"Her Smoke Rose Up Forever"

The James Tiptree, Jr. Memorial Award

Tiptree/Sheldon/? the Mistress of Illusion who brought such sharpness of poignancy and point to this collective work that it's hardly bearable at times. Her writing made her beloved; her masquerade made her legend. Mistress of Irony, that her suicide should make her a monument, honored as only the dead ever are! Yet honored in such a way as she would surely find hilarious, inspiring: honored by bake sales, and the works of women!

(Decarnin qtd. Gosnell 1993: 125)

The James Tiptree, Jr. Memorial Award is an award given annually for a science fiction or fantasy text which explores and expands gender roles. The award can be won by men as well as women for a short story or novel. Each year the Tiptree Award winner or winners are decided by a jury of five consisting of four women and one man. The jury changes every year. Once the winner(s) are decided a press release listing the winner(s), those short listed for the award and all those texts considered (the long list) is issued.

The lives of James Tiptree, Jr. add many resonances to this relatively new science fiction award named in his/her memory. In this chapter I examine the first five years of the Tiptree Award and the many connections between the award and the traditions within science fiction of feminism and engagement with issues of sex and sexuality since 1926. The Award powerfully demonstrates continuities of science fiction communities and is another site for the blurring between fan and pro. Further, the Tiptree Award reauthors and reworks the stories of James Tiptree, Jr. and her/his/their complicated relationship within and with the field of science fiction.

Researching the Tiptree Award confirms the contested nature of the term 'gender' and what it designates. I encountered many different usages of the term 'gender'. It was used to refer to the social construction of maleness or femaleness
while the term sex was used to refer to biological sex, thus maintaining the sex/gender distinction. It was also used to refer to the biological ‘fact’ of sexed bodies or to refer to both the social construction of the two normative sexes and sexed bodies. This variety of uses of the term ‘gender’ is a reflection of the range of different people who have been involved with the Award since its inception in 1991. That there are five different judges every year means that the interpretation of what a text that “explores and expands” gender is shifts. Throughout this thesis I have been using ‘sex’ to refer to this space of biological/social/cultural construction and performance of the sexed self. The variety of texts which have won and been shortlisted for the Award reinforce this approach to ‘sex’ in that the shortlist demonstrates that gender does not delineate a “crisp distinction” between sex and gender but rather refers to the “problematical space” of sex/gender (Sedgwick 1990: 29).

In the first section, “More Domestic Stories: feminist sf community and the Tiptree Award”, I consider the complex relationship of the Award to the idea of a feminist sf community, and the ways in which the running of and fundraising for the Award demonstrate that grass-roots feminism is alive and well in the 1990s. In the second section, “Reception”, I examine the various responses to the Award. In the third section, “Judging the Tiptree Award”, I look at the interaction of some of the Tiptree juries and their negotiation and re-negotiation of what exploring and expanding gender means. In the fourth section, “Tiptree Texts”, I examine the twofold effect of the Tiptree Award: on the one hand it rewards and encourages speculation about gender and on the other hand it recognises a tradition within science fiction of doing just that. I do this by examining some of the winning and shortlisted texts as well as considering the retrospective Tiptree Awards of 1996. Finally, in, “Alice James Raccoona Tiptree Davey Hastings Bradley Sheldon Jr. and the James Tiptree Jr. Memorial Award”, I trace the dynamic relationship between Tiptree and the Award named in his/her honour.
More Domestic Stories: feminist sf of community and the Tiptree Award

A few months ago, I was talking with Richard Kadrey, a born trouble-maker. We were talking about women in science fiction and Richard, just to make trouble, said, “You know what would really piss people off? You ought to give out a women’s science fiction award.”

Interesting idea. It would make certain people very cranky. It would get the conspiracy theorists going, wondering, “What are those women up to now?” We envisioned a little plexiglass cube with all this “women’s stuff” floating in it: little plastic babies and cooking pots and ironing boards and sewing machines.


Pat Murphy and Pamela Sargent were guests of honour at the fifteenth WisCon. The quote above comes from Pat Murphy’s guest of honour speech given on the second of March 1991. In this speech she brought the James Tiptree, Jr. Memorial Award into existence. Murphy places the award in the context of long-running debates about the presence of women in science fiction. These debates, which I discussed in chapters five and six, frequently locate women in the sphere of romance or of the domestic, the one frequently, if not inevitably, leading to the other. Murphy and the writer Richard Kadrey mock this with their vision of a plexiglass trophy full of floating “women’s stuff”. Kadrey refers to “people” in this quote, Pat Murphy shifts this to “certain people”. “Certain people” who are “conspiracy theorists”. These are the kind of conspiracy theorists who believe that having women in science fiction is equivalent to a “great erosion” of the field (Merwin 1950: 6). As I have shown, part of the fear of women in the field is a fear of the intrusion of the private sphere into the public sphere, and further a fear of women invading their private men’s club within the public sphere.

Murphy continues her narration of the Tiptree Award’s genesis by conceding that,

[ok]ay it was just a joke, nothing more. But a few weeks later, I had dinner with Karen Joy Fowler and I mentioned this joke. Karen is also a trouble-maker, but a very thoughtful one. She looked thoughtful and said, “You know, there is no science fiction award named after a woman.”

Let’s see: we have the Hugo (for Hugo Gernsback), the Theodore Sturgeon Award, the John W. Campbell Award, and of course the Philip K. Dick Award. No women. Frankenstein, by Mary Shelley, has been called the first science fiction novel, but there is no Mary Shelley award.

And then Karen, who tends toward brilliance, said, “What about James Tiptree, Jr.?”

Her Smoke Rose Up From Supper

The exciting sequel to The Bakery Men Don't See

The cover of SF's Her Smoke Rose Up From Supper illustration by Freddie Baer.
This putative award will be named for a woman who for most of her career in the
sf field was a man. Murphy also locates the Tiptree Award in the context of other
science fiction awards to mark out its difference. She continues:

And so I would like to announce the creation of the James Tiptree, Jr. Memorial Award,
to be presented annually to a fictional work that explores and expands the roles of women
and men. We’re still in the planning stages, but we plan to appoint a panel of five judges
and we plan to finance the award - and this is another stroke of genius on Karen’s part -

Bake sales are the American equivalent of cake stalls. In Australia, and I
presume, also in America cake stalls are a common fundraiser for schools and
churches. They are invariably run and provided with cakes by women.
Cakestalls/bakesales are associated with suburbia, the family and with
motherhood. Karen Fowler’s genius is to link this cliche of suburban domesticity
with a science fiction award and so to overtly blur private and public spheres.

Pat Murphy ended her announcement - and simultaneous enactment - of
the Tiptree Award by asking for potential bake sale volunteers to talk to her
after the speeches were finished. The response was immediate. Jeanne Gomoll
writes,

A few moments later, after a thunderous round of applause, a bunch of us Madisonians
clustered around Pat and began vocalizing such dangerous phrases as “I’ll help,” “We’d
like to publish,” “I could do,” etc. A few months later we found ourselves organizing
mailing lists, posters, bakes sales, and one of the largest publications that SF³ has ever

Diane Martin concurs:

[t]here was electricity in the air. Trite, but I don’t know how else to describe it. In the
five minutes after Murphy’s speech ended, I talked to at least three other women who had

Eventually there were two cookbooks both published by the Madison, Wisconsin
science fiction group, SF³. Both are plays on the titles of Tiptree stories, the first
is The Bakery Men Don’t See (1991) and the second Her Smoke Rose Up From
Supper (1993). The cover of Her Smoke Rose Up From Supper is reproduced
opposite the artwork is by Freddie Baer. The recipes and anecdotes were
provided by pros and fans from within the science fiction feminist community.
Although the cakestalls have not generated an enormous amount of revenue they
have been extremely successful in generating interest and knowledge of the award within the larger science fiction community. More financially lucrative fundraisers have been the marvellous t-shirts of Freddie Baer. The t-shirts commemorating each Award go on sale at the convention where the Awards are presented. Invariably they sell out quickly.1

Many of the people who became involved with the Tiptree Award explicitly link the Tiptree to a renewal of a tradition of feminist science fiction. This is not only a tradition of writing but also a fan tradition. Diane Martin comments:

I arrived at WisCon 15 cautiously optimistic. I was reconciled to feminist SF being considered as a topic of historical interest, sort of like Latin. I was just hoping to meet up with a few other Latin scholars. Imagine my surprise when I found myself attending and participating in panel discussions that in feminist content and enthusiasm, rivalled the WisCons of the late 70s (Martin [1991] 1992: 3).

It was no coincidence that Pat Murphy announced the Tiptree Award at the only feminist-oriented science fiction convention in the world. The first WisCon was held in Madison, Wisconsin in 1977 as a direct result of, and participation in, the feminist explosion within fandom in the seventies. It was part of the new “women and sf” panels held at conventions and the debates about feminism and science fiction which were conducted in the Women’s Apa, The Witch and the Chameleon, Janus/Aurora as well as the Khattru Symposium. Karen Joy Fowler credits the “women of WisCon” for “mak[ing] it happen from the very beginning” and writes that for her the “best thing about the Tiptree Award is that it got a lot bigger than me and Pat. It did this really quickly” (Fowler 1996: 109). Without the continuing engagement between various feminisms and various science fictions over the sf community’s almost seventy year history, however, it is very unlikely that the Tiptree Award would have taken off in the manner that it did.

1 At this year’s presentation at WisCon 20 in May the t-shirts were sold out within the hour. I was on a panel as the sale was underway and had to beg a friend to buy a fifth annual Tiptree Award T-shirt for me.
Murphy explicitly locates the Tiptree as a response to what she saw as the marginalisation of, and hostility to, women in science fiction. She relates this to the opposition of male ‘hard’ sf to female ‘soft’ sf which I discussed in chapter six. In her WisCon 15 speech she leads up to her announcement of the Tiptree Award with the following story:

A few months ago, I was talking to a science fiction editor who is a friend of mine. We were talking about this and that, and in the course of conversation he happened to say, “Of course, you don’t write science fiction.”

Now I don’t always care what people call what I write, but I do like to understand why they call it one thing or another. And I’m curious about how people define science fiction. So I said, “What about ‘Rachel in Love’? That’s science fiction.”

And my friend said, “That’s not science fiction.”

I was really puzzled, so I said, “Using a method of neural transfer that I can justify scientifically, more or less, a scientist transfers his daughter’s personality and thought patterns to the brain of a chimp. That’s not science fiction?”

My friend frowned and got a little flustered and a little embarrassed and mumbled something or other. After a bit more uncomfortable conversation, it became clear that he had confused my story, “Rachel in Love,” with “Her Furry Face,” by Leigh Kennedy, and as it turns out, “Her Furry Face,” though an excellent story, lacks many of the overt trappings of science fiction.

What seemed significant about my friend’s confusion was that it related to a persistent rumbling that I have heard echoing through science fiction. That rumbling says, in essence that women don’t write science fiction. Put a little more rudely, this rumbling says: “Those damned women are ruining science fiction.” They are doing it by writing stuff that isn’t “real” science fiction; they are writing “soft” science fiction and fantasy (Murphy [1991] 1992: 7-8).

The other guest of honour at Madison 15 was Pamela Sargent, the editor of the extremely influential Women of Wonder anthologies. In her guest of honour speech she also engages with this debate and quotes from Charles Platt’s claim from “The Rape Of Science Fiction” (1989) that

they [women] eroded science fiction’s one great strength that had distinguished it from all other fantastic literature: its implicit claim that events described could actually come true (Platt 1989: 14).

Sargent’s response is:

Well, shame on me - I reprinted stories by all these writers [Platt lists Vinge, McIntyre, Le Guin, Russ, Wilhelm and Emshwiller] in my Women of Wonder anthologies. I never dreamed I was helping to erode science fiction. I suppose we can consider this another ambiguous advance. Once, women were discouraged from entering the boys’ clubhouse, and now we are influential enough to be responsible for the decline of the field (Sargent [1991] 1992: 11).

Sargent discusses a short essay by Lewis Shiner from the New York Times where he claims that what sf needs is

a new literature of idealism and compassion that is contemporary not only on the technological level but also the emotional (Sargent [1991] 1992: 11-12).
"I couldn't agree with him more," writes Sargent, "but some of us were writing exactly that kind of literature" in the seventies and eighties (Sargent [1991] 1992: 12). Sargent’s arguments are very close to those of Jeanne Gomoll which I discussed in chapter one in which she characterises the dismissal of 1970s sf and fandom as ‘boring’ as a move to make invisible the upheavals and very exciting changes wrought by the women’s movement (Gomoll 1986-87: 7-10).

Sargent’s speech was given on the same night as Murphy’s announcement of the Tiptree Award. Although neither woman had colluded on the contents of their speeches they both used the occasion of being guest of honour at WisCon to discuss the state of feminist science fiction and they came to very similar conclusions. Both women began their careers in science fiction in the 1970s and so had been actively involved in second wave feminism and its impact on science fiction.

In the second volume of the newly published *Women of Wonder* anthology Sargent begins by discussing the Tiptree Award. She argues that

[by 1991, the effect of the women’s movement on science fiction had faded in the minds of many. There was a need by then for an award that specifically honored and called attention to works that dealt imaginatively and inventively with gender roles. Some of the writers who had created a stir in the ’70s were being forgotten. Women were still writing science fiction and winning acclaim for their work; indeed some of the most honored, accomplished, and important writers in the field were women, so no one could say that the field excluded women or that they had no audience. The situation was more complicated and ambiguous than that (Sargent 1995b: 2).]

The Tiptree Award is a site from which to contest these different constructions of an object called ‘1970s science fiction’, as well as being an active part of that construction.

The first two Tiptree Award presentations were held at WisCon. It was decided to hold some of the following presentations at other science fiction conventions. Suzy McKee Charnas writes:

[the third Tiptree will be awarded in Boston at a convention called ReaderCon in July, 1994. Moving the ceremony to different SF conventions around the country is meant to maximize its educative potential (and to avoid burnout in Madison) (Charnas 1993).]

The sixth Tiptree will be awarded at the International Conference for the Fantastic in March 1997. As Charnas indicates, the Award is not only about
fostering a feeling of community amongst those who are part of feminist science fiction, it is also about actively working towards change. Perhaps, if there are more texts imagining the world otherwise eventually the world will be otherwise.

This utopian impulse is articulated by Fowler:

Just ask yourself, if we weren’t taught to be women, what would we be? (Ask yourself this question even if you’re a man, and don’t cheat by changing the words.)

The Tiptree Award is supposed to honor people who try to answer that question - people who try to help us unlearn what television and the movies and books and comics and advertisements for automobiles and cigarettes have taught us (Fowler 1996: 109).

For Fowler, like de Beauvoir and many others before her, sex is not natural but something that must be learned. And the Tiptree Award is a site in which this learning process can be investigated and deconstructed. Charnas hopes that this process will lead to change:

No one knows how long the Tiptree will continue to be given. What we who have been involved in the process so far would like best would be to see such changes, in fiction and in life, that an award to help illuminate issues of the sex and gender war would no longer be needed.

In the meantime, works by Tiptree nominees and winners provide an entry point for women readers into the genre where our own and our children’s futures are being imagined in their many possible variations (Charnas 1993: 20).

The existence of the Award and of the feminist science fiction community in which the Award is fostered and nourished already demonstrates that a series of shifts have taken place within the field of science fiction. The increasing number of varied texts that are nominated for the Award each year is also a strong indication that the Tiptree Award has had an impact. However, Fowler and Murphy and others involved with the Award would like the Tiptree Award to have an impact outside the world of feminist science fiction.

One way in which the Tiptree Award has had an impact outside the world of feminist science fiction is the role it played in the successful application of Nicola Griffith to remain with her partner the writer Kelly Eskridge in the United States. Griffith won the Tiptree in 1994 for her novel Ammonite. Permission was granted largely because she was able to prove that she had won ‘major’ awards within her chosen field:
Winning the Tiptree, and the Lambda,\(^2\) and being nominated for a couple of other things did help with my immigrant application, and I don’t mind being quoted, or having my real name used. I applied for an EB-2 visa, granted to “aliens of exceptional ability” in the arts, sciences and so forth. Winning “nationally and internationally recognized” awards is one of the conditions of that visa. So, obviously, the Tiptree helped there. But where it helped most, I think, was in the second part of the application—the “national interest” waiver.

Labour certification is something that everyone has to fight for except heterosexual spouses and people like Nobel prize winners (to get an EB-1, you literally have to win the Nobel prize, “or equivalent”). As a writer, I didn’t have a job, don’t have a job and never intend to have a job. So I needed a way around that labour certification. I needed a waiver. So me and my lawyers set out to prove to the US government that it was, literally, in the national interest for me to live and work in this country. So I had to prove that my work was not only brilliant, unique, exceptional, extraordinary, prize-winning (etc. etc.) but that American citizens would be worse off without it. And so I talked about feminism, the way literature shows new possibilities, helps citizens imagine those new possibilities, gives them something to aim for (among them, of course, parity between the sexes). The writer, I said, is the imagination, the soul and spirit, of the people. I can’t remember the words I used, exactly, but they were positively stuffed with hyperbole. And I had to get testimonial letters to back all that stuff up. Many people in the SF, and lesbian and gay, and feminist, and literary communities helped me out. And, much to my pleasure, the Justice Department said that, yes, it was in the national interest for me to live and work over here. So I guess I’m about as important as a stealth bomber. Anyway, my case apparently made new law. As far as I know, I’m the first out dyke to be granted this status—and all on the basis of my lesbian feminist science fiction. Chortle.

But what I haven’t told many people yet is that the existence of science fiction fandom directly helped my case. In my final interview at the US embassy in London, the consular officer took one look at my material and said, “Hey, do you know Roger McBride Allen?” I said I knew his work. She said, “He’s a good friend of mine.” And we talked about Star Wars and other sharecrop franchises, and she knew what a Nebula Award was, and understood the Tiptree. I believe, of course, that even if she hadn’t known SF from a hole in the ground I would have been granted admission, but that fandom thing, the acknowledgment of shared status as part of an often scorned minority, certainly made the process easier. She smiled, and stamped my application and said, “Come back at two o’clock for your visa.” As good as a funny handshake (Personal correspondence 18 April 1995).

An award that was conceived initially as a parody of science fiction awards, was able to mimic legitimacy as an award to such an extent that it in fact became legitimate and allowed Griffith to win in a game where, as a lesbian and an alien, the odds were stacked significantly against her. Griffith’s anecdote also adds to the layers of the science fiction community that I have been discussing in this thesis. Within the community, writers like Roger McBride Allen and Nicola Griffith are very differently located. Allen’s work is frequently described as hard sf and Heinlein-esque while Griffith’s work is most frequently called feminist (which still seems to preclude being viewed as a hard sf writer). Despite this gulf, in the context of the US embassy in London, the science fiction community and fandom becomes knowable and inclusive. The overlapping science fiction

\(^2\)The Lambda is an award for the best gay and lesbian literature. It includes a science fiction category.
Ursula Le Guin receives and eats her Retrospective Tiptree Award, WisCon 20, 26 May 1996, photo by Helen Merrick.
communities are also able to have an effect on mundane fields so that it is Griffith's position within science fiction which enables her to become a resident of the US.

The Tiptree also functions as a playful comment on the field of science fiction as a whole and many aspects of the Award were a comment on the older science fiction awards. Vonda McIntyre insisted that there be no stomach-churning suspense for the nominees at the Award presentation. Fowler comments that this practice of publishing the "short list and the winners simultaneously" avoids "transforming the people honored on the shortlist into losers" (Fowler 1996: 109). These lists of all texts considered for the Award, the winners and the shortlist are now a part of the Tiptree Award homepage and include comments from the judges about how each text fits under the rubric of the Tiptree award. In this way the Tiptree works in an expansive way rather than exclusionary way.

Another part of the Award's playfulness is the physical Award itself. Suzy McKee Charnas and Ursula Le Guin independently suggested that the Award be edible, Le Guin commenting that "I have seen and even received some awards that would be far far better eaten" (Humphries, Bill, "James Tiptree, Jr. Homepage," a World Wide Web page with URL

http://www.sf3.org/tiptree/index.html)

Several of the award winners have thus been presented with a typewriter and award plaque cast in milk chocolate. In 1996 the two writers whose idea the chocolate award was, Charnas and Le Guin, were named Retrospective Tiptree Award winners (along with Joanna Russ) and were presented with huge chocolate plaques. The photo on the opposite page shows Le Guin taking a bite of her plaque. Le Guin had already been a co-winner of the Tiptree in 1995. On that occasion she was given a chocolate typewriter.

As well as chocolate there is US$1,000 in prize money, airfare to and expenses at the convention where the Award is presented, as well as a specially commissioned work from a woman artist. In 1995, for example, Nancy Springer received a mask representing the central character, Lark, from her Tiptree-
winning novel, *Larque on the Wing*. The Lark Mask was created in ceramic and feathers by artist and writer Michaela Roessner. The mask also works as a metaphor for James Tiptree, Jr/Alice Sheldon’s own masquerade, which underlines the performativity of sex and sexuality which is always a masquerade of some kind. Springer’s book, about a heterosexual woman who wakes up on her fortieth birthday to discover she has changed into a young homosexual man, is also concerned with the performance of sex and sexuality.

The Tiptree Award has also managed to avoid the usual hierarchy that is maintained by many literary awards, where only professionals are invited to be on the jury panel. The Tiptree Jury has included fans, writers, editors, booksellers, academics, even postgraduate students researching the Tiptree Award.

**Reception**

Pat and I did want to make trouble, and the people we imagined we would annoy were some shapeless, penised force in the field, some vague locus of male power.

Whoever these men are, my sense is that they’ve managed to ignore the Tiptree entirely. We have failed to upset (I would love to hear I’m wrong about this). Instead, every year has seen some controversy from within our community. I don’t know why I didn’t anticipate this. Obviously, even when your motive is to honor work, you will inevitably create a second category of the un-honored. This is where the controversy has come in. I think generally people range from okay to ecstatic with the actual winners. It’s the non-winners that trouble

(Fowler, Fem-SF Discussion group 10 June 1996).

For Fowler, the “vague locus of male power” in the field ignoring the Award is more invidious than if they attacked it. In fact, there has been some anti-Tiptree commentary from two prominent men in the field. Hugo and Nebula winning sf writer, David Brin, was negative about the Tiptree Award in an interview for *Holland SF* by Ruud van de Kruisweg. Kruisweg asks Brin about his novel *Glory Season* (1993). Kruisweg puts the novel in the context of the battle of the sexes:

For some reason the idea of single sex societies never died out (though there are enough awful books written about this theme). I could think of quite a lot of recent novels about this subject, like Sheri Tepper’s “The Gate to Women’s Country”, Nicola Griffith’s “Ammonite”, Pamela Sargent’s “The Shore of Women”, maybe even Lois McMaster Bujold’s “Ethan of Athos”. All these books were written by female writers, not male. What is the reason that men don’t dwell on this theme anymore? Is the subject too hot to touch? Are women more interested in the ‘war between the sexes’, because they still feel that humans are still not created equal, never mind the official word? (From The Linkoping Science Fiction & Fantasy Archive [http://sf.www.lysator.liu.se/sf_archive/sf-texts/authors/B/Brin%2CDavid.mbox](http://sf.www.lysator.liu.se/sf_archive/sf-texts/authors/B/Brin%2CDavid.mbox))
Brin responds by referring to the Tiptree Award:

As I say in my afterword, it is a topic in which men are often denied to have the same wisdom or insight as female authors. Fortunately, only a few silly people have said that about Glory Season... (although those few did make certain the book was not considered for the James Tiptree Award for gender bending SF) (From The Linkoping Science Fiction & Fantasy Archive

http://sf.www.lysator.liu.se/sf_archive/sf-texts/authors/B/Brin%2CDavid.mbox)

Brin firmly locates his book within the battle of the sexes by giving “Poul Anderson (Virgin Planet)...and especially Phillip Wylie (The Disappearance)” as examples of “other men who have written in this area”. Kruisweg asks if there is any “particular reason why you think that feminist politics had the upper hand in not considering the book for the Tiptree Award?” Brin does:

Are you kidding? The award was designed specifically FOR political reasons! The only question was -- would it be controlled by feminists who are true citizens of science fiction...who want to explore ideas and solve problems...or would they be self-righteousness junkies, holding everything and everybody to ideological litmus tests. I have met very many of the former, feminists such as Sarah Hardy and Betty Friedan. Also, there are also many of the latter in SF, who cannot bear the idea of a man writing about such topics...especially a man with liberal views, but views not on the officially approved list (although those few did make certain the book was not considered for the James Tiptree Award for gender bending SF) (From The Linkoping Science Fiction & Fantasy Archive

http://sf.www.lysator.liu.se/sf_archive/sf-texts/authors/B/Brin%2CDavid.mbox)

In fact Glory Season was considered for the Tiptree and was on the 1994 longlist with lengthy comments from two of the judges, Ursula Le Guin and Jeanne Gomoll.

Charles Platt in a letter to SF Eye questioned the need for another science fiction award:

Awards are always a bad idea, and the Tiptree Award is even worse than usual, because it separates books by men from books by women as if the difference matters. It also implies that awards discriminate against women, which they don’t (Pat herself has won her share) (Science Fiction Eye June 1992: 6).

It was immediately pointed out to him that the Award is open to anyone. Texts by men have been on the shortlist in every year of the Award, and in 1996 a man, Theodore Roszak, was the co-winner of the Tiptree with Elizabeth Hand. In some quarters this has been dismissed as ‘tokenism’. In a lovely piece of unintentional irony which many associated with the prize have found enormously amusing, I asked Susanna Sturgis who chaired the 1994 Tiptree Jury about reactions to the Award:
After I returned home from Potlatch and the Tiptree ceremony, I started a Tiptree Award topic on GEnie, a U.S.-based online service that has three huge SF roundtables, for the written word, media, and fandom. I hoped it would encourage discussion of the award criteria ("what is gender-bending?") etc. and encourage people to recommend books and stories for the award. It has done a little of this, but mostly it served as a forum for two or three men to air their uninformed prejudices about the award: why is there only one man on the jury, who decides what the criteria are, why has no man ever won the award, and so on. What struck me is that, although the award founders and supporters are very accessible within the f/sf community, the complaining individuals had made no attempt to contact any of them with their questions and concerns. I encouraged them over and over again to recommend titles for the 1995 award, but none of them has (Personal correspondence 13 May 95).

The Tiptree has received a lot of coverage within the science fiction community. Outside the field of sf, the coverage has been largely confined to the feminist press with an article by Julie Phillips appearing in the December 1995 issue of Ms. Susanna Sturgis has written articles about the ‘Tiptree Juggernaut’ for Feminist Bookstore News May/June 1995; Sojurner: The Women’s Forum September 1994 and American Bookseller September 1992. In her construction of the Tiptree, Sturgis shapes it in terms of joking:

With such a trickster as its guiding spirit, The Tiptree Award has been blessed with an exuberant sense of humor. Feminists running bake sales, after all? (Sturgis 1992: 11).

She locates the Tiptree Award within the debates about woman and sf which I discussed in the third chapter:

Through the 1980s, the death of feminism was assumed by many in the mass media and prayed for by others. Not unknown in the fantasy and science fiction field (which, since the 1970s, has been challenged by the increasing visibility of women writers) are male voices wailing that women (a) ruined the genre, messing it up with their concern for plot and character, and/or (b) can’t write ‘hard’ (ie rooted in ‘real’ science) science fiction (Sturgis 1992: 11).

Sturgis also notes that:

many believe that [the Award] has significantly affected what is being written and published. In the first eligibility year (1991), I was surprised how few of the books I read took risks with gender-related issues. Each year there have been more, as reflected by the steady growth of the shortlist: 5 titles in the first year, 7 in the second, 10 in the third and 14 in the fourth. Some writers now talk about how the existence of the Tiptree prompted them to re-examine and challenge their own assumptions about gender (Sturgis 1995: 52).

By far the greatest amount of debate about the Tiptree has taken place within the feminist sf community. Most recently a large part of this debate has taken place on the Fem-SF discussion group. Most of this debate has concerned winning
and shortlisted texts. However, the most frequent criticism is not about the texts which are on the list, but those that are not.

**Judging the Tiptree Award**

I don’t think it’s instructive to talk about trends. Every jury has begun by inventing the wheel — by grappling with the phrase “explores and expands gender” all over again. I am unaware of any jury being led by precedent, except in a couple of cases, where they didn’t like what a previous jury had done and vowed not to repeat it. So if some year you see the Tiptree veering, I think you can expect it to right itself again (from whatever slanted position you personally think is upright) and I guess I hope that the more irritated a year’s choices make you, the more eager you will be to serve on the jury in your turn and set things straight. This award belongs to us, as Susanna points out, in a way that other awards don’t.

(Fowler, Fem-SF Discussion group 10 June 1996)

I have spoken to a number of Tiptree judges about their experiences judging the award. The first issue that became apparent in these discussions is that each jury is involved in producing the Tiptree Award and that each jury is different. This means that the Award, like science fiction, itself is always in a state of becoming. The more recent judges have begun their time on the Tiptree jury with a knowledge of what a ‘Tiptree text’ is. They can point to previous winners and previous shortlists of texts considered. When the first jury convened, a ‘Tiptree text’ was a text written by James Tiptree, Jr. When they began debating about which texts they would shortlist and which they would give the award to they were part of the formation of the objects, ‘Tiptree Award Winner’ and ‘Tiptree text’. That these terms are beginning to have currency and effects is demonstrated by phenomena like the review of N. Lee Wood’s *Looking for the Madhi*. In her review of this text Shira Daemon argues that the book comments on the “ways in which we perceive gender differences” and asks that the “Tiptree Judges take note” (Daemon 1996: 31). I have spoken to science fiction writers who have told me that they are planning or writing their ‘Tiptree book.’

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3 Though as I have demonstrated in the previous chapter that is, by no means, a straightforward proposition.
Just what a Tiptree book is becomes the site of negotiation for each successive Tiptree Jury. The first jury worked with the rubric that they were looking for texts which “explored and expanded the roles of men and women”. They were also given a list of books that Murphy and Fowler would have given the Award to in the past. Their paradigmatic case was Carol Emshwiller’s brilliant *Carmen Dog* in which women begin to turn into beasts and beasts into women:

Pooh...now finds herself taking over more and more of the housework and baby-sitting, yet continues to be faithful. Her mistress is deteriorating rapidly - mouth grown wide, eyes suspicious...A guinea pig named Cucumber...although not very smart is taking over several of the easier tasks in the house next door....Philip the king snake down the block, has turned out to be female after all, as has Humphrey the Iguana. Neither of them, it is clear, has much maternal instinct, though, and they were last seen heading south on Route 95 with not so much as a good-bye kiss to the little ones who had watched over them tenderly, albeit not very consistently (Emshwiller 1990: 2-3).

Later juries have had the examples of previous year’s winners and short lists. In a discussion of the Tiptree Guidelines in the electronic discussion group, Fem-SF, Lucy Sussex, one of the 1995 jurors wrote:

Also, as Susanna Sturgis wrote in the Potlatch programme book, each year the judging panel redefines the award, as what is challenging in ’92 may be old hat in ’95. I can’t comment on other year’s panels, but we did this by consensus.

And the award is really not for ersatz Tiptree stories. We’re not going to see her like again.

(Sussex, Fem-SF Discussion group, 11 July 1995).

Jeanne Gomoll, the chair of the 1994 Tiptree Award responds:

My experience on the judging panel for the 1993 Tiptree pretty much matches Lucy Sussex’s experience in that we spent a great deal of time in our correspondence discussing what we thought the term “gender bending” meant. We agreed that it is not a term that can be defined once and for all time. It changes from year to year, and we decided that our task as judges was to choose the fiction that best represented its meaning the year we read for the award.

It was an incredible experience, but I don’t think any of us dug up Pat’s “guidelines” published in a press release to help us in our task.

The Tiptree process reinvents itself anew each year. Guidelines written one year will probably become outdated in another year. Right now, that seems a very good thing to me. If we agree that human consciousness evolves, why shouldn’t the prizes we award for it also evolve.

And I agree with Lucy that we’re not about giving awards to Tiptree look-alikes (Gomoll, Fem-SF Discussion Group, 15 July 95).

This exchange neatly explicates the negotiation that goes on from year to year on the panels and also the shift in meaning of Tiptree book from something written by Tiptree to something that could be shortlisted for the Tiptree Award. Susanna Sturgis, as part of this exchange of Fem-SF, writes:
We were guided in our discussions primarily by the works we read and the comments made by previous jurors. Sometimes the latter gave me clues to areas that might not have been taken seriously enough, eg., exposing the incestuous potential of the Traditional Family in Robin McKinley’s Deerskin (1993) (Sturges, Fem-SF Discussion Group, 17 July 1995).

Questions like, What does “gender-bending” mean? What are we looking for? What are we rewarding and encouraging? And the arguments and discussion they are part of give voice to undercurrents and debates within the broader science fiction community and beyond. Debates about popular feminism and ‘political correctness’ are raised frequently. Indeed Murphy attempts to pre-empt this charge in her guidelines: the “aim of the award organizers is not to look for work that falls into some narrow definition of political correctness” (Bill Humphries, “James Tiptree, Jr. Homepage,” a World Wide Web page with URL http://www.sf3.org/tiptree/index.html). The award serves to show also that feminism is not a monolith any more than science fiction is - that there are many feminists and feminisms.

The term “gender-bending” has been the centre of much debate within the context of the award:

Even among award supporters, I think, the term “gender-bending” is controversial. It’s catchy and easier to repeat than “fantasy or science fiction that explores and expands the roles of women and men!” For some people, though, it means gender CHANGING -- characters that change genders, as in Orlando (Susanna Sturgis in personal correspondence 13 May 95).

It is interesting to consider just how difficult it is for people to say what the award is for. The phrase most frequently used by judges and those involved with the Tiptree, to try and explain what it is for is ‘gender-bending’. This is a term that has an almost quaint historical overtone, coming as it does, from the olden days of so-called seventies feminism. I like the term even with its resonances of 70s glam rock - where the bending of gender enabled David Bowie to sell a few million records. It is a term that is full of possibility - making of gender a play thing that can be endlessly reshaped - and in science fiction, bodies are above all else plastic.

Each jury has also had different dynamics and negotiated these questions in different ways. I spoke to at least one juror from each of the five juries. Naturally
their deliberations while on the jury are confidential but most were happy to talk to me more generally about their experiences as a Tiptree judge. Fantasy and science fiction scholar, Brian Attebery was the ‘token’ man on the 1995 jury. He narrates his experiences of being a Tiptree judge in terms of negotiation and consensus:

One thing that surprised me was the degree of agreement among the committee members. I had understood that previous panels had been rather divided, and since this was a group of people I had never met (except Pat Murphy, and that was only on one social occasion) I rather expected that we would have different takes on issues and stories. Then when we got to discussing, the most frequent way of introducing comments was “Susanna is right when she says…” or “I agree with Lucy that…”

I wonder if one of the reasons it worked as well as it did was that we made an effort to present ourselves and our readings in personal, informal ways, rather than as impartial judges making abstract statements. There was always a bit of chitchat in and around the discussion: My dealings with pre-school-age children and travels around the wilds of Idaho, Ellen’s radio work, Susanna’s horseback rides on the beach, Lucy’s new neighbourhood, etc. All of this not only made us feel like old friends, but it also gave a groundedness to our readings (Personal correspondence 17 May 1995).

His discourse is predicated here on both/and rather than, either/or and located in the interpersonal. The 1995 jury was the first all-electronic jury, as by October all jurors had an internet account. This brought the jurors, who were located in Melbourne, Australia and various points of the USA, much closer together and made communication faster and more immediate. This belies the notion that computers and computer technologies are cold and alienating. The 1997 Tiptree jury, of which I am a member, is also entirely electronic. This enables us to pursue our negotiations about sex/gender/sexuality and how this plays out in terms of individual texts without long delays.

As a founding mother, Karen Fowler, who is on this year’s jury with me, has had an inside view on the deliberations of all previous juries. She writes that:

Each jury tends to start off with a round of letters discussing those words. It gets easier for them than for us here, because they are dealing with actual books. By which I mean that it is easier to say a particular book doesn’t do this, than it is to say exactly what “this” is. In effect then, with those vague guidelines, each jury does make up its own criteria, and in different years, different values have predominated. Some juries have valued expansion more than exploration of gender. Some have felt that feminism was a crucial component and the sort of book you propose, the one that argues some essentially feminine quality to women could not have won in those years, although perhaps in others (Fowler, Fem-SF discussion group, 19 June 96).

Jurors from various years have also told me that they were guided by certain things they did or did not like about an earlier jury’s decisions. Some thought
previous years' lists were too long or too short and decided to remedy that situation.

As a juror I have found that it is much easier to say whether a given book is or is not what I think of as a Tiptree text than it is to explain what a Tiptree text is. Juries are engaged in a meaning making process and these processes are dependent on paradigmatic contrast. You make meaning by saying whether a given thing is or is not part of a particular paradigmatic set, not by defining the paradigm. The meanings are thus made through exchange and negotiation between each of the jury members. What constitutes a Tiptree text is renegotiated every year. However, this process takes place in the deliberations around all literary awards, the notion of good writing and what text is the 'best' is as much under negotiation as is the notion of "expanding and exploring gender".

The Tiptree Texts

(i) Encouraging speculation about gender: The Tiptree Award

Having a prize means that there must be winners, and in having winners and a shortlist the Tiptree award has created a visible canon of sf that speculates about gender, sex and sexuality. Every year as more winners of the prize are named and more texts added to the short-list, this canon grows. Up to this date the winners have been:


1993: Maureen F. McHugh, China Mountain Zhang, Tor, 1992

1994: Nicola Griffith, Ammonite, Del Rey, 1993


While the winning texts and shortlisted texts have as much differentiating them as they have in common, all these texts engage with the “problematical space” of ‘sex/gender’ (Sedgwick 1990: 29). Not all of the Tiptree texts are easily situated within the battle of the sexes. For instance, McHugh’s *China Mountain Zhang* (1992) set in a future world in which China is the dominant power and homosexuality is illegal, is not what I constitute as a battle of the sexes text.

However, in many of the Tiptree texts, tropes and themes of the battle of the sexes texts I discussed in chapters three and four are apparent: all-women or women dominated worlds - Elisabeth Vonarburg’s *In the Mother’s Land* (1992), Griffith’s *Ammonite* (1993) and Geoff Ryman’s “O Happy Day!” (1994); women at war with men - Alice Nunn’s *Illicit Passage* (1992) and Suzy McKee Charnas’ *The Furies* (1994); hermaphrodites - Graham Joyce & Peter F. Hamilton’s “Eat Reecebread” (1994) and Duchamp’s “Motherhood Etc.” (1993). In Melissa Scott’s *Shadow Man* (1995) the multiple sexes of the earlier texts are given names. Her book has five sexes - fem, man, woman, herm and mem.5 Le Guin’s “The Matter of Seggri” (1994) is set on a world in which “men have all the privilege and the women have all the power” (Le Guin 1994: 9). The text comments on early sexbattle texts like Bond’s “The Priestess Who Rebelled” (1939) as well as the later *Gate into Women’s Country* (1989) by Sheri S. Tepper. Springer’s *Larque on the Wing* (1994), about a woman who finds she has become a young homosexual man on her fortieth birthday, shares the central sex-change idea with Keller’s “The Feminine Metamorphosis” (1929) and Dickinson’s “The Sex Serum” (1935), although the text entirely re-works these transformations.

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4 See Appendix II for the full annotated lists of shortlisted and longlisted texts.
5 Scott’s *Shadow Man* (1995) was not shortlisted for the 1996 Tiptree but was part of a separate list of “Other Works of Note.”
The Tiptree texts, as well as being in conversation with pre-Tiptree Award
texts which speculate about sex and sexuality, are also in conversation with each
other. Each new list of winning and shortlisted texts redefines what it is to
speculate about these issues in science fiction and comments on previous years of
the award.

Recognising past speculation about gender: The Retrospective Tiptree
Award

Vonda McIntyre wrote, quite rightly, "This is a kind of no-brainer,
 isn't it? The first retrospective Tiptree should go to Uncle Tip. If you
have to have a title, "The Women Men Don't See," but better for the
body of work". Was James Tiptree eligible for the Retrospective
Tiptree Award? That question hadn't occurred to us. Alice Sheldon
did, of course write the definitive Tiptree-Award-winning stories (and
while doing it, lived a Tiptree-Award-winning-life). Ultimately, we
decided that the existence of the award itself was a tribute to James
Tiptree and that giving Alice Sheldon the retrospective award would
be redundant.

(Murphy 1996: 119)

At the 1996 Tiptree Award Presentation held at WisCon in May the first
Retrospective Tiptree Award was given to Ursula Le Guin for The Left Hand of
Darkness (1969), to Joanna Russ for "When It Changed" (1972) and The Female
Man (1975), and to Suzy McKee Charnas for Walk to the End of the World
(1974) and Motherlines (1978). The decision was made by getting all the judges
of the first five years of the Tiptree to nominate five works for the Retrospective
Award. When the nominations were all put together the jurors were asked to
choose three works. As well as the three winners, a list of all the other works that
had substantial support from jurors was compiled. Pat Murphy writes that for
her,

this list has already served its purpose. There are books on it that I missed when they
came out - and a few that I'd never heard of it! For me, this is a list of future pleasures -
books to seek out and appreciate. But I'd also like to note that this is not the final,
complete, never-to-be-changed list of what could have won a Tiptree Award. Like the
award itself, the list may change over the years. Who knows? Five years (and hundreds of
chocolate chip cookies) from now, we could torture another list of jurors with
unreasonable requests (Murphy 1996: 119).

I have examined Le Guin's Left Hand of Darkness and Russ' "When it Changed"
as part of the battle of the sexes, and had my time frame extended past 1973, I
TIPS FOR THE GOURMET
(Optional suggestions and other hints)

- Bring Tiptree books to help answer the inevitable questions about her and her writing.
- Never tried but suggested: Sell coffee, tea, lemonade or cider. All these baked goods make people thirsty! Be sure to bring cups if you do this.
- Send letters or postcards to potential bakers. Announce in advance that the upcoming convention will have a Tiptree bake sale.
- Anyone mailing cookies to a bake sale should pack them VERY securely, broken cookies, especially cookie crumbs, are much less appealing than undamaged ones. Pack cookies by putting the heavier ones on the bottom, and fragile ones on the top.
- Bring a jar of Tiptree Marmalade. If you can find one, this would be a good addition to your table. Some buyers have expressed an interest in the origin of the Tiptree name.
- Have authors sign cookies. Do this with frosting, if you can get the authors to sign at the table, all the better.
- Have a silent auction or a raffle for a large item, such as a whole cake, cheese cake, or gingerbread house.

HOW TO RUN
A James Tiptree, Jr. Memorial Award BAKE SALE

—Tips, Suggestions & Warnings—
Written by Bake Sale Veterans:
Hope Keifer and Karen Babich
Designed by Jeanne Conner
October 1991

How to run a James Tiptree Jr. Memorial Award Bakesale Pamphlet.
would certainly have discussed the two novels by Charnas. Giving these texts the Retrospective Award makes explicit the tradition of speculation about sex that has existed within science fiction since 1926. The existence of this Retrospective Award works to highlight these connections. It also makes explicit the way in which the genre consists of readers of texts, as well as texts and producers of texts. The annotated Retrospective Tiptree Award list is full of jurors’ reminiscences about the impact these texts had on them as readers. Debbie Notkin writes of *The Left Hand of Darkness* that it was for me, as I think it was for many readers my age, my first time. In all the science fiction I had read before that, I had only found hints, tantalizing glimpses, of what I knew could be there. *The Left Hand of Darkness* threw open wide the doors that had been left alluringly ajar and said, “Come in. There’s more room here than you ever imagined. Let me show you what some of it is like” (WisCon 20 Souvenir Book 1996: 120).

For Notkin and the other jurors the process of choosing the winners of the Retrospective Award involved them reliving their involvement with the field and what they see as crucial shaping moments of that engagement.

Alice James Raccoona Tiptree Davey Hastings Bradley Sheldon Jr. and the James Tiptree Jr. Memorial Award

And then Karen, who tends toward brilliance, said, “What about James Tiptree, Jr.?” James Tiptree, Jr., winner of multiple Nebulas...[who] was revealed in mid-career as Alice Sheldon, and forever after, in every introduction James Tiptree was again revealed as Alice Sheldon. James Tiptree, Jr., who helped break down the imaginary barrier between “women’s writing” and “men’s writing.” James Tiptree, Jr., author of “The Women Men Don’t See”.


As much as Tiptree enabled the Award to come into existence so too has the Award given James Tiptree, Jr. another life. In a pamphlet produced by SF3, the Madison science fiction group, “How to Run a James Tiptree, Jr. Memorial Award Bake Sale” there is a section on “Tips for the Gourmet (Optional suggestions and other hints)” which is reproduced opposite. The pamphlet demonstrates that part of the Award is to encourage interest in the writing and lives of Tiptree.
I spent much of chapter four looking at the figure of Hermaphroditus as an ambivalent symbol of both hope in the battle of the sexes, and of acquiescence, and of defeat. Tiptree is another ambivalent symbol, a modern day Hermes.\textsuperscript{6} Hermes is a charged and ambivalent figure, flitting between life and death, being the God of narrative, and the genitor of Hermaphroditus who is both male and female. Like Tiptree, not easily tied down and also like Tiptree/Sheldon et al - a trickster.

As a trickster she/he has come to play an important role for some feminists in the science fiction community. And it is this role of trickster which has been a strong influence on the formation of the Tiptree Award. The majority of the literature about the James Tiptree, Jr. Memorial Award is littered with words like play, laughter, joking and parody.

The stories I sketched in the previous chapter about the lives of Tiptree et al, and other connected stories circulating amongst fan and pro, enabled the formation of the Tiptree award. Predominantly it is those stories about the mysterious Tiptree, and after the Revelation, about Alice Sheldon-who-is-Tiptree which have had the most currency. What contribution do stories about the life of a child in and out of Africa and Asia during the final decades of colonial rule, the life of a young woman married to an alcoholic poet, and a little later to an officer and a gentlemen, make to the meaning and constitution of a science fiction award and one that is pointedly not the Alice Sheldon Award?

All these Alices and Tiptree and Raccoona were, and are, part of the field of science fiction. The child Alice read science fiction:

\begin{quote}

The summer when I was 9 we were up in the woods of Wisconsin as usual, and Uncle Harry returned from an expedition to the metropolis of 1000 souls thirty miles away with his usual collection of the \textit{New York Times}, \textit{The Kenyon Review}, etc...Out of his bundle slipped a 7 by 9 magazine with a wonderful cover depicting, if I recollect, a large green octopus removing a young lady's golden brassiere. We stared. The title was \textit{Weird Tales}.

"Ah," said Uncle Harry. "Oh. Oh yes. I, ah, I picked this up for the child."

"Uncle Harry," I said, my eyes bulging, "I am the child. May I have it, please?"

"Uh," said Uncle Harry. And slowly, handed it over.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{6} I am indebted to Judith Barbour for drawing my attention to the similarity of the figure Hermes to that of Tiptree.
The February 1929 issue of *Weird Tales* by Hugh Rankin.
And so it all began. He would slip them to me and I would slip them back to him. Lovecraft - oh god. And more and more and more; we soon discovered Amazing and Wonder Stories and others that are long forgotten (Tiptree 1979: 32).

The cover referred to is reproduced opposite. Tiptree and Raccoona were part of the fan world of sf as well as the professional one. More broadly they were part of science fiction communities. They were part of the kind of science fiction that is recognised and perpetuated by the feminist convention, WisCon.

In her introduction to The Bakery that Men Don't See, Diane Martin argues that the award has to be called the James Tiptree, Jr. Memorial Award to remind everyone of the palpable effects of being a male writer and how, if it is discovered that a male writer is 'really' a woman, there is a very different set of effects. I agree. However, it is important to remember that Tiptree is not a stable, easily mapped writer. Tiptree is also Raccoona and the three Alices I discussed in chapter seven. Tiptree was also none of them. And the fascination of Tiptree/Alice lies not just in her/his most public science fiction life but in the personal discontinuities that make up those lives. The Tiptree Award is given for texts which explore and expand gender. Alice/Tiptree's lives do just that and in doing so they demonstrate that being male and being female are not opposites; there are a variety of ways of being either and both, and none of us is (or are) a unified subject (Henriques et al 1984; Davies & Harre 1990). I believe that science fiction is the perfect place to explore these diversities and that the Tiptree Award is a fantastic (in every sense) site for the recognition and propagation of this exploration.

7 However, the only issue of Weird Tales which fits that description is dated February 1929 when Alice would have been 13 or 14.
Epilogue

In order to know something we first have to make it...we produce the things we know, that's how we come to know them

(King 1994: xv).

In this thesis I have produced an object, the battle of the sexes in science fiction, and traced its journeys from 1926 to 1973; through the multiple lives of Tiptree et al, through the Award shaped by his/her life and the seventy year long story of science fiction communities and feminism and women. This complex, and contradictory object that I have created has enabled me to know the field of science fiction, and in knowing it, to become a part of that field. My science fiction is not the same as that which Aldiss creates in Billion Year Spree (1973) or Amis creates in New Maps of Hell (1960). Neither is it entirely the same science fiction that Lefanu creates in her Chinks in the World Machine (1988) or Roberts creates in A New Species (1993). My science fiction is a series of shifting communities, consisting of people, texts and knowledges and their engagements with each other. For my construction of this field, like Katie King's construction of feminist theory, conversations are central.

I have examined a much longer period of sf's development than is usually covered in feminist critical accounts of science fiction. This examination has enabled me to contextualise and historicise the debates about women and sf, within the field of sf, within the various science fiction communities and the debates and conversations between these communities. This makes my object, science fiction, different from those of Aldiss, Amis, Lefanu and Roberts who are predominantly concerned with fictional texts.

My construction of the field of science fiction has also been crucially shaped by my physical location. Having access to the Rare Books collection at the University of Sydney library meant that I was able to trace conversations about men, women and science fiction through the letters, editorials, articles and science fiction stories of prozines, fanzines and books over the past seventy years.
Conversations between Asimov, Byers, Mary and James Rogers, Turnbull and others in the pages of Astounding in the late 1930s; and between Russ, Anderson, Tiptree, Le Guin and others in the 1970s; and amongst Tiptree judges and the participants of fem sf on three different continents in the 1990s. These series of conversations are produced by, and also produce, the battle of the sexes texts, WisCon, the James Tiptree, Jr. Memorial Award and many other sites of these debates.

The conversations that I have charted throughout this thesis have been crucial in shaping it. So too have the conversations that I have had about, and as a result of, this thesis. I mean most particularly my discussions with other students and scholars and members of science fiction communities. Many of these conversations took place in emails between participants scattered throughout Australia, the USA, Canada and Britain. The internet has not been merely a means of speeding up communication, but has enabled an interaction that would not otherwise have been possible, and has thus been a crucial part of my production of the object of knowledge that is this thesis. This has operated in a variety of ways, from requests for information about hard to find fanzines, resulting in copies of those fanzines materialising in my letter box, to images for this thesis being sent to me in a matter of minutes from the other side of the world, to the sense of the science fiction community that I am reminded of every time I log into my email account.

Both fictional and ‘non-fictional’ explorations of the sexes negotiate and explore what it is to be a man or a woman or neither, and the political, social and cultural capital that attaches to that particular kind of being within the field (or fields) of science fiction. These discourses manifestly demonstrate that there is no one way of being any or either of these sexes - that being is a production, a performance - and it is continuing. These texts also demonstrate that their engagement with such issues is constitutive and explorative and not merely an exemplification of them.
The battle of the sexes stories that I examined in chapter three make explicit the inequality between the class known as women and that known as men. Most of these sexbattle stories attempt to teach that the rule of men is natural. Disrupting this natural order can only lead to anarchy and thus stagnation, or, to too much order, and thus stagnation. However, as I have shown, in the midst of their conservatism, rampant misogyny, heterosexism, and anti-feminism, these texts denaturalise essential differences between the sexes and reveal the existence of more than two sexes, and the fluidity of these sexed bodies.

At the same time, the texts I examined in chapters three and four locate all difference on the axis of sex: race and class are almost entirely elided. The worlds imagined in *The Disappearance* (1951) and *Venus Plus X* (1960) are predicated on an equality between white men and white women and yet the term white is never used, let alone explored. White becomes, not only unmarked, but invisible.

The texts I examined in chapter three seek to erase the bodies of not-real men and women. However, their existence is what enables the real women and men to signify as real and their erasure is never quite possible as the range of not-real sexed bodies leaks out. These leakages become the focus of some of the texts I examined in chapter four such as Russ’ “When It Changed” (1972) Sturgeon’s *Venus Plus X* (1960) and Le Guin’s *Left Hand of Darkness* (1969) and of many of the Tiptree texts, both those authored by Tiptree and those associated with the Tiptree Award. Many of these texts, such as Springer’s *Larque on the Wing* (1994) and Duchamp’s “Motherhood Etc” (1993) focus on those who perform their sex inadequately, rather than on the real-man real-woman dyad of sexbattle texts such as Bond’s “The Priestess Who Rebelled” (1939) or Cooper’s *Who Needs Men?* (1972). All these texts, whether overtly feminist or anti-feminist, are also located within the discourse of romance and its enunciation and enforcement of heterosexuality. Some of the texts, including Wyndham’s “Consider Her Ways” (1956), Russ’ “When it Changed” (1972) and Jones’ *White Queen* (1991), interrogate this discourse.
The texts I have examined in this thesis are not simply theorising the performance of sex; they are engaged in the performance of sex. They are both practice and theory. Nor are those performances confined to written texts. As Pat Murphy writes of Tiptree/Sheldon: he/she wrote the “definitive Tiptree-Award-winning stories” and at the same time she/he “lived a Tiptree-Award-winning-life” (Murphy 1996: 119).

As I demonstrated in chapter seven, the lives of Alice James Raccoona Tiptree Davey Hastings Bradley Sheldon Jr. vividly demonstrate the groundedness of post-structuralist understandings of subjectivity. A concept of a fixed unitary subject is simply inadequate for mapping out these overlapping and intertwining lives. Even those texts which are predicated on this idea, such as those in chapter three, serve to demonstrate that the unitary subject is illusionary.

This thesis is also part of an examination of my own subjectivity. The journey of the production of my thesis has compelled me to examine my own relationship to the field of science fiction and to think about the ways in which the field has shaped my sense of self. Additionally, as I argued in chapter one, that process of exploration has changed my relationship to the field. I have become an active member of a community of which previously I had had only the vaguest inkling. The process of writing a thesis is frequently a process of initiation into a community, though usually that community is an academic one. This initiation has made real to me that texts are inextricably part of communities; that genres are embodied, are communities, rather than static collections of markings on paper.