"The girl who was plugged in"

Journeys in science fiction

Research is always a journey and in this chapter I detail the particular journeys through texts and fields, theories and methodologies, which have shaped this thesis. A journey implies a final destination. This thesis, however, is not a final destination but a part of the journey. In the course of charting this journey I examine my shifting relationship to the field of science fiction, which as I show, is not an homogeneous one.

I add a further metaphor to shape my discussion in this chapter, the metaphor of being ‘plugged in’. This metaphor is particularly appropriate to my work because this thesis engages with the field of science fiction, which is frequently about interactions between humans and technologies. Seen through this metaphor, my journeys and this thesis are part of the process of becoming ‘plugged in’ to the field of science fiction. Paradoxically I also discuss the ways in which I was plugged in to this field prior to beginning my production of this thesis.

I have been using the term ‘field’ with no explanation. My use of field is indebted to both Pierre Bourdieu and M.A.K. Halliday. In Halliday’s schema, field is part of a three part division\(^1\) to account for what Malinowski called context of situation (Halliday [1978] 1986: 28). For Halliday

\[\text{field refers to the ongoing activity and the particular purposes that the use of language is serving within the context of that activity (Halliday [1978] 1986: 62).}\]

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\(^1\) The three divisions are field, tenor and mode. Tenor refers to who is taking part in the discourse, their status and privileges (what Bourdieu would call symbolic capital), and mode to the part that language is playing in the discourse (Halliday & Hasan [1985] 1986: 12). The three are not entirely distinct and the same parts of language can constitute field, tenor and mode.
Malinowski's context of situation is not just the physical environment but also the social reality or culture in which language occurs.

Bourdieu understands a field to be a social space made up of social relations between people. He argues that to “think in terms of field is to think relationally” (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992: 96). His use of field therefore is roughly equivalent to Malinowski's context of situation. At stake in Bourdieu's terms is 'capital'. Capital consists only in part of material goods. Bourdieu also takes account of what he calls symbolic capital (status and prestige) and also cultural capital which allows him to account for such phenomena as taste and education. Bourdieu argues that these different kinds of capital only realise their particular meanings within particular fields. For example, within the field of science fiction, names like Ursula Le Guin and Kim Stanley Robinson have enormous cache that they would not have within the field of athletics. Particular ways of being have meaning only within the terms of the field or fields that they are part of. When talking about social distance Bourdieu gives the following examples:

agents occupying a higher position in one of the hierarchies of objective social space symbolically deny the social distance which does not thereby cease to exist, thus ensuring they gain the profits of recognition accorded to a purely symbolic negation of distance ('he's unaffected', 'he's not stand-offish', etc.) which implies the recognition accorded to a purely symbolic negation of distance (the sentences I have quoted always have an implicit rider: 'he's unaffected, for a duke', 'he's not stand-offish, for a university professor', etc.) (Bourdieu 1990: 127).

In this thesis I investigate the particular meanings which the field of science fiction allows for the battle of the sexes. I am using field to mean “the ongoing activity and the particular purposes that the use of language is serving within the context of that activity” with “that activity” being science fiction (Halliday [1976] 1988: 62). Science fictional language is a particular concern of this thesis. I am also using field as Bourdieu does. Both Halliday and Bourdieu stress that the ‘field’ is dynamic, constituted as it is by the activities of humans. However, the metaphor can seem static, conjuring up images of a sports field, or a corn field, a designated area of space which does not, on the whole, move. The term ‘community’ gives a stronger sense of being embodied than does field.
Throughout this work I slide between field and community and use the two as near synonyms. The term field allows me to keep the sense of genre and texts but when I need to emphasise the importance of lived experiences and embodied subjects I use the term community. The latter usage is a reminder that I am talking about social relations, about dialogues between people, some of whom are still living and speaking and writing to each other, and that, of itself a written text is nothing but a series of markings. As Tarzan observed, on his first acquaintance with written language, it is nothing but “strange little bugs which cover...pages” (Burroughs [1912] 1990: 48). Or more explicitly:

[It]here are no ideas whatsoever in any libraries. All that is stored in any of these places are odd little patterns or marks or bumps (Reddy 1979: 309).

It is people who make sense of the “strange little bugs” with the “art of language” that is reading (Reddy 1979: 309). There is more than one “art of language” and part of becoming plugged into the field of science fiction is becoming fluent in its language or languages, as I illustrated with my readings of Delany’s phrase, “he turned on his left side” in my preamble (Delany 1984: 88).

Like any other theorist, student or scholar, I am engaged in the process of constructing the object of my investigations. At the same time my object, in this case, the field of science fiction, reconstructs the subject - me. Becoming part of the science fiction field and conversant in its language was a process which began before I thought of writing a thesis about science fiction. However, in the process of producing this thesis I have found myself much more overtly a part of the science fiction community as a practitioner and creator of this field. In calling this thesis ‘the battle of the sexes in science fiction’, I create an object - the battle of the sexes in science fiction. To tell a story about something is to shape that something. Katie King in her 1994 book, *Theory in its Feminist Travels: Conversations in US. Women’s Movements*, discusses this process:

Origin stories about the women’s movement are interested stories, all of them. They construct the present moment, and a political position in it, by invoking a point in time out of which that present moment unfolds - if not inevitably, then at least with a certain coherence (King 1994: 124).
The story I tell in this thesis about the battle of the sexes in science fiction is also an interested story. By beginning my story in 1926 with the advent of Amazing Science Fiction and ending with the James Tiptree, Jr. Memorial Award in the 1990s I make the development of the Tiptree Award from the mostly virulently anti-feminist battle of the sexes stories from the 1920s onwards look both natural and inevitable. It begins to look like evolution. Yet my creation of ‘the battle of the sexes’ does not take place in a vacuum. As Judith Butler argues in Bodies that Matter, “discourse has a history that not only precedes but conditions its contemporary usages” (Butler 1993: 227). My ‘battle of the sexes’ is constrained by the various discourses of which it forms part. Samuel R. Delany makes the point that a

practice of writing, like science fiction, is the collection of codes used to make texts said to belong to it “make sense”...But any single code exists as a response to historical pressures...in the real world. Discourse happens, and happens in response to the world: it does not merely exist in some timeless and innocent space of abstract language possibilities...Such awareness is particularly important in a field like contemporary science fiction whose demotic development has put it outside “literature” - in ways that have both healthy and precarious aspects (Delany 1984: 200).²

When I say that in this thesis I create the object ‘the battle of the sexes’, I do so constrained by the historical knowledge that Joanna Russ set out such a genre in her 1980 article of the same name, and she did so knowing that Sam Moskowitz had published an anthology of this genre of science fiction in 1972. Further, they were both aware of a body of texts published in science fiction magazines accompanied by blurbs declaring them to be a battle of the sexes story:

The war of the sexes has been the subject of story, poem, song, article, textbook - and just plain worry for as long as there have been men and women (Blurb accompanying “The White Widows” by Sam Merwin, Jr., October 1953 Startling Stories: 15).

Delany argues that

[the working assumption of most academic critics...is that somehow the history of science fiction began precisely at the moment they began to read it - or, as frequently, in the nebulous yesterday of 16th- and 17th-century utopias. For both notions accomplish the same thing: they obviate the real lives, the real development, and finally the real productions of real SF writers, a goodly number of whom are still alive, if not kicking. This is why the best histories of science fiction remain the commentaries of Merril and

² This quote comes from a letter Delany wrote to Science Fiction Studies in 1979.
Asimov in their various anthologies, the collected reviews of Knight in In Search of Wonder of Blish in The Issue at Hand and More Issues at Hand, and of the Panshins in SF in Dimension: for the rest one must go digging through back issues of old SF magazines for reviews by Merrill, Budrys, del Rey, and Miller (Delany 1984: 85).3

Joanna Russ also argues for an historical awareness of science fiction (sf):

the symbolic importance of certain material can be misread because the significance of the material in the cultural tradition that science fiction comes from...is simply not known to the critic (Russ [1975] 1995: 7).

I have to plead guilty to the particular kind of blindness that Delany and Russ point to. In 1992 I would have said that I was well-versed in science fiction, yet I had never read any histories of the field nor any critical accounts of it. I did not know that many considered the appearance of the first issue of the magazine Amazing Stories to be the beginning of science fiction. I had never heard of Amazing or any other science fiction magazine. I read mostly books that were published at the time I was reading them.

My sf was almost entirely written by women. I had heard of Asimov and Heinlein but I had never read them. The history of science fiction that had formed around my reading was almost completely at odds with the histories of the genre that I read in the course of producing this thesis - histories in which women appear on the peripheries, and where fantasy is the other side of the dichotomy from science fiction, at least as frequently as mundane fiction. I agree with Delany and Russ, that an historical awareness of science fiction is essential. There are, however, many science fiction histories, such as the one I tell about the battle of the sexes in this text, that have not been told or only partially told.

Science fiction is a field that consists of not only written texts but also people: writers, readers, fans, artists, critics and editors.4 Many of these people have been actively aware of their part in constituting this field and a significant number of texts have been taken up with just these self-reflexive activities of

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3 This quote comes from an article "Science Fiction and 'Literature' - or, the Conscience of the King" which was first delivered as a speech in 1979.

4 These are not necessarily separate categories of people, Judith Merrill, for example, has been at one time or another a writer, a reader, a fan, a critic and an editor.
The Girl Who Was Plugged In - Long drama

Setting: Future Earth, no aliens.

Ugly deformed girl tries to suicide, is blackmailed (willingly) into being wired up as Waldo operator of a beautiful young-girl body. Body is a vegetable when not operated, but then can live and speak and move about world freely by means of satellite technology. Satellites are owned by giant corporation, part of whose business is to stimulate demand for luxury --- and other --- products in a world where advertising is tamed. Son of one of its powerful tycoons falls in love with the lovely girl-body, thinks she is a normal girl under brain-control; resolves to free her. Fight - flight scenes. He gains entrance to underground installation where ugly girl is operating his beloved --- thinks she is brain-control, kills her. So of course the lovely body reverts to vegetable. Story is told by cynical man from this future, knocked back here by enemies. Message: Dreams can come true and kill you, like the Little Mermaid. Also: our world is run by greed. Also, blind adoration of celebrities is the opium of the people.

James Tiptree, Jr.'s summary of "The Girl Who Was Plugged In".
constituting science fiction. As a long time reader of science fiction I have always been, in a sense, part of the field of science fiction. The sense of belonging, of community, however, came about as a direct result of this thesis.

I have taken the phrase ‘plugged in’ from James Tiptree, Jr.’s 1973 story, “The Girl Who Was Plugged In”. Tiptree’s own summary of the story appears opposite. I am concerned not with the story itself but with its historical importance. “The Girl Who Was Plugged In” has been read retrospectively as a precursor to that eighties marketing success ‘cyberpunk’ and Tiptree has been called one of its mothers/fathers (Kadrey & McCaffery [1991] 1992: 21; Gordon 1990: 38). I use the metaphor more broadly to describe the process of connection between subjects and science fiction communities and the connections between the subjects which comprise those communities.

The term is particularly apt, for computer technology has shaped the production of this thesis: from word processing to image scanning, to the internet and the world wide web. I have been physically plugged in during the research for, and composition of, this work on two continents.

At the same time I am plugged in to a series of systems of other knowledges which are located within and constitute the field of the academy. Charting my relationship to these sets of knowledges involves setting out the theoretical and methodological underpinnings of this thesis. It should immediately be apparent that there is a problem with this formulation - ‘theory’ on the one hand - ‘methodology’ on the other. I expressed dissatisfaction with this theory/practice

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5 I would like to thank Julie Phillips, Tiptree’s biographer, for supplying me with Tiptree’s summaries of his/her stories.

6 As I discuss below, the practitioners of cyberpunk have become notorious for their blindspot where feminism is concerned and Tiptree is one of the few ‘mothers’ that they have claimed (William Gibson qtd in Gordon 1990: 38). However Samuel R. Delany has observed the importance of the writings of Joanna Russ to William Gibson, noting the similarities between Russ’ character Jael from The Female Man (1975) and Gibson’s Molly from Neuromancer (1984) (Delany 1994: 173).

7 The existence of email means that I am in daily contact with other science fiction scholars as well as writers and editors. Email has made it possible for me to be in a continuing almost daily debate with Sylvia Kelso and Helen Merrick, both PhD students working on science fiction. Sylvia’s location in Townsville, Queensland and Helen’s in Perth, Western Australia would have made this intense dialogue much more difficult and a great deal slower without email. The three of us are also part of a feminist science fiction internet discussion group called fem-sf which includes writers, readers, fans, editors, artists and scholars of feminist science fiction from Australia, Argentina, Canada, the United States and Britain.
opposition in my preamble. I set out in detail below the ways in which the
production of this thesis demonstrates the unworkability of such a dichotomy but
also the great difficulty of speaking and writing about intellectual work without
falling back into this binary. Bourdieu has said that

[...]his opposition between the pure theory of the lector devoted to the hermeneutic cult of
the scriptures of the founding fathers (if not of his own writings), on the one hand, and
survey research and methodology on the other is an entirely social opposition. It is
inscribed in the institutional and mental structures of the profession, rooted in the
academic distribution of resources, positions, and competencies (Bourdieu & Wacquant

Another instance of the way this artificial dichotomy misleads is the impact of
the work of systemic functional linguistics scholars such as M.A.K. Halliday and
Ruqaiya Hasan on my thesis. Is my use of Halliday a methodology for analysing
texts or is it a way of thinking about language and discourse and therefore
theoretical? I believe it is both. My familiarity with systemic functional theories
of language has changed the way I read and think about texts and in this sense
functional grammar is crucial to the thesis although it is not always obvious in
my work.

Language and science fiction

I have talked above, and in the preamble, about the importance of Hallidayan
functional grammar to this thesis. I was taught Hallidayan functional grammar as
part of my undergraduate degree in an English Department. His understanding of
language as social semiotic has had a profound affect on my subsequent work.
However, this is not a linguistics thesis and I make only occasional use of his
grammar, commenting only on certain meanings in the clause centred around the
verbal meaning or the process.

I have already demonstrated in the preamble the efficacy of functional
grammar for setting out the difference in the grammars of science and mundane
fiction. I did this by looking closely at the meaning centred around the process.
Halliday outlines two systems for understanding the function of the verb or
process, the transitive system and the ergative system (Halliday 1994: 161-174).
Nina Puren’s use of Halliday’s work provides an excellent example of the usefulness of an ergative analysis. In her recent article on romance and the law Puren suggests that Sharon Marcus’ compelling argument that the syntax of rape is transitive (as in ‘he raped her’, where ‘he’ is unambiguously the Actor assaulting ‘her’ who is the Goal of this process), does not account for the narrative the rapist frequently tells within the court room where he is not responsible. For this story Puren argues that ergativity is more useful:

\[
\text{[t]ransitivity is a grammatical movement of extension, in which a process extends (or not in the case of intransitives) from one participant to another...the ergative model of the event understands a verb or a process to be realised through the body of the participant, who is named the medium, for example, ‘he’ in the clause: ‘he went crazy’. When two participants are involved, the one who causes the action to happen in the other is called the agent, as, for example, in the clause: ‘Her beauty made him go crazy’, in which ‘her beauty’ is the agent, and ‘he’ is the medium that the process of ‘going crazy’ occurs through. In this kind of construction, the agent is coded as responsible for the action taking place (Puren 1995: 18).}
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The following tables demonstrate this difference:

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<th>Ergative Analysis</th>
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Puren makes it clear that using an ergative analysis allows power relations to be traced as they are explicitly worked out at the level of the grammar. Ergativity allows me to highlight the relations of power enacted in the inscription of ‘real’ femininity and masculinity in the battle of the sexes texts.

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8 I am indebted to Nina Puren for making me see how essential an ergative analysis is in demonstrating how these sets of relationships are worked out at the grammatical level.
Science fiction and 'sense of wonder'

The inextricability of subject and object has been especially noticeable during this enterprise. I began this thesis with the idea of working on science fiction. If I had begun with an intention of examining questions of sexual difference as they are negotiated within science fiction my approach would have been different. Instead I began with science fiction. As I read and talked to people my understanding of what science fiction is shifted. In this section I start to tease out this relationship and the questions it has produced for me.

My relationship to science fiction is as important to the theory and methodology of this thesis as my relationship to the academy. This is because a crucial beginning was my love for literature which is not tied to a mimetic relationship with the 'real'. Science fiction is certainly one genre which fits within this rubric and I have read it since I was a child. I have also been aware since childhood that it is not a majority taste and that there is a general expectation that children will grow out of reading fantasy, fairy tales and science fiction as they grow older. This never happened to me. Indeed one of the motivations for this thesis was the absence of literatures of the fantastic from the syllabus of my undergraduate degree. The only fantastic literature I was able to study was medieval literature - a period in which the binary realistic/non-realistic was meaningless - so I retreated into medieval literature as a way of quenching my thirst for the fantastic. I discuss this thirst in more detail below. Writing my thesis on science fiction was in some ways a reaction to these constraints.

Before beginning my research I viewed science fiction as a body of professionally produced texts. I knew few other people who read it and we rarely

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9 The idea that there is ever a direct relationship between the real and the written is always a tenuous one. The relationship takes place between texts. Jane Austen's novels have as much to do with earlier novels as with the 'reality' of her life and times.

10 On one occasion when I suggested a non-mundane text by Angela Carter as suitable for a course on postmodernity the response was, "Angela Carter?! Lightweight!"
talked about it. I knew that Ursula Le Guin, Tanith Lee and Theodore Sturgeon wrote it and that *Left Hand of Darkness*, *Fool’s Run*, *Synners*, *White Queen*, *Blue Mars* and *Doctor Who*\textsuperscript{11} were some examples of what was produced. I had never heard of fandom or fanzines and I had no sense of the people who produced the texts I loved.\textsuperscript{12} I was aware of who James Tiptree, Jr. was, but had read few of the stories, and knew only vaguely about Tiptree really ‘being’ Alice Sheldon. In short, science fiction was neither field nor community - where the workings of capital, symbolic or cultural, could have a real affect - but books.

Mixed up with the books that constituted my science fiction was a texture or a feeling that these texts I read and (less frequently watched) produced in me. This sensation made me feel that there were infinite possibilities - if I just closed my eyes and imagined I could almost get there. In her paper delivered at WisCon 20, “Third Person Peculiar: Reading Between Academic and SF-Community Positions in (Feminist) SF,” Sylvia Kelso discusses her own first experience with this science fiction-produced feeling. She identifies the history of this feeling:

\ldots you know the cliche for it, it’s the hoariest line in SF. It was my first experience with ‘sensawunda’, of course. But let me do a\ldots quick academic detour here to tell you that ‘sense of wonder’ has a long and lofty pedigree. According to Greenblatt, Ancient Greek ‘Aristotelian’ philosophers saw wonder and pleasure as the end - the goal - of poetry. By the renaissance, an influential Italian critic thought that no-one who didn’t “excel at arousing wonder…could be called a poet”. Thomas Aquinas’ teacher hit it best of all. Wonder, he said, wasn’t just intellectual, it was visceral. It caused “a systole of the heart.”

Despite its hoariness, that, I think, is a hallmark pleasure of the SF text; and although it’s rare as a phoenix, it’s a pleasure I’ve never lost (Kelso 1996: 2).

Before I began my research I knew the feeling but not the label for it. ‘Sense of wonder’ was not then the cliche for me it has become. Kelso delivered this paper to an audience who were well acquainted with various histories of science fiction and with many of its cliches. As I discussed above, my idea of science fiction has shifted considerably in the process of writing this thesis. Sense of wonder, however, although that is not what I called it, is a crucial shared

\textsuperscript{11} This thesis, however, will not deal with science fiction media.
\textsuperscript{12} I was aware of Star Trek fans, popularly known as “Trekkies”, but only as they were presented or rather, caricatured, in the mass media.
element between my understanding of what science fiction meant to me, and that of almost all the accounts of science fiction I have read over the past four years.

Tied to this ‘sense of wonder’ is the possibility of imagining different ways of being. Earl Jackson, Jr. calls his chapter on Delany’s science fiction, “imagining it otherwise”. Joanna Russ and Samuel R. Delany have both written about the utopic possibilities of science fiction for allowing this kind of imagination. And this understanding of science fiction has been crucial to feminist engagements with the genre.

Sarah Lefanu, whose 1988 In the Chinks of the World Machine was one of the first book length studies of feminism and science fiction, calls science fiction’s freedom from representing the ‘real’ a “plasticity.” She argues that it makes possible and encourages (despite its colonisation by male writers), the inscription of women as subjects free from the constraints of mundane fiction; and it also offers the possibility of interrogating that very inscription, questioning the basis of gendered subjectivity (Lefanu 1988: 9).

Science fiction, Lefanu argues, offers possibilities for imagining different worlds and different ways of being a sexed subject. While these extraordinary claims about the infinite “webs of possibilities” are frequently made for science fiction (Delany [1977] 1978: 81), it remains that a vast deal of science fiction is not overtly subversive in the manner that Lefanu and others desire (Knight [1967] 1974; Moylan 1986; Lefanu 1988). Frequently science fiction abounds with technological change which seems to have little or no affect on social relations. The rhetoric dating back to science fiction’s pulp beginnings in the 1920s is full of ideas of limitlessness. At the same time, there have always been acknowledged constraints, most notably that of science itself. Part of the same rhetoric of the early pulps and of hard science fiction up to the present day is a glorified notion of science. Proper science fiction must derive “rigorously and systematically, from science” (Russ 1995: 4).

It is within this discourse that the distinction, which I gloss over in this thesis, between fantasy and science fiction is crucial. Fantasy is not rigorous, science fiction is. The letter columns of the early pulps are full of discussion and
argument about scientific accuracy. For a while one of the most popular professional science fiction magazines, Astounding, had a column called "Science Discussions" entirely devoted to letters about the scientific content of the magazines' stories, while letters about other issues were printed in "Brass Tacks". Of course the majority of science fiction stories have always, and will always, fly in the face of known science. Even when religious faithfulness to science is not observed there are other constraints. All texts within a field are constrained by all the texts that have gone before them.

I felt that I was actually seeing all those texts that had gone before when Pauline Dickinson who works in collection management at the University of Sydney Library first showed me around the Rare Book science fiction collection at the library (hereafter Rare Books). I was told about the collection by a lecturer when I wrote an essay about science fiction in the final year of my undergraduate degree. The core of this collection consists of the enormous bequest made to the library by long-time Melbourne collector and fan, Ronald E. Graham. Because of this bequest, the University of Sydney has one of the largest public collections of science fiction material in the world. The collection includes a very sizeable proportion of all the science fiction novels and magazines published up until Ron Graham's death in 1978. There are complete or near complete runs of famous early magazines such as Amazing, Astounding and Weird Tales. I had never seen so many science fiction books together in the one place and I had never before seen any early science fiction magazines.

The collection has been crucial to this thesis. Without it I would not have discovered so quickly what Samuel R. Delany calls a "vast tributary system of informal criticism, comprised of 'apas' (amateur press associations), fanzines, reviews, and assorted commentary" (Delany 1984: 238). I began my survey of sf criticism in the traditional manner by reading articles published in the academic sf journals Extrapolation, Science Fiction Studies and Foundation as well as with book length studies. At the same time, however, I began to read fanzines. It soon became apparent that they and other forms of "informal criticism" were essential
sources for my work on the period 1926-1973. In fact, during this period they were virtually the only sites for sf criticism and histories. Delany makes the following comment about the particular importance of blurbs (his comments are themselves in the form of a blurb):

Science fiction had developed at least one critical form all its own: the annotated anthology. Traditionally SF magazine editors prefaced each story by a punchy, two or three line blurb. Collecting their own tales in volume form, SF writers from Sturgeon to Le Guin have stolen the blurb's position for brief, informative paragraphs about their tales...A good deal of SF history is buried in these blurbs. Perhaps the most important historical document in this form...is Judith Merrill's more and more heavily annotated Best SF of the Year volumes, running from 1956 through 1967 (Delany 1984: 36).

Throughout this thesis I make use of these blurbs from magazines and from anthologies such as those of Judith Merrill.

Fandom

In a number of places in this chapter I have used the terms, fan, fandom and fanzine without explanation. My introduction to fanzines and fandom took place in Rare Books where Pauline Dickinson steered me to two bookshelves piled with manilla folders of fanzines. In this way I discovered that fanzines are amateur publications put together by lovers of science fiction, who call themselves fans. Fans called what they were part of fandom. Fandom was generated by the letters to the editor that were published in professional science fiction magazines, like Amazing. These letters frequently concerned the stories published, the covers of the magazines, and science. Addresses were printed with these letters and before long the letter writers who lived in the same area were contacting each other and forming friendships and loose-knit communities and talking, among other things, about science fiction. Delany observes:

I doubt that any field in the first 60 years of its existence has generated a comparable amount of written demotic response as large as the one science fiction has - and generated it without state, corporate, or academic support. I am speaking of hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of pages of...fanzines (Delany 1984: 239).

The fanzines that I worked with in Rare Books date from the mid 1930s to the late 1970s and were from the USA, Australia, England and Canada. They had been put into alphabetical order at one time but this was inconsistent. Very
Published occasionally by the Executive Committee of the Futurian Society of New York for the enlightenment and entertainment of its members.
November 5th, 1938, No. 1.

MARS OR EARTH?

SHALL MARTIANS TAKE OVEN EARTH FOR THEMSELVES?

The Martians, who as everybody knows landed October 30th in New Jersey, have withdrawn. But before doing so, they contacted the Futurian Society to represent them in their future negotiations with the leaders of this planet. The Futurians, not entirely willing to go over to the side of the stellar chancy, have delegated one of their number to present the viewpoint of the Martians to its members. Donald A. Waldron, well-known science-fiction fan, has accepted the assignment and will take the rostrum at the next meeting to show why the human race should give up its planet and its existence in favor of the superior Martians. Dr. Isaac Asimov, another member, firmly in favor of terrestrial supremacy will oppose him in debate. It promises to be hot and heavy. Is the Earth worth saving? Is humanity worth fighting for? Should the Martians be allowed to take over, or opposed when next they return? Or should we swap planets? Nobody should fail to show up at this next timely of all debates. It will take place at the next meeting of the Futurians, Sunday, November 13th at 730 West and Avenue, Brooklyn, N. Y.

SCIENCE-FICTION POETRY—YES OR NOT.

Is there such a thing as science-fiction poetry? Maybe you think there is? Maybe you thought such writers as Francis P. L. The Planet Prince and others had written it? Well, yes, yes is quite right and you may be wrong! Cyril Kornbluth, one of the Futurian's poets contends that there is no such thing as science-fiction poetry. He says so openly and boldly and has some remarkable arguments to prove it. Fred Pohl, head of the Science-Fiction Poets Guild challenges Kornbluth's ideas. A brief but hot contest of the debate took place by the two at the last meeting of the Futurian Society on October 30th. They flashed fire at each other and indeed were on the verge of coming to blows so strong were their individual convictions. Kornbluth, raging and exploded. "Pohl is dreaming!" he cried, "science-fiction poetry, foreword!" "Bah!" retorted Pohl, "Kornbluth has never awakened!" They will fight it out to a finish at a future meeting of the Futurian Society. Don't miss it!

Futurian fanzine. The Futurian News dated 5 November 1938.
few of them are professional looking. They are stapled-together pieces of paper with or without covers, often almost illegibly printed on a hectograph machine. An example of a one-page fanzine put together by the New York Futurian fan group appears opposite. Most of the fanzines were full of reports of fan activity, meetings, conventions, feuds, reviews and some debate about science fiction, though frequently discussion of science fiction is minimal. The fanzines are also full of their own language, and I soon became familiar with terms like ‘gafiate’ - an acronym for ‘get away from it all’ meaning to leave fandom; ‘fen’ the plural of fan; and ‘prozine’ a professional science fiction magazine like *Amazing*.

Although fandom grew out of the letter column of *Amazing*, and following it, other science fiction magazines, by 1944 the entry on ‘fan’ in *The Fancyclopedia* claims that although the term is

> used by the scientifictionists who merely write letters to the editor and collect pro mags...the fen of fandom have a more restricted meaning in mind (My italics; Speer 1944: 29).

By this time ‘merely’ writing to prozines is not enough for authentic fanhood.

The entry then goes on to elaborate some of the more “restricted meanings”:

> The IPO 13 made no attempt to isolate an essential characteristic by which all fans mite [sic] be distinguished, but said that “A real fan fulfills practically all of the following requirements: He [sic] buys and reads most of the professional fantasy magazines (this was when there were less than half a dozen), collects them, and writes the editors. He subscribes to at least one fan magazine. He corresponds with other fans. S-f fandom is his ruling passion. He has probably tried his hand at writing, either for fan or pro magazines or both” (My italics; Speer 1944: 29-30).

A discourse of fan authenticity was already in operation. Though, as this entry demonstrates, the term ‘fan’ was contested. It is also clear that fans during this period were assumed to be male. By far the majority of the fanzines I looked at were produced by men and contained letters and articles by men. There were,

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13 The entry on IPO in the *Fancyclopedia* reveals:

IPO - The Oklahoma Institute of Private Opinion (title a take-off on Gallup), a poll series conducted by Speer. Post cards were sent out, with questions hekted thereon. Twelve sets of questions in all were put out, extending over a period of some two years around 1938. The number of replies was small, usually little more than 20, but were fairly representative till near the end (Speer 1944: 50).
The title page of the 1944 Fancyclopedia.
however, women fans and I found mention of women’s fanzines as early as the 1930s.

The entry gives other definitions of a ‘fan’ citing well known fans, or BNFs (Big Name Fans) as sources:

Widner said he thinks the essential thing about fans is that they have an ideal of a better way of life and want to change things; but this hardly sets them apart from millions of non-fans. [illegible] well received is Norman Stanley’s “sense of fantasy”, a taste for the imaginative analogous to the sense of humour (Speer 1944: 29).

This first definition is close to the notion of ‘imagining it otherwise’ which I discussed above. The second definition is an early appearance of the idea of ‘sense of wonder’. Both notions have a long history within the discourse of science fiction.

The Fancyclopedia is a perfect example of Delany’s “informal criticism”; there are many references to science fiction texts and writers who were considered important at the time. It is also an example of fandom’s self-awareness and self-reflexivity. Fans began writing their own history and naming their own periods very early. The Fancyclopedia appeared only fourteen years after the appearance of the first fanzine, Ray Palmer’s The Comet in 1930. In the Fancyclopedia there are entries for the various historical periods, First Fandom, Second Fandom and so forth which were already in use at the time. The Fancyclopedia, the title page of which appears opposite, was produced in association with NFFF (National Fantasy Fan Federation) and LASFS (Los Angeles Science Fiction Society) and also vetted and corrected by the New York Futurians and other well known fan organisations of the period.

One of the stories which became an important part of the discourse of fandom was the idea that it could lead to a professional engagement with science fiction. The transition of fan into pro (professional) is the process of the accumulation of cultural capital within the field. A number of the names I came

14 Ray Palmer went on to be a science fiction writer, and well-known editor, editing Amazing from 1938 to 1949.
across in fanzines, Ray Bradbury, Isaac Asimov, Lee Hoffman, Frederik Pohl and Judith Merril become pros. This notion of the fluidity of the science fiction community where you could go from being a fan to being a BNF (big name fan) to being a professional writer or artist or editor is not as important an aspect of fandom as it once was. Far fewer contemporary pros were once fans. However, most science fiction writers, even if they were never fans, go at least occasionally to science fiction conventions. At the same time there have always been fans who were uninterested in becoming pros as well as fans who were more interested in fandom than in science fiction for whom the motto ‘fiawol’ - ‘fandom is a way of life’ - is most apt.

While fandom is tremendously important to the formation of the field of science fiction and endlessly fascinating in its own right, it has been estimated that at most only 5% of the population who read science fiction are active fans (Hartwell [1984] 1985: 158). Fandom and science fiction are overlapping fields rather than one being a subset of the other. There is more than one science fiction and those science fictions are historically contingent. Fandom has also changed over time. In the 1930s and 1940s it was possible to say that there was only one science fiction fandom and almost every fan in the USA at least knew of every other active fan. Today that would be impossible and there are many different fandoms. Media fandom is now vastly larger than written science fiction fandom. I discuss early fandom and its relationships to the science fiction field in more detail in the next chapter.

*The battle of the sexes and the construction of sex*

One of the first articles I read, sitting at my desk in Rare Books surrounded by this cornucopia of science fiction, was Joanna Russ’ 1980 article “*Amor Vincit Foeminam: The Battle of the Sexes in Science Fiction*”. As I indicated in the

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15 Although the fans of Australia, the United Kingdom and Canada may well have considered themselves as separate from the fandom of the USA.
preamble, Joanna Russ’ article was central to the formation of this thesis. It was particularly important because it gave me an object of study, the battle of the sexes. My engagement with Russ’ article also further highlights how much my thesis has been shaped by my access to Rare Book’s science fiction collection.

When I read “Amor Vincit Foeminam” I had not known there was a genre within science fiction which engaged explicitly with relations between the sexes. I immediately set about reading the texts Russ discussed. Having access to the Rare Books collection meant that I was able to read all the texts she referred to. Five of the ten texts Russ discusses are from the 1972 anthology by Sam Moskowitz, When Women Rule. The anthology has a long introduction by Moskowitz in which he lists more than thirty other battle of the sexes texts. The majority of these were also in Rare Books. When I finished reading those texts I posted a notice requesting assistance to a science fiction readers’ newsgroup, rec.arts.sf.written. My list of battle of the sexes texts expanded, and again the majority of the texts mentioned were in the Rare Books collection.16

Many of the battle of the sexes texts I have read in the past four years are overtly anti-feminist, frequently comically so. Joanna Russ in her foreword to the reprint of “Amor Vincit Foeminam” in her collected essays, To Write Like A Woman (1995), discusses how bad they are. This begs the question: if the stories are so dreadful why would anyone bother to read them let alone give them serious consideration? Russ writes:

Samuel Delany told me the stories were too idiotic to bother with, but they would not leave me alone until I gave them their place in the sun. Their crudity and silliness were worse than my representation of them, honestly; they were terrible. But it was fun. As a critic, a reviewer, and a teacher, I have spent my life reading a huge amount of extraordinarily bad fiction; sometimes the only way to discharge the emotion aroused by the incessant production of gurry is to beat the gurry to death, especially when it’s as marvellously foolish as this was (Russ 1995: 41).

16 I also made contact with a long time Sydney science fiction fan, Graham Stone, through Pauline Dickinson. Graham Stone has been an invaluable source, pointing me in the direction of even more battle of the sexes texts, and helping me obtain those few texts not contained in Rare Books.
I bothered to engage with these texts because I found Russ’ article entertaining and could not quite believe that such stories existed. Most importantly, however, I saw many connections between the battle of the sexes texts and later overtly feminist science fiction texts. Many of the battle of the sexes texts differ markedly from the later texts in that they seek to contain the threat of change to the relationships between men and women. However, in attempting to do so they make these processes of constructing maleness and femaleness and the relationships between the two more visible. Many of the battle of the sexes texts make explicit the ways in which romantic heterosexual love and sexual intercourse are crucial to the shaping of ‘real’ women’s subjectivities and their integration into an economy of compulsory heterosexuality (Rich 1980; Wittig 1992).

Looking at the way the battle of the sexes texts theorise sexual difference is part of the work of historicising sex and examining questions of difference. In these texts there are often many more sexes than two or even three. Being a man or a woman is not a given, it is always unstable. As it is in the mundane world outside science fiction.\(^\text{17}\)

Foucault has underlined the instability of the category of sex. In his introduction to *Herculine Barbin Being the Recently Discovered Memoirs of a Nineteenth Century French Hermaphrodite* he asks rhetorically:

> Do we truly need a true sex? With a persistence that borders on stubbornness, modern Western societies have answered in the affirmative (Foucault [1986] 1987: vii).

This stubbornness appears in many of the battle of the sexes texts where men and women are expected to be their true sex and to be that sex properly. However, these texts offer the possibility of being something other than a proper man or woman and thus they problematise the notion of a true sex in the same way that the existence of hermaphrodites and transsexuals in the ‘real’ world do.

\(^\text{17}\) As I write the Olympic Games in Atlanta are a recent memory. Every female athlete was tested at those games to prove that she was authentically female and thus able to compete as a woman (Lorber 1994: 41). There is a vast deal at stake in being a ‘real’ woman.
Some of the battle of the sexes texts can be read in terms of the one-sex model discussed in Laqueur’s 1990 *Making Sex*. Laqueur argues that from the eighteenth century onwards, a two-sex oppositional model gradually came to be the dominant way of seeing sex, but until then the one-sex model “where the boundaries between men and women are of degree and not of kind” dominated (Laqueur 1990: 25). Women and men, in this model, are not opposites. They are composed of the same liquids, they both excrete sperm and have the same genitalia, except that the woman’s is hidden - her vagina is a penis (later the correlation is made between clitoris and penis) and her ovaries are testicles. Women are “inverted, and hence less perfect men” (Laqueur 1990: 26).

In *Making Sex*, Laqueur writes of the one sex world:

In this world, the body with its one elastic sex was far freer to express theatrical gender and the anxieties thereby produced than it would be when it came to be regarded as the foundation of gender. The body is written about and drawn as if it represented the realm of gender and desire...An open body in which sexual differences were matters of degree rather than kind confronted a world of real men and woman and of the clear juridical, social, and cultural distinctions between them (Laqueur 1990: 125).

There are certain similarities between this “elastic” one sex world with its “fluid boundaries of sex and more rigid distinctions of gender” and David Keller’s sf story “The Feminine Metamorphosis” (1929). In “The Feminine Metamorphosis” young women “were striving to occupy positions on a par with men” and eventually they take a concoction made from the gonads of Chinese men to make them turn into men (Keller [1929] 1972: 151). Laqueur recounts some sex change stories in which women who engage in masculine activities turn into men. For instance

a young man in Reims who lived as and anatomically seemed to be a girl until the age of fourteen, when he/she “while disporting him/herself and frolicking” with a chambermaid, suddenly acquired male genital parts (Laqueur 1990: 126).

The difference is that in the 1929 story this transformation is against nature and God and must be punished by madness and death. In Laqueur’s sex-change stories there is no problem in changing sex. Problems arise if once you have attained your new sex you do not behave in the manner it requires of you; in Foucault’s terms you must be your true sex. If the youth from Reims had not
transformed into a man while frolicking with the chambermaid then trouble would have ensued. On the other hand, it is possible to read the sex transformation in “The Feminine Metamorphosis” in exactly this manner because the women who turn themselves into men do not fulfil all the functions of their new sex - they do not play golf but bridge, they act like women while walking around in the bodies of men (Keller [1929] 1972: 171).

Both Foucault’s and Laqueur’s understandings of the historical changes in the shapings of the category of sex are central to this thesis. However, my understandings of their theses about the category of sex is shaped by my readings of the battle of the sexes texts, rather than vice versa. This is an extremely important point and one which Simon Goldhill makes in his book *Foucault’s Virginity*. Goldhill argues that Foucault’s focus on philosophical writing and medical treatises in the classical world leads him to ignore or minimise contemporaneous literary texts which might have complicated his arguments. Goldhill is worth quoting at some length:

A recent critic [Lois McNay in *Foucault and Feminism* (1992)] has commented, however, that there hasn’t been much criticism of these later volumes [of the *History of Sexuality*], except, she adds somewhat sniffily, for the occasional classicist complaining of Foucault’s inaccuracies of interpretation (as if mere (mis)reading was unimportant when there are Big Ideas to be discussed). She herself goes on to analyse Foucault’s concept of the self and sexuality with barely a reference to the texts from which his conceptualization is developed. This is paradigmatic, it seems, of a difficulty in maintaining the balance between an engagement with the sweep of Foucault’s vision, and an engagement with the series of individual readings from which that sweeping vision is formulated. I will in my classicist hat sometimes point to places where systematic misreading seems to me to be more than usually debilitating to an argument (Goldhill 1995: xi-xii).

Sexuality and sex are negotiated in a variety of discourses, although it seems in most histories of sexuality like Foucault’s and Laqueur’s that their sweeping panoramas are privileged over the texts from which these panoramas are developed. This is part and parcel of the worship of Big Ideas to which Goldhill refers. The battle of the sexes texts also negotiate questions of sex and sexuality in ways that contribute to these broader understandings.
The Romance Discourse

As I have indicated in the previous section, the discourse of romance is a crucial shaping force in many of the battle of the sexes texts of the period 1926 - 1973. In this section I set out what I mean by the term ‘romance discourse’, as the discourse of romantic love is directly relevant to the constitution of the battle of the sexes.

In debates about the role of women in science fiction, the process of heterosexual exchange taking place between hero and heroine, and the woman’s role in it, is designated ‘the love interest’. In these debates, as I show in chapter six, there is a continual slide between the terms, ‘love interest,’ ‘romance,’ ‘sex,’ and ‘women’. They become one and the same. On the whole this equivalence between ‘women’ and ‘love interest’ disqualifies women from the field of science fiction since love belongs to the field of romance, or rather, literature for “sentimental old maids who like a bit of ‘slop’” (Astounding Science Fiction November 1938: 158). The battle of the sexes stories are an area of science fiction where the two fields, of science fiction and of romance are overtly in operation.

The discourse of romance, and of heterosexual relations upon which the discourse is predicated, is built upon the differences between the sexes. The romance discourse is part of the heterosexual economy and is a primary site “where gender difference is re-produced” (Holloway 1984: 228).

The violence of romance has been frequently observed, from the middle ages and the invention of romantic love until the present day. Indeed the formation of Western romantic love is said to be predicated on the antifeminist and misogynist discourses of the middle ages. R. Howard Bloch claims that the

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18 This slide is not unique to science fiction. Virginia Woolf observed that this was a frequent slide: “sex - woman, that is to say” (Woolf [1929] 1977: 27).

Aeceticism of the earlier [Christian] period, synonymous with the deprecation of the feminine, was, in the High Middle Ages, simply transformed into an idealization both of woman and of love (Bloch 1991: 10).

Bloch argues that courtliness...is a much more effective tool even than misogyny for the possession and repossession of women in what Julia Kristeva terms "the eternal war of the sexes" (Bloch 1991: 196).

John Wyndham's battle of the sexes story, "Consider Her Ways" (1956), also makes this argument. The women in his matriarchal world are happy and peaceful without men and recognise that romantic love was invented to subjugate women and make them love their chains:

[...they were caught up in a process, and everything conspired against their escape. It was a long process, going right back to the eleventh century, in Southern France. The Romantic conception started there as an elegant and amusing fashion for the leisureed classes (Wyndham [1956] 1965: 49).]

The coercive violence of the "Romantic conception" or discourse of romance is played out in many texts. Love stories are replete with metaphors of war alongside those of love. It is arguable that the discourse of romance is produced through the conjunction of war and love. Certainly the title of some of the battle of the sexes texts, and the phrase itself, are suggestive of such a conjunction: "The War of the Sexes" (1933), "The Priestess Who Rebelled" (1939), "Amazons of a Weird Creation" (1941), The Sex War (1960), "The Masculinist Revolt" (1965), "War Against the Yukks" (1965) and Sex and the High Command (1970).

The hegemonic force of the romance discourse can be seen in Leslie F. Stone's "The Conquest of Gola" (1931). Stone was one of the earliest women writers of science fiction. See illustration opposite. Stone's story is told from the point of view of the Golans who are a race where the women rule. The Golans are invaded by an all-male force from earth. Because of their technological superiority they are easily able to deal with the invaders. The Golans find the human men ugly:

[...]ever before have I seen such a poorly organized body, so unlike our own highly developed organisms. How nice it is to be able to call forth any organ at will, and dispense with it when its usefulness is over! (Stone [1931] 1994: 33)
However, the human men, enlisting the aid of the Golan men rebel against their captors and seize the Golan women in their beds. The Golan narrator despite her amusement with the “poorly organized” human body responds to the male human body in typical romance style:

I started up only to find his arms about me, embracing me. And how strong he was! For the moment a new emotion swept me, for the first time I knew the pleasure to be had in the arms of a strong man (Stone [1931] 1994: 40).

In this brief moment the romance discourse finds its way into the text only to be dispelled almost immediately. The Golans soon expel the would-be invaders from their planet permanently.

**Feminist science fiction**

Joanna Russ’ 1980 battle of the sexes article is crucial to this thesis not only because it contributed my object of study but also because it provided a perfect focus for me to engage with questions of feminism and science fiction, with questions of feminist science fiction, and with questions of women and science fiction.

What struck me about Russ’ article and the texts she explored was that they illustrated that science fiction’s engagement with feminism, sexual difference and with sex and sexuality was not a recent development. Science fiction, it appeared, had a tradition of engaging with these issues. This was very different from the claims I had been reading in accounts of women and science fiction such as the early article by Russ, “The Image of Women in Science Fiction” in which she argued that:

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).

This is a rhetorical overstatement. In the same article Russ refers to the battle of the sexes stories, as well as pointing out that at the time of writing there was, in fact, some science fiction being published, not least her own, which did speculate about “gender roles”. Throughout the seventies and eighties a number of similar
articles on women and science fiction were published which criticised science fiction’s lack of women practitioners, and the lack of representation of women (Russ [1971] 1974; Friend 1972; Badami 1976; Kaveney 1989).

The battle of the sexes texts complicate this picture of science fiction as a boy’s own genre. As mentioned earlier, I had no sense, as I was growing up, and reading predominantly texts by women with female protagonists, that science fiction was generally considered to be a boy’s own genre. However, I did not start reading science fiction until the 1970s, by which time, it is generally considered, feminism had begun to have a considerable impact on the field. I have since discovered other readers who have not experienced science fiction as maledominated, such as Connie Willis, whose article on this subject “The Women SF Doesn’t See” I discuss in more detail in chapter five (Willis 1992).

The increase in feminist engagements with science fiction in the 1960s and 1970s was made possible not only by the increase in consciousness of feminism generally in the mundane, as well as the science fiction world, but also by science fiction’s prior engagement with feminism. This is demonstrated by the many battle of the sexes stories as well as by debates about the place of women within the field. I discovered these debates in the letters pages of prozines like Astounding and Thrilling Wonder Stories in the 1930s and 1950s respectively. I discuss these debates in chapter six, “Fault”.

The genre of science fiction has always contained some kind of engagement with the terrain of sex and sexual difference. However, science fiction engaging with feminism, and feminist science fiction are not necessarily the same thing. Many of the battle of the sexes texts directly engage with feminism. David H. Keller’s “The Feminine Metamorphosis,” (1929) certainly does. In the story women are dissatisfied with the glass ceiling in business and strive to improve their position. Their plans are undone because God does not intend women to do anything but raise families no matter how brilliant at business they are. Clearly this story responds to the feminism of the period and equally clearly it is not a feminist tale.
Russ' article allowed me to engage with feminism and science fiction, feminist science fiction, as well as women and science fiction. These distinctions are important. I have shown how a science fiction text can engage with feminism without being feminist. But what is feminist science fiction? There are as many feminist science fictions as there are feminisms and science fictions. Feminist science fiction is both a reading practice and a writing practice.

For example many of the feminists who take part in the on-line discussion group Fem SF, dislike Sheri S. Tepper's *The Gate to Women's Country* (1988), arguing that it is essentialist in its understandings of gender differences. Others on the list, including myself, have argued that the work is an ironic re-writing of earlier battle of the sexes texts. Many heated debates have arisen on the list when we have tried to delineate exactly what we mean by 'feminist science fiction'. One of the few things we can agree about is that the fact that there were women engaged with science fiction as early as the 1920s and 1930s, and that there have always been women fans, does not necessarily mean that women have always felt welcome within the field, or that these women were all feminists.

The difference between women's issues and feminist issues is a grey area. While not all of the women who have been part of the field of science fiction would identify as feminists, the fact of their participation has become a feminist issue. The mere fact of their presence created a tradition that other women could then become a part of. Connie Willis in her article “The Women SF Doesn't See” discusses stories by women she read while growing up in the 1950s:

> 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).

Another tradition of women's writing sf is created by Jane L. Donawerth and Carol A. Kolmerten, the editors of *Utopian and Science Fiction by Women: Worlds of Difference*, who argue that

utopias and science fiction by women - women's 'literatures of estrangement' - constitute a continuous literary tradition in the West from the seventeenth century to the present day (Donawerth and Kolmerten 1994: 1).
The problem, however, with locating women science fiction writers in such a tradition is that it tends to ignore the importance of the field of science fiction. A writer can be part of many different traditions. To read Joanna Russ' *The Female Man* (1975) as a utopia and read it only in relation to Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Herland* (1915) or Margaret Cavendish's *The Description of a New World, Called the Blazing World* (1668) ignores the ways in which it re-writes various battle of the sexes texts within science fiction, where worlds of all women are presented as dystopias not utopias. Russ' familiarity with both the utopian and science fiction fields, is a crucial force in the texts she produces.20

Joanna Russ is a good example of positioning within a variety of fields. While the first publication of her "The Image of Women in Science Fiction" was in 1971 in a feminist journal, *The Red Clay Reader*, it was also reprinted in *Vertex*, a science fiction magazine.21 This located her critique of the genre in two fields, feminism, and science fiction. She is thus located 'inside' both, and in the juxtaposition becomes part of the formation of a third field, “feminist science fiction”.22 As Lefanu writes, “[f]eminist SF...is part of science fiction while struggling against it” (Lefanu 1988: 5). This struggle was, in the seventies, very real. Susan Wood writes that

Joanna [Russ], Vonda [McIntyre], and a very few supporters were rousingly trashed for being bitter, vicious, feminist bitches. One small but vocal trashin minority (like most of them, a man deeply afraid of women) cornered me at a party in Vancouver honoring Judy Merrill. He asserted, sniggering, that the only way Judy acquired the stories for her famous Year's Best series was by having sex with the authors (Wood 1978: 5).

In the 1980s there was talk within the feminist science fiction community of an erasure of the emergence of an overtly feminist science fiction culture in the previous two decades but particularly in the 1970s.23 Jeanne Gomoll, long-time

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20 Not least by herself. Her two articles, "Amor Vincit Foemina: The Battle of the Sexes in Science Fiction" (1980) and "Recent Feminist Utopias" (1981) make this clear.
21 Indeed, the way in which Russ' article was taken up and debated in various fanzines and later editions of *Vertex* amply demonstrates Russ' position as part of the field of science fiction. I discuss these debates in detail in chapter six, "Faulk".
22 The notion of insider/outsider is an enduring one in science fiction and to many is crucial to the formulation of the fan identity. I discuss this formation in detail in chapter two.
23 This is part of a wider attempt to dismiss the 1970s. See, for example, June Gallop’s *Around 1981* (1992).
fan and editor of the feminist fanzine *Janus/Aurora*, wrote a rebuttal of this attempt at erasure. She quotes Bruce Sterling in his introduction to William Gibson’s collection *Burning Chrome*:

[All forms of pop culture go through doldrums; they catch cold when society sneezes. If SF in the late Seventies was confused, self-involved, and stale, it was scarcely a cause for wonder (Sterling [1986] 1988: 9).

Gomoll then responds to Sterling:

[With a touch of the keys on his word processor, Sterling dumps a decade of SF writing out of critical memory: the whole decade was boring, symptomatic of a sick culture, not worth talking about. Now, at last, he says, we’re on to the right stuff again... This new strategy not only attempts to detract from the critical assessment of SF writing by women, and to belittle the accomplishments of women in SF fandom, but it has also been turned against the women’s movement as a whole. For the last couple of years I’ve begun to suspect that the phrase, ‘the me-decade’ is really a euphemistic attack on the changes made by the women’s movement. The phrase is both inappropriate and misleading (Gomoll 1986-87: 7-8).

Gomoll beautifully describes the impact of feminism on fandom in the 1970s, and the “exhilarating, exciting, unbelievable gathering of people, overjoyed to have found one another” that marked the period and her despair at this erasure (Gomoll 1986-87: 9).

This sense of unease about the ways in which the feminist science fiction of the 1970s was being devalued and even sometimes erased was part of the background to Pat Murphy’s 1991 announcement of a new award, the James Tiptree, Jr. Memorial Award for science fiction which expands and explores gender roles. Murphy, and her co-conspirator, Karen Joy Fowler felt that feminism generally, and within science fiction in particular, had a long way to go. Murphy had “come to believe that to change the way that people think about women and men, we need to show people in different roles” (Murphy [1991] 1992: 8).

I first heard about the Tiptree Award while doing research in Toronto at the Merril collection which is part of that city’s public library system.24 I began immediately to make connections between the new award and the development

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24 This collection was made possible by the extremely generous donation of books by Judith Merril.
of feminist science fictions. Later while based in San Francisco I was able to talk to both of the originators of the James Tiptree, Jr. Memorial Award, Karen Joy Fowler and Pat Murphy, as well as two of the judges, Debbie Notkin and Jeanne Gomoll.

Many of the battle of the sexes texts explore gender roles. When I read the first few Tiptree Award winning texts and some of the short listed texts, I noticed even more connections between what the Tiptree Award was recognising and the earlier sex battle texts. Here was an award that was drawing attention to texts which engaged with many of the issues that ‘my’ battle of the sexes texts 1926-1973 engaged with. The Tiptree Award fitted perfectly with my existing project especially as I had already decided to analyse at least one of James Tiptree, Jr.’s own stories.

When I returned to Australia after my 1993-1994 study trip to North America, I was able, using email, to stay in contact quickly and regularly with the many science fiction people I had met in North America. I was also able to contact three other Tiptree judges, Lucy Sussex, Susanna J. Sturgis and Brian Attebery and interview them over the net.

People I had made contact with in the USA would give my email address to other people they thought would be able to help me with my work. My North American contacts also enlarged my Australian contacts. By the time I came back from North America it was clear to me that science fiction was not just a body of professionally produced texts. The science fiction community, or rather communities, had become real for me, and I had become a part of it. This was most vividly realised when on a visit to Australia in June 1995 Karen Fowler asked me if I would be on the 1997 Tiptree Award jury. As the Award is given for the fiction of the previous year I now find myself in regular email discussion with Karen, Delia Sherman, Richard Kadrey and our chair, Janet Lafler, about the award, and the various nominated texts we read. I am indeed ‘plugged in’ to the fields of science fiction and feminist science fiction.
In the next chapter I discuss the constitution of the field of science fiction in more detail in order to provide the context for my later discussion of the battle of the sexes in science fiction from the pulps to the James Tiptree, Jr. Memorial Award.