.

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- 2 Jeanne Gomoll's famous essay first appeared in *Aurora* Vol 10, No. 1 (Winter 1986-7). It is available also at <http://www.geocities.com/Athens/8720/letter.htm>.
- 3 Consider *Locust's* remark in its Jan 30, 1977, report on the revelation of Tiptree's gender: "In a recent speech, Ted Sturgeon commented that nearly all of the top newer writers, with the exception of James Tiptree Jr., were women. The exception is now gone."
- 4 Christine de Pisan's *The Book of the City of Ladies*, first published in 1405, "talked back" to *Romance of the Rose* in particular and to the Aristotelian construction of the inferiority of women in general. Her "city" is built entirely of all the learned and powerful women she had ever heard of, using the "trowel of her pen" and "the pick of her understanding," and guided by the ladies "Reason, Rectitude, and Justice." For an inspiring discussion that characterizes Christine's city as a utopia (predating, of course, Thomas More's), see Angelika Bammer, *Partial Visions: Feminism and Utopianism in the 1970s* (New York and London: Routledge, 1991).
- 5 Jennifer Burwell, *Notes on Nowhere: Feminism, Utopian Logic, and Social Transformation* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1977). Although the texts she studies includes Russ's *The Female Man*, Butler's *Patternmaster* novels, and Marge Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time*, her index does not have an entry for "science fiction."
- 6 Marleen Barr, writing in the preface of *Feminist Fabulation: Space/Postmodern Fiction* (Iowa City, Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 1992), is explicit: "As I have pointed out in many places, despite feminist speculative fiction's usefulness and importance, it is easy to dismiss this literature as inferior genre fiction justifiably positioned outside literary institutions. I now consider the term

‘feminist SF’ to be obsolete; I situate all feminist speculative fiction within feminist fabulation, which, like Robert Scholes’s ‘structural fabulation,’ encompasses many literary forms, of which SF is only one”(xv). I suspect most feminist sf writers, on hearing this declaration that “feminist SF” is obsolete, would read this as a sentence of exile from the only place where their work is likely to be welcome.

- 7 After presenting this paper at WisCon 25, I came upon Ruth Salvaggio’s *The Sounds of Feminist Theory* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999). Salvaggio cites Walter Ong’s speculation that European women’s exclusion from “learned Latin” for more than a millennium must have influenced the style of women writers, particularly as they contributed to the development of the novel and made it “more like a conversation than a platform performance” (22). I can easily imagine some sociobiologist getting hold of this distinction and arguing that men write to display their mate-worthiness while women write to nurture. But it is worth recalling the case of Christine de Pisan, a master of “learned Latin”—who felt the lack of the exceptional token who, lacking female peers, understood how tenuous her status as exceptional must always be.
- 8 Joanna Russ, *How to Suppress Women’s Writing* (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1983), 93.
- 9 Elizabeth Grosz, “Histories of a Feminist Future,” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 25, 4 (Summer 2000), 1017-1021, at 1018.
- 10 The list can be found on my website, at <http://ltimmel.home.mindspring.com>.
- 11 Jane Donawerth, *Frankenstein’s Daughters: Women Writing Science Fiction* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1997), xvii-xxvi.

- 12 See Carol Farley Kessler's headnote to Cridge's "Man's Rights" in Carol Farley Kessler, ed., *Daring to Dream: Utopian Fiction by United States Women before 1950*, Second Edition, (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1995), 3-4.
- 13 Annie Denton Cridge, "Man's Rights; or, How Would You Like It?" in Carol Farley Kessler, ed., *Daring to Dream: Utopian Fiction by United States Women Before 1950*, Second Edition (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1995), 6.
- 14 Kessler, *Daring to Dream: Utopian Fiction by United States Women before 1950*, 3-4.
- 15 Menie Muriel Dowie, *Gallia* (London: J.M. Dent, 1995).