

# Introduction to Science Fiction

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Office hours: Wednesdays, 12–1 p.m. or by appointment

November 6, 2023. Russ/Tiptree.

## review: Delany

- ▶ “And went up”: confounds metaphoric and literal interpretations
- ▶ ...you could say that about spacers and frelks too
- ▶ language precedes sex-gender (“*une frelk*”)
  - ▶ yet the spacers are a biological figure for queerness
  - ▶ race as a “surround”: double-consciousness
  - ▶ cosmopolitan settings: challenges to identity

## discussion: Russ

- ▶ In what ways is this a feminist story? Find lots.
  - ▶ feminism: “advocacy of equality of the sexes and the establishment of the political, social, and economic rights of the female sex” (*OED*)

## men vs. people

They are obviously of our species but *off*, indescribably off. (509)

“Where are all the people?” said the monomaniac.

I realized then that he did not mean people, he meant *men*, and he was giving the word the meaning it had not had on Whileaway for six centuries. (511)

As a people, we are not very bright,” he said. “There’s been too much genetic damage in the last few centuries. Radiation. Drugs. We can use Whileaway’s genes, Janet.” Strangers do not call strangers by the first name. (512)

“You know as well as I do that parthenogenetic culture has all sort of inherent defects...But surely you can see that this kind of society is unnatural.”

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

for a while

All good things must come to an end. (515)

▶ Why?

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1937	Joanna Russ b. NY
1953	Westinghouse winner
1957	BA in English, Cornell
1959	“Nor Custom Stale,” <i>F&amp;SF</i> 17, no. 3 (September)
1960	MFA in Drama, Yale
1966	lecturer, Queensborough CC, Bayside, NY
1967	<i>Alyx</i> , intro by Delany (Boston: Gregg Press)
1970	English professor, Cornell
1972	“When It Changed” (Nebula winner)
1975	<i>The Female Man</i> (New York: Bantam)
1983	<i>How to Suppress Women’s Writing</i> (Austin: U of Texas P)
2011	d.

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Sources: John Clute, “Russ, Joanna,” in *Encyclopedia of SF*, 2023; “Joanna Russ,” in *Contemporary Authors* (Gale, 2015), [LRC](#); Darien Cavanaugh, “Joanna Russ,” in *Contemporary Literary Criticism*, ed. Lawrence J. Trudeau, vol. 432 (Gale, 2018), [LRC](#).



## conversations

- ▶ Does Russ's story implicitly critique Le Guin's novel?

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“There is only half a species here. Men must come back to Whileaway.”  
(513)

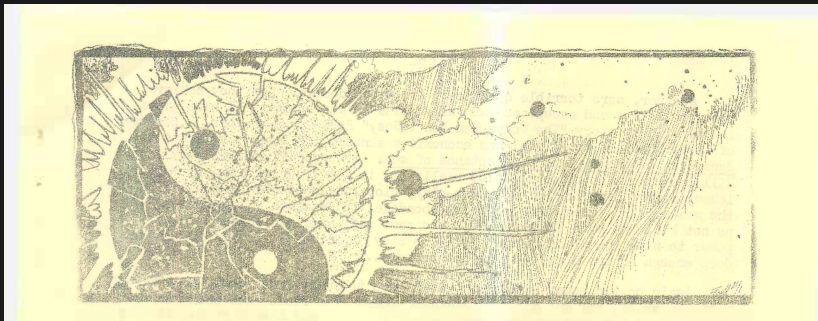
## New Wave/Second Wave

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1964	Civil Rights Act passed
1966	<b>NOW</b> founded by Betty Friedan et al.
1967	Delany, “Aye, and Gomorrah...,” in <i>Dangerous Visions</i>
1969	Le Guin, <i>The Left Hand of Darkness</i> Stonewall Riots
1972	Tiptree, “And I Awoke...,” <i>F&amp;SF</i> (March) Russ, “When It Changed,” in <i>Again, Dangerous Visions: 46 Original Stories</i> , ed. Harlan Ellison (Garden City, NY: Doubleday) Equal Rights Amendment approved by Congress (3 states short of ratification)
1973	<i>Roe v. Wade</i> (abortion)
1975	“Women in SF: A Symposium,” <i>Khatru</i> 3–4 (November)
1976	<i>Aurora: Beyond Equality</i> , ed. McIntyre and Anderson (Fawcett); includes Le Guin, “Is Gender Necessary?”
1977	SF3 holds first WisCon (Madison, WI)
2004	ratio of median woman’s to man’s wage levels off at 80% (source: <a href="#">BLS</a> )
2015	<i>Obergefell</i> decision (same-sex marriage)
2022	<i>Dobbs</i> decision (abortion)

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- ▶ What other relations of opposition or alignment exist among Le Guin, Delany, Russ, and Tiptree?



Freff [pseud.], illus., *Khatru* 3–4 (November 1975): 21, [fanac.org](http://fanac.org).

DOWN WITH YIN-AND-YANG THINKING! (Tiptree, 17)

I saw pale kings, and princes too,  
Pale warriors, death-pale were they all;  
Who cry'd—"La belle Dame sans merci  
Hath thee in thrall!"  
I saw their starv'd lips in the gloam  
With horrid warning gaped wide,  
And I awoke, and found me here  
On the cold hill side.



John Keats, "La Belle Dame sans Merci" [The Beautiful Lady without Mercy] (1820), rpt. [Representative Poetry Online](#).

Image: Alice Sheldon in 1977, [jamestiptreejr.com](#), accessed November 3, 2023.

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1915	Alice Hastings Bradley b. Chicago
1927	Mary Hastings Bradley, <i>Alice in Jungleland</i> (New York: Appleton)
1934	marries
1940	divorces
1942	joins US Army (air intelligence)
1945	m. H.D. Sheldon
1952–55	Sheldon and husband in CIA
1959	BA, American University
1967	PhD in psychology, GWU
1968	James Tiptree Jr., “Birth of a Salesman,” <i>Analog</i>
1972	“And I Awoke...,” <i>F&amp;SF</i> (March)
1976	Raccoona Sheldon, “Your Faces, O my Sisters! Your Faces Filled of Light!,” in <i>Aurora: Beyond Equality</i> , ed. McIntyre and Anderson (Fawcett)
1977	Tiptree’s identity revealed
1987	d.

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Sources: John Clute, “Tiptree, James, Jr.,” in *Encyclopedia of SF*, 2023; Wikipedia s.v. “James Tiptree, Jr.,” accessed November 4, 2023.

## to boldly go

“We’re built to dream outwards.” (524)

“Ah, Jesus, don’t you see? Everything going out, nothing coming back. Like the poor damned Polynesians. We’re gutting Earth, to begin with. Swapping raw resources for junk. Alien status symbols. Tape decks, Coca-Cola, and Mickey Mouse watches.” (522)

When one culture has the big guns and the other has none, there is a certain predictability about the outcome. (Russ, 514)

- ▶ What does imperialism have to do with sex, anyway?



## homodiegetic narrator

The Procyra's hopeful face appeared around the corner. The red-haired man snarled at him and he backed out. I started to protest.

“Ah, the silly reamer loves it. It's the only pleasure we have left...”  
(523)

“Man is exogamous—all our history is one long drive to find and impregnate the stranger. Or get impregnated by him, it works for women too. Anything different-colored, different nose, ass, anything, man *has* to fuck it or die trying.” (523)

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I see “humanity” in its best sense as closer to the maternal pattern than to the male—because of the empty violence which so often infects the male pattern. I would not, go dforbid, reduce all life to cosy Mommywuv. (Tiptree in “Women in SF,” 22)

## possibilities

Now obviously if I could describe a “human being” I would be more than I am—and probably living in the future, because I think of human beings as something to be realized ahead. (If we survive ourselves.) (Ibid., 20)

next: meanwhile, in Poland

- ▶ Lem, “The Seventh Voyage” (*Wesleyan Anthology*)
- ▶ Lem, “How Microx...” (Canvas: print out)