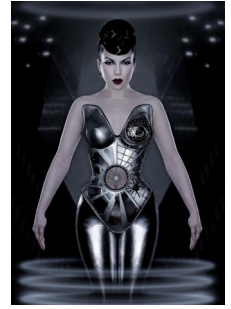


ANDROMEDA'S OFFSPRING

Issue 2: Oct 2011



Hi All, and welcome to the second issue of Andromeda's Offspring. Firstly, my apologies for the issue with the last page that meant my contact details were wiped off. Big oops! For future reference, please feel free to send me your thoughts and comments to theresa.derwin@yahoo.co.uk or contact me via my website www.terror-tree.co.uk.

- In this second issue you can read;
- Comments Page - Your views.
- Part 2 of Sam Fennell's story *Happy Birthday Harley Jones*, including a brief bio of Sam
- Part 2 of *B-Movie Beauties*, focusing on *Galaxina* and *Barbarella*
- Author Profile - Joanna Russ
- Classic Book Review - *The Female Man* by Joanna Russ
- Contemporary Book Reviews - *Debris* by Jo Anderton & *Zoo City* by Lauren Beukes

I do hope you enjoy this issue, and as always I welcome your thoughts. As such, it's logical to start with your letters telling me what you thought of issue one. Thank you to everyone who took the time to write to me.

Comments and complaints: YOUR VIEWS AND LETTERS

I heard from lots of people this issue, in fact too many to mention, so I am including a mixture of full responses and thought I'd start with the formatting and typo feedback. Firstly I heard from Rog Peyton of the BSFG. He said, "One minor point is that you call Andromeda 'a little independent bookshop'. Andromeda was actually one of the biggest independents - third largest in the Midlands - with a turnover approaching £500,000 per year. 'Little' is wasn't."

My apologies. It's because Andromeda always felt small in its approach to customers and was a great place to mingle and chat. No offence meant.

Rog also wrote, "A nice magazine but could do with more meat - why not include Pt 2 of 'B-movie Beauties' in this first issue? A 10-page issue, half of which is Sam's story, seems a little slim. You could always include the 2nd part of the story as well. Why not leave publishing until you've got at least 24 pages?"

Rog also offered some useful formatting and grammatical feedback. Thanks, Rog.

I also heard from Dave Langford, who had this to say; “I see this has already been put on line at eFanzines.com and briefly discussed on a fan mailing list. One participant pointed out that it was impossible to comment or copy comments to Theresa because the eFanzines version (a PDF) doesn't include contact information.” Dave also helpfully pointed out some typos on the original draft.

Dave Corby sought feedback and noted that “the columns seem to be the main point of criticism so far. One of my contacts who has commented is Andrew Butler, who is the editor of Amon Hen, the Tolkien Society newsletter. While he did mention the columns, he also pointed out that he really enjoyed the first part of the “Harley Jones” story and is looking forward to part 2!”

You hopefully will note an improvement in the issue layout this month.

Jennifer wrote: “I think overall it looks good--however, the full justification in the columns on the first page makes it very hard to read, and looks sloppy. Full justification is generally evil, but it's even more evil in columns!”

Thanks Jennifer, I have attempted to rectify such heinous evil!

In respect of actual content and the themes of the fanzine, Dave Corby had more to say. “I think that the evolution of women’s roles in SF film, etc. is a fertile source for a column. For example, if we move on to the 60s we get 2001: A Space Odyssey, where the lot of women has improved (they are at least respected scientists now, with nary a mention of time taken for hair treatment) but they still take a secondary seat to the all-male protagonists. Eventually you can compare with 2010 in the 80s, where the Russian spacecraft is actually commanded by a woman, no less, who plays a very important role in the plot! Not to mention the existence of a twin computer to HAL with a female persona. It also occurred to me that in considering female authors of SF, I start struggling, once again, with the definition of SF. For example: Anne McCaffrey is a very well recognised author, and she has argued repeatedly that she is writing SF. But many readers assume she writes fantasy. Where is the line drawn?”

Food for thought indeed!

This succinct response comes from Chris M:

“Good work! I'd like to see some more factual stuff about Brum fandom etc”



Someone trying to meet my challenge of naming 20 of over 150 female SF authors is another Chris:

"I just wanted to drop a line saying that I read and enjoyed your new zine and can't wait to read more. The Fan Fiction piece was especially fun.

"I did, at my desk, surrounded by piles of Computer History and Steampunk novels, take the twenty women SF writers challenge and while it took me a few minutes (how hard was it to dig the name Ursula K. LeGuin out of my head?) I managed.

"My list: Octavia Butler, Gail Carriger, Cherie Priest, Ekaterina Sedin, Mary Robinette Kowal, Ursula, Carrie Vaughn, Kij Johnson, Seanan McGuire, Lauren Beukes, Nancy Kress, Tanith Lee, James Tiptree, Jr., Marion Zimmer Bradley, Connie Willis, Lois McMaster Bujold, Susanna Clarke, Chelsea Quinn Yarborough, Elizabeth Bear, Elizaeth Moon, and Karen Anderson.

"And then I looked over the list and thought "Hmmm... I wonder if some of them are just fantasy authors" and then it completely slipped my mind and I moved on to trying to find contact info to send this missive. I own books by everyone of the above writers, and with the exception of McMasters Bujold, Moon and Yarborough, have read multiple books by all of them. I am far from an enlightened reader, and if you asked me my five favorite authors only one would be a woman (in this case Tiptree) and of my favorite Genre writers, there's only Tiptree, Christa Faust and Cherie Priest, though Kij has been growing on me.

"All in all, I am excited to see that you've started a fine zine here!"
Chris

Well done on your list Chris. Some good names in there!

"Hi Theresa,

Thanks for "Andromeda's Offspring" - I look forward to receiving more issues of this fanzine. I read your rant on B-movie heroines of the 50s with amusement. It has been noticeable that there has been little change in the role of women the recent superhero movies - the woman's place is to be eye candy, to scream picturesquely, and be rescued by the hero. There have been some attempts to provide personality or character or believability to these icons but usually it fails miserably. I was very pleased to have seen the recent "Captain America", a film that I went to see with no expectations. The love interest was an independent female British agent with a knowledge of science and an ability to move the plot along when the hero is potentially stymied. Far from screaming and waiting to be rescued from deadly peril she actually goes in with the ground troops and providing covering fire and being pretty heroic herself. A vast improvement over the likes of Pepper Potts and Mary Jane Watson. (*I completely agree Julia*). One problem I had with the fanzine was with the story "Happy Birthday Harley Jones" - although I am enjoying the story, I was thrown out a couple of times by the lack of proper proof-reading/editing. Whilst I appreciate that this is "fan fiction", I feel that this should not mean that it is unnecessary to proof-read work. (This makes me think of the difference between "amateur" and "unprofessional" - when running conventions my friends and I were amateurs, doing it for the love of the thing, but determined not to be unprofessional, ie, saying "we don't have to do a good job because we are not being paid for it. Our intention was to do the best job possible because we were passionate and cared about what we were doing.) It occurred to me that perhaps I am misunderstanding, and the writer's intention is to be writing in Harley's "voice", but if this is the case, it seems inconsistent and unconvincing. (*The editing and proof reading falls to me*). I hope this is helpful and not disheartening. I look forward to your next issue."

Best regards, Julia Daly

Thanks to Lloyd Penney, who had lots of ideas to share:

“Dear Theresa:

“Many thanks for Andromeda’s Offspring 1. Thanks to Steve Green, I now have your e-mail address, and can forward comments on what I read here. I promise I will try to be as constructive as possible, and try to give you something similar to what I send to Steve when he does a zine.

“SF is indeed the literature of ideas, but it needs an examination from time to time, to see if it indeed delivers to us what we want out of it. This is a more enlightened age than in the past (I’d like to think, notwithstanding riots in Vancouver and London), and while it would be good not to have to worry about who produces the literature we love, especially their gender, there is an imbalance as to men and women writing the novels and short stories. Is there a reason why there’s more men than women? Will publication records bear out that observation? Is there a reason why there are more men than women on the Hugo ballot? Do men not nominate and vote for women? Do women not nominate and vote for men? Do women not nominate and vote for women, for that matter? There seems to be a fairly equal attendance between men and women at the Worldcon, and fandom itself probably has more women in it. Do we need to get to know female SF writers better? Absolutely. Wiscon does a very good job of that, but they are only one convention, and their voice needs to multiply. Will this fanzine do the same job through the printed word? I hope it will.

“Lauren Beukes not only won the Clarke, but she is also nominated for a World Fantasy award, and is a Campbell nominee on the Hugo ballot. I have noticed that some are calling her an American writer, as you have; I believe she is actually from South Africa. I know there are many who are honing their writing skills in Johannesburg; I expect there to be a uprising of South African SF writers in the next few years.

“Women have been portrayed as those gentle creatures in so many B-movies, true. We don’t see female scientists/leaders/bosses/etc. the same way we see their male counterparts. Main bosses are leaders, female bosses are bitches, etc. We all need to change our way of thinking. This also reflects on the way we regard men’s professional sports versus women’s professional sport. The men pull down the big contracts; the women are lucky to get plane fare to their next game. The men’s final is more important than the women’s final, etc.

“Canadian science fiction has its share of female SF stars...Tanya Huff, J.M. Frey, Karen Wehrstein, Shirley Meier, Karen Dales, Marie Bilodeau, Violette Malan, Julie Czerneda, Sandra Kasturi, Nancy Kilpatrick, Diane Walton...there are many more. They helped to lead the emergence of Canadian science fiction about 20 or more years ago, and they continue to lead.

“The recent death of Joanna Russ got many people thinking about our female writers, and the fact there are four females of five authors of novels nominated for the Best Novel Hugo helps the cause. The disinvite of Rebecca Ore to Wiscon also got people talking about ideas, opinions, political stands and how we react if their opinions are different than yours, or many even offend you. If we could only agree to disagree...

“I am very interested to see what you do with this zine as the issues go on. There were some who complained bitterly about the fact there was no e-mail address to communicate with...if only they’d asked how to get in touch, they wouldn’t have looked so foolish. Many thanks, I look forward to issue 2.”

Yours, Lloyd Penney

William McCabe wrote in about <http://www.bbc.co.uk/i/b013q20k/>, "which is the first episode of a series "Cat Women of the Moon" on SF and sex. They've got several good writers interviewed (Iain Banks, China Mieville, Geoff Ryman) and Mike Ashley at the British Library exhibition. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b0145x7h> is episode 2 of the series. I'm not sure how much longer episode 1 will be available and I haven't been able to get at episode 2 yet but it might be of some interest."

Thanks William. Worth checking this out.

"Hi Theresa!

"Just wanted to say how much I enjoyed Andromeda's Offspring, and it was lovely to meet you at the Grey Lodge horror fiction gathering as well (*If you are interested in attending thios please contact me*). I loved the first part of "Happy Birthday, Harley Jones" and look forward to the second part. The name and the idea behind it is great, I never got round to going into the Andromeda bookshop which I now regret.

"I'm wondering if the perceived lack of female science fiction writers is similar to the perceived lack of women in science - enough people have said that there aren't that many women in SF/science that it has become "common knowledge". As a female with a BSc in Physics who has ended up working in Analytical Chemistry (long story), I can say with some authority that there are plenty of women scientists out there.

"I'm looking forward to the review of "The Female Man" as it's one of the few books I've read that I didn't really like. I expect that's down to me misunderstanding it or something. Maybe I read it too literally?

"So thank you for a great first issue and I look forward to reading more."

Jinnie the Perky Goth

Thanks Jinnie

And finally, I heard from David Moody, author of Hater and Autumn, among other horror novels.

"Hi Theresa

"I think it's a great first issue with plenty of strong, original content (and that's without a doubt the most important aspect of any mag.). I love 1950s B movies, so I particularly enjoyed the feature. We've lost a lot of 50s scream queens this year, and it's nice to see them celebrated like this. Please keep me on the mailing list because I'd love to read subsequent issues, if that's okay."

David Moody

SFX Magazine also commented on this fanzine in its recent issue and noted the technical formatting errors but overall felt it had a lot to offer the field.

Thank you to everyone who took time out to write in. Much appreciated!

Theresa

FAN FICTION: HAPPY BIRTHDAY HARLEY JONES (part 2 OF 2)

Before cracking on with part two of Sam's story, I thought it might be nice for you to meet her. Here is a brief bio from Sam about herself and her writing:

When I started writing:

I painted a lot when I was younger, and I would write stories to accompany the paintings, so the pictures came first and the words came later! My first real try at writing stories properly was as part of a writing group at secondary school. Unfortunately I was challenged by my teacher to stop reading fantasy novels and read some 'proper literature'! I read widely as a result but have retained a hatred for intellectual snobbery and over-analysing creative activities ever since. I try to keep stories and the language in them as simple as possible.

Favourite Authors:

My favourite SF writer is Ursula LeGuin. There is a satisfying completeness about her novels, from start to finish I feel that I am reading a rich and involved story that is considered and directed. The spot is shared with Iain M Banks, who writes about worlds that I could never imagine and opened my eyes to how exciting and how 'big' science fiction stories could be.

Fan Fiction:

I've been reading fan fiction for years. It sometimes has a bad reputation, but there are some genuinely good writers involved. It is often a very accepting and encouraging community. I'll be happy to continue writing fan fiction and stories for years to come.

Sam Fennell

See below for the continuing story of Harley Jones.

FAN FICTION: HAPPY BIRTHDAY HARLEY JONES (part 2 OF 2)

I became more restless and troubled by the day. My dream had seemed so real, and yet it had raised more questions. Who was Michael? Why were they trying to find me, to take me home, to that planet? As I reflected, I knew I had to keep a lid on it. I had to keep sensible, sane, steady ... My blood tests had been fine, my cognitive tests had been fine, but I had heard those murmured low voices as the Doctor had come to check on me again; "the tests aren't necessarily conclusive, just an indicator, delusions can mean senility." The doctor had finished his conversation with Rosa by saying "observe him very carefully. Let's get him on an anti-depressant for now."

The morning after that conversation Rosa, satisfied that my bed was dry again in the morning, sat down and handed me my paper ramekin of pills. Now with a blue pill. I didn't question it.

“How are we feeling Harvey?” she said gently.

“I’m annoyed’, I said. I hadn’t had a dream with Michael in for three weeks.

“Would you like to talk about it?” she asked.

“Have you ever felt like you don’t belong?” I said, “as if you thought you were part of something, but that you’re not really a part of it at all, and you feel kind of...kind of...”

“Isolated?” she finished.

“Yeah, isolated. I thought I belonged somewhere, but now, I’m just stuck here at Sunrise - nothing happens, except sometimes someone dies”.

Rosa nodded. “Maybe if you got involved in some more activities, you might feel less isolated...”

“No!” I cut her off irritably. “I don’t belong here, don’t you get it? I don’t belong at Sunrise, I don’t belong in this town, and I don’t belong on this planet! They’ve just pumped my head full of everything about their planet and left me here to die and I don’t know why the hell they would want to do that.”

Rosa patted me on the knee. “Don’t worry Harl, we’ll always look after you here, why don’t you take a nice rest, I’ll make you some warm milk.”

I nodded dumbly, too tired to wipe away the salty tears that streamed down my face.

I took a walk that evening. Sunrise was stifling, at least the garden was out in the world and it seemed real. I knew what was coming; my outburst this morning would have convinced Rosa and the Doctor I was senile, or at least delusional. There would be more pills, more check ups.

The trees moved in unison with the breeze, nodding in agreement with me and rustling gently. The weather was muggy, I heard thunder in the distance. I looked up, I could see only three or four stars.



Cloud covered the rest of the sky. This planet I thought, is a wonder. It may not be mine, and my life might have been more misery than joy, but it is truly a wonder.

Damn you, Michael. I looked up at the only star now visible.

“Damn you!” I muttered.

A few weeks ago I had been happy, playing bridge, pottering in the garden, having plenty of naps. I had accepted my fate; I had accepted that my family were dead; my son was dead, that I would most likely die at Sunrise. I would kiss the photo of my son every night and every morning. And now I was tired, aggravated, not sleeping. I could never mention any of this to anyone, my outbursts had been stupid, but it was clear that I couldn’t talk to anyone about this. It was the most important thing in my life, after the birth and death of my son, the fact that I was from somewhere else. As I thought of Michael from my dreams, I realised that he had given me hope; hope of belonging, of a family, of not being alone. It was a false hope. There had been no more dreams, no visits, no damn flying saucers or close encounters.

“Damn you!” I shouted.

The thunder rolled closer, it fuelled my rage, I felt that it knew me, it knew I had to expel all my anger.

“Damn you! You come and give me hope, and then you leave me here to die!” I bellowed into the thundery air as it began to rain hard and heavy.

I waved my walking stick into the air, pointing at Michael and the planet and my son- the whole universe that had abandoned me.

“You don’t have the right! Do you hear me? You’ve been stringing me along all this time! And now, they think I’m mad! And where are you? On your damn sunny planet leaving me here to die like an old fool!” I cried as the thunder rolled and the wind whipped around me.

Lightning stuck a tree a few hundred yards from me in the Sunrise garden, sparks flew into the night’s sky like a firework and I could smell burning pine.

“You leave me alone; I don’t want to see you again! Get out of my dreams, get out of my head! Go to hell, go to HELL! You hear me? HELL!” I hollered, and I threw my walking stick into the air.

Two nurses dashed out from the Sunrise patio doors and ushered me back in, arms around me, wrapping me in a blanket. They lead me back to the dry common room, into the warm and calm.

“Are you okay Harley?” one asked. She was young, so pretty, and so full of concern, so I looked into her eyes and began to sob.

“Let’s get you to your room.”

They gently lifted me into a wheelchair, and took me off to bed.

Michael appeared in my dream again that night.

“Leave me alone, I don’t believe in you. The doctor’s right, I’m senile”, I had said, waving my stick at him. Slowly his face morphed, changed into that of my son. My beautiful handsome son, who had died so young huddled in a dirty corner of a dirty street, eyes open wide and staring, pupils dilated from whatever drug he had taken that day to ease whatever pain he suffered.

His head cocked slowly to one side. “We know where you are now, and we’re coming to bring you home”.

I woke up.

“You are not my son!” I exclaimed as I sat up.

Rosa was there, brown eyes full of pity.

“No Harley, it’s me Rosa”.

“I know that!” I snapped. “I had a bad dream”. She handed me my paper ramekin of pills. I swallowed.

“Get some more sleep Harley”, she said.

I lay back. Sedatives, I thought. They’ve given this delusional, demented pitiful old man some sedatives.

“You’ll be here soon Harley”, Michael said in the next dream.

“Look Michael, or whatever the hell your name is,” I said, ‘I don’t know who you are, or what you are, but I truly believed that I belonged here, on this planet, I don’t know why, but I did. But you know what? I know nothing! I don’t know your real name, I don’t know this planet’s name and I don’t know where it is. I don’t know what your birds and trees are called, I don’t know your music. I don’t know why your sky is such a dark blue. I don’t know if you have beer, coffee or Elvis. So don’t tell me that you are coming for me, when I don’t know what that means, or where the hell you’re going to take me to.”

What seemed to be a smile spread across Michael’s face.

“You are right Harley. I need to tell you some things. Why don’t we walk?”

We walked towards the line of trees in the field, past other people who also seemed deep in conversations as they walked around the field slowly.

“Can they see me?” I asked

“No, said the Tall Man, “but they can see me and they know I am talking to you, this is a shared space for communication.”

“I don’t follow”, I said as we turned a corner.

“It is like a room, in which we meet with people over long distances to communicate with them.”

“Yes, that is a good analogy”, he replied, and we continued walking for a while. A cool breeze felt enlivening on my face.

“I’m walking without my stick!” I exclaimed.

“You are not really walking,” Michael said. He stopped and turned to me, seemingly happy with the spot for us to stand and talk for a while.

“We have found where you are, and we would like to bring you here. This planet is similar to Earth in size, atmosphere and environment. Here you can see there are variations of our species. Those that look like me and those that look a little more like you. We share a common ancestry but at some point we evolved into two species.”

“You are human Harley, you are descended from us or we are descended from you. For some reason, a seed of knowledge in your mind has awakened and bloomed.”

“But how did you know? How did you find me?” I said.

“We have these communication rooms, we listen, we can hear this... seed being woken, ripened, in many people in many places.”

I looked around the field, and at all the people walking, many of them talking into the air.

“You mean these people are all having similar conversations? With people like me?”

“Yes, although not just on Earth, there are other planets and places and beings to whom we communicate. We do not have coffee, or beer. We can learn these things from you, but we have many things that you might enjoy. You would be looked after here, we hold elders in high regard and you would be home. This place, this planet, is not pronounceable in your language. It is called many things by many people, you may call it what you wish.”

“My son ... I said, looking down, looking at my feet, strangely bare, on the thick green grass. “You impersonated my son. That’s not fair. I don’t want you to do that again.”

“You saw your son, Harley, I do change how I appear. It was your son that you wanted to see”.

We paused. We stood in silence for a few minutes. I looked around. The air was clean, I took deep breaths. It seemed like a long time since I had breathed properly. The sky was bright. People seemed happy. I was reminded of the cleanness I had felt after my collapse, the uncluttered freshness of my mind, and it was here. That feeling had come from here. I had no one left on Earth, only more tests, more frustration, more stifling care.

“I’ll come”, I said slowly.

Michael smiled, still looking at the line of trees in the distance.

I woke up. I laughed. Another spaceman dream I thought, and reached for some water. I still had that feeling, the bliss, the calm, the freshness.

“Harley”.

I jumped out of my skin. Michael was stood in the corner of the room, half shadow, half real. He looked larger at first, as if in the light you could see only part of his form.

“You frightened me!” I said in good humour.

He stepped out of the corner. “Are you ready Harley?”

“Yeah,” I said eagerly, “I’m ready.”

I stood up and kissed the photo of my son, placing it back on the bedside table. Michael approached me, and embraced me in his arms. He felt so big, larger than life, three times the size he appeared.

I smiled, and for a moment, I imagined I was hugging my son and closed my eyes.

There was a popping sound, just on the edges of what I could hear. A bright flash and a bracing wind, the air felt charged, electric.

“We are here”, said Michael. I saw the line of trees, the field, and the sky. “Welcome home”.

I’ve remained here. There is no option to return to Earth. Now, I am 98. I am getting older, there is no doubt about that, but there is no real pain to speak of.

I will die, but not for a while yet, we are afforded a little more time here. And when I do die, I will stay here. All that I am made of stays here and becomes the blue sky and the green fields and the laughter in the air.

The people here fulfil their lives by caring, by nurturing. This planet is inhabited by our relations and distant cousins who look for our souls across the galaxy to bring them home, care for them, learn from them. They want to know about coffee and beer and Elvis, about Time magazine and the Queen and the ozone layer. They take delight in learning new songs, hearing poetry, seeing a painting. There are many others here like me, old and young from many different places. There are many here who are not quite like me, human looking but slightly different somehow. It took me a while, three or four years, to work all this out, to finally comprehend it.

“Did you realise this was heaven? Before you got here I mean?” I asked a friend once.

“Oh yes’, she said, where else could we be?”

The End

RANT OF THE MONTH:

B-Movie Beauties (part 2 OF 2)

In my mission to understand the portrayal of women in SF B Movies, I recently watched a handful of Classics. Before I crack on, let me say three things;

1. All comments in this rant should be taken with a pinch of salt because;
2. All subject material is a reflection of its time, and
3. Some films are absolute classics irrespective of gender representation.

My nephew Kyle is a bright spark. He dropped in to visit with the family recently and caught me guiltily watching *Galaxina* (I ruined my street cred I can tell you). However, in the midst of explaining *why* I was watching this film, we became involved in a debate about the representation of women in film, particularly SF B Movies. This reminded Kyle of an essay he was required to write on Laura Mulvey’s ‘The Male Gaze’.

A British feminist Film Theorist, in her essay ‘Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema’, Mulvey surmised that classic Hollywood films, “put the spectator in a *masculine subject position*, with the figure of the woman on screen as the *object of desire* . . . Meanwhile, Hollywood female characters of the 1950s and 60s were, according to Mulvey, coded with “to-be-looked-at-ness.” Mulvey suggests that there were two distinct modes of the [male gaze](#) of this era: “voyeuristic” (i.e. seeing women as ‘whores’) and “fetishistic” (i.e. seeing women as ‘madonnas’).” [Laura Mulvey - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#). (all itallics are mine)

Interesting stuff. And I would argue, particularly in respect of the two films I will discuss (*Barbarella* and *Galaxina*), that Mulvey was right. I’m not an expert in film or feminism by any means, but I do have a mind, and a pair of eyes. So, in true *Mulvey* fashion, I’m going to share with you my experience of recently viewing these two SF B-Movies. Before I start, yes, *Barbarella* is less of a B-Movie than *Galaxina*, and in fact in my opinion is a fantastically fun film. However, stay with me on this . . .



“In film, the male gaze^[1] occurs when the audience is put into the perspective of a heterosexual man. A scene may linger *on the curves of a woman's body*, for instance.^[2] Mulvey argues that in mainstream cinema, the male gaze typically takes precedence over the female gaze.” [Gaze - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)

So, let's start with *Galaxina*. Apart from dodgy sets, questionable acting and re-used special effects from the likes of *Star Trek* (check out the ship's siren), this film is quite fun. Starring the ill-fated Playboy Playmate of the Year Dorothy Stratten, *Galaxina* is rather like a poor man's *Barbarella*. It also boasts the rather gruesome fact that it was filmed the same year that Stratten was murdered by her manager.

The synopsis is pretty simple; Galaxina is a Robot with feelings who works on board a small phallic spaceship sent on a 54 year mission. Galaxina is quite literally a play toy, who can be controlled by the male crew of the ship and serves a candlelit dinner to the crew dressed in a party version of a French Maid's outfit. She also, rather interestingly, has *no voice*. In fact, she only develops a voice after spending 27 years of the outward journey alone, and re-programmes herself a voice purely to attract the 'Sarge' who is in love with her. Question: 'What exactly *did* he fall in love with?' It wasn't her dialogue, that's for sure.

Galaxina is frequently called 'Doll' and other possessive/demeaning nicknames and her entire purpose is to serve the men around her. She also spends much of the film sitting in her chair waiting to be called upon when she is needed. And once she can talk? Well, she comes out wearing a white negligee and bright lipstick, everything her man could wish for. In fact, she tells her Sarge, "Your every wish is my command". Not exactly the image of a modern woman of 1980 is she? I'll leave Galaxina right there as there isn't much more I need to say on it. Watch the film, it speaks for itself.

This brings me nicely to *Barbarella*. Gloriously camp and kitsch, the first scene of the film shows Barbarella stripping out of her space suit until naked, as she receives her mission to hunt down and recover Durand-Durand. Barbarella, living in a completely pacified universe, must stop Durand-Durand's positronic ray from being used to create war.





All of her outfits are exceptionally flattering whilst being titilating, designed to stir the male gaze. And to escape the majority of dangerous situations she finds herself in, she ends up offering various versions of sexual intercourse with random men. It's all about the love baby! We get the impression that Barbarella must surely be good in bed; after all, one session with her, and Pygar regains the will to fly.

Despite being frequently saved by her male counterparts, Barbarella is also a great feminist icon; beautiful, proud of her rediscovered sexuality, strong, and pretty much able to get the men in her life to do anything for her. We also have a bit of Lesbian fetishism in there with the Black Queen in Sogo.

Then there is the delightfully fun scene in which Barbarella is imprisoned by Durand-Durand as he plays his 'giant organ' making her climax. Magnificently, Barbarella's sexual power is too strong, defeating the organ. "It couldn't keep up with you", he declares, "have you no shame?", as if she *should* feel shame at her own sexuality.

I could go on and on about the sexuality of *Barbarella*, the male gaze etc etc. However, I take it with a pinch of salt. Where *Galaxina* is trashy and demeaning, *Barbarella* is sensual and incredibly good fun. But don't dismiss the male gaze so easily. Pick a B-Movie, watch it, then let me know what you noticed after considering the gaze.

Theresa Derwin

JOANNA RUSS: FEMINISM and me

By Helena Bowles

It's always been difficult to be "out" as a feminist. In fact, there's an analogy that can be drawn between the "proud and lonely destiny" of the fan, seeing the value in a ghettoised genre, and the reaction of the feminist woman to contemporary society. In both cases we are questioning values that society as a whole would rather not see questioned and demanding that our questions - and radical new answers be taken seriously.



Things have changed on both fronts. To a degree. SF in its more debased, populist forms has gradually become a common cultural currency. The grosser assumptions about women and their place in society are no longer overtly expressed. The internet has brought together many of us with these minority, niche interests. It is easy, now, to find serious treatment of SF as a literature on the net. Equally, it is easy to find feminist discourse. It wasn't always so.

When we look back at the 70s, it seems as though feminism was everywhere. Nonsense! Believe me, it was only *marginally* easier to find a sister who was out then than it is today! And in the 70s SF was a boy's club. Oh, there were some prominent stars - Anne McCaffrey and Marion Zimmer Bradley were very visible - but for the most part this most forward-looking genre was firmly entrenched within what one revolutionary writer called "galactic suburbia".

That writer was Joanna Russ. She was one of a handful of female writers who began to challenge the tacit gender stereotypes of both general society and of SF as a genre. In the late 1960s she began a series of stories about Alyx - notable for attempting to portray a self-actualised female character who was neither a love interest nor a man in disguise. It was remarkable how this apparently simple decision, to write a woman who was also a full human being, changed the landscape of the literary form she used. Equally challenging was the work she is best known for, 1975's *The Female Man* which used the SF form to examine conceptualisation and construction of gender. As a young woman trying to figure out society, my place in it and what made me uncomfortable about the whole set up, Russ's writing was a revelation. Difficult, challenging, making me look at social constructs in a way that asked me to recognise my own complicity in them: she was not a cosy read!

Her non-fiction was, if anything, more of a revelation. She reviewed SF and regularly skewered writers for their treatment of gender as well as plain poor writing. She was intelligent, witty and razor sharp in her deconstruction of literature. Then, of course, there was the infamous *How to Suppress Women's Writing* - a wonderful book which carefully looks at the reaction to women writers and their work, laying bare the whole instruments of suppression and oppression in a way no one had done before or has since.

That was over 35 years ago and Russ died earlier this year. We live, apparently, in a post feminist era where the major battles have been won... and yet women are still under-represented as SF writers and editors. Women are reviewed less often than men - and reviewed less often *by* men and women are anthologised less often despite both Connie Willis and NK Jemison winning major awards. Russ understood: a few stars don't change the way women are represented overall. That takes the whole community making a deliberate effort to promote women's writing. The Russ Pledge is a worthy tribute to one of feminism's and SF's great heroes.

BOOK REVIEWS & competition

Each issue, we will be reviewing a selection of classic and contemporary SF books. Following Helena's inspiring article on Joanna Russ, it seems appropriate that we start with the great lady herself. This issue then, you can read reviews of *The Female Man*, followed by Lauren Beukes' *Zoo City* and *Debris* by Jo Anderton.

We also have a free copy of *Debris* to give away donated by Angry Robot. Just drop me a line with your details.

The Female Man

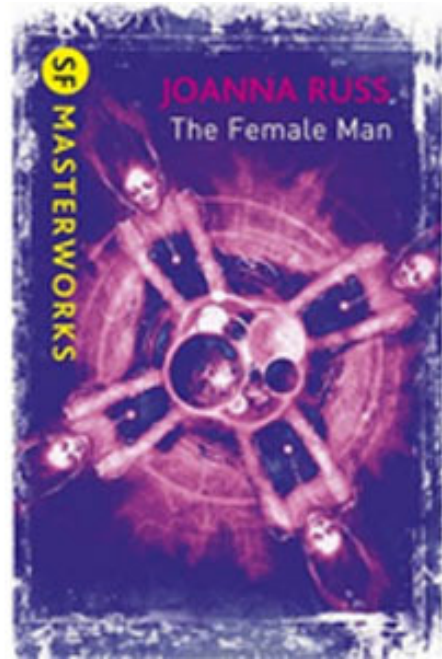
Author: Joanna Russ

Publisher: Gollancz SF Masterworks

Price: £7.99

Page count: 207pp

Reviewer: Theresa Derwin



The introduction to this novel written by Gwyneth Jones, tells us that *The Female Man* is “partly a dizzying SF mindgame; partly it’s a timeless road map of the feminist route to self-realization”.

From this you can probably gather that this seminal feminist text, as Helena earlier mentioned, is no easy read. Challenging and enlightening, it is a book that every female SF Fan should try at least once.

At some point in history, there was a plague in Whileaway, ending in AC03 (After Catastrophe) that resulted in the death of all males, leaving a wholly female society. Genetic surgery has resulted in the merging of ova to enable the continuation of the species. Whileaway is vivid, scientifically realistic and a possible world. In Whileaway and the world we know there are four women who are inexplicably linked, and who are in fact aspects of the same woman. They are the narrator, Joanna, Jeannine Dadier and Janet Evason. “Eventually”, Evason declares, “We will all come together, four women who are the same woman but in different worlds and different times, brought together”. One of them becomes a man; a female man.

The narrative is dizzying and infectious, confusing, yet at times enthused with visible clarity. The novel is full of sexual politics. It is edgy, passionate and provides observations of contemporary life which are surprisingly accurate; show a culture where a woman’s existence is validated by recognition from a man. Perhaps the best quote from the book to demonstrate the impact is as follows:

“If you scream, people say you’re melodramatic; if you submit, you’re masochistic; if you call names, you’re a bitch. Hit him and he’ll kill you”.

The best thing it seems is to suffer mutely and yearn for a rescuer, but suppose the rescuer doesn’t come? Wonderfully ironic and simply sublime, *The Female Man* must be read and understood.

Zoo City

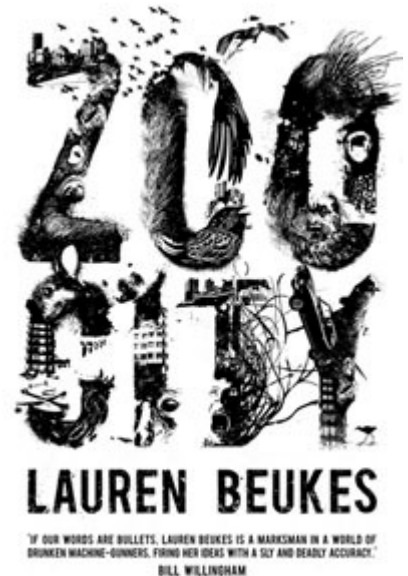
Author: Lauren Beukes

Publisher: Angry Robot

Price: £7.99

Page count: 381pp (including extras)

Reviewer: Theresa Derwin



In the future, criminals can be easily identified, because criminals become ‘animalled’, carrying their animal everywhere with them on their back or in their purses like a furry scarlet letter. Zinzi December has a sloth on her back a broken history and a talent for finding lost things - not people. That is until she is hired to locate Song, part of the pop group Isusi. Of course then, it gets complicated.

Zoo City is a vibrant, lively city showing its corruption and poverty in its powerful language. Beukes uses excerpts from ‘documentary’ films and books to explore the lives of the ‘animalled’ and the depths of the city to lend authenticity to her creation. There is an absolute integrity to this novel that makes it stand out above the norm.

Sloth has his own personality, as do the other animals connected in their symbiotic relationships to their human counterparts. Beukes outlays a world of discrimination, bias and fear that surrounds the ‘animalled’. Explorations of Racism, South Africa’s history of apartheid and violence are interwoven through the narrative. Despite all of this, it is an incredibly easy and engaging read, deserving of every award.

Debris

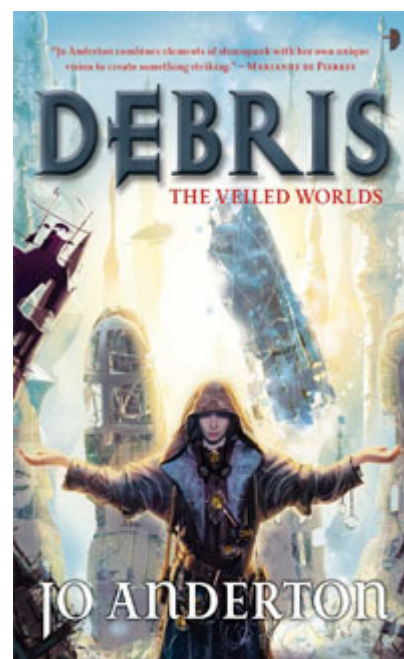
Author: Jo Anderton

Publisher: Angry Robot

Price: £7.99

Page count: 464pp

Reviewer: Theresa Derwin



In a far future where technology is all but indistinguishable from magic, Tanyana is one of the elite. At least she is, until a freak accident leaves her unable to do the job she was born to do. For Tanyana is a 'Pion Binder' manipulating pions, and altering the very structure of the world. Pions had always come to her when she called and in losing the pions, Tanyana has lost an integral part of herself.

Following her accident, which was not her fault, Tanyana has a brain injury and is no longer able to manipulate pions. This leaves her distraught particularly when it turns out she is now able to see debris, the waste created by pion manipulators. She is then 'suited' against her will; a painful and distressing experience.

But who or what caused the accident that almost destroyed her? And is the debris much more important than anyone realises?

A blend of SF and fantasy, *Debris* is a strong novel and entertaining read, made more so by the firm and powerful female main character and the voice which Anderton gives her. Tanyana's strength, the intriguing set up of this veiled world and Anderton's writing style itself make this a formidable book that can be enjoyed by all. Well worth picking up.

LAST THOUGHT

A friend wrote to me the other day about the recent controversy at FantasyCon. "It's a gender issue", they said, referring to the awards given out and Sam Stone's decision to hand her award for best novel back. Whilst I'm not sure that this isn't more an issue of the people involved not thinking through things clearly, I did want to say something on it. Gender issue or not, lots of readers and writers have been online debating the issue. Here's what I have to say: If you're going to express an opinion or rant about a situation in which people's feelings are involved, do so with respect. It's easy enough to be respectful and manners as they say, cost nothing. What do you think? Was it all blown out of proportion? Are there valid arguments? Is it, indeed a gender issue? Drop me a line with your thoughts.

NEXT ISSUE

Coming in December:

Military SF featuring articles, profiles and reviews on;

- Lois McMaster Bujold
- Elizabeth Moon
- Deborah Christian
- Elizabeth Ann Scarborough
- Profile of Naomi Mitchison
- Ellen Ripley & other Kick Ass Heroines
- Short story by Jan Edwards

THANKS FOR STOPPING BY