"Mama Come Home"

*Introducing The Battle of the Sexes 1926-1973*

In the next two chapters, I examine a particular body of stories within the field which are explicitly about relations between women and men. This group of texts, the battle of the sexes, raise many issues concerning men and women, and sex and sexuality. In this chapter I set up my arguments about the battle of the sexes which underpin my discussion in this and the following chapter.

The texts I discuss in this chapter are predicated on an unequal relationship between the sexes where male rule is naturalised and female rule is demonised. The texts I discuss in chapter four, however, are concerned to negotiate a less unequal relationship between the sexes. I begin my discussion with the narratives in general before going on to present a close reading of some specific texts.

The battle of the sexes genre is a site where the negotiations that produce and shape heterosexual subjectivities are explicitly realised. The title of Robert Wentworth’s “World Without Sex” (1940) is suggestive of these negotiations,¹ because sex here actually has a very limited referent. This is not a world in which no sex acts take place but a world in which a specific heterosexual engagement of a dominant man and a submissive woman is (at first) absent. That engagement is symbolised by particular kinds of female bodies, the kind of desirable female bodies which were commonly represented on many of the covers of sf magazines. A world where desirable female bodies are not available to men is a world without sex. For a woman to become a part of the heterosexual economy, she must learn to perform her sex properly so that she can then *be* sex. “One is not

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¹ Robert Wentworth was a penname of Edmond Hamilton.
born, but rather becomes, a woman” (de Beauvoir [1949] 1972: 295). Neither is one born a real man. In this chapter I examine the process of becoming a real woman or a real man in the battle of the sexes.

The majority of the battle of the sexes texts I consider here are those which Joanna Russ refers to in “The Image of Women in Science Fiction”. She writes:

The strangest and most fascinating oddities in science fiction occur not in the stories that try to abolish differences in gender-roles but in those which attempt to reverse the roles themselves. Unfortunately, only a handful of writers have treated this theme seriously. Into a world of cold, cruel, domineering women who are openly contemptuous of their cringing, servile men...[Then] arrive(s) men (a man) from our present world. With a minimum of trouble, these normal men succeed in overthrowing the matriarchy, which although strong and warlike, is also completely inefficient (Russ 1974: 56).

This role reversal serves to demonstrate that female rule is misrule.² The centre of these texts is the struggle to restore male rule and the ‘natural order of things’. A central aspect of the natural order of things is a heterosexuality predicated on the romance discourse which I call the heterosexual economy. The matriarchal worlds are heterosexual yet they are outside this economy - men there exist only for reproduction, and if there are no men then there is no sex. The matriarchal women must be reincorporated into the heterosexual economy which they were a part of in their patriarchal past. For the women of these matriarchal worlds, reincorporation is a return, as a class, to the rule of the father.

In many of these texts there is both a literal war between men as a class and women as a class, and also a metaphorical war between two individual representatives of their class: the hero and heroine. In the process of rescuing the heroine from her matriarchal existence the hero transforms her into a real woman. The process of incorporation (not reincorporation because for the heroine this is her first encounter with patriarchy) to the heterosexual economy is achieved through some kind of heterosexual penetration, usually a kiss. Later in this chapter I give an ergative analysis of two ‘kiss’ passages in particular, one

² Many of the battle of the sexes texts use the device of role reversal. This device is by no means unique to science fiction. See for instance Natalie Zemon Davis’ “Women on Top” (Davis 1978: 124-151).
from Nelson S. Bond's "The Priestess Who Rebelled" (1939), and the other from Edmund Cooper's *Who Needs Men?* (1972).

The field of science fiction during this period was not the only site in which debates about women, sex, sexuality and feminism were taking place. In 1928 Virginia Woolf was overcome by the number of books written about women:

One went to the counter; one took a slip of paper; one opened a volume of the catalogue, and...the five dots here indicate five separate minutes of stupefaction, wonder and bewilderment. Have you any notion of how many books are written about women in the course of one year? Have you any notion how many are written by men? Are you aware that you are, perhaps, the most discussed animal in the universe? (Woolf [1929] 1977: 27).

Wallace G. West's battle of the sexes story, "The Last Man" (1929), which I discuss below begins with an epigram from Thomas M. Ludovici's *Lysistrata or Woman's Future and Future Woman* (1923). *Lysistrata* is one of the books by men about women contributing to Woolf's "wonder and bewilderment". Ludovici's philosophical treatise concerns the degeneracy the human race has fallen into because of Woman. He extrapolates from the present sad state of affairs two scenarios for the development of the future world. In one, women take over and eliminate all men. It is from this version of the future that "The Last Man" takes its epigram:

...By that time, however, a significant precedent will have been established and a lesson learnt that will not easily be forgotten. The superfluousness of men above a certain minimum will have become recognized officially and unofficially as a social fact...in a very short while it will become a mere matter of routine to proceed to an annual slaughter of males who have either outlived their prime or else have failed to fulfill the promise of their youth in meekness, general emasculation [sic] and stupidity (Ludovici 1923: 95).

This state of affairs is Ludovici's extrapolation from the current conditions of post-World War I degeneracy. For obvious reasons in the West women outnumbered men and had begun to join the workforce in increasing numbers. He writes that

there is still a fight to be fought with Feminism, ...we ourselves, though heart and soul pro-feminine, still remain active anti-Feminists...if anti-Feminism means resisting the further development of Feminism, to prevent it from culminating in some or all of the changes outlined in the previous chapter; if it means a struggle to maintain the natural functioning of male and female in reproduction; and if it also means the retention of the family, the home, and some beauty in our social scheme, then it certainly cannot yet be a lost cause (Ludovici 1923: 101).
These ideas about what the natural relations between the sexes should be are central to the majority of the battle of the sexes texts I examine in this chapter. Indeed the title of the chapter, taken from Tiptree’s story “Mama Come Home” (1968), is a direct reference to this desire to make the relations between women and men return to an imagined past when there was no feminism and all the mamas were at home.

*The Battle of the Sexes in Science Fiction 1926-1973*

The two main accounts of the battle of the sexes in science fiction during this period are Sam Moskowitz’s *When Women Rule* (1972)\(^3\) and Joanna Russ’ “Amor Vincit Foeminam: The Battle of the Sexes in SF” (1980). Part of the process of writing about the battle of the sexes is to decide what texts belong in this category. Moskowitz locates the stories in his anthology within the history of science fiction to show how inclusive the genre is despite claims to the contrary. He argues that the theme of “woman dominant...spotlight[ed] the female sex” and has “since the beginning...been regarded as legitimately within the province of science fiction” (Moskowitz 1972: 1). Russ, on the other hand, is concerned to show how appalling the battle of the sexes texts are and contrasts them to a more recent genre, which she calls feminist utopias.

Although Moskowitz’s anthology is titled *When Women Rule*, he includes two stories in which women do not rule. In “The Last Woman” (1932) there is only one woman left in the world, and in “The Feminine Metamorphosis” (1929) women are thwarted in their attempts to seize power. Joanna Russ excludes the texts she designates feminist utopias from the battle of the sexes although she argues that most of them are “concerned with the battle of the sexes” (Russ 1980: 13). She also briefly mentions some texts by men which she deems to be possibly

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\(^3\) The introduction of *When Women Rule* was first printed as an article in the August 1967 issue of *If*. 
pro-feminist but also excludes them from the designation battle of the sexes
(Russ 1980: 13).

I have designated any text which is concerned with relations between the
sexes as a battle of the sexes text. I include Russ’ ‘feminist utopias’ as well as her
‘pro-feminist’ texts by men in this designation. I include texts where men rule as
well as those where women rule and also less typical battle of the sexes stories,
such as H. O. Dickinson’s “The Sex Serum” (1935) and Philip Wylie’s The
Disappearance (1951).4

That the battle of the sexes was a known sub-genre or theme of science
fiction is highlighted by intertextualities between the stories. As well as the
unconscious intertextualities which occur because writers are immersed in the
same discourses and fields of knowledge, science fiction is also characterised by a
great deal of conscious rewriting of earlier texts. For example, according to
Moskowitz, “The Last Woman” first published in the April 1932 issue of Wonder
Stories, was “deliberately[ly]” written as a counter to “The Last Man,” first
In “The Last Man” all men have been destroyed except for one, M-1, the Last
Man, who is kept on permanent display in a museum. He is rescued by a woman
who is a throwback to the time when the world was bisexual and they escape to
the mountains. In “The Last Woman,” all women have been destroyed except for
one, the Last Woman, who is kept on permanent display in a museum. She is
rescued by a man who is a throwback to the time when the world was bisexual

4 “The Sex Serum” (1935) concerns a serum which can change a woman into a man and vice versa. The
woman experiences a boost in her intelligence when she becomes a man while the man becomes stupid
and so is unable to invent a method of reverting his/her transformation. In The Disappearance (1951)
all the men of earth find themselves having to exist in a world without women, and all the women find
themselves in a world without men. I discuss The Disappearance in chapter four.
5 There was a debate between James Blish, writing as William Atheling, Jr. and Moskowitz in the 1950s
about Moskowitz’s “reputation for reliability in matters of fact” which Atheling contended was
“somewhat overblown” (Atheling 1970: 39). In particular Atheling argues that Moskowitz detects
influences between stories where there are none because he ignores the frequently long gap between a
story’s writing and its publication. Atheling cites as evidence stories written by himself some years
before they appeared in print which Moskowitz claims were influenced by stories not yet published at
the time of writing (Atheling 1970: 35-39). I have no way of knowing, other than Moskowitz’s word, if
“The Last Woman” (1932) was written in response to “The Last Man” (1929) however the similarities
between the two texts are remarkable.
THE LAST WOMAN

By Thomas D. Gardner

They laughed and passed comments on the Last Woman. Her face flushed under their cold merciless humor. She was to them another animal of earth.

1338

Title page illustration of Thomas D. Gardner's "The Last Woman" by Paul, Wonder Stories, April 1932, p. 1238.
and they attempt to escape into outer space. Richard Wilson’s *Girls from Planet Five* (1955) has a series of short “Vox Pop” sections where Joan and George, Mr. and Mrs. Everyman, gradually discover that the matriarchal world is abnormal and that George is meant to be the man of the house and undertake paid work to take care of his wife. In *Venus Plus X* (1960) there are a series of “Vox Pop” sections about Herb and Jeanette, Mr. and Mrs. Everyman, where they, though mostly Herb, consider questions of sex and gender and misogyny. *Venus Plus X* also refers specifically to *The Disappearance* (Sturgeon 1960: 71-72). These are just a few examples of the many instances of intertextuality between sexbattle texts. The battle of the sexes stories also share many motifs such as the use of role reversals, matriarchal worlds modelled on insects and parthenogenesis.

**Real Men and Real Women**

In her article, “Gendering the Body: Beauvoir’s Philosophical Contribution”, Butler writes that

> there has been a great deal of popular and scientific thinking that has tacitly subscribed to gender as a kind of being. We speak quite often of someone being a real or true man or woman, being “manly” or “womanly” as if participating in an ideal Form of man or woman, and here we tend to assume that man and woman are substances that not only exist but are causally responsible for certain kinds of behaviour (Butler 1989: 258).

The majority of the battle of sexes texts which I discuss in this chapter are predicated on an ideal form of manliness and womanliness and show ways in which woman and man are distinct substances whose manliness and womanliness cause them to engage in certain behaviours. These behaviours mean that they are real women and real men and those who do not engage in these behaviours are not real men or women.

Thomas S. Gardner’s “The Last Woman” (1932) is set in a world - with the exception of one woman - entirely populated by real men. Men are the dominant sex having defeated women’s attempt to “feminize civilization” (Gardner [1932] 1972: 135). An illustration from the story appears opposite. The story ends with the last woman being executed and an all male “Science Civilization” triumphing. Russ (1980) discusses “The Last Woman” and its all-male scientific
utopia but by the end of her article she seems to have forgotten the narrative resolution which results in a world without women:

no Flasher book [Russ’s alternative name for the battle of the sexes texts] I was able to find envisioned a womanless world (or dared to say so); about half the feminist Utopias matter-of-factly excluded men (Russ 1980: 14).

“The Last Woman” notwithstanding there is no need to envision a world without women as there has always been science fiction which “matter-of-factly excluded” women. The following letter from Isaac Asimov makes this point:

[There is a great deal of significance, I think, in the fact that the four stories of the September issue of Startling Stories did not contain a single female character...[T]he September issue goes to prove that good stories can be written even with the total absence of the weaker sex (Startling Stories November 1939: 115).

The all-male world of Gardner’s “The Last Woman” is world of real men not homosexuals. The world is achieved through the discovery of the Elixir, as

[all] the energies that had been turned toward sex and the emotional side of life were released for thought and work. Every branch of science advanced and the Scientists began to control the money and power resources of the Earth (Gardner [1932] 1972: 134).

The Elixir keeps mankind “intensely masculine”, they do not become “thin-chested neuters” (Gardner [1932] 1972: 133). However, the invention of the Elixir is not enough for the triumph of the Science Empire. Women have to be eliminated because:

the female bred truest to type and held the primitive characteristics longer than the male and...she reverted to the primitive type the quicker (Gardner [1932] 1972:135).

The elimination of sex means the elimination of creatures who divert man from his true role as scientist.6

That there is more than one sex in these texts is obvious: after all, they are about the battle of the sexes. The plural of sex, ‘sexes’, signals plurality. The battle of the sexes, therefore, takes place between more than one sex. In the majority of the texts the explicit assumption is that it takes place between two opposite sexes, male and female. However while many of these texts tell a story

6 I discuss the ideas in “The Last Woman” about a man’s strength and virility being drained by sex - that is women - in chapter five.
of two opposite sexes engaged in warfare, many also tell a story in which there is a multiplicity of sexed bodies. Some posit at least four: real women, real men, not-real men and not-real women.

The notion that there are ‘real’ men and ‘real’ women as well as ‘not-real’ men and ‘not-real’ women is explicit in the sexbattle stories I discuss in this chapter. In Nelson S. Bond’s “The Judging of the Priestess” (1940), the sequel to “The Priestess Who Rebelled”, the heroine, Meg, says of the hero, Daiv:

It is no Man-thing, Mother. It is a Man; a real Man such as were the Gods! Not a scrimping parody like our breeders, nor a foul brute like the Wild Ones - but a Man. He is Daiv, my mate! (Bond 1940: 46).7

In Edmund Cooper’s Who Needs Men? (1972) Rura, the heroine, after she is captured by the renegade men asks, “What do you usually do with women you take prisoner?” Her captor, Diarmid, responds, “Ah, well, that is a double question, you see. Usually we divide them into two classes - women and exterminators” (Cooper [1972] 1974: 87). Later Diarmid tells her that she will “be seen not as an exterminator but as a free woman”. Rura asks, “Are your women free, then?” and Diarmid responds, “They are free to be women” (Cooper [1972] 1974: 94).

Joanna Russ argues that these texts are built around a central contradiction: “[w]hen women fight men, the battle is won by men because women are loyal to men” (Russ 1980: 12). On the one hand it is taken for granted that men and women are natural enemies and must be in conflict, in battle, and on the other hand that real, proper men and women, men and women as they are meant to be, are perfect complements to each other and can only live in harmony.

However, within the heterosexual economy of real men and real women this is not a contradiction. In worlds where there are more than one kind of woman, the real women are those who are loyal and the not-real women are those who

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7 Nelson S. Bond wrote three stories about the priestess Meg, the third is “Magic City” (1941). Throughout the three stories real Men are referred to with a capital M.
The front cover of the 1953 paperback edition of Jerry Sohl's *The Haploids* published by Lion Books.
fight against men. This is clearest in the texts where the women who work to
wipe out the men are, in fact, aliens. There are a number of battle of the sexes
stories where it is an alien race of women who are intent on wiping out the men.
In Jerry Sohl’s *The Haploids*, a separate race of women, the haploids, look
exactly like women except that they are unnaturally cold (Sohl [1952] 1953: 81).
The cover of the 1953 paperback edition appears opposite. They are a
parthenogenetic race created by an insane female scientist, Dr Gardner. Gardner
has also created a deadly radiation device which kills all men who are exposed to
it except those who have AB blood. She is defeated because her daughter turns
against her to help the hero who has AB blood. The daughter turns out to have
been brainwashed into believing that she too is a haploid when she is, in fact, the
doctor’s ‘natural’ daughter. She is therefore a real woman and, once she
overcomes her brainwashing, loyal to the male cause.

This idea of alien women forming a secret conspiracy against men is also the
centre of *The White Widows* by Sam Merwin Jr. ⁸ The illustration for the title
page appears on the next page. Larry Finlay has written a thesis on haemophilia
examining the female carriers of the disease. In the process he accidentally
uncovers a centuries old conspiracy among certain superhuman women to wipe
out men, and develop a way of reproducing without them and rule the world:

> There had been a number of definite characteristics, some physical, some physiological.
> For one thing, haemophilia carriers tended to be women of a driving dominant type,
> which he had termed the “Empress Type” in his thesis - their drive intensified by their
> ability, with or without great native beauty, to make themselves attractive to men.
> They were strongly erotic, with a tendency towards lesbianism, basically heterosexual.
> Physically, in most cases they tended towards unusual length of limb, coupled to
> longevity and extrernal strength, and speed of reflex.
> ...basically these women are believers in a world of one sex. Amazons if you will
> (Merwin 1953: 63)

Marriage and love are a trap to destroy men. Finlay prevents the women’s
conspiracy to launch germ warfare over Asia and so begin the destruction of

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⁸ *The White Widows* was first published in *Startling Stories* in the October 1953 issue and then as a book
by Doubleday in the same year. Sam Merwin Jr. was the editor of *Startling Stories* and *Thrilling
Wonder Stories* from 1945 to 1951. I refer to his editorial for the December 1950 issue of *Thrilling
Wonder Stories* on the women’s invasion of science fiction in chapter five.
He stumbled onto a new version of the bottle of the exes—and there wasn’t a single care among the creatures he fought...

mankind. However the novel ends with Finlay married to one of the Amazon women and aware that the conspiracy against men has been stalled not defeated.

In *The Haploids* and *The White Widows* the women who are involved in the conspiracy against men are not real women, they are aliens, “haploids” or “Amazons”. There are real women in these texts who are loyal to their men. In “The Misogynist” by James E Gunn all women are aliens.9 The narrator and his friend Harry sit and talk, or rather, Harry talks, and the narrator listens. The narrator says that “nobody tells stories like Harry”, though “women don’t think Harry is funny” (Gunn [1952] 1955: 16). According to Harry, women, “[t]he alien race,” are involved in a conspiracy to wipe out men (Gunn [1952] 1955: 17):

> What better way...to conquer a race than to breed it out of existence? The Chinese learned that a long time ago. Conqueror after conqueror took the country and each one was passively accepted, allowed to intermarr...and eventually was absorbed. Only this case is the reverse. Conquest by marriage might be a good term for it. Breed in the conqueror, breed out the slave. Breed in the alien, breed out the human.

> ...It’s only in the last few generations that their plans have been coming closer to success. They have the vote, equal rights without giving up any of their privileges, and so forth. They’re outliving men - and it’s men, of course, who are extending the life span for them...And there’s something else men are doing for them... We’re experimenting with fertilization by salt water, electrical stimulus, that sort of thing. Once we work it out properly...”

> “...They’ll just refuse to marry, use prenatal sex determination to produce nothing but girls, and then you’ll have a single race - the female race (Gunn [1952] 1955: 17-20).

Harry’s account includes many of the elements of other battle of the sexes texts including matriarchies (Gunn [1952] 1955: 18) and parthenogenesis (Gunn [1952] 1955: 20). As in *The Haploids* marriage is a conspiracy to destroy men by breeding them out. As proof of his theory Harry quotes and refers to a litany of misogynist sentiment: Homer, Ovid, Swift (“A dead wife under the table is the best goods in a man’s house”), Antiphanes, Menander, Cato, Shakespeare, Lord Chesterfield, Nietzsche and others (Gunn [1952] 1955: 20). Misogyny is transformed into reason. At the end of the story Harry is dead and the narrator is about to go down to the cellar where his wife is banging about with a poker (Gunn [1952] 1955: 24). An illustration appears on the following page.

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9 “The Misogynist” was first published in the November 1952 issue of *Galaxy Science Fiction*. 
The coldness of the haploids and these other alien women with their conspiracies against men is very like stereotypes of lesbians and indeed in *The White Widows* they are even said to have a "tendency towards lesbianism" (Merwin 1953: 63). Monique Wittig has argued that lesbians are not women because they can not be incorporated into the heterosexual order (Wittig 1992). There are undisguised lesbians in other sexbattle texts such as *The Disappearance* (1951), *Virgin Planet* (1957), *World Without Men/Alph* (1958, revised 1972), and *Who Needs Men?* (1972). However, as in *The Haploids*, the main function of lesbianism is to show how infinitely preferable heterosexuality is and to mark those women who do not instantly become heterosexual on seeing a man or being kissed by him as not-real women. I found no mention of male homosexuality in any of the texts I discuss in this chapter. Particularly not in "The Last Woman" (1932), where an all-male world is made possible by the eradication of "sex and the emotional side of life" (Gardner [1932] 1972: 134).

In these stories there are always only one kind of real men and real women. However, there are sometimes a variety of not-real women and not-real men. In Nelson S. Bond’s "The Princess Who Rebelled" (1939) there are three different kinds of not-real women: the warriors with
corded legs, the grim, set jaws. The cold eyes. The brawny arms, scarred to the elbow with ill-healed cicatrices. The tiny, thwarted breasts, flat and hard beneath harness-plates. Fighters they were, nothing else (Bond [1939] 1972: 198).

The mothers who were

full-lipped, flabby-breasted bearers of children. Those eyes were humid; washed barren of all expression by desires too oft aroused, too often sated. The bodies bulged at hip and thigh, swayed when they walked like ripe grain billowing in a lush and fertile field. They lived only that the tribe might continue to exist. They reproduced (Bond [1939]1972: 199).

The workers:

Their bodies retained a vestige of womankind's inherent grace and nobility. But if their waists were thin, their hands were blunt-lingered and thick. Their shoulders were bent

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10 Theodore Sturgeon's story "The World Well Lost" published in the first issue of *Universe Science Fiction* in June 1953, was one of the earliest sympathetic portrayals of male homosexuality in science fiction and caused "considerable uproar at the time" (Tymn & Ashley 1985: 692).
with the weight of labour; coarsened...Their faces were grim from the eternal struggle with an unyielding earth... The workers' skin was browned with soil, their bodies stank of dirt and grime and unwashed perspiration (Bond [1939] 1972: 199).

The description of the workers' bodies as having "retained a vestige of womankind's inherent grace and nobility" shows clearly that women are naturally graceful and noble. If the worker's retain "a vestige" of these qualities and the warriors and mothers have none the implication is that they are not women at all. The same array of sexed female bodies is present in Wyndham's "Consider Her Ways," (1956) which is mostly set in a far future world where all men have been extinct for generations (Wyndham [1956] 1965: 14).

In "The Priestess Who Rebelled" there are two different kinds of not-real men. There are the men kept for breeding purposes in the matriarchal communities: they have "pale, pitifully hairless bodies" and "soft, futile hands and weak mouths". They "loll" about and make "small enticing" gestures (Bond [1939] 1972: 198). Then there are the Wild Ones who "roam the land...[s]earching for food" and "most of all for mates." The Wild Ones have "shaggy bodies", "thick, brutish faces", and "hard, gnarled muscles" (Bond [1939]: 207). The Wild Ones are male but they are not men.

As I have shown above, an identifiably male or female body does not, in these textual worlds, automatically grant the status of man or woman. Elizabeth Spelman in Inessential Woman (1988) shows how in "Plato's proposal for a kind of 'equality' between men and women...he is referring to a very small group of men and women" (Spelman 1988: 80). Males with womanly souls or females with womanly souls, who are almost invariably those of the lower classes, are excluded from the potential equality between the manly-souled philosopher elite.

In the real men/real women texts, the bodies are pared down to a bare minimum. There are, with few exceptions, only white, heterosexual, middle class and mostly North American bodies. And still there are those that do not qualify as real men and women. In the sex battle world bodies and behaviours rather than souls gain admittance to the exclusive caste of the real. In "The Priestess
Who Rebelled”, Meg the heroine, who by the text’s end has become a real woman, is described thus:

her legs were long and firm and straight as a warrior’s spear. Her body was supple; bronzed by sunlight save where her doeskin breech-cloth kept the skin white. Unbound her hair could have trailed the earth...her skin was golden-brown, and pure gold where the sunlight burnished the fine down on her arms and legs; between her high, firm breasts (Bond [1939] 1972: 204).

Compare this to the warriors, mothers and workers above. The hero, Daiv’s body is smooth and almost as hairless as her own. Bronzed by the sun. But it was not the pale, soft body of a man. It was muscular, hard, firm; taller and stronger than a warrior (Bond [1939] 1972: 208).

The two are linked together by the language choice: they are as “smooth and hairless” as each other and both have been “bronzed” by the sun. Daiv is more masculine than the women warriors of Meg’s tribe and Meg is as straight and firm as one of their spears.

The different categories of not-real man and woman and real man and woman are fixed. However, the sexed bodies are fluid and can be transformed. Such a transformation results in the body moving from one category to another. An example of transformation occurs at the end of Richard Wilson’s *The Girls From Planet Five* (1955): the beautiful and tall non-Earth women, the Lyru, learn that their men - whom they have never taken seriously because they are shorter and less brave than they are - have been secretly working against the evil Crones for generations. After this revelation one of the Lyru, Lori “look[s] happily at Jason, who seem[s] almost as tall as she [is] as he stands beside her” (Wilson 1955: 180).

The wide range of sexed bodies in these texts is not a static one. All of the bodies discussed here, although (literally) textual bodies, are historically contingent. Moira Gatens argues that the “qualitative difference in the way we live out our particular balances (or imbalances) of masculine and feminine traits is crucially connected to our bodies” and this cannot be separated from “the meaning and significance of the sexed body in culture” (Gatens [1989] 1996: 30). Culture is not ahistorical. For instance in “The Last Man” the women of the
matriarchal world are described as “tall, angular, narrow-hipped, flat-breasted” (West [1929] 1972: 109). All of which sounds like a description of a 1990s high fashion catwalk model - one of the late-twentieth century ideal womanly bodies. However in the context of the story, it is a description of a kind of body that women developed once all the world’s men disappeared:

In the ages which followed, great physiological changes took place. Women no longer having need of sex, dropped it, like a worn-out cloak, and became sexless. tall, angular, narrow-hipped, flat-breasted and unbeautiful [my italics] (West [1929] 1972: 108-109).

These “tall, angular, narrow-hipped, flat-breasted” unwomen are contrasted with the heroine who has:

Hair red as a slumberous [sic] fire - eyes blue as the heavens ... Unafraid she wrinkled her nose at him, then wrapping about her a long black robe which but half concealed her deep breasts and the forgotten womanly grace of her carriage (West [1929] 1972: 110)

Some of these stories are more overt about their historical context than others. For instance in “The Feminine Metamorphosis” by David H. Keller M. D, published in the August 1929 issue of Science Wonder Stories, the sexual inequality of the contemporary world is foregrounded. Unlike many of the other sex battle texts, the women who wish to take over the world in “The Feminine Metamorphosis” have a clearly stated reason for doing so. Their dissatisfaction is put in the context of the erosion of the gains won by American Women in the workforce during the first world war:

During the World War the feminine sex had tasted the sweetness of responsibility with increasing incomes, so that at the close of the war they were reluctant to return to their former humble positions. Well educated, capable, and hard working women were striving to occupy positions on a par with men, and the situation had become so acute that many corporations had passed regulations, strictly limiting the advancement of women in their employ...

The result had not been a happy one. More and more women were preparing themselves for positions of trust and large salaries. Every phase of business activity, especially those requiring brain power, was being handled by the members of the fair sex, who, by their constant application to work, their ability to look after the smallest details, and their one-track minds, were far more capable of holding positions of trust than was the average business man (Keller [1929] 1972: 151).

The story begins when a Miss Martha Belzer is told that she will not be promoted because she is a woman. This despite being “brilliant”, “capable”, “shrewd”, and “intelligent” (Keller [1929] 1972: 149-150). The male business
The Feminine Metamorphosis
by David H. Keller M.D.

She was called a biological chemist and would take the glands from the operations into her laboratory and work on them. When she finished she had a test-tube of clear liquid called "impulse."

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leaders of America have decided that Miss Belzer, and other women like her, must be prevented from
gain[ing] control of the great corporations of the nation...So, the word passed from the President of one great concern to the Chief Executive of the next that under no circumstances should a woman be promoted to certain positions in these companies (Keller [1929] 1972: 153).

Miss Belzer forms a conspiracy with other women to take over the USA and the rest of the world using a drug made from diseased gonads removed from Chinese men. They transform 5,000 of their number into men and these men take over the business world. The illustration on the facing page shows the women at work. They also invent a formula which causes women to have only female children and start investigating parthenogenesis. Unfortunately for the women's conspiracy a detective, Taine of the Secret Service, uncovers their plans. At the same time the disease that was in the gonads, which seems to be syphilis, starts to drive the five thousand female men mad.

The justice of the women's complaints is irrelevant. They are unnatural power-seekers and their intelligence, which had allowed them to prosper in the work force until their promotion was blocked, is marked as unnatural. The other women in the text who are not part of the conspiracy are not clever. Taine lectures the unnatural women:

You went on with your plans, but you forgot God. He had certain plans for the human race, and it was no part of His plan that women should live...without men...You took...loving wives and wonderful mothers - you took the best that we have bred, and through your desires to rule, you have changed them into...insane women (Keller [1929] 1972: 194-5).

The women have attempted to change the natural order of things whereby men work in the public sphere, and women in the private as “loving wives and wonderful mothers”. To go outside the heterosexual order is to go insane and a mad woman, like a lesbian, is not a woman. Further when the women have become men, they are unnatural men and are described in terms that imply homosexuality, they refuse to play “a real man's game, like golf” (Keller [1929] 1972: 171) and the way they dress is suspicious:
Their clothing was masculine, but at the same time, it had a dash of color to it, a peculiar something that was different. When one of this group walked down on Fifth Avenue, his general appearance was such as to make passing women, and men also, turn to look again at him (Keller [1929] 1972: 199).

The initial desire by Miss Martha Belzer and other women to be promoted because of their ability soon becomes a “dream of a manless world...We do not want two sexes in this fair world of ours, not as long as one sex can run it so efficiently” (Keller [1929] 1972: 186). This equation between a desire for equality and a desire for power and dominion over men and their eradication is made frequently. Some examples are “The Last Man” (1929), *The Haploids* (1952), *The White Widows* (1953 reprinted as *The Sex War* in 1960), “For Sacred San Francisco” (1969), *Sex and the High Command* (1970) and *Who Needs Men?* (1972).

Parthenogenesis is a key element in these texts. Once this method of reproduction is discovered men become redundant. This is an old notion. Laqueur writes that the Hippocratic writer would have to admit that there was something uniquely powerful about male seed...because otherwise he would have no answer to the question with which two-seed theorists were plagued for millenia: if the female has such powerful seed, then why can she not engender within herself alone: who needs men? (Laqueur 1990 [1992]: 40).

Once the women in these stories discover the secret to parthenogenesis men’s days are numbered. The battle of the sexes texts take place in a universe in which non-sexual interaction, friendship and affection between men and women cannot exist because their relationships are constructed across a bridge of biology (Russ 1980: 3). Once the biological necessity for their interaction is removed, that is reproduction of the species, women and men cease to have any need of each other. If a society produces artificial ovum and incubators as in “The Last Woman” (Gardner: [1932] 1972: 135-136) then who needs women? And if parthenogenesis is achieved as in *Who Needs Men?* (Cooper [1972] 1974) and many other texts then, indeed, who needs men?
THE FEMININE METAMORPHOSIS

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gave you all a piece of expensive jewelry. She gave you a piece of jade, Dr. Hamilton, and she gave the doctor whom you call Lucy this ring. Lucy thought the little China girl rather nice. Well, to make a long story short, I was that little girl. I lived in the hospital with you for some months. The Government sent me over to find out what you girls were doing there. I had some ideas then and during all these years those ideas have been slowly working into definite form. I suspected some of the things you spoke of tonight, yet, at the same time, you went a lot further than I thought sensible people would go. I know a lot about women, but I cannot understand what's the matter with you—unless you really are insane."

Dr. Hamilton shook her head gravely. "I guess he is right, girls. I remember that little Chinese girl, and he did give me the jade. He would not have known about that unless he had been there. I have heard about him, but I had no idea that he was so damn clever. But is he clever? To get the best of Lucy and come here dressed to impersonate her? And then this chorus girl. Well, he says he is Taine, and I really do not think he has harmed Lucy—just locked her up somewhere. So, the best thing we can do with him is to kill him right away. He knows too much—we can handle this chorus girl, but this man—he only way to keep him quiet is to kill him. I hate to commit murder, but I have been working on this plan for years and I am not going to have it go to pieces just on account of a man."

Miss Patricia Powers agreed with the Doctor. "You are right, Hamilton," she said. "He knows too much. If he is dead, we will get through our financial coup, and in a week it will not make any difference if they do find out he died here at the Club."

Suddenly the San Francisco doctor, Lucy, who was really Taine, seemed to change. His face grew hard, and his hands, within his coat pockets, twitched.

"Now, you sit down, ladies, and listen to me talk. You are not going to kill me or anybody tonight. There are about five hundred policemen around this building. If I am not out safely by midnight, they are going to find out why. No one is going to leave. You women have played a great game, but it was a selfish, inhuman sort of a game, and you are going to lose out and it's not your fault or my fault, but just one of those happenings that make me believe in predestination. You want to run this world, and have all the men die off and make it a female Paradise, and you forgot there was a God and that He made man just the same as He made woman. I admit that some men are rather bad sort of tools, but some of us are really rather good sorts—take me, for example. My wife thinks I am wonderful—of course, all my boys are girls, but, at the same time, she would have been tickled had the last one been a boy. You go and change your bodies, and try and make men out of yourselves, and all the rest of what you call your programme, and now you think that you are going to win out by killing me. If it were not for the Misses and the kids, I would not mind much if you did, but even if you were able to, what good would it do you?

"I think your Dr. Hamilton is a rather bright expert. I always shall be indebted to her for operating on Ming Foo. She had a wonderful plan and she has worked it out in a wonderful way—but she did not know the Chinese people—not the way I do. I have lived with them and slept with them and I know a little more about them than you would think, just by looking at me. During these last two weeks I have been having long talks with scientists from all over the East. Perhaps your detectives know who they were, though they could not tell what we talked about. But I wanted to learn all I could about that medicine Dr. Hamilton prepared in that hospital, and these men told me. I said so and so and they agreed with me that my idea might be right. What you have said tonight convinces me that I was right."

Taine Explains

"YOU went on with your plans, but you forgot God. He had certain plans for the human race, and it was no part of His plan that women should live on, century after century, without men, as you were preparing them to do. So, this is what (Concluded on page 274)"
Sex and Science

A page from the middle of “The Feminine Metamorphosis” is reproduced opposite. In its centre is a newspaper cutting proclaiming that it is an illustration of how “fiction becomes fact”. This evidence is used to legitimate Keller’s story. The story is not merely a fiction but a science fiction.

Examples, such as this, from the real world of science were often used in sf magazines of the 1920s and 1930s to legitimate science fiction. The editorial blurbs which accompanied the stories frequently draw attention to the scientific accuracy or relevance of a story before pointing out its merits as an entertainment. The blurb for “The Feminine Metamorphosis” exactly follows this order:

When a physician-author writes a story on a biological subject, you may be sure that it will be more than interesting. Only during recent years, have the functions of the various glands in the human body assumed a tremendous importance. It seems that the glands are responsible for almost everything imaginable in our mental and physical make-up. It is also true, very frequently, that these functions can be interfered with by altering or otherwise influencing the glands.

It has been known for some time, that extracts from various glands can be used as a stimulant to the live glands of human beings, although the extract has been secured from animals or human beings.

It may be safely said that the wonderful field of gland surgery and medicine is as yet practically untouched. Some of the most surprising and far-reaching discoveries will come when we know more about them.

In the present story Dr. Keller, with his usual insight, has written a most original story that is as good as it is amazing. And incidentally, he has given us a most clever O. Henry ending - a climax as surprising as it is unique (August 1929 Science Wonder Stories: 247).

It transforms the story into a serious engagement with discoveries about “sex glands” of “recent years”. The blurb accompanying “The Last Woman” (1932) also legitimates the story by claiming a relationship between it and recent discoveries about sex glands:

Despite its title, this story is not calculated to appeal especially to our feminine readers. For it is a red-blooded story, and a bizarre one; yet it deals with events that are well within the limits of probability.

The understanding of how our sex glands function, and their effect upon us is just beginning to be understood. When we finally do understand, certainly a new era will dawn in the history of the race.

Some men already predict that women will eventually rule the world, and they will at least make the attempt to overthrow masculine domination. But suppose they lose, and man holds the undisputed sway, with but one woman left. Will men idolize her; will they fight over her like wild beasts; or will they enslave her? The answer that our author gives is much different than you will think. This is a distinctly original story, and deals with an absorbing idea (April 1932 Wonder Stories: 1239).
THE SEX SERUM

By H. O. DICKINSON

I think that my vanity is forcing me to write, although I know as I set down the words in this almost illegible handwriting that it will get no farther than the bottom drawer of my desk. Yes, it will be fortunate if it ends there, for I am a very impulsive person and the wastepaper basket is nearby.

But when I reflect, it seems hardly fair—back to myself and all those people who were cheated out of the answer to a first-class mystery. Consider too that eminent man, Sir John Norton. I think the satisfaction he would derive from this manuscript would more than compensate him for the inconvenience caused by striking out at least one case from his latest volume: "Unsolved Mysteries of the Twentieth Century."

I have read his fourth problem, "The Manor House Murders," with a smile upon my lips and a smile of superiority feeling which comes to a man who knows the truth. And why should I not smile? It is the only reward I will ever obtain from my knowledge. For you do not realize that I am the only person alive to-day who knows the real solution of a crime which baffled, and is still baffling, a whole country—a unique position to be in, you will agree, and one that arouses all men's latent vanity.

I have kept the secret for a long time now and no one would suffer from the telling of it—not that I think it would be believed, but it will pass as another of one of the more fantastic and imaginative theories that have often been advanced as explanations of a mystery which has for so long defied logical solution.

And again, further excuse for my vain and babbling tongue. Unusual stories are the fashion these days when every normal plot has fallen the prey of the modern literary mass-production machine, dealt with as a cow does its cud—chewed, twisted, turned about, contracted, reversed, dished up in a thousand different ways, then swallowed in disgust. And now it turns, with despairing howls, to Frankenstein's, covered freaks, and mummified horrors for its sustenance.

You remember the Manor House murders, non-existent reader—the strange disappearance of both Professor Neville, the famous biologist, and his daughter Jeanette. Then there was the finding of the dead and battered body of an old lady in Neville's study and the half-dead body of a young man, since thought to be the Professor's son, lying by her side.
Both these stories were published during the period Nelly Oudshoorn discusses in her book *Beyond the Natural Body: an archaeology of sex hormones*. Oudshoorn focuses on the period of the “1920s and 1930s in which scientists became confused by their own assumptions about sex and the body” (Oudshoorn 1994: 1). She investigates the scientists who were engaged at the time in understanding, as the blurb to “The Last Woman” puts it, “how our sex glands function, and their effect upon us.” Outside science fiction, scientists such as Jongh in 1936 were struggling “to define which observed characteristics can be considered decisive for our judgement [of the sex of a hormone]: male or female” (Oudshoorn 1994: 1) and others like Bell in 1916 were discovering that “there are many individuals with ovaries who are not women in the strict sense of the word and many with testes who are really feminine in many other respects” (Oudshoorn 1994: 37). Within science fiction these struggles were being translated unproblematically into “understanding...how our sex glands function”. The struggles and negotiations Oudshoorn documents were popularly understood as scientific endeavour and therefore a series of discovered facts that could become the scientific basis for some of the battle of the sexes texts.

The editorial introduction to H. O. Dickinson’s story “The Sex Serum” (1935) is reproduced opposite. Science in this passage is animate and has agency. It can solve mysteries, and make discoveries - the kinds of discoveries which will lead to a story such as “The Sex Serum” being transformed from science fiction to ‘actual’ science.

This rhetoric is also present in the following comments which accompanied “The Last Man” in the February 1929 issue of *Amazing Stories*:

According to Kipling, “The female of the species is always more deadly.” By that, he means that she is stronger in her own way, and we know that she usually is more numerous. Even among human beings, there are more females than males. Perhaps in thousands of years, evolution will have progressed in such a manner that the world will be entirely peopled by females. This is not so impossible as it would seem to be, because with many insects, the female of the species already predominates.

The present story then is founded upon an excellent scientific basis and the story itself is excellent as it is original and unusual. You will not forget it for a long time (*Amazing Stories* February 1929: 1090).
The leaps of logic here, from Kipling’s comment, to there being more women than men, to women taking over because amongst insects the “female of the species already predominates”, are fairly breathtaking. All these leaps however constitute an “excellent scientific basis” for the story. There is then a core of ‘truth’ to this story, therefore it is science fiction.

As I demonstrated in the previous chapter, the idea of scientific accuracy was central to discussions of science fiction stories in the letter columns of these magazines. Sexbattle stories were also debated in these terms. For instance, John J. Kelly, Jr. of St. Paul, Minnesota wrote a long response, to Keller’s “The Feminine Metamorphosis” headed, “Is Man Made the Same as Woman?”[^11]. Kelly writes that “The Feminine Metamorphosis” is “unfair and one-sided” because the women were:

merely striving for economic liberation. Due to the intolerance of the male sex, the only way that the women could secure their freedom in this instance was by the annihilation of the men (Science Wonder Stories November 1929 Vol. 1 No. 6: 663).

Worse than being unfair the story is “unscientific”:

Detective Taine when he had the women trapped at their conference...said, “...and you forgot that he (God) made man just the same as he made woman.” Is this science? If it is, I am not acquainted with it. I have made the study of scientific subjects my hobby for years, but never came in contact with a statement like that.

Is not Dr. Keller familiar with the fact that at one time the female was the only animal in existence on earth?...the female organism alone existed as such but was fertilized by the male sperm cell, and that this cell was a part of the female organism. According to this, it would appear untrue that “man was made the same” as woman. The male organism (which characterizes the sex) was of later derivation by the processes of evolution. When Dr. Keller states that man was made the same as woman he is...making a scientific error (Science Wonder Stories November 1929 Vol. 1 No. 6: 663).

Kelly does not argue that “The Feminist Metamorphosis” is bad science fiction because it is misogynist. It is bad science fiction because it is predicated on “scientific error”.

[^11]: All other responses I found were favourable but not very detailed; Louis Kurzeja of Chicago Illinois gave it an ’A’ meaning excellent and remarked, “[It gave me a humorous feeling when I had finished reading it” (Science Wonder Stories October 1929 Vol. 1 No. 5: 467).
Real man makes real woman

"The Feminine Metamorphosis" (1929) is unusual amongst the sexbattle texts because it has no central pairing of hero and heroine. The unnatural order of things is not resolved through a 'romance' between this pairing but by the will of God. The more usual romance pairing is very similar to Monique Plaza's description of Lacan's understandings of hysteria:

the hysterical is a woman who is struggling against men, and who doesn't know if she is a man or a woman...she will emerge from her revolt when she meets the master she seeks, who will give her the desire to be a woman (Plaza 1984: 81).

If I amend this slightly to read "who will make her a woman" then Plaza's statement becomes a description of a group of texts in which the hero makes the heroine into a woman.\textsuperscript{12} The hero does this by stripping her of agency and making her body into something over which she has no control. This process inverts the examples of Nina Puren which I discussed in chapter one. In Puren's examples the fragmentation of the woman's body, 'her beauty,' leaves her open to blame and responsibility for what 'her beauty' has caused in the man who then rapes her. In Puren's story the woman is the agent of the violence which works itself through the medium of the man. However, in the sexbattle stories I examine in this section, the man is the agent of the change that works itself out through the body of the woman. The woman is allowed agency when it frees the man from responsibility that could cause him to be adversely affected, that is sent to gaol. Otherwise she is the medium, the site of change that is worked on her by a man.

This process of the hero making the heroine into a 'real' woman provides an Agent for Simone de Beauvoir's famous words: "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" (de Beauvoir [1949] 1972: 295). It is a man who makes a woman. In the two battle of the sexes texts which I examine in this section,

\textsuperscript{12} This story is by no means confined to science fiction. I have a vivid memory of an Elvis movie, 
_The Littlest Love, A Little Love_ (1968), in which the heroine leaves a message in lipstick for Elvis on the mirror the morning after their (off-camera) night of passion: "Thank you for making me a woman".
Nelson S. Bond's "The Priestess Who Rebelled" (1939) and Edmund Cooper's *Who Needs Men?* (1972), the process of 'becoming woman' takes place when the woman is incorporated into the heterosexual economy.

Another famous utterance which touches on becoming a real woman is the song, "You make me feel like a natural woman", written by Carole King and most famously performed by Aretha Franklin. Judith Butler in her article, "Gendering the Body: Beauvoir's Philosophical Contribution", discusses "You make me feel like a natural woman" and its relations to Beauvoir. Butler argues that Aretha Franklin uses a simile that suggests that she knows the natural woman to be a figure and a fiction. Her claim, then, seems to translate into the following: "you allow me a fantasy for a moment, the experience of a unity of my sex, gender, and desire that I know to be false but wish were true." Aretha doesn't dispute Beauvoir, but gives us some understanding of the emotional pull of the illusion of a natural and substantial identity (Butler 1989: 258-59).

Indeed "you make me feel like a natural woman" complements Beauvoir's utterance and supplies agency: You, presumably a man, are the Agent that allows me as Medium to feel like (to begin to become) "a natural woman". You are responsible for how I am positioned within the economy of heterosexuality. However a close examination of "Priestess" and *Who Needs Men?* shows that this cannot stand - as it is still framed from the woman's point of view and so allows her some (small) control of the discourse. In the texts I discuss in this section the clause becomes "He made her become a real woman".

The sexbattie texts in which man makes woman closely resemble the story of Pygmalion who, revolted by "the many faults which nature has implanted in the female sex", created a snowy ivory statue, Galatea, who Venus blessed with life so that "the ivory lost its hardness, and grew soft: his fingers made an imprint on the yielding surface" (Ovid: 231-232).13 There is one crucial change: in the

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13 There are more overt versions of this myth in science fiction. "Helen O'Loy," by Lester del Rey is a much anthologised story first published in Astounding in 1938. In it two men create the woman of their dreams - a robot.
The Priestess Who Rebelled

Into the valley of the Gods went the priestess to discover their secret, but when she saw their faces, she rebelled.
battle of the sexes texts, Venus disappears, and Pygmalion makes his creation real without the aid of a goddess.

The centre of my examination of the creation of these Galateas is penetrative intercourse and the kiss. To highlight the ways in which this romance narrative works to construct a compliant, heterosexual, 'real' woman's body I make a detailed comparison of some key passages from two texts - “The Priestess Who Rebelled,” which was first published in Amazing Stories in October 1939, and Who Needs Men?, which was first published by Hodder and Stoughton in 1972.

In “The Priestess Who Rebelled”, Meg, a priestess in a matriarchal post-apocalyptic world (the apocalypse came in 1960), meets a man, Daiv, who is unlike the soft weak men who serve her people as breeding stock. He comes from the one unmatriarchal people left on Earth. Meg is on her way to see the Gods, this being the last rite before she becomes the Mother, head priestess of her people. The title page opposite shows Meg on her journey. The man, Daiv, tells her that her Gods are men and implores her to be his mate as she is very beautiful - though his first words to her are: “You...talk too much. Sit down and eat, Woman!” (Bond [1939] 1972: 208). Before Meg goes to see her Gods Daiv kisses her, “the touching of mouths,” and she is swept off her feet but still determined to do her duty. She arrives at Mount Rushmore which turns out to be the Place of the Gods and sees that her Gods are in fact men: Jaarg, Taamuz, Ibrim and Tedhi. Meg realises that her sterile unnatural virgin existence need not continue: she can become Daiv’s mate and live happily ever after.

Who Needs Men? is set in far future Britain where the only remaining men are fighting for their existence in rugged Scotland. Diarmid MacDiarmid, leader

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14 The hero telling the heroine that she talks too much and should shut up is a recurring motif. In Who Needs Men? Diarmid tells Runa, “Be quiet, woman...you speak too much” (Cooper 1972: 80). There is a similar moment in The Feminists (1971), Girls From Planet Five (1955) and “War Against the Yukks” (1965). The Western world has an extremely long tradition of silencing women and equating that silence with virtue (Bloch 1991; Purin 1995: 18).

15 Who Needs Men? is not the only sex battle text which features one rugged area of the world holding out against female rule. In The Girls from Planet Five the only refuge in the woman-dominated USA is Texas. The only other place in the entire world is Australia.
of one rebel band, bests Rura, an exterminator, the highest caste of the new matriarchal world, whose function is to exterminate men. Diarmid kisses Rura. She is unable to forget him and realises that sex with women is empty. Eventually Rura is captured by Diarmid and they escape further north to live together. Their idyll does not last and they are killed by exterminators.

In both “The Priestess Who Rebelled” and Who Needs Men? the romance between hero and heroine is the battle of the sexes in miniature. The restoration of the natural order, of male rule and heterosexuality, will follow from this conquest if it is to happen at all. In the sequel to “The Priestess Who Rebelled”, “The Judging of the Priestess”, the head priestess of Meg’s Clan, the Mother, declares that

Meg was right...She rebelled against the Law that said a Priestess might not mate - but she was right in her rebellion.

List, now, for with the all-seeing eyes of one on the threshold of death I tell you truth. It is right that Women should mate with Men. There should be no Workers, no Warriors, no breeding-mother. Our Clan should own no stud-males, pale chattels like...horses. All this is wrong (Bond 1940: 59).

Heterosexuality’s place at the heart of the transition from female rule is made even more explicit at the end of the “The Judging of the Priestess”. One of the Wild Ones asks the Warrior Chieftain of Meg’s Clan, Lora, to be his mate:

Lora spoke, and her answer was the answer of all womankind to the new regime...

“You must be mad, Man!” she declared. “But - but I think I like your madness” (Bond 1940: 59).

In the 1972 text Who Needs Men?, however, the evil matriarchy triumphs and the heroine, Rura, dies with the already dead hero, Diarmid, in her arms.

In both texts a kiss is the turning point in the conversion from matriarchy to patriarchy. In “The Priestess Who Rebelled” the kiss is the climactic, in every sense, moment towards the end of the text:

“There is a custom in our tribe...a mating custom which you do not know. Let me show you.”

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Every ambassador and minister was female except the one to Australia. The Aussies, separated by thousands of miles of water from creeping femininity, had demanded and got a male ambassador - and a bachelor at that (Wilson 1955: 15).
He leaned over swiftly. Meg felt the mighty strength of his bronzed arms closing about her, drawing her close. And he was touching his mouth to hers; closely, brutally, terrifyingly.

She struggled and tried to cry out, but his mouth bruised hers. Anger thoughts swept through her like a flame. But it was not anger - it was something else - that gave life to that flame. Suddenly her veins were running with liquid fire. Her heart beat upon rising, panting breasts like something captive that would be free. Her fists beat upon his shoulders vainly...but there was little strength in her blows.

Then he released her, and she fell back, exhausted. Her eyes glowed with anger and her voice was husky in her throat. She tried to speak, and could not. And in that moment a vast and terrible weakness trembled through Meg. She knew, fearfully, that if Dav sought to mate with her, not all the priestessdom of the gods would save her. There was a body-hunger throbbing within her that hated his Manness...but cried for it! (Bond [1939] 1972: 216).

This extraordinary passage is a description of a kiss or rather the touching of mouths. The constraints at the time “The Priestess Who Rebelled” was published against representing sex means that the text can only represent penetration and orgasm metaphorically and metonymically. The traces of standard representations of intercourse are here throughout: she falls back “exhausted” after the touching-of-mouths, her eyes “glow” and her voice is “husky”. In later versions of this narrative, the kiss is sometimes transformed into penetrative sex which is, at least initially, like this kiss, resisted by the woman. For example in *Who Needs Men?*, the heroine Rura meets an old woman, once an exterminator, who tells her that rape is a myth because

>nno woman - particularly an exterminator - who is conscious and uninjured can be raped. So I'll tell you what happened, sweet. I got tired of being punched, and I got tired of struggling uselessly. And the revulsion and the feeling of sickness just sort of died. And the weight on top of me seemed to be - well, interesting. And when he pinned my arms and bit my throat and dug his fingers into my breast, it all hurt like hell. But, chicken it aroused me. Goddess, how it aroused me. So I let him enter. And he grunted and I groaned, and we thrashed about like a couple of mindless creatures in a frenzy. I tell you, I never knew what a climax was until that red-haired animal squirted his semen into my womb (Cooper [1972] 1974: 46-47).

Initially the woman resists and then she discovers that she likes it. Penetration is crucial to becoming woman. The rapist says to her prior to the rape, “They made

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16 My grammatical analysis of this passage begins on page 81.
17 A kiss standing in for sex is by no means unique to written science fiction. Just look at any film from the same period. This point is made explicit in the French/Italian co-production *Nuovo Cinema Paradiso*/ Cinema Paradiso (1988) directed by Giuseppe Tornatore. The local priest is in charge of censorship and edits all the kisses out of the films. The projectionist creates a collage of these kisses which is shown at the film’s end.
18 Hearing this account by the old woman ex-extermian is part of Rura’s process of unlearning the ‘brainwashing’ of her matriarchal society.

In *Who Needs Men?* the kiss appears very close to the beginning of the text and is just the first step towards the heroine, Rura, becoming a 'real' woman (she needs to be gang-raped and learn to love heterosexual penetrative sex and get pregnant before the process is complete).

He kissed her on the lips. She struggled, but with one arm he managed to hold her. The rifle was dropped. There was something terrible about the kiss. It was like no other kiss she had ever known. It was humiliating, it was degrading, it was disturbing. It drained strength from her limbs, filled her head with nightmares.

He let her go.

"Well, exterminator. *That was a kind of rape, was it not?*" [my italics] (Cooper [1972] 1974: 24).13

In *Who Needs Men?* there is no constraint against representing sexual intercourse. Yet the kiss is represented as an extraordinarily powerful force in the text and still functions in a manner very similar to the kiss in "The Priestess Who Rebelled". This passage also links the kiss and rape: "That was a kind of rape, was it not?"

A belief in the necessity of female orgasm to conception, and indeed to heterosexual intercourse, is apparent in *Who Needs Men?* The old woman who tells Rura of her rape became pregnant. Rura also becomes pregnant immediately after having intercourse with her Diarmid. For both women it is the first time they have ever had an orgasm. The belief in the necessity of orgasm to conception is an old one. Thomas Laqueur writes that until the eighteenth century it was widely held that “[w]ithout orgasm...the fair sex [would] neither desire nuptial embraces, nor have pleasure in them, nor conceive by them” (*Aristotle's Masterpiece* qtd. in Laqueur [1990] 1992: 3).

The women have vaginal rather than clitoral orgasms: Rura feels Diarmid's sperm “pulse...excruciatingly, wonderfully, through her vagina” (Cooper [1972] 1974: 110) and the old woman declares that she “never knew what a climax was

---

13 My grammatical analysis of this passage begins on page 82.
### Table 3.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actor</th>
<th>Process: material</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>she</td>
<td>fell back,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 3.2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actor</th>
<th>Process: material</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>She</td>
<td>struggled</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 3.3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actor</th>
<th>Process: material</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>He</td>
<td>leaned over</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 3.4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actor</th>
<th>Process: material</th>
<th>Goal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daiv</td>
<td>sought to mate with(^1)</td>
<td>her</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 3.5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actor</th>
<th>Process: existential</th>
<th>Existent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There</td>
<td>was</td>
<td>a body-hunger [[throbbing within her]]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 3.6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actor</th>
<th>Process: Phenomenon</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>that hated</td>
<td>his Mannness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process: mental: affect</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 3.7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actor</th>
<th>Process: Phenomenon</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>but</td>
<td>cried for it!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process: mental: affect</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

\(^1\) This is a fascinating example because 'to mate' is an intransitive verb for what is an intrinsically 'transitive' activity. This is why 'mate with' is a phrasal verb, because without the 'with' the meaning of the clause changes entirely "Daiv sought to mate her" ... to something else.
until that red-haired animal squirted his semen into my womb” (Cooper [1972] 1974: 47). Both women have unusually sensitive vaginas. It is as though they have an inverted penis for a vagina which was a feature of the one-sex model of female anatomy (Laqueur [1990] 1992: 4). Coincidentally this is exactly how a vagina is constructed for many male-to-female transsexuals. The procedure utilizes the:

> skin of the penis for the lining of the new vagina and retains a portion of the erogenous tissue from the base of the penis for the clitoris...if accomplished correctly, [this] allows for vaginal feeling (even vaginal orgasm) because the penile skin used to line the vagina retains its nerve endings...Success is often measured by the ability to engage in penile-vaginal intercourse (Hausman 1995: 68-69).

Rura’s vagina, like those of many male-to-female transsexuals, seems to have been designed specifically so that she will find most pleasurable what most men are supposed to find most pleasurable - penetrative penile intercourse. For a real woman to orgasm she needs a real man. Indeed, in many battle of the sexes texts, such as “The Priestess Who Rebelled”, genital stimulation is not a prerequisite for the real woman’s orgasm; they can climax from kissing.

In a transitive analysis of the passage (see Appendix III for my complete analysis of the passage) Meg is the only Sayer or Senser. However, as it is Daiv who speaks the opening paragraph, he is an implied Sayer. He also speaks his Verbiage whereas Meg is unable to speak. Meg “tries to cry out” but is prevented, she “trie[s] to speak” but cannot. When she is Senser her perceptions are uncertain. In the first paragraph, she does “not know”, and later when she does know something it is “fearfully”.

Meg is an Actor less frequently than Daiv and when Meg is Actor she does not act on anything - there is no goal. Examples are given in tables 3.1 and 3.2 opposite. In the terms of traditional grammar these are intransitive verbs. That is, the process is not extended beyond the Actor. By contrast, only once does Daiv not have a goal. See Table 3.3. Otherwise Meg is his Goal as in Table 3.4.

However, various parts of Meg’s body and emotions/sensations are Actors: angerthoughts (presumably hers) her veins, her heart, her fists, her eyes, a vast and terrible weakness (also presumably hers as it “trembles through [her]”). This
Table 3.8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>He</th>
<th>let</th>
<th>her</th>
<th>go.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Initiator</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Actor</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Process: material</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>He</th>
<th>kissed</th>
<th>her</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Actor</strong></td>
<td>Process: material</td>
<td>Goal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>with one arm</th>
<th>he</th>
<th>managed to hold</th>
<th>her</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Circ: manner:</strong></td>
<td><strong>means</strong></td>
<td><strong>Actor</strong></td>
<td>Process: material</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>It [the kiss]</th>
<th>drained</th>
<th>strength</th>
<th>from her limbs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Actor</strong></td>
<td>Process: material</td>
<td>Goal</td>
<td><strong>Circumstance:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>location: place</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
fragmentation of her body into parts serves to demonstrate that before this kiss she was not an integrated, real woman. Her body is a series of parts which she struggles against and tries vainly to control. Her body parts know what she wants better than she does. The final sentence of this passage sets up this split subjectivity explicitly. Tables 3.5, 3.6 and 3.7 shows the analysis of the last sentence.

The “body-hunger throbbing within her” has consciousness, not Meg, and it is this “body hunger” which hates “his Manness” but also cries for it. Her body knows what she wants better than she does and it manifests this knowledge by acting in clauses where she does not or cannot. This split subjectivity collocates with that clause which is an indexical feature of the genre of romance, particularly of bodice-rippers - “her body betrayed her”.

In a transitive analysis of the kiss passage from *Who Needs Men?*, the heroine, Rura, is Actor only twice and, as in the passage from “Priestess,” she is only Actor when she has no effect on anything else. Indeed one of the clauses also appears in “The Priestess Who Rebelled”. See Table 3.2. The other clause in which Rura is an Actor is, “he let her go”. See Table 3.8 on facing page. In this clause she is only Actor in a process which he, Diarmid, makes possible, initiates. Literally she can act because he allows her to. Like Rura, Diarmid is Actor only twice but in both cases he affects something, the process extends beyond him to a Goal - Rura. See Tables 3.9 and 3.10 opposite.

The other Actor in the passage is not any of Rura's body parts as in the previous passage but the kiss itself. See Table 3.11 opposite. In the previous passage Meg is overcome by her body's response to the “touching of mouths” or kiss but the kiss does not become an Actor in this extraordinary manner.

The repetitious structure in the kiss passage from *Who Needs Men?*: “[i]t was humiliating, it was degrading, it was disturbing” highlights the tremendous importance of the kiss (Cooper [1972] 1974: 24). Rura is being transformed by its power and that transformation into a real woman is “humiliating”, “degrading”
### Table 3.12

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Angerthoughts</th>
<th>swept</th>
<th>through her</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agent</td>
<td>Process</td>
<td>Circumstance: location: place</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 3.13

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>her voice</th>
<th>was</th>
<th>husky</th>
<th>in her throat.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Process</td>
<td>Range</td>
<td>Circumstance: location: place</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 3.14

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a vast and terrible weakness</th>
<th>trembled</th>
<th>through Meg.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Process</td>
<td>Circumstance: location: place</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 3.15

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Her eyes</th>
<th>glowed</th>
<th>with anger</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Process:</td>
<td>Circumstance: manner: means</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
and “disturbing”. This structure of repeated intensive attributive clauses is paralleled in a later passage in *Who Needs Men?*:

“Love me,” said Rura. “I want to open myself for a man. Love me, please... Diarmid lay upon her, caressed her, loved her. It was not like the rape of the previous day. It was not like lying with women. It was not like anything she had ever known. It was warm, it was disturbing, it was exciting, it was humiliating, it was proud (Cooper [1972] 1974: 108).20

The parallelism could not be more exact. Not only is the grammar identical with the structure “it was x” repeated but there are also echoes in the lexical choice of “humiliating” and “disturbing”. In this passage ‘it’ refers to penetrative penile-vaginal intercourse, in the earlier passage ‘it’ refers to the kiss. In both passages the power of the kiss and then of sexual intercourse is transcendent.

In an ergative analysis of the passage from “The Priestess Who Rebelled” (see appendix III for my complete analysis of the passage) Meg is never the agent. She is either the Medium or a circumstance of place, the site in which change is wrought. See Tables 3.12, 3.13 and 3.14 which appear on the facing page.

An ergative analysis makes it clear that Meg’s body is literally not her own and that she is not responsible for anything that happens to it. Daiv is the Agent responsible for the process that takes place through the Medium of her body. Even when there is no Agent in a clause, see Table 3.15, it is not hard to infer that Daiv is the cause of this as he is the Agent responsible for everything else that takes place in the passage. Meg has no responsibility for the actions and behaviours of her body. Her body is literally not her own. “Her body betrayed her”.

In an ergative analysis of the kiss passage from *Who Needs Men?* (see appendix III for my complete analysis of the passage) Rura like Meg never has agency. She is either the Medium, or parts of her become Circumstances of place,

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20 Russ comments wryly about Edmund Cooper “determinedly charging into his favourite formula: ‘It was X. It was Y. It was Z. It was Q’ (Russ 1988: 13).
**Table 3.16**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agent</th>
<th>Process</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>on the lips</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>He</strong> kissed <strong>her</strong> on the lips</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 3.17**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agent</th>
<th>Process:</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>from her limbs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>It [the kiss]</strong> drained <strong>strength</strong> from her limbs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Circumstance: location: place
the location for the beginnings of her transformation from exterminator to woman as in Table 3.16 opposite. Diarmid, like Daiv in “The Priestess Who Rebelled”, is the Agent in this clause, the one who causes the kiss to happen. However, in this passage unlike the passage from “The Priestess Who Rebelled”, the kiss is also an Agent as in Table 3.17. In this clause the kiss is the Agent and once again one of Rura’s body parts, her limbs, is the circumstance of place. In this passage the centrality of the kiss to the process of becoming a woman is realised in the grammar.

**Becoming a real man**

In worlds where the natural order of things has been disturbed, it is not only females whose femininity is undermined; the masculinity and virility of males is also corrupted. As I have demonstrated, men can become the “breeders” and “Wild Ones” of “The Priestess Who Rebelled,” and once they are in this category they are not men. However, although the categories are fixed, the bodies within them are fluid. At the end of the sequel to “The Priestess Who Rebelled,” “The Judging of the Priestess,” one of the Wild Ones has acquired a name, Wilm, and is close to acquiring a mate - once he has bathed to remove “the smell from [his] body” and “shave[d] off that awful beard” (Bond 1940: 59). He will be incorporated into the heterosexual economy and become a real man like Daiv.

In Wallace G. West’s “The Last Man” (1929) the eponymous hero, M-1, believes what his custodians tell him:

> But the world was perfect now, M-1 realised. No further change was necessary. He grew ashamed of his suggestions that new discoveries might be made. Everything was known! Life was complete, vibrant! The millennium was at hand, and he was the only discordant factor (West [1929] 1972: 109).

It is the atavist woman Eve who teaches M-1 to recognise that the matriarchy is stagnant and decaying. She seeks him out and utters blasphemies which he tells her are “wicked” (West [1929] 1972: 110). Eve introduces the idea
of escape and begins the process that will make M-1 into a real man using the transcendental effect of her real woman’s body:

They stopped and looked at each other under the moon, which had just passed the zenith. A great wave of tenderness and admiration swept over him. Awkwardly he seized both her hands in his.

“You’re so different,” he marvelled. “You make me feel queer here.” He tapped his chest. “Like tears,” he tumbled, “and sunshine and flowers.”

She smiled, and leaning forward, gently touched her lips to his. A shock, like that from a dynamo, passed through him. He leaped back as though she had struck him, then reapproached.

“What was that?” he asked stupidly.


The parallels between this passage and the “touching-of-mouts” passage from “The Priestess Who Rebelled” are obvious. The kiss overwhelms and an orgasmic wave passes through his body. However the roles are reversed - Eve, the heroine, is the Agent and the hero’s lips are the Circumstance of place. See Table 3.18.

| Actor  | Process: 
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>material</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Goal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
|        | Circumstance: 
|        | location: place |
| Agent  | Medium  |

Although Eve is the Agent the encounter is not violent as the kisses are in “Priestess” (1939) and Who Needs Men? (1972). Eve touches her lips to M-1’s “gently”, Daiv’s touches his mouth to Meg’s “closely, brutally, terrifyingly”.

This kiss seals M-1’s rejection of the matriarchy, “the human hive” (West [1929] 1972: 105). Eve also renames M-1: “My name is Eve...I gave it to myself. I have forgotten my number...I shall call you Adam” (West [1929] 1972: 117) and suggests they escape into the wilderness:

“We are doomed. I see it all so clearly now. There can be no more progress. There can be no more superman to drag mankind forward in spite of its blindness.”

“No,” Eve whispered, “but there are atavists to drag mankind backward to a point where it can get a fresh start.”


---

21 “Consider Her Ways” (1956) is another matriarchical world modelled on bees or ants.
From that moment on Adam begins to behave like a real man and Eve ceases to initiate all the action. He comforts her when she bursts into tears and when they hatch a plan together to blow up the "life factory" Adam announces that it is his "place to do this thing" (West [1929] 1972: 126). Adam’s blossoming masculinity causes the text to try and rewrite itself describing the "growing love between the last man and the woman he had now chosen as his mate" ([my italics] West [1929] 1972: 124). Eve chose Adam. Although Eve made Adam (though not from her rib) into a real man once he has become a man she can not initiate anything without threatening his newly acquired manhood.

Mama Come Home: parodies of the Sex War?

The texts in this section are different from the majority of the texts I have discussed in this chapter because they are not predicated on the idea that female rule is wrong and do not necessarily re-inscribe the natural order of things. In this section I discuss Search the Sky (1954) by two of the Futurians, Frederik Pohl and Cyril Kornbluth, and Wyndham’s “Consider Her Ways” (1956) as well as Tiptree’s “Mama Come Home” (1968)\(^{22}\) and Bruce McAllister’s “Ecce Femina!” (1972).

Russ discusses these last two texts in detail (Russ 1980: 6-7 & 11-12). She describes Pohl & Kornbluth’s Search the Sky (1954) as containing “a brief satiric sketch of a role-reversal society” (Russ 1980: 13). Sam J. Lundwall says of this section of the novel that it is a “wry, tongue-in-cheek account of a world run by women” where

career men are frowned upon [and] the male protagonist is regarded as little more than a talking parrot when he starts to explain things to a leading business woman...

...The protagonist is even subjected to an attempted rape by a drunk (female) truck driver.\(^ {23}\) And suddenly he isn’t a hero any longer - he’s just a decorative piece of

\(^{22}\) “Mama Come Home” was originally called “The Mother Ship” when published in If in 1968.

\(^{23}\) Actually she’s a jet pilot not a truck driver. A male Azoran says of the difference between truck drivers and pilots:

I know truckers are supposed to be rough and tough; maybe they are. But you can’t tell me that deep down a trucker isn’t a lady. When you tell them no that’s their. But a pilot - it just eggs them on (Pohl & Kornbluth [1954] 1979: 79).
furniture to be admired and used. If this seems farfetched, look around you. You have it everywhere here and now, only it is the other way around (Lundwall 1971: 149).

There were moments in this sequence from *Search the Sky* when I found the satire effective, for instance the reversed wedding vows:

Marilyn, you have chosen to share part of your life with this man. You intend to bear his children. This should not be because your animal appetites have overcome you and you can’t win his consent in any other way but because you know, down deep in your womanly heart, that you can make him happy. Never forget this. If you should thoughtlessly conceive by some other man, don’t tell him. He would only brood (Pohl & Kornbluth [1964] 1979: 99).

The hero observes that the groom is crying and decides that he “doesn’t blame the poor sucker”, then “being a man of conscience” wonders “if that was why on Halsey’s Planet [his home planet] women cry at weddings” (Pohl & Kornbluth [1954] 1979: 99). Yet the heroine is shown as helpless and giggling and when she works out how to operate the F-T-L drive it is because she is an idiot savant (Pohl & Kornbluth [1954] 1979: 107). The novel ends as follows:

Eventually he set up the combinations for Halsey’s Planet on the Wesley Board. Helena was beside him, proud and close, as he threw in the drive (Pohl & Kornbluth [1954] 1979: 169).

“Consider Her Ways” by John Wyndham first published in 1956 as part of his collection, *Sometimes, Never* is often cited as an early example of science fiction’s engagement with questions of feminism. The heroine, Dr. Jane Summers, whose husband has been killed recently, volunteers to be a guinea pig for the testing of a drug. After taking the drug she wakes to find her mind in the body of a breeding Mother in a future Matriarchal world where all the men died centuries earlier as the result of a virus. The story’s centre is some twenty pages of dialogue between Jane and Laura, an esteemed historian of her age. Jane asks how the world managed to survive without the men. Laura gives her a condensed history of the role the discourse of romance has had in subjugating women:

...when the crisis came it turned out that hardly any of them knew how to do any of the important things because they had nearly all been owned by men, and had to lead their lives as pets and parasites.

...It wasn’t their fault...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 leisured classes. Gradually, as time went on, it permeated through most levels of society, but it was not until the latter part of the nineteenth century that its
commercial possibilities were intelligently perceived, and not until the twentieth that it was really exploited.

You see, the great hopes for the emancipation of women with which the century had started had been outflanked. Purchasing power had passed into the hands of the ill-educated and highly-suggestible. The desire for Romance is essentially a selfish wish, and when it is encouraged to dominate every other it breaks down all corporate loyalties. The individual woman thus separated from, and yet at the same time thrust into competitions with, all other women was almost defenceless; she became the prey of organized suggestion. When it was represented to her that the lack of certain goods or amenities would be fatal to Romance she became alarmed, and thus, eminently exploitable (Wyndham [1956] 1965: 48-51).

Jane is appalled and does not recognise this description of her world. She argues that this Matriarchal world is one without love and Laura observes that Jane is repeating...the propaganda of [her] age. The love you talk about, my dear, existed in your little sheltered part of the world by polite and profitable convention. You were scarcely ever allowed to see its other face, unglamorized by Romance. You were never openly bought and sold, like livestock; you never had to sell yourself to the first-comer in order to live; you did not happen to be one of the women who through the centuries have screamed in agony and suffered and died under invaders in a sacked city (Wyndham [1956] 1965: 60).

Lundwall quotes part of this dialogue about romantic love and argues that while the dialogue “might not give much blood to the debate...it is still a healthy sign of science fiction recognizing the problem” (Lundwall 1971: 151). Amis calls “Consider Her Ways” a rare example of “female-emancipationism” in science fiction (Amis 1960: 99). He also quotes a large chunk of the text’s central dialogue, commenting that

Laura is not only a thoughtful and intelligent person but gets the best of the argument, saying all that can be said for the notion that women would be better off without men and making what seem to me some fairly damaging criticisms of the contemporary female role (Amis 1960: 77-8).

Russ says that “Consider Her Ways” is a “pro-feminist discussion of romantic love and the feminine mystique” (Russ 1980: 13). Russ has reservations, however, and observes parenthetically that “Wyndham creates another of those beehive-like societies structured by biological engineering” (Russ 1980: 13). The society is, in fact, deliberately modelled on ants. I would add another criticism. It seems fairly extraordinary that there would be no lesbianism or masturbation in an all-female world. Once again the assumption is that without men there can be no sex.
Joanna Russ includes Bruce McAllister's "Ecce Femina!", first published in *Fantasy and Science Fiction* in February 1972, as one of her "Flasher" texts. After reading her account of "Ecce Feminal!" I expected another *Who Needs Men?* and found instead a satirical text. Russ characterises this humour as "unintentional" (Russ 1980: 13). Russ' satire "The Cliches from Outer Space" (1984) includes "The Turnabout Story" which is remarkable similar to "Ecce Feminal!", it features a "ravaging, man-hating, vicious, hulking, Lesbian, sadistic, fetishistic Women's Libbers" motorcycle gang who terrorise the hero George (Russ [1984] 1985: 33).24 However, the moments in McAllister's story where a motorcycle gang member, called Queen Elizabeth, uses "soda pop for strange purposes" (McAllister 1972: 127), and the gang members call each other "brother-muckers" (McAllister 1972: 131), seem to me far from "inadvertently" funny.

The magazine blurb which accompanies "Ecce Feminal!" does not encourage a reading of the text as satire: "Here's something different from Bruce McAllister: a tough and pungent extrapolation of women's lib" (February 1972: 117). Rather, I read the text as a "tough and pungent extrapolation" of men's fears of "women's lib", and a fairly dark one too. Most of the text is a role-reversal with female rather than male bikers in the Hell's Angels mould. They become masculine and uncontrollable as a result of shooting up with E9. One man tells the narrator Mac how

he had gotten sick and tired of supporting her - her bike, her E9, her arrogance, her appetite, her perversions (McAllister 1972: 133).

The narrator is not part of the heterosexual pairing that is at the centre of the majority of the texts I have discussed in this chapter. He is an observer. The pairing is between Jack, who is the biggest and most violent of the women and runs her own garage, and a beaten and abused man, or "papa", who is brought in

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24 My thanks to Helen Merrick for drawing my attention to these parallels.
by the local motorcycle gang. She adds to the violent abuse the man has suffered and then nurses him, Oscar, back to health and keeps the gang members away from him. When one of the gang stabs Oscar, Jack kills her and, in a parody of the you-Jane me-Tarzan scenario of many of these texts, Jack grabs the injured Oscar who struggles against her, “she hit him. He went out, and in one easy motion she slung him over her shoulder” (McAllister 1972: 142). The text ends ambiguously with the narrator Mac looking at a photo that Jack and Oscar have sent him of Jack with her muscle gone to fat holding a baby:

No matter how you look at the picture, her eyes seem to be looking at you. They follow you around.
And you can’t tell whether she is smiling or not.
But then, you never could (McAllister 1972: 144).

While Russ does not read “Ecce Feminal” as a commentary on the sex war she does read James Tiptree, Jr.’s “Mama Come Home” (1968) in this way. Joanna Russ argues that “Mama Come Home” is one of the “few attempts to write thoughtfully about the Sex War”. According to Russ the reason for the story’s “odd” treatment of the Sex War,

both inverting some of its elements and commenting critically on others...is not far to seek. As the SF community now knows, “James Tiptree Jr” is the pseudonym of Alice Sheldon. A woman does not, obviously, have the same stake in the myth as male authors may have (Russ 1980: 12).

Amanda Boulter, In her article, “Alice James Raccoona Sheldon Tiptree Sheldon Jr: Textual Personas in the Short Fiction of Alice Sheldon”, discusses this tendency to read “a feminist subtext” in all of Tiptree’s work and asks, “reading with hindsight what precisely do we choose to see?” (Boulter 1995: 6). When the story was first published James Tiptree Jr. was not known “to be” Alice Sheldon. I would argue that Bruce McAllister’s “Ecce Feminal” (1972), also “invert[s] some of its [the sex war’s] elements and comment[s] critically on others” (Russ 1980: 12). Russ’ knowledge of Tiptree’s ‘true’ sex makes her more alive to satire and subversion in Tiptree’s work than she is in McAllister’s story. At the same time Russ also argues that the heroine of “Mama Come Home,” Tillie, is
"Mama Come Home" - Comedy with a message

Setting: Earth of very near future, offices, park, airport etc.

Aliens are Human-type girls with great smiles, nine feet tall. Hero is CIA man in love with colleague who was brutally gang-raped as child and has no use for men. Aliens land and tour around, everybody loves 'em. They claim they are the normal adult form of women (their men are earth-normal) and that Terra is a colony where they sent defective women who didn't mature. They are actually a gang of free-booters out to bring home a load of male sex-slaves. While praying, hero is caught by them and brutally raped (their sex-organs are peculiar). His girl was turned on by them; this turns her off, and she participates in a successful scheme to get them off Earth. Afterwards she finds she can stand hero; message: Victims and the raped can only stand other victims and rape-ees.

Note: This story and the one below are a set, same hero, etc., designed to illustrate idea that when Earth is discovered by aliens we may go through analogous history of Third World when discovered by Europeans. "Mama" is the slave-taking phase; next comes the religious-conversion missionary phase.

James Tiptree, Jr.'s summary of "Mama Come Home".
presented as without family, without friends, indeed without a social context of any kind. Thus her choice is - as it is in all these stories, for all the heroines - between evil (or in some cases decaying and sterile) female tyranny and some version of the hero, i.e. men (Russ 1980: 12).

Tiptree's own summary of the story appears opposite. "Mama Come Home," like the later "Women Men Don't See", is told in the first person voice. The narrator is Max, a hard-boiled CIA agent who is, in the tradition of Philip Marlowe, a chivalric romantic, a sweet misogynist. Aliens land from the planet Capella. They are "brainy, lovely, man-crazy - and eight and a half feet tall!" (If June 1968: 81). Like the earlier The Girls From Planet Five (1955), the women are considerably taller than their male counterparts,25 blonde and beautiful, and their intentions towards Earth are not good. However, in The Girls from Planet Five the alien women Lyru are controlled by the evil crones whereas the Capellan women act for themselves.

The Capellan women use men as slaves and sex toys. The story revolves around defeating the Capellans but according to Russ like many of the other battle of the sexes stories

[l]he real struggle is for Tillie's loyalty, and it is her conversion to loving the hero that is the centre of the story (Russ 1980: 12).

Tillie's coldness towards men has a cause:

Tillie at fifteen had caught the full treatment from a street gang. Fought against knives, left for dead - an old story. They'd fixed her up as good as new, except for a few interesting white hairlines in her tan, and a six-inch layer of ice between her and everybody who shaved (Tiptree [1973] 1975: 60).

Tillie is operating outside the heterosexual economy and the story details her reincorporation. Unlike the earlier stories she is not overpowered by a kiss or sexual intercourse but by the proof that the Capellans are not her saviours, that they are rapists. When the Capellans get out of their spaceship and it becomes apparent that they are all eight feet tall, the narrator, Max sees

a funny look on Tillie's face. Several girls were suppressing themselves, and Mrs. Peabody seemed to feel an egg hatching in her uplift. The men looked like me - tense. Right then I

25 That is until the Lyru women of Girls From Planet Five discover that their men really are not wimps at which point either the women shrink or their men grow.
would have settled for green octopuses instead of these good-looking girls (Tiptree [1973] 1975: 57).

Tillie looks just like a Capellan only five feet tall. They adopt her as a kind of pet. Max the narrator sees Tillie becoming more and more involved with the Capellans and tries to warn her about them:

You think your big playmates are just like yourself, only gloriously immune from rape. I wouldn’t be surprised if you weren’t thinking of going home with them. Right? No, don’t tell me kid, I know you. But you don’t know them. You think you do, but you don’t. Did you ever meet any American blacks who moved to Kenya? Talk to one some time (Tiptree [1973] 1975: 64).

This collapsing of race and sex so that white women’s oppression and otherness is made equivalent to that of African-American men with no African-American women in sight is a sleight of hand that is sometimes practised in white feminist writing (Spelman 1988; hooks 1984; Ang 1995).

When Max is raped by the Capellans:

[m]y next clear view was from the ground where I was discovering some nasty facts about Capellan physiology through a blaze of pain. (Ever think about being attacked by a musth vacuum cleaner?) (Tiptree [1973] 1975: 66).

Tillie’s allegiances start to shift.

[the American black who goes to Kenya often discovers he is an American first and an African second, no matter what they did to him in Newark... She swung back her hair, slowly. I could see mad dreams dying in her eyes (Tiptree [1973] 1975: 71).

In order to defeat the Capellans Tillie has to relive her rape. This disturbs the balance between Tillie and Max because it means that she has, in a sense, been raped twice and he only once.

A trap is set to force the alien women, who want to use human men as sex toys, to go home. At the same time, as Joanna Russ, argues, the story details the traps that are set for Tillie so that she too will come home to the heterosexual economy. However, Tillie’s reincorporation, is not the joyous one that is for Meg in “The Priestess Who Rebelled”. She can barely talk about it:

...The closest we came - then or ever - to an explanation was over the avocado counter. “It’s all relative, isn’t it?” she said to the avocados.

“IT is indeed,” I replied.

And really, that was it. If the Capellans could bring us the news that we were inferior mutations, somebody could bring them the word that they were inferior mutations. If big, hairy Manna could come back and surprise her runt relations, a bigger, hairier Papa could appear and surprise Manna (Tiptree [1973] 1975: 78).
Tillie, like her sexbattle compatriots of the texts that I have been looking at, has been coerced into heterosexuality, into being a real woman. The difference is that her reincorporation into heterosexuality does not physically transform her. She is with Max because her dream of a women’s utopia, free from rape, has been dashed, not because of the magical force of a kiss.

Despite the overwhelming pessimism about the relations between men and women there are still remnants of the real man and real woman ethos. Tillie is asked about the male Capellan Mavrua - “He’s - I don’t know - like gay only not” (Tiptree [1973] 1975: 70). Max studies him on the monitors and notes that “as Tillie said, queer but not. Clean-cut, muscular, good grin; gonads okay. Something sapless in the eyes” (Tiptree [1973] 1975: 71). Clearly he is not a real man. Yet it is the story’s hero who is raped and the heroine who rescues him from that rape. Max observes that

Analogic reasoning works when you have the right frame. We need a new one. For instance, look at the way the Capellans overturned our psychic scenery, our view of ourselves as integral to this world. Or look at their threat to our male-dominant structure. Bigger, more dominant women who treat our males as sex-slave material (Tiptree [1973] 1975: 71-2).

But the psychic shock is overcome and life continues. Tillie has resigned herself to life behind enemy lines but will not talk about her capitulation. This is the same kind of coping strategy that is adopted by the mother and daughter in another Tiptree story, “The Women that Men Don’t See” (1973): “What women do is survive. We live by ones and twos in the chinks of your world-machine” (Tiptree [1973] 1990: 140). I discuss this story in chapter six.

“Mama Come Home” (1968) is as inconsistent and as contradictory as “Ecce Feminal!” (1972), “Consider Her Ways” (1956) or Search the Sky (1954). Male rule is revealed, either by implication as in Search the Sky and “Ecce Feminal!,” or directly as in “Consider Her Ways” and “Mama Come Home,” as violent and oppressive to women. Romantic love operates within the heterosexual order to keep women in their place. On the other hand different knowledges about women and their biological inferiority are upheld: in Search the Sky the heroine is considerably less capable than the hero and depends upon
him, in "Consider Her Ways" the only society women can bring about for themselves free of the tyranny of Romantic Love is a near fascist one modelled on ants, in "Ecce Femina!" the tough mountain of a heroine Jack melts into motherhood, and in "Mama Come Home" Tillie gives way to the narrator without a murmur because "It's all relative, isn't it?". On this level there is no difference between the texts I have discussed in this section and texts like "The Priestess Who Rebellled" (1939) and *Who Needs Men?* (1972) - both groups of texts lay open the necessity of the heterosexual economy for making a female into a 'real' woman.

In the next chapter I discuss battle of the sexes texts which offer solutions other than the reincorporation of women into the heterosexual economy. Solutions such as hermaphroditism and notions of equality between the sexes.