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RECONSTRUCTING GENDER IN SCIENCE FICTION: CHARLOTTE PERKINS GILMAN AND JAMES TIPTREE, JR.

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to examine the subversive element of science fiction as a literary genre. Even though this area of literature established itself as a rather androcentric type of writing, mainly authored by male writers, the genre itself renders itself suitable for reimagining alternative realities. This paper focuses on woman writers who created invaluable works that are termed feminist utopia or feminist science fiction. Charlotte Perkins Gilman is a pioneer with her all-woman utopian society in her 1915 novel Herland. One of her followers in this genre is James Tiptree, Jr., who became a household name in the science fiction world, and who in her turn, creates alternate worlds in her fiction, such as “Houston, Houston, Do You Read?” where gender constructs are questioned and re-envisioned. Both Gilman’s and Tiptree’s fiction present different realities that are free from a dichotomous and sexist culture which pervades a patriarchal world. This gender duality gives way to a hierarchical order and all of its devastating results for civilization and the female sex. Both writers discussed in this paper created worlds where gender duality is non-existent, and hence, free of all its consequences.

Keywords: Science Fiction, Gender, Feminist Theory, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, James Tiptree, Jr., American Literature

BİLİMKURGUDA CİNSİYETİN YENİDEN KURGULANMASI: CHARLOTTE PERKINS GILMAN VE JAMES TIPTREE, JR.

ÖZ

Bu çalışmanın amacı, bir edebi tür olarak bilimkurgunun yıkıcı (subversive) öğelerini incelemektir. Söz konusu tür oldukça androsantrik (erkek-merkezci) olup çoğunlukla erkek yazarların alanı olmakla birlikte, bu alanda yaratılan eserlerin alternatif dünyalar tasarlamak için oldukça uygun olduklarını gözlemledik. Bu çalışma, feminist

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ütopya veya feminist bilimkurgu olarak adlandırılan eserler yaratan kadın yazarları incelemektedir. Charlotte Perkins Gilman, 1915 yılında yayınladığı Kadınlar Ülkesi (Herland) ile, bu alanlarda bir öncü sayılmaktadır. Onun takipçisi olarak James Tiptree, Jr. bilimkurgu dünyasında yerini almıştır ve “Houston, Houston, Do You Read?” gibi kurgularında, alternatif gerçekliklerde, cinsiyet rollerini sorgulayıp yeniden tahayyül etmiştir. Gilman ve Tiptree’nin kurgusu, ataerki dünyanın gerçekleri olan dikotomi (ikili karşıtlık) ve cinsiyetçi kültürden arınmış dünyalar inşa etmektedir. Cinsiyet dualitesinin (ikiliğinin) yarattığı hiyerarşik düzen, medeniyet ve kadın cinsi için yıkıcı sonuçlar doğurmaktadır. Bu çalışmada incelenen her iki yazar da cinsiyet dualitesinin ve bunun olumsuz etkilerinin olmadığı dünyalar yaratmaktadırlar.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Bilim Kurgu, Cinsiyet, Feminist Kuram, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, James Tiptree, Jr., Amerikan Edebiyatı

1. INTRODUCTION

Beyond the exploration of space, time travel, and alien lifeforms, science fiction, more than any other genre, empowers its author to envision ideological transitions and alternate worlds based on existing realities. Within this literary genre, feminist utopias portray worlds in which identity and gender can be explored outside the accepted norms. It challenges the existing gender dichotomy in patriarchal culture, which brings about hierarchical orders including dichotomous notions such as “superior” and “inferior” or “oppressor” and “oppressed.” Since the scientific world is ruled by the male principle, science fiction came about as a male-dominated literary genre, reflecting patriarchal ideology. Nevertheless, this genre provides a formidable medium to re-invent gender roles or engender utopian societies free of gender constraints.

In her influential essay “Is Gender Necessary?” (1993), Ursula K. Le Guin comments on various elements concerning her own science fiction novel *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1969), in which she creates an androgynous species on the planet Winter. One witnesses that gender roles become obsolete, and identities are not shaped according to sexual constraints. In Le Guin’s fiction, alternate realities are liberated from patriarchal ideology, which she scrutinizes in the conclusion of her essay:

Our curse is alienation, the separation of yang from yin. Instead of a search for balance and integration, there is a struggle for dominance.

Divisions are insisted upon, interdependence is denied. The dualism of value that destroys us, the dualism of superior/inferior, ruler/ruled, owner/owned, user/used, might give way to what seems to me, from

here, a much healthier, sounder, more promising modality of integration and integrity (Le Guin, 1993, p. 172).

With the women's movement of the 1960s, inspired by Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949/1953) and her followers Kate Millett, Monique Wittig among many others, science fiction writers of the 1960s and 1970s obtained a framework to subvert gender notions and descriptions of womanhood. As Veronica Hollinger claims, science fiction can be "the literature of change" (Hollinger, 2003, p. 125) since it proves to be the perfect medium for a critique of gender construction and a disruption of culturally constructed identities. In turn, literature uses its power to question oppressive ideologies and becomes a generator of new visions. To that end, in *Bodies That Matter*, Judith Butler points out that "literary narrative" is "a place where theory takes place" (Butler, 1993, p. 182) – a place of resistance. This article strives to illuminate the birth of feminist utopias within the science fiction world, in an endeavor to reconstruct gender roles that define women in relation to the male sex, focusing on Charlotte Perkins Gilman's pioneering utopia *Herland* and James Tiptree Jr's short story "Houston, Houston, Do You Read?"

2. Science Fiction and Utopia

Even though there exists no unanimity over the exact definition of this literary genre, in *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction* (1979), Darko Suvin defines it as one "whose necessary and sufficient conditions are the presence and interaction of estrangement and cognition, and whose main formal device is an imaginative framework alternative to the author's empirical environment" (Suvin, 1979, pp. 7-8). Science fiction's break with other "realistic" literary genres results in the estrangement, while "cognition differentiates" science fiction from myths, fairy tales and fantasy literature.

The foundation for science fiction can be traced back to utopian literature that envisions the advancement of societies in various aspects. Oscar Wilde claims, in his 1891 essay *The Soul of Man under Socialism*, that progress means "the realization of Utopias" (Wilde, 1910, p. 17). In his classic work *Utopia* (1516/1992), Thomas More coined the term from its Greek roots, insinuating both "good place" (eu-topos) and "no place" (ou – topos). However, while portraying an ideal society that establishes equality among humankind, More does perpetuate female subjection. Hence, this utopian society insists on the existing patriarchal paradigm.

More's intention to satirize the England of his day is apparent, as well as his ideals for a world that promises equality and justice. However, as much as he conceives a perfectly well-established society, gender difference and inequality are one of its attributes. In More's time, the superiority of the male sex was unquestionably accepted as natural, so that this fact remains an accepted notion in his utopian society. This clearly illustrates how gender

norms are thoroughly embedded in Western society, and the rest of the world as well.

Following More's utopian novel, many other writers created works of this genre of fiction in the seventeenth century. These works, such as Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis* (1627/1992) and Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726/2005), visualized imaginary travels and fantastic idealistic societies. The popularity of science fiction continued its rise as science advanced and new discoveries continued to provide newer insights and possibilities. In the nineteenth and early twentieth century, Jules Verne and H.G. Wells published their novels and short stories before the genre was established. Later in the twentieth century, popular pulp magazines published science fiction stories written by A. E. Van Vogt, Robert E. Heinlein, Theodore Sturgeon and Isaac Asimov.

As social criticism proved to be an important factor in producing utopian literature, looking at the canon of science fiction up until the twenty-first century shows mainly the purpose of social and political reform. Both satirizing and building new worlds in speculative realities, science fiction is a far more androcentric genre among other types of literature, specifically because it centers around scientific branches such as physics, mathematics, astronomy and so forth. As a result, the works by male science fiction writers reflects this patriarchal culture that excludes women from the scientific realm.

Centering around male narratives and a strict masculinist perspective, female characters, if they are portrayed at all, are stereotypical images, helpless victims who depend on the men for their existence. Sarah Lefanu asserts that science fiction, "like all writing, is written from within a particular ideology" (Lefanu, 1988, p. 16), reflecting and perpetuating culturally built gender norms.

3. Women and Science Fiction

Women writers of science fiction make use of the boundlessness of science fiction to break cultural constraints on sexual identity. In their endeavor to represent womanhood realistically, they also undertake the task to change the images of women in male-created science fiction. Traditional masculinist science fiction tends to portray female characters as stereotypes, i.e., weak, passive, or evil and dangerous beings. In Beauvoir's words, they become the Other: "it must be repeated once more that in human society nothing is natural and that woman, like much else, is a product elaborated by civilization" (Beauvoir, 1949/1953, p. 617). A case in point is Lester Del Rey's short story "Helen O'Loy" (1971) which recounts how a male scientist who, as a modern-day Pygmalion, builds the perfect woman in the form of a female robot, incorporating all conventional feminine features.

Looking back at the earliest examples of science fiction by women writers, one can give the example of *A Description of a New World Called the*

Blazing World, Margaret Cavendish's 1666 novel, satirizing scientists and the consequences of their experiments. It is also a pioneer in that it provides a feminist point of view to science fiction. Cavendish's novel is followed by those by women who contributed to fantasy and science fiction before this term began to be used. These include nineteenth-century novels such as Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley's *Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus* (1818/1994), Jane Webb Loudon's *The Mummy! A Tale of the Twenty-Second Century* (1827/1994), and Mary Griffith's *Three Hundred Years Hence* (1836/1975).

Shelley's gothic novel became a classic female-authored science fiction novel, which presents a gripping critique of male-driven scientific progress, and the God complex that overtakes Dr. Victor Frankenstein in his ambitious endeavor to create a new race. However, the moment the creature opens its eyes, Frankenstein refuses to nurture it and abandons it. The novel shows that male-dominated science will lack the nurturing duties and responsibilities for created life. Shelley faced scrutiny and prejudice, as her contemporaries believed it must have been written by P.B. Shelley, who wrote a foreword to the masterpiece. Webb Loudon's novel, set in the year 2126, shares resemblances with Shelley's story, in that it deals with the revivification of a dead body. Lefanu points out that "the female Gothic offers more than strong-minded heroines; it offers a means to women, as does science fiction, to challenge dominant literary conventions and to produce a literature that can be at once subversive and popular (Lefanu, 1988, p. 25). She adds: "Like Gothic fantasy, science fiction opens up a universe of possibilities for women" (Lefanu, 1988, p. 27). Later, the Victorian period witnesses the popularity of ghost stories by J.H. Riddell, Elizabeth Gaskell, Sarah Orne Jewett, and Edith Wharton.

Elizabeth Stuart Phelps and Mary E. Brandley in the latter part of the nineteenth century, and Charlotte Perkins Gilman at the start of the twentieth-century, are considered feminists of the first wave of the women's movement. Their fiction focused on patriarchal notions of family, femininity, birth control, hypocrisy, among many others. As Luce Irigaray claims, the gender role ascribed to women is just that, "a role, an image, imposed upon women by male systems of representation" (Irigaray, 1977/1985, p. 84). Carl Freedman argues that, despite its history as a male-dominated genre, "science fiction is an especially appropriate form for feminism" and feminist social theory (Freedman, 2000, p. 131).

In the twentieth century, between 1925 and 1960, pulp magazines published science fiction stories, which were predominantly written by male writers. A minority of female writers, such as C. L. (Catherine Lucille) Moore and Leigh Brackett, created male-driven stories aiming for a male fanbase. Most importantly, their language use has a masculine quality, foregrounding values such as courage and heroism, in addition to using solely the initials of their names or male pseudonyms to avoid bias. Moore's female cyborg

Deirdre in her short story “No Woman Born” (1944) challenges the notion of “woman” and “human,” pointing out the artificiality of constructed gender roles.

Examples of powerful feminist fiction in the 1960s and 1970s include Sonya Dorman’s “When I Was Miss Dow” (1974), Ursula K. Le Guin’s *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1969), Joanna Russ’s *The Female Man* (1973), Marge Piercy’s *Woman on the Edge of Time* (1976), and James Tiptree, Jr.’s “The Women Men Don’t See” (2004b). Le Guin explains her reasons for creating male-centered stories until the middle of the 1970s in “The Fisherman’s Daughter”:

I wrote my fiction about heroic adventures, high-tech futures, men in the halls of power, men—men were the central characters, the women were peripheral, secondary. Why don't you write about women? my mother asked me. I don't know how, I said. A stupid answer, but an honest one. (Le Guin, 1989, p. 234).

The genre of science fiction provides the means for feminist writers to challenge restricted gender roles, specifically those works centering on all-female societies. Joanna Russ, an important name in this field, emphasizes that feminist utopias emerged as “reactive” stories (Russ, 1981, p. 144). Feminist science fiction, specifically in the 1960s and 70s, comprise utopian societies that showcase struggle for subjectivity, breaking free from subordination, domestic labor, and absolute dependence on men. Brian Attebery points out that science fiction “opens up new ways of talking gender: new things to say and new ways to say them” (Attebery, 2002, p. 14).

Lefanu claims that “By borrowing from other literary forms it lets writers defamiliarise the familiar, and make familiar the new and strange. ... The social and sexual hierarchies of the contemporary world can be examined through the process of 'estrangement', thus challenging normative ideas of gender roles” (Lefanu, 1988, p. 21). Hélène Cixous is an important figure who calls for women to create an “écriture féminine,” in her powerful essay “The Laugh of the Medusa”:

I shall speak about women's writing: about what it will do. Woman must write her self: must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies—for the same reasons, by the same law, with the same fatal

goal. Woman must put herself into the text-as into the world and into history-by her own movement (Cixous, 1975/1976, p. 875).

A further objective is to portray real women and their experiences in lieu of stereotypical images of women in mainstream science fiction. According to Joanna Russ, who focuses on the image of women in science fiction, the genre provides an arena for “speculation about the innate personality differences between men and women, about family structure, about sex, in short about gender roles” (Russ, 2017, p. 210). In addition, feminist writers employ various strategies to make gender dichotomy obsolete by either eliminating gender altogether or creating androgynous beings. One such strategy is depicting a world without the dichotomy created by male presence. Science fiction writers such as Charlotte Perkins Gilman, James Tiptree Jr and Joanna Russ imagine worlds inhabited solely by women who embrace nature rather than exploiting it, ultimately leading to a harmonious life in balance with nature. As Kate Millett claims, excluding and eradicating the sexual politics that emerges from the dichotomous male world, consisting of hierarchies. The world is a “male manufacture” (Millett, 1969, p. 25).

The invading men show incredulity at the existence of a non-dichotomous world. Their expectation is that of the “normal” or “natural” way of a hierarchical existence in which the male gender rules over the weaker sex. Feminist science fiction questions the artificiality of so-called “natural” aspect of gender. For instance, In Joanna Russ’ short story “When It Changed,” the male visitors from earth claim that Whileaway, consisting solely of women, is “unnatural,” to which the narrator replies: “Humanity is unnatural” (Russ, 1972, p. 772). His insistence on describing men as “people” only implies the dichotomous relations on earth as natural.

3.1 Gilman’s Feminist Utopia *Herland*

An alternate society of all-woman communities constitutes one of the popular themes in 1970s feminist utopias, of which Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s fiction became a pioneering example. Gilman also authored non-fiction work centering on social reform. For instance, in *Women and Economics: A Study of the Economic Relations Between Men and Women as a Factor in Social Evolution* (1898), Charlotte Perkins Gilman asserts the need to reform “in our minds the position of woman under conditions of economic independence” (Gilman, 1999, p. 144). Gilman’s theory of gender necessitates equal opportunities for women to render them independent and useful for a progressive society.

Gilman’s utopia *Herland*, originally published in 1915, has become the inspiration for many women writers who envision ideal worlds without sexual oppression. The novel recounts the exploration of three male American explorers who discover a land inhabited solely by women. Prior to their

discovery, all of them voice their beliefs that an all-female country must be uncivil, primitive, and chaotic. Their expectations range from a nunnery to an uncivilized place where order simply cannot exist, all deducted from their ingrained sexist ideas about “female nature”.

The novel opens with the narrator Van’s (Vandyck Jennings) account that he lost all his notes and drawings to describe these women’s land. He does admit that “descriptions aren’t any good when it comes to women” (3) and neither are prescription for Gilman. Van, a sociologist, ponders: “If there is such a place ... a strange and terrible ‘Woman Land’ in the high distance” (Gilman, 1999, p. 4), “you’ll find it’s built on a sort of matriarchal principle” (Gilman, 1999, p. 9), to which Terry O. Nicholson (“the Old Nick”), the misogynist among them, replies: “They would fight among themselves ... Women always do. We mustn’t look to find any sort of order and organization ... it’ll be awfully primitive ... I’ll get myself elected King in no time” (Gilman, 1999, p. 10). Van adds that he “used to argue learnedly about the physiological limitations of the sex” (Gilman, 1999, p. 11).

Hence their disbelief at finding a land that is not only civilized, but also progressive. As they observe the country and the all-female inhabitants, their comparisons with the women in their society showcases the ingrained preconceptions about gender identities. Their conventional idea of “woman” as Kate Millett illustrates in *Sexual Politics*, is passive, shy, modest, which in patriarchal terms, renders her “feminine.” (Millett, 1969, p. 26). However, the women in this utopia clash with this constructed image. They have short hair, dress plainly, but what’s more poignant, they are very rational, bright, athletic and strong, which are qualities believed to belong solely to the male sex. Consequently, the three explorers find themselves unable to view these inhabitants as “women.” With their insight, intellect, and inquisitive nature, these women appear cold, distant and more importantly, too confident as far as these male visitors are concerned. Van describes them as “not, in the girl sense, beautiful ... as I looked from face to face, calm, grave, wise, wholly unafraid, evidently assured and determined” (Gilman, 1999, p. 21) and “inconveniently reasonable” (Gilman, 1999, p. 57). When Celis asks Jeff why women are weaker, he resorts to “convention” (Gilman, 1999, p. 93), which evidently proves the men’s culture is shaped by these artificial customs and practices.

Van’s portrayal of these amazons alters the more he studies this alternative society:

These women, whose essential distinction of motherhood was the dominant note of their whole culture, were strikingly deficient in what we call “femininity.” This led me very promptly to the conviction that

those “feminine charms” we are so fond of are not feminine at all, but mere reflected masculinity – developed to please us because they had to please us, and in no way essential to the real fulfillment of their great process (Gilman, 1999, p. 60).

The men are educated about these women’s world, and their dedication to their Mother Goddess. The inhabitants of country reproduce through parthenogenesis, which they perceived as a “gift from the gods” (Gilman, 1999, p. 57) and began a “new race” (Gilman, 1999, p. 59) that proved to be a success, as opposed to Viktor Frankenstein’s ambitious dream. As the narrator interprets: “Here was Mother Earth ... all that they ate was fruit of motherhood ... By motherhood were they born and by motherhood they lived – life was, to them, just the long cycle of motherhood” (Gilman, 1999, p. 61). What’s more, the further the men explain their patriarchal culture to their hostesses, the more Van realizes he became “less proud ... of what we, with all our manhood, had done” (Gilman, 1999, p. 61). On the subject of religion, the men find out that these women revere a “great Mother Spirit” but they do not understand the notion of worship, blind obedience. These are unquestionable practices towards “the God of the Christian world” as Van explains that “we had simply taken over the patriarchal idea ... all we have to do is Believe – and Obey” (Gilman, 1999, p. 113).

While their goal is to subdue and subjugate the women, ironically, they become the ones who are captured and “taught.” They are “mastered,” by the women. Gilman intersperses humorous instances in Van’s narration: “We felt like small boys ... caught doing mischief in some gracious lady’s house” (Gilman, 1999, p. 21). Following an unsuccessful endeavor by the men to overpower the women they encounter and Terry firing a gun in the air, Van narrates that they find themselves “much in the position of the Suffragette trying to get to the Parliament buildings through a triple cordon of London police ... struggling manfully, but held secure most womanfully (Gilman, 1999, p. 25). A sense of falling through the looking-glass overcomes the men, as Jeff strives to comprehend: “They don’t seem to notice our being men ... It’s as if our being men was a minor incident” (p. 32). This utopian, all-woman country defies description through the phallogocentric gaze, even the name “Herland” is only used by the male explorers.

All through the novella, until his expulsion, Terry, the most patriarchal-minded one, finds himself unable to call the inhabitants “women,” and refers to them as, “Maiden Aunts” (Gilman, 1999, p. 60), “grandmas,” (p. 22), and “boys .. a standoffish, disagreeable lot ... critical, impertinent ... no girls at all” (p. 87), reiterating their lack of femininity. He frustratedly adds: “They’ve no modesty ... no patience, no submissiveness, none of the natural

yielding which is woman's greatest charm" (Gilman, 1999, p. 99). This refusal to call them women illustrates the ingrained image of women. Terry's aggressiveness comes out when he concludes that the women "have never been mastered" (Gilman, 1999, p. 95). His attempt at raping Alima results in expulsion from Herland, yet he insists that these "old maids ... don't know the first thing about Sex" (Gilman, 1999, p. 132). Van explains that when Terry says "sex with a very large S, he meant the male sex, naturally" (Gilman, 1999, p. 132).

The fact that Gilman chose a male narrator reflects his internalization of the matrilineal society that lives in harmony with nature's cyclical time. A further aim of a male voice is to invite readers of both sexes to question their current social norms. This newly-discovered country proves the possibility of a social structure where gender constraints do not define the individual. Furthermore, this matriarchal society is free of evils such as war, hierarchy, injustice, class distinctions, crime, or exploitation, all of which Van admits to exist in his patriarchal country. In addition, Gilman shows how language is formed by cultural values and in return, reflects these values. For instance, these women do not comprehend the meaning of words such as "wife," "virginity," or "family name," which illustrate how culture reflects in the language use.

Juxtaposing the male world with their own, Somel points out the obvious deficiencies:

We find that in all your historic period, so much longer than ours, that with all the interplay of services, the exchange of inventions and discoveries, and the wonderful progress we so admire, that in this widespread Other World of yours, there is still much disease, often contagious ... Also there is still, in varying degree, ignorance, with prejudice and unbridled emotion ... We find also that in spite of the advance of democracy and the increase of wealth, that there is still unrest and sometimes combat (Gilman, 1999, pp. 143-144).

Having pointed out the failings of their world, the narrator shares his understanding of Herland, proving the superiority of this matriarchal society. Following a process of assessment and scrutiny of his lifelong norms and accepted values, Van recounts what he internalizes about this utopia:

These were women one had to love “up,” very high up, instead of down. They were not pets. They were not servants. They were not timid, inexperienced, weak. After I got over the jar to my pride ... I found that loving “up” was a very good sensation after all. It gave me a queer feeling, way down deep, as of the stirring of some ancient dim prehistoric consciousness, a feeling that they were right somehow – that this was the way to feel. It was like-coming home to mother ... I mean the feeling that a very little child would have, who had been lost-for ever so long. It was a sense of getting home; of being clean and rested; of safety and yet freedom (Gilman, 1999, p. 139).

3.2. Tiptree’s short story “Houston, Houston, Do You Read?”

One of Gilman’s many followers is James Tiptree, Jr., a pseudonym for Dr. Alice Sheldon, who as many women writers, used a male name to avoid sexual prejudice. After receiving many awards for her fiction, the world found out her true identity. Tiptree’s fiction is mostly narrated by a male voice as many women science fiction writers adhered to the male narrative tradition. For nearly eight years, unanimous comments pointed out that her writing style was very masculine which stems from her overtly macho narrators who objectify women. However, at the same time, Tiptree’s fictive worlds lead the reader into interrogating accepted perceptions of gender.

In Tiptree’s short story “Houston, Houston, Do You Read?” first published in 1976, one can discern many similarities with Gilman’s feminist utopia. The story recounts how, following damage to their spacecraft, three American astronauts try to reach the space center in Houston, but subsequently get in contact with Luna Central on Earth who refer them to another craft, *Escondita*, with an all-woman crew. The name means “hidden” in Spanish, referring to the hidden land of women in Gilman’s novel. The setting of the story is another ship, *Gloria*, that saves the men from asphyxiation.

The male astronauts, who are drugged for the women’s protection, remind the reader of Gilman’s three explorers in *Herland*. The story is narrated through a third person point of view, centering on the perspective of Dr. Orren Lorimer, a scientist who Tiptree depicts as insecure and intimidated by the other two men. The narration commences with Lorimer’s embarrassing

experience in a women's restroom when he was much younger, given in flashbacks and reflecting his repressed anger, as he ponders: "*I am not a girl!*" He proves to be the beta male among the two alphas on a year-long expedition on the command module *Sunbird*. It is to be noted that Tiptree realistically reflects the male ego and dynamics and tension among the men.

The other two men are Captain Bernhard Geirr, or Bud, a womanizer who gradually becomes sexually violent toward the women, and Major Norman Davis (Dave). The latter emphasizes his emphatic belief in God, the Creator, and establishes himself as the most patriarchal figure, as pointed out, "the full chestnut beard gives him a patriarchal gravity" (Tiptree, 2004a, p. 166). The men are informed that they are in another time dimension, since they unwittingly travelled through a black hole and realize that they "jumped forward in time" (Tiptree, 2004a, p. 175). Quite literally, they find themselves in another world in another time.

They are devastated to be informed that the world as they knew it is no longer there. Because of a world epidemic, an airborne human-made virus, that damaged reproductive cells, Earth's population decreased from eight to two million, and sterility stopped new births, mainly affecting men. Most continents, including America, are uninhabited. Before they became all extinct, the remaining men, referred to as "crazies," captured and raped women after the epidemic began. The world as the men know is gone, and there exists another "service and communication facility for space flights" (Tiptree, 2004a, p. 179) and for two centuries, the space center in Houston does no longer exist.

The male point of view describes the new female world as one without a formal structure of government, abolishing any form of hierarchy, and instead of a government, the women rotate in the fields they are in charge of. Notions such as money, private property, or army are now obsolete. Among many concepts no longer valid for these women are prayer, as they also are not familiar with a Christian Bible. Their idea of faith is belief in themselves, heavily opposed by religious Dave. The men liken this new reality to one of the science-fiction stories Lorimer is said to enjoy.

Lorimer discovers they artificially engender babies on the new earth through cloning, and mothers bear children cared for by other women in crèches. The women on the craft consist of Lady Blue, and the "sisters" Judy Dakar and Judy Paris, who turn out to be clones. Another passenger is Andy, or an "andy," a product of "early androgen treatments" (Tiptree, 2004a, p. 203), who are created solely for muscle-power. The men call the female astronauts "the chicks" (Tiptree, 2004a, p. 164), and judge them for being too plain and comment they would look better if they "fixed themselves up" (Tiptree, 2004a, p. 165) in order to look more appealing and "feminine."

The tension mounts when the men's violent intentions become clear. Luna warns that the "male persons" are "from a *very different culture*"

(Tiptree, 2004a, p. 185). This concern about the women being in the same spacecraft as the men proves to be correct as, as Bud voices his menacing plans to impregnate the women and exploit the all-women inhabited Earth. In this respect, Myda warns Judy that the men, who are figures out of history in their view, have a “very rigid authority code ... being commanding. That’s called dominance-submission structure, one of them gave orders and the others did whatever they were told, we don’t know quite why ... if the dominant one is in shock or panicked, maybe the others can’t reply unless this David lets them” (Tiptree, 2004a, p. 177). This is obvious as Dave feels restless since he is not the one in command, and “not deciding the course” (Tiptree, 2004a, p. 192) instead of the women.

The scene of Bud’s attempted rape of one of the women in zero gravity includes moments of humor and sarcasm. Bud’s previous wishful thinking of becoming an irresistible catch for the women on earth sharply contrasts with his becoming an object of research on the craft. During his attack, it becomes clear that the other women are observing him, and recording his actions on film while the assaulted woman starts to collect the floating sperm sample in a bag. Following Bud’s violent assault, he is subdued, and it is Major David’s turn to attack their female rescuers. He claims these women “have forgotten He who made them” and that they have “lived in darkness” (Tiptree, 2004a, p. 212) without a patriarch to rule them, in need of “guidance,” quoting the Bible that “the head of the woman is the man.” Holding the cross, David claims that God has sent him on purpose, to guide these women “Let the women learn in silence and all subjection” (Tiptree, 2004a, p. 212) “They shall have sons to rule over them and glorify Thy name” as he continues to call the woman “Serpent!” (Tiptree, 2004a, p. 213) since she is disobedient and blasphemous because they deny a father as their leader. This is followed by exclaiming his innate wish of bringing back the structured life he is accustomed to: “There is going to be some order around here” (Tiptree, 2004a, p. 213). “Order” refers to the patriarchal hierarchy he believes to be natural. Dave threatens with a gun, another phallic weapon he will use to bring back the natural order of his own world. Finally, he is subdued by their rescuers. In a final attempt to stress that men are vital for humanity, and they are the only gender that will protect them from any form of danger that may come to humanity, Lady Blue points out the irony that all kind of violence and wars “ended when you did” (Tiptree, 2004a, p. 215). Despite their intentions to help these rescued men, the women choose to be cautious and decide not to endanger Earth by bringing them back with them. She explains: “We can hardly turn you loose on Earth, and we simply have no facilities for people with your emotional problems” (Tiptree, 2004a, p. 215). This implies that the feminist utopia on the planet no longer has need for such facilities to imprison humans following mental disturbances, or crime. The fact that as men, they are “irrelevant” (Tiptree, 2004a, p. 216) to these women of a brave new world, is mortifying for the men.

In response to the men's questions: "What do you call yourselves? Women's World? Liberation? Amazonia?" (Tiptree, 2004a, p. 216) the women identify themselves as human beings, the species that women have so long been alienated from as they have been turned into "the objectified Other," as Simone de Beauvoir posits (Beauvoir, 1949/1953, p. 10). With emphasis, the women reiterate that they are part of "Humanity, mankind ... The human race" (Tiptree, 2004a, p. 216).

4. CONCLUSION

To conclude, feminist science fiction aspires to break down the dualistic nature of male-dominated literature by creating alternate realities. In building female subjectivity through various strategies, they strive toward social change. These strategies range from altering language use to building different worlds where the patriarchal ideology cannot exist any longer. One of the aims is to lead the reader to question socially constructed gender roles and imagine what realities could be possible. As much as literature holds a mirror to culture, pointing out weakness and corruption, it can also point out the necessary steps toward change in order to improve societies.

Whether stated between the lines, or blatantly satirized in harsh truths, literature both reflects the realities of civilizations, power structures and sexual politics and proposes solutions to age old conflicts. This paper researches the ways feminist science fiction writers, such as Gilman and Tiptree, disclose patriarchally structured hierarchies in their speculative works, that lead to estrangement and conflict. Feminist theory questions established orders in political terms, while science fiction presents alternative realities in the imaginative world. Gilman and Tiptree are among many others who inspired postmodern feminist writers such as Margaret Atwood, Ursula K. Le Guin, and Marge Piercy.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding this research.

ETHICS COMMITTEE APPROVAL / PARTICIPANT CONSENT

Ethics committee approval is not required for this study. There are no participants in this study.

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