Peace in the Feminist Garden

The feminist utopias of the '70s and the Mythologies of the West

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This master's thesis is carried out as a part of the education at the University of Agder and is therefore approved as a part of this education. However, this does not imply that the University answers for the methods that are used or the conclusions that are drawn.

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"To oppose something is to maintain it" (Ursula K. Le Guin)

Chapter 1: Introduction

Science fiction and feminism seemed to be an unlike association before the 1970s. American science fiction was traditionally considered to have, from the very beginning of the genre, a masculinist orientation. Male writers and male characters dominated the science fiction literature. The focus on science, technology and progress seemed to "naturally" exclude women (Merrick 241). American male sf writers had been preoccupied by the progress of the human race and expansion of productive areas for the benefit of the human race. Progress had been a motivation for the mythologies of the West (the myth of regeneration through violence and the myth of the garden) as well. These mythologies were widely employed in the sf productions from the very beginning of the genre, more obviously perhaps in space operas. Women characters (as women writers) were almost absent or poorly represented in connection with science fiction. Thomas M. Disch states that "Women were (…) neglected, libeled, or condescended to when they appeared in science-fiction stories" (115). Space, the final frontier was no place for women in science fiction, the same way the frontier had been no place for women in Westerns (a genre that was fueled by and fueled the Mythologies of the West). "SF celebrated the Destiny of Man in the new frontier of outer space, where women were shown to be incompetent ditzes" (Disch 116). Women in the genre western, as in sf, are generally associated with domesticity or are victims waiting to be rescued by a manly hero from the hands of the savage Indians or aliens, respectively. Domesticity is something to be

avoided by men, because it means stagnation, the death of progress. Challenges, on the other hand, are necessary to it. Moreover, a man has to prove his manhood by physically confronting difficult situations and enemies, but altruistically, for the good of mankind. The future of humanity is important to the sf hero (and writer) - more important than the present of the individual.

With the changes that occurred toward the end of the 1960s in USA (the re-emergence of feminism, the New Left, the ecological movement, the anti- war protests) the mythologies of the West that had been employed by sf writers, mythologies that had been shaped by and had shaped the American consciousness, seemed to become outdated. The garden was no longer somewhere beyond a frontier\space frontier that needed to be conquered through violence against the Other. The garden was there and then, not in the future, on the Earth that needed protection against the aggressive human hand. Progress depended on protecting the already existent natural resources and human beings. The Others were demanding respect and equality (women among them) and violence was fought against peacefully by the flower power generation.

The new rebellious attitudes against capitalism, expansionism, war, discrimination contaminated the science fiction as well. The New Wave of sf started in England during the period of fame of the Beatles and was adopted by USA during the hippie period, as Edward James points out in *Science Fiction in the 20ᵗʰ century* (166). The initiators of the New Wave were pleading for change in the classical themes and attitudes of the classical science fiction of the previous decade. The "new wavers" thought it was time to stop dreaming about the distant future of humanity and focus on the immediate future. It was time to focus on Earth and inner space instead of exploring the Universe and the outer space, time to pay attention to private instead of public, to get more involved in human affairs, instead of ignoring them and dreaming about stars. According to James, they thought that sf was lacking depth, color, real

passion, originality and style. ("Science Fiction" 168). The American New Wave was not as radical as the British, holding on to the traditional sf, but adopted enough of the ideas from the British to prepare the ground for the feminist sf writers and for the reinvention of utopia.

The feminist sf writers seem to have a predilection for utopias, unlike male sf writers who had been avoiding them, because, as domesticity for the frontier hero, utopia meant the end of progress. "Utopias (…) imply a static, already achieved state of harmony, peace and justice- rather than a project or an image of a better place and how to get there" (196), is Neta's C. Crawford comment on the classical utopias, in her essay *Feminist Futures*. A perfect world means the end of progress for the male sf writers and their heroes because the latter lack motivation to fight for the betterment of the humankind. Edward James confirms this idea: "Utopia, in America sf from Campbell to *Star Trek*, is generally to be avoided not because in is inherently totalitarian, but because it is static, has ceased to struggle and to progress, and hence is doomed to decay" ("Science Fiction" 68). In addition, James traces the cause of the masculine rejection of utopia back to the history of the American frontier:

> "It has often been suggested that America, in the nineteenth century, flourished because the existence of a frontier encouraged growth, experimentation, and change; travel into 'Space, The Final frontier'(in *Star Trek*'s phrase) was, and remains for many American sf writers, the ultimate way of avoiding society's stasis and degeneration" (68).

The female sf writers understanding of progress differs though from the notion of progress promoted by the mythologies of the West, as well as by the traditional science fiction. While for the male sf writers progress means expansion for the benefit of the humankind, for the feminist sf writers progress means a better life in a better society for all individuals, women in particular. Iver B. Neuman, discussing about diplomacy in *Star Trek*, distinguishes between two narratives of progress. The first one has to do with quantitative, imperialist expansion. This is the kind of narrative employed by the male sf before the New Wave. Progress meant

expansion, evolution, conquering new frontiers and defeating enemies in the process, a way of thinking very much alike the one that motivated the conquering of the West. Utopia in its perfection would leave both the cowboy and the space cowboy without challenges, nothing to fight for, nothing to put their manhood at test and at work. "There may be a gentle progression towards maybe more perfect systems; but there is a denial of adventure, of risk- taking, of the expanding of spatial and technological horizon" ("Utopias and Anti- utopias" 222), is Edward James justification for male science fiction writers disliking utopias. There is no conflict in utopias, no fictional excitement.

The second kind of narrative that Neuman discusses is a narrative of quality embetterment: betterment of the self and of the structures of which the individual is a part. The focus in this case is on the individual, but also on the individual's "need to fit with an already established order" (Neuman 45). The feminist sf writers in their utopias employ this second kind of narrative of progress. The focus of these literary works is set on the individual betterment and betterment of the situation of women in general, in societies that are not perfect, but better than the real ones and for which women are better fit. These utopian societies are better in the sense that they allow and encourage personal evolution and benefit from the results of this personal growth as well, unlike the societies contemporary to the feminist sf writers. There are no wars and no revolutions in the feminist utopias, but "a gentle progression towards maybe more perfect systems" (James "Utopias and Anti- utopias" 222).

Barbara Smuts in her essay *The Evolutionary Origins Patriarchy*, gives a possible evolutionary explanations for these different preferences that the masculinist and feminist narratives of progress express. It is all about sexuality and reproduction, she claims: "Male interest in mate quantity, combined with female interest in mate quality, creates a widespread conflict of interest between the sexes" (Smuts, "The Evolutionary Origins").

The feminist sf utopias are not a flight from reality. On the contrary, they are meant to critically present their contemporary realities and point out cultural, social, political flaws, from women's perspective. Their critique is not direct: they use a technique specific to science fiction, "defamiliarization" and create new worlds that attempt to answer old problems or at least make readers aware of them. According to Encyclopedia of Contemporary Literary Theory, defamiliarization, a term introduced and developed by Viktor Shklovskii, is a modality of showing things in new or unexpected ways. Applied to literature, defamiliarization operates on three levels:

> "At the level of language, it makes language difficult and deliberately impeded (…). On the level of content, it challenges accepted concept and ideas, by distorting them and showing them in from a different perspective (…). On the level of literary forms, it "defamiliarizes" literary conventions and, by breaking with the dominant artistic canons and introducing new ones (…)" (Makaryk 529).

Defamiliarization is employed in sf feminist utopias at all three levels (language, content and literary form), in different degrees, as a method of questioning the patriarchal discourses that justify and enforce the unequal treatment of women in society.

The feminist sf writers not only criticize and raise awareness about the condition of women in their respective societies, but they also try to provide solutions for the bettering of their conditions. Their utopias are "thought experiments". Some of the feminist sf writers of the '70s anticipate the feminist wave of the '90s: "What if…?" they wonder (a hypothetical question that is another MO of sf). What if there were more than the frustrating binary oppositions male/female? They imagine worlds where this opposition is exploded: androgens, homosexuals and cyborgs populate their alternative societies. The outcome is better worlds for women: they escape the suffocating, unbalanced dichotomy male/female in which turned them into an oppressed Other and they also escape the gender role ascribed to them by patriarchy. The feminist writers set women free not by opposing patriarchy, but by allowing a

plurality of discourses alternative to the patriarchal ones. They attempt to destabilize the edifice of patriarchy by casting doubt on the mythologies that contributed to building and maintaining it.

Still, according to Peter Barry, in his *Beginning Theory*, one of the major efforts of the feminism of the '70s went into exposing the mechanisms of patriarchy (a cultural mind-set that perpetuated sexual inequality) and opposing it. This effort is visible in the sf feminist literature as well. The mythologies of the West promoted patriarchy and it was only natural that they would become, consciously or not, a target for the feminist sf writers of the `70s. The mythologies of the West are born at the frontier between wilderness and civilization, where, apparently, only men can survive. While violence is inherent to masculine survival and progress, the feminist sf writers will criticize and reject it and build mostly pacifistic worlds, where violence is either absent or does not carry any mythological function. Rejecting violence, they reject the quantitative progress (to use Neuman's term) as well. They do not believe in the mythological power of violence to regenerate. Progress at any cost (and particularly at the expense of Others) is not an option for them and the expansionist kind of progress it is not seen as a necessity by the feminists. Even if they feature technologically advanced worlds, technology is not a purpose or a means of domination of Others, but a means of survival. Moreover, the return to nature, the regression to primitiveness as a state of spiritual innocence are encouraged and seen as benefic for both the individuals and the communities to which they belong.

The main concern of the feminist sf seems to be the qualitative progress of the individual, for the benefit of the community. The interrelationships between the members of the utopian communities are important in the utopian feminist sf. Joanna Russ, in her essay *Towards an Aesthetic of Science Fiction,* claims that "the protagonist of science fiction are always collective, never individual persons" ("To Write Like a Woman" 5). Though this

might not be true for all sf, since the genre has promoted a lot of male heroes in particular (much like the western), it seems to be perfectly true for the feminist utopias.

Avoiding hierarchies and combating any ideology of dominance is a central and obvious preoccupation of the sf feminist writers. That is why the feminists manifest a preference for what Guy Debord in his work *The Society of the Spectacle* calls "cyclical time" that leads to "static societies" (societies that organize their time in terms of their immediate experience of nature). They avoid "the irreversible time" or "the historical time" which brings progress, but also gives power and authority to the "owners of history" (Debord 132), generating hierarchies. The categories of sex, gender, race, social class become irrelevant in the feminist utopias. They drag the cowboy (space cowboy) off his high horse, make him bear children, turn him into a sexual tool or even make him disappear completely. In Joanna Ursula Le Guin's novel *The Left Hand of Darkness* the king of the imaginary land Karhide gets pregnant and suffers a miscarriage; one of the characters of Joanna Russ' novel *The Female Men* has made herself a "boy toy" whom she uses sexually as she pleases and another female character comes from a planet inhabited by women only. These two science fiction works written by major feminist sf writers of the 1970s make use of the distinction central to the theoretical feminism of the '70s between sex and gender but, at the same time, both sex and gender are denied the power to generate identities (anticipating the feminist criticism of the '90s). One being a female does not impose on her bearing children, men and machine can do the same. Child care is not a woman's responsibility either, but the community's. Women become means of production instead of reproduction, to use the feminist Marxist/socialist terminology. They roll up their sleeves, show their muscles and put them to use for the benefit of the community. The female body is seen neither as something given with a certain function, nor as a construct of the patriarchy, but a woman's choice.

Race has not more power than sex to turn people into a marginalized and discriminated against Other in the feminist SF utopias. When the category of race is mentioned, it is only as a matter of contrast with the writers' contemporary society. Race does not create oppositions, hierarchies or fixed identities in the feminist utopias, as it does in the mythologies of West. Indians are seen as less worthy human beings, on account of their race, as women because of their assumed physical weakness. The same is the case with social classes: the feminist utopias are classless or, if the classes exist, it is only to show the effects of class division on individual and society. The feminist sf utopias aspire to be sexless, genderless, classless societies, lacking racial discrimination. None of the categories of sex, gender, class and race is favored in building individual identity. They aspire to perfect equality between the members of the utopian communities, but not to uniformity. They want to allow "a powerful infidel heteroglossia" (Haraway "Simians"181) - a coexistence of multiple discourses as a way to destabilize patriarchy which, through discourses like the Mythologies of the West, promoted binary oppositions that lead to domination of the Other and empowered The Man. At the same time, there are in the feminist utopias some residual resentments left by the "battle of sexes" specific to the beginnings of the second wave of feminism in USA. This hesitation between constructing an essentialist, unique women's identity based on the patriarchal oppositional dichotomies and dissolving these dichotomies by allowing a plurality of discourses and blurring the boundaries between opposed categories is present throughout the feminine utopias of the '70s. It is possible that sometimes, during the second and third wave of feminism, the feminists came to the Estraven's conclusion: "To oppose something is to maintain it" (Le Guin 151). Opposing patriarchy, its mechanisms and its constructs meant accepting, maintaining and validating them.

The mythologies of the West have contributed to perpetuating the image of women as a unitary Other and promoting patriarchy. This essay is going to analyze and compare two the

major feminist utopias mentioned above, Ursula K. Le Guin's *The Left Hand of Darkness* and Joanna Russ's *The Female Man* in the attempt to answer the question: "To what degree do they interrogate or endorse the Mythologies of the West?" The next chapter of this paper constitutes a theoretical framework for the discussion of the two novels from the perspective of the Myth of the Garden and the Myth of regeneration through violence.

Chapter 2. Theoretical background

This chapter includes three theoretical parts. The first part explains the historical, social and cultural context in which *The Left Hand of Darkness* and *The Female Man*-appeared. The second is concerned with the literary context in which they occurred and the genre that Le Guin and Russ chose as a vehicle for the feminist ideology and the criticism of patriarchy. The third part is a theoretical approach to myth making and two of the Mythologies of the West, the Myth of the Garden and the Myth of Regeneration through Violence. The

2.1. Feminism and feminist criticism

Feminism was not born in the '60s in USA. The feminism that emerged in the '60s was actually considered a second feminist wave, as Martha Weinman Lear called it in an article in New York Times Magazine, in 1968 (womenshistory.about.com). The first wave, which had occurred in the 19th century and early 20th century in Europe as well as in USA, had focused mainly on getting women's suffrage and it culminated in USA with the passage of the 19th amendment that granted women the right to vote, in 1920. Women's movement of the `60s, which started in USA, was the renewal of an old tradition of protesting against women's unequal position in society (Barry 116).

In the first chapter of her book *The Feminine Mystique*, Betty Friedan, a leading figure of the feminist movement of the time, describes the '60s as a period of awakening for a whole generation of housewives. She claims that the American women had, for a while accepted and had apparently been content with their roles that had been assigned to them by patriarchy, after World War II:

> "Over and over women heard in voices of tradition and of Freudian sophistication that they could desire no greater destiny that the glory of their own femininity. Experts told them how to catch a man and to keep him, how to breastfeed children and handle their toilet training, how to cope with sibling rivalry and adolescent rebellion; how to buy a dishwasher, bake bread, cook gourmet snails, and build a swimming pool with their own hands; how to dress, act and look more feminine and make marriage more exciting; how to keep their husbands from dying young and their sons from growing into delinquents. They were taught to pity the neurotic, unfeminine, unhappy women who wanted to be poets or physicists or presidents. They learned that truly feminine women do not want careers, higher education, political writes- the independence and the opportunities that the old- fashioned feminist fought for"
>
> (Friedan, "The Problem that Has No Name")

According to the website tavaana.org, the average marriage age had dropped to 20, the proportion of women attending college in comparison with men had dropped as well, while the birthrate of USA was overtaking the birthrate of India. Many women would not leave the house, but for shopping, drive their kids around or attend social events with their husbands. The suburban housewife had apparently become the ideal of an entire generation of American women and the envy of the entire world (tavaana.org). This ideal of femininity had

stereotypical physical traits as well: a woman had to be blond, thin and busty if she were to "catch" and keep a good man who could ensure her a comfortable life as a suburban housewife (tavaana.org).

Betty Friedan reveals in the first chapter of her book that many of the housewives felt trapped in their suburban modern houses, equipped with the latest technology, that was supposed to set them free. In her quality of magazine writer, she discovered that the happy housewives shared a common problem. "The problem that had no name", Friedan called it. Friedan interviewed American housewives and what they seemed to have in common is a frustration, a sense of purposelessness and of loss of identity. The awakening of the housewives started in the '60s and it was the beginning of the second wave of feminism.

The first step for setting the American housewives free, was to get them out of their homes. According to (tavaana.org) women had a limited access to the job market, only 38% of them working in the beginning of the '60s and the most commons jobs that women occupied were those of teacher, secretary or nurse. If they did not work, they were supported by husbands, to whose earnings and properties they had no legal right. If they worked, they were less paid than men were and had less chances of being promoted. While the original goal of the feminist movement of the '60s and '70s and of the National Organization for Women (NOW) was to prevent workplace inequality through pro- equality laws, the more radical feminists had as an aim to completely overthrow patriarchy, seeking equality for women not at only at political level, but at personal level as well. They believed that women were oppressed at all the levels of their existence through the mechanisms of patriarchy. They brought up into public discussions issues that were considered private like sexuality, marriage, childcare, abortion, birth control and the stereotypes of femininity (tavaana.org).

While some of the aims of the American feminists were easier to accomplish, others needed more effort. There were favorable circumstances that helped women get out of the

house, get jobs and become more independent, like the boom of the American economy that increased the necessity for work force. The access to oral conception gave women both access to better jobs (accidental pregnancies could no longer prevent them from taking or completing a higher education) and more sexual freedom (tavaana.org). By the late '70s, the list of successes achieved on the behalf of the American women was significant: the outlawing of gender discrimination in education and of the discrimination against pregnant women in employment; the legalization of abortion and birth control; the acceptance of irreconcilable differences as ground for divorce; the founding of rape crisis centers, women's shelter and health clinics. (tavaana.org).

With major practical issues solved by the first and second waves of feminism, the third feminist wave beginning in the '90s will shift focus from politics and group identity to individual identity. They oppose the idea that there is a universal female identity. Race, nationality, religion cultural and social backgrounds, sexual orientation are variables to be taken into account and they lead to a multiplicity of identities. It is the most theoretical of the three waves of feminism, considering that the first wave was mostly related with the women's suffrage and the second with sexual equality. These two waves did not lack a theoretical frame either.

According to Peter Barry, feminism was "in some important ways, literary from the start, in the sense it realized the significance of the images of women promulgated by literature, and saw it as vital to combat them and question their authority and their coherence" (117). Feminism was concerned with books and literature. As a consequence, it was only natural that feminist criticism would become one the most practical ways of influencing values and attitudes. The beginnings of feminist literary criticism are at least as old as Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792). She is considered to be in *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, "a forerunner of ideological reading" (Leitch

495). Modern feminist criticism is indebted to Wollstonecraft, as it is to the work of Virginia

Woolf and Simone de Beauvoir. Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* (1929) shows the

same discontent as Wollstonecraft's work for the unequal treatment of women in what

education is concerned and their lack of alternatives to marriage and motherhood- issues that

that will become part of the agenda of the feminists of the '60s and '70s.

Hélène Cixous' concept of *écriture féminine* and her theories are important

contributions to the battle of sexes of the '70s as well, by opposing patriarchal discourses to

women's writing. In her essay *The Laugh of the Medusa* she advocated for shifting away from

the automatisms of the patriarchal discourse and embracing repressed feminine discourse- "la

écriture féminine", that "it will wreck partitions, classes and rhetoric, regulation and codes

(…)it's explosive, utterly destructive" (Cixous 1952). Julia Kristeva's theories will develop

Cioux's theories, claiming that language has two aspects: the semiotic aspect (characterized

by lack of order and logic, displacement, slippage, condensation, mothers) corresponds to the

concept of *écriture féminine*, while the symbolic aspect (associated with authority, order,

repression, control, fathers) is associated with the patriarchal discourse (Barry 123).

The linguistic approach to feminism has been a matter of controversy among feminist

theorists, as the psychoanalytical approach. While the European feminist critics were more

open to these approaches, the American were more skeptical to them (Barry 125). Freud was

condemned by the American feminist critic Kate Millet in her *Sexual Politics* (1969) as being

a source of patriarchal attitudes (faculty.atu.edu). He was defended later, among others, by

Juliet Mitchell, another American theorist of the second wave of feminism in her book

Psychoanalysis and Feminism (1974). Using the same distinction central to the second wave

of feminism, which Millet also had considered, between sex (a matter of biology) and gender

(a social construct), Mitchell argues that Freud does not see femininity as something women

are born with, but as the result of experiences and adjustments. Gender roles are not naturally

given and therefore they can be altered. Moreover, Freud's defenders argue that the "penis envy" should not be taken literally- the penis representing actually a symbol of the social power, while "castration" is women's lack of social power (Barry 125).

Donna J. Haraway considers that all the modern feminist meanings have roots in Simone de Beauvoir 's claim that "one is not born a woman", the essence of in her essay *The Second Sex*. ("Simians" 131). De Beauvoir rejects the idea that there is such a thing as female nature or essence. The Eternal Feminine is just a myth created by patriarchy- it is the sum of women's experiences projected into the Realm of platonic forms as timeless and unchanging essences (Beauvoir 1265). This way, women are denied subjectivity and authenticity and they are constructed as immanent. They become the looking glass (to use Virginia Woolf's metaphor) through which men construct their own subjectivity and assert their superiority; through opposition, they represent transcendence, striving for freedom and authenticity. What de Beauvoir attempts to do is to tear down patriarchal myths and de-essentializing their woman- construct; these ideas were appealing to both the feminists of the second wave and the third wave. While the former will declare an open war to patriarchy, the later will try to explode the binary opposition male- female that puts women in an inferior position of otherness. They believe that not only gender roles are social constructs of the dominant patriarchal discourse, but sex as well.

The third wave feminists grew up with the benefits that the first and second wave of feminism had gained for them, but their theorists criticize the first and second wave for discussing womanhood in universal terms and promoting a mostly static identity politics. Claire Snyder, in her essay *What is Third- Wave Feminism? A New Directions Essay*, claims that the third wave is a feminism without "women" (rejecting the essentialized view on women), without exclusions and moving beyond generational conflict (Snyder, "What is

Third- Wave Feminism?"). Judith Butler and Donna Haraway are two important theorist of the third wave of feminism.

Judith Butler, in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990), one the most influential theoretical text of the 1990s, according to *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, explores how gendered identity is socially produced through repetitions of ordinary daily activities. The notions of masculinity and femininity are receives notions and are exclusionary and oppressive, in Butler's opinion. The feminists of the second wave had distinguished between sex and gender, the former indicating the anatomical difference between the masculine and the feminine body, the latter meanings and conventions attached to those bodies. Butler considers that culture attributes a signifying order to the anatomical differences as well. Sex too, not only gender, is a cultural construct, claims Butler.

The body "often appears to be a passive medium that is signified by an inscription from a cultural source figured as "external" to the body" (Butler 2542). Butler questions the idea that the body pre-existing the acquisitions of its sexed significance is an inert matter, signifying nothing. Still, the body is not a being, but "a variable boundary, a surface whose permeability is politically regulated" (2551), believes Butler. According to Mary Douglas in *Purity and Danger* the purpose of these political regulations is to establish specific codes of cultural coherence and order. At the same time, the boundaries of the bodies are "the limits of the socially *hegemonic"* (Butler 2544), the margins where all social system are vulnerable and where "the pollution", like homosexuality or lesbianism, can occur (Butler 2544). Butler further focuses on Kristeva's discussion of abjection, "something originally part of the identity", "expelled from the body, discharged as excrement, literally rendered Other" (2546). The hegemonic cultural identity is consolidated through the exclusion and domination of the otherness from the body and through the distinction between internal and external. The division between the inner and the outer worlds of the subject is maintained for the purpose of

regulation and control, as the division between male and female bodies. Society has imposed "an idealized and compulsory heterosexuality" (Leitch 2548). Butler considers that gender is falsely naturalized as a unity through the "regulatory fiction of the heterosexual coherence" (Leitch 2548).

According to The Norton Antology of Theory and Criticism, Butler subscribes to Foucault's and Lacan's theories on subject formation. In Foucault's view, subjects are produced through discourses of power that work at the level of daily routine. For Lacan identity is achieved by passing into the Law (the culture's significant order) and it involves a process of alienation of the self, trapped at the unconscious level. Influenced by Derrida's understanding of performative speech acts, Butler comes to an understanding of sex and gender as results of "stylized repetitions of acts through time" (Butler 2552). They lead to polymorphous discourses which, converging, lead to the socially accepted understanding of "man" and "woman". "Repetitions become domesticated and recirculated as instruments of cultural hegemony" (Butler 2551). She considers identity formed through these repetitions a trap: it robs identity of its heterogeneity and plurality, reducing it to binary categories. This has negative consequences for both those who fit the accepted identities and those who do not- the so-called deviants or non- identities (homosexuals, lesbians, hermaphrodites). "Gender is performance with clearly punitive consequences" (Butler 2551), a "compelling social fiction" (2551), Butler claims. Those who identify themselves as belonging to the heterosexual categories accepted as normal repress all non-heterosexual desires and this leads to contempt for the deviants. The deviants, in turn, experience internal guilt and external sanctions. Butler calls for the resignification of the identity through the loosening of the constitutive categories, which have entrapped the self. The idea of a homogenous identity and identity politics have only had negative consequences, to feminism included. Butler advocates for loosening the rigid boundaries between man\woman, self\other through subversive

performances that would destabilize the rigid categories and render genders *incredible*: "The possibilities of gender transformation are to be found precisely (…) in the possibility of a failure to repeat, de- formity and a parodic repetition that exposes the phantasmatic effect of abiding identity as a politically tenuous construction" (Butler 2552) .

Donna Haraway takes feminism to a new level with her essay *A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology and Socialist- Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century*, which turns out to be a manifesto of cyberfeminism (Leitch 2187). Her essay begins with blaming women's movements for turning women into a collective object, a political construct, a fiction, much as patriarchy had done, by employing the concepts and categories imposed on them by patriarchy.

> "There is nothing about being "female" that naturally binds women. There is not even such a state as being "female", itself a highly complex category, constructed in contested scientific discourses and other social practices. Gender, race and class consciousness is an achievement forced on us by the terrible historical experience of the contradictory social realities of patriarchy, colonialism and capitalism" (Haraway, "Simians" 155).

Joining the postmodern feminists such as Judith Butler, Haraway considers the feminism of the previous wave outdated, in the context of movement from organic, industrial society to a society based on information and technology. The main flaw of the previous feminist theories is their essentialism, in the attempt to create a women's unique identity. Haraway pleads for relativism, pluralism, "a powerful infidel heteroglossia" (Haraway "Simians"181), for an identity that incorporates incompatible things, for an identity that is true to reality, not a construct.

Women's self gets new dimensions in the context of the explosion of global techno science: "Woman disintegrates into women" (Haraway, "Simians"160). Haraway proposes the cyborg as an icon of the new feminism. The cyborg is a hybrid between machine and

organism (human and animal), fictional and lived experience, physical and non- physical. The cyborg is not "afraid of permanently partial identities and contradictory standpoints" (Haraway, "Simians"154). Haraway explores the borderlands between those areas where the identities are negociated, but they remain partial and contradictory (Leitch 2188). Being a hybrid between organism and machine it resists the seduction of organic wholeness and does not have the nostalgia of original unity or the Garden of Eden.

Haraway's cyborg is a post- gender world creature; it is unstructured by the polarities like public/private or nature/culture that have shaped the western culture and mythologies. Haraway explains her feminist agenda in the beginning of the essay:

> "This chapter is an argument for pleasure in the confusion of boundaries and for *responsibility* in their construction. It is also an effort to contribute to the socialist- feminist culture and a theory in a post- modernist mode and in the utopian tradition of imagining a world without gender, which is perhaps a world without genesis, but maybe also a world without end" (Haraway, "Simians" 150).

Haraway's cyborg is also a post-western, post- oedipal creature. The Western self, a result of exclusion through naming (of sex, race, social category etc.), must be disassembled and reassembled into a new self in the interest of survival of the species, in Haraway's opinion. The cyborg is the result of this reassembling. It has the advantage of being free of all dependencies and burdens of any past; its identity is only given by fiction and lived experiences.

Technology has become part of the identity of this new icon of feminism, and the more advanced the technology, the more imprecise become the boundaries between physical and non-physical. Power is no longer about physical force and size: "Miniaturization has turned out to be about power; small is not so much about beautiful as preeminently dangerous" (Haraway, "Simians" 153). The new technologies also mediate and enforce social relations. "The New Industrial Revolution is producing new worldwide working classes, as well as new

sexualities and ethnicities" (Haraway, "Simians" 166). New collectivities emerge as well, while the familiar grouping are disappearing. Work has become feminized in the sense of becoming vulnerable: the workers are treated as servers and the security of men's jobs disappear as well as the women's. This leads to the erosion of gender, believes Haraway, with women-headed households becoming quite common. The power to survive, by "seizing the tools (…) that marked them as other (Haraway, "Simians" 175) is a characteristic of Haraway's cyborg. Survival is actually the ultimate goal of Haraway's cyborg. Haraway' s cyborg is an utopian creature; it is Haraway's imaginative way of drawing attention to the flaws of the second wave of feminism and her solution for making the world better for women and ensuring the survival of the species. In order to do that the Western selves must be dissolved (Haraway, "Simians" 157). This is exactly what some of the feminist sf writers of the '70s will attempt to do.

2.2. Science fiction and feminist sf utopia

If science fiction has been for a long time "the leper of literary genres" (Disch 2), feminist science fiction, and, generally, science fiction written by women must have been the leper of science fiction before the 1970s. As women- writers, women- characters in male- written fiction literature have been, from the beginning of sf as literary genre, poorly represented. The women characters were either absent or constructed images of the patriarchal culture and men's desire. The roles of the feminine characters were peripheral in the plot of the sf literary work. Damsels in distress, waiting to be rescued by the strong male protagonist, robot-like housewives or purely sexual objects, their position was always one of subordination to men. They are Others, "the most significant Others" (Disch 10), but not that much different of the aliens, robots, androids or cyborgs that populated the sf worlds.

In her essay *Gender in science fiction*, Helen Merrick points out that traditionally, sf has been considered a masculine field, its content having to do with science and technology, considered areas of interest that excluded women and considerations of gender (Merrick 241). Merrick believes that the masculinist nature of science fiction is exaggerated and that gender is actually crucial to sf:

> The presence of 'Woman'- whether actual, threatened, or symbolically represented (through the alien or 'mother Earth' for example)- reflects cultural anxieties about a range of 'Others' immanent in even the most scientifically pure, technically focused sf. The series 'self/other' dichotomies suggested by gender, such as human/alien, nature/technology, and organic/inorganic are also central (although often unacknowledged) facets of the scientific culture informing much sf (Merrick 241).

She agrees with Brian Attebery that the master narrative of science has always been told in sexual terms, the masculine corresponding to innovation and knowledge and feminine to nature and passive object of exploration. The feminist sf writers will attempt to disrupt these gendered binaries and to challenge the traditional notions of gender present in most male written sf before the 1970s.

Thomas M. Disch belives that in USA women themselves might have not been very tempted from the beginning of science fiction as a genre "to fight for rooms of their own in such a tawdry residence" (Disch 115), since science fiction appeared as boys' literature : "a naïve, ungainly hybrid, full of inconsistencies and obvious absurdities, written to an audience of adolescent boys by writers only slighter older" (Disch 2).

"The American SF dream first began to coalesce, as an institution and an industry, some seventy years ago, with the appearance of Amazing Stories, the first pulp magazine specializing in "scientification", as Hugo Gernsback christened the then nameless genre" (Disch 2). Edward James begins his history of the development of the genre in 1895 with the English writer H. G. Wells and 1895 to be the boom of a first period of science fiction, even

though science fiction was not established as a genre before the 20th century. He believes that it is the feeling of *fin de siècle* and the increased speed of technological advance that made writers speculate about the future. The British sf writers influenced widely the Americans in that period, but American sf took a different road with the boom of the fiction magazines called "pulps" (printed on cheap paper made of wood- pulp) and their eventual specialization. The quality of the stories published in these magazines was as poor as the quality of the paper, but the creation of the first specialized sf magazines is a recognition of the existence of the genre, according to Edward James. While the British scientific romance was concerned with the future of humanity and with philosophical and scientific questions, in USA the sf before Second World was more about thrilling space adventures and super-heroes in the so called "space operas". "Their concentration on action, not thought, on power than rather responsibility, on aggression not introspection, on wish- fulfillment not reality, has survived into much contemporary science fiction", writes James about the content of pulp sf ("Science Fiction" 48).

By the end of 1930s the genre was fully recognized in USA. During the '40s and '50s the genre developed, in both quality and quantity. New ideas about what sf should be about occurred. 1950's was a new period of boom for science fiction, "the true classic era", believes James ("Science Fiction" 87) of sf. American sf was about the future, space exploration and colonization of other planets, meeting aliens, the rise and fall of the Galactic Empire and ultimately of the universe. The classic science fiction is interested in the fate of humanity and not of humans: "the purpose of science fiction is to speculate about the potentialities and possibilities of the human species and its place in universe" (James, "Science Fiction" 96). The interaction with the created environment is of more interest for the writers of sf than the human relationships.

The science fiction of the next decade goes against many of the classical themes and clichés of science fiction, which the writers and readers of science fiction felt were no longer relevant for their contemporary society. This reaction is known as the New Wave of science fiction. The New Wave began in England and it took off in USA at the time of the hippies, "a time of cultural innovation and generational shake-up" (James, "Science Fiction" 167). What the New Wave adherents felt that sf was missing was mainly depth and lack of genuine interest in humans. They thought it was time to put an end to the interstellar traveling and turn back on Earth, to move the focus from humanity to individuals, from the outer space to the inner space. The American New Wavers were not as drastic as the British were: they did not reject the traditional sf, but agreed it was time for improvement and variation. This rethinking of science fiction, in the context of Women's Movement of the late '60s, made science fiction appealing for women writers. The new science fiction seemed a good way to promote the feminist agenda. James considers that "the potential for a feminist sf was already apparent in the long history of feminist utopian writing", and it is this subgenre of sf that the feminist sf writers find particularly attractive. Why is utopia so appealing to the feminist science fiction writer? To answer this question requires an understanding of this term and literary genre.

Fátima Vieira claims in her essay *"The concept of utopia"* that, the word utopia, coined by Thomas More bears a duality of meaning as a place that is simultaneously a non-place and a good place (5). This place was inspired by the Myth of the Golden Age, the religious promise of a happy afterlife and the myth of Cockaygne (a land of plenty), among others (Vieira 5). The first utopias were static: they offered the example of well-established ideal societies, in a place undiscovered yet on Earth, but their perfection deprives them of the possibility of further development, of a future. They are visions of a better place, frozen models for the contemporaries. The later utopias give a criticism of the present societies, but also hope for the future. Their alternative societies are rather set in the future than in the

present; the focus changes from locus to chronos and from static utopias to dynamic. Progress is possible in these dynamic utopias at all levels: in technology, science, social progress, political, economic.

This preoccupation with time and progress made utopia come closest, of all the literary genres, of science fiction. Vieira considers that these two genres came so close that they were often confused. Even the researchers of utopian studies and of science fiction have argued about which genre is subordinated to the other (Vieira 8). "The intersection of modern science fiction and utopia begins with what I consider the foundational characteristic of science fiction, namely its ability to reflect or express our hopes and fears about the future, and more specifically to link those hopes and fears to science and technology"(138), is Peter Fitting' s opinion in his essay "Utopia, dystopia and science fiction", regarding the connection between utopia and science fiction. The writers of both genres acknowledge Science and technology as important tools for making a better world and the American pulp science fiction magazines of the 1920s and 1930s popularized this idea.

The American faith in science and technology is shaken for a while by use of the atom bomb in Japan. The optimism and with it the ability to imagine better places died in the course of the 20th century, according to Edward James, in his essay *Utopia and Anti- utopias* "extinguished by the horrors of total war, of genocide and of totalitarianism" ("Utopias" 219). This mood changes again in the early '70s in USA, "the times of the hippies (…) a time of cultural innovation and generational shake-up" (James, "Science Fiction" 167). In this historical context, the new wave of science fiction, that had occurred in Britain in the '60s, with its change of emphasis from quantitative, technological progress of the humanity to qualitative social progress of the individual, took off in USA. The Feminists found in utopian science fiction a suitable vehicle for their criticism towards patriarchy and, at the same time, for their hope for a better future for women. Alessa Johns, in her essay *Feminism and*

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Utopianism, tries to explain why the utopian imagination has been crucial to feminism. According to her, there are three reasons for this. The first reason would be that, since gender equality never really existed, it had to be imagined. The second, literature was a good way to raise awareness to the cause of feminism, to reach a large audience, given the otherwise limited political, economic and social power of women. The third reason would be that utopian science fiction, by making the familiar seem strange, was a good way to alter people's perception, without imposing the feminist ideology directly on them.

The feminist utopias are critical and process- oriented: the feminists criticize the contemporary society and come up with alternative societies that are not perfect, that are under construction, but better than the real one, from their perspective. The feminist utopias are strongly influenced by socialism, rejecting private property and hierarchies of any kind. Decentralization and cooperation are specific to the feminist utopias and there is little focus on political and economic structure. Peter Fitting considers that the feminists concentrate on the lived realities of the characters. "This emphasis on daily life is an application of the feminist slogan "the personal is political" (Fitting 148). Consequently, these utopias address personal issues like marriage, sexuality, procreation, parenting, work and offer alternatives to the patriarchal structures of the real American society of the '60s- '70s, which they implicitly criticize. In these utopic societies, there is equality between sexes, marriage is replaced by freer living arrangement, there are sexual alternatives to the heterosexuality, procreation and parenting are common social responsibilities and work is available according to personal inclinations and social needs. The concern for the technological and scientific progress and the domination of nature, that is specific to patriarchal culture, is replaced by a nature-friendly attitude. What the feminist utopias of the '70s offer are "images of an emancipated human nature in which playfulness, spontaneity, creativity and eroticism are no longer sublimated to the demands of capitalism and patriarchy"(149), concludes Fitting in his essay.

In addition to the emphasis on daily life, as mentioned before, a characteristic of feminist sf utopias is the fact that they are process- oriented. According to Alessa Johns, in the above-mentioned essay, there are five features that contribute to this process- oriented character of feminist utopias. The first is the emphasis on education, as a means of escaping the subordinate status that the lack of education enforces and becoming equals to men. The second feature is that the feminists see the human nature as malleable and social, rather than predetermined and individualist. The third feature is their view of shared political power, instead of absolutist and gradual reforms and ongoing change, instead of revolutions. Violence) The fourth feature that leads to feminist sf utopias being process- oriented is the dynamic view of the environment, seen not as a passive recipient of the abuses of patriarchy, but as an important element that must be cherished and protected. The last of the features mentioned by Johns is pragmatism: "they emphasize the material over transcendent, the physical over the metaphysical, the action over the idea" (192). Pragmatism is generated by the conviction that the only way to change women's life for the better is by a collective effort. These features result into utopian societies that are not static perfect Gardens of Eden but Gardens-to- be, through the common effort of the inhabitants. This is the kind of progress that the feminist sf writers seem to want: qualitative progress, which implies personal and social betterment. They oppose the expansionist, quantitative progress of the patriarchal discourse, which was promoted by both the early science fiction and the mythologies of the West and deny the regenerative quality of violence. The feminist sf writer's intentions seem to oscillate between the desire to deconstruct the patriarchal mythologies, expose them as cultural mystifications and reassembling their parts into a better world. Like the most influential demystifier, Roland Barthes, the feminists want "to 'unlearn' orthodox social values or *doxa*, and to establish more pluralistic perspectives" (Makaryk 528). Understanding how myths come to be is essential in understanding the feminist endeavor.

2.3. Myth making and the Mythologies of the West

Myth is, according to the French literary theorist and linguist Roland Barthes, a type of speech, a system of communication, a message. It is not an idea though, but a form, appropriated by society through social usage. Richard Slotkin in his essay *Myth and the Production of History* makes clear the distinction between ideology and mythology: while ideology is "an abstraction of the system of beliefs, values, and institutional relationships that characterize a particular culture and society", "mythology is the body of traditional narratives that exemplifies and historicizes ideology" (70). Myths are then stories that have their origins in history and embody an ideology belonging to a particular culture or social class. The historical narratives, through social usage, in time, become abstracted conventions, metaphors and cultural essences. Their meaning is not lost, but impoverished and this impoverished meaning is the source of myth.

The American Frontier has been a source for a variety of myths that have shaped and reflected the American nation. "The myth of the garden" and "the myth of regeneration through violence" have their roots in historical events: the migration towards west that started after the English colonization in the 17th century and ended in the 19th century. Historically, the Frontier was the outer line of English settlement. As the settlement advanced westward, the frontier line moved with it, until 1880's. The geographical area that was the frontier line lost, in time, its strict geographical meaning and symbolic significance was attached to it. For Fredrick Jackson Turner, it was the gateway to free land, plentifulness, opportunity, freedom and equality, a real Garden of Eden. At the same time, it was the limit between civilization

and savagery. Richard Slotkin states his belief in *Gunfire Nation: the Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth Century America* that this is exactly the ideology behind another myth: the myth of regeneration through violence. Violence was necessary in order for civilization to advance and conquer wilderness- this was the political justification for the American expansionism. These two perspectives on the Frontier, apparently rival, one sprung from soil, the other from blood, turned into myths through social usage and acceptance.

Turner's essay *The Significance of the Frontier in American History* (1893) was one of the most influential works about the West. For Turner, the Frontier marks the meeting point between savagery and civilization (3). The "frontier hypothesis" states the fact that the birth of the American identity is related to the existence of an area of free land beyond the frontier and the advancement of the American settlement westward. Analyzing Turner's essay, Henry Nash Smith advances the idea that Turner's hypothesis is developed out the myth of the garden, placing it in the tradition of the agrarian theory, developed in Europe in the 18th century. This theory holds as an ideal the society of farmers. Turner states that the return to this primitive life, over and over again, with each new frontier, is the circumstance that shaped the American character. Turner disagrees in his essay with the ideas advanced by two dominant school of historians of his time: those considering slavery of being of great importance in shaping the American identity and those that gave too much attention, in his opinion, to the Germanic germs planted in the New World. He rejects racial determinism in favor of geographical: "Thus civilization in America has followed the arteries made by geology" (Turner 14). Economical determinism is favored as well: the Frontier and the free land in the West ensured economic prosperity for all the member of the society and were, thus, enhancers of democracy. "The frontier is productive of individualism (….) The frontier individualism has from the beginning promoted democracy (Turner 31).

While Turner's "myth of the garden" springs out of nature or nature of things, later in 1990s Slotkin states that myths are shaped by historical contingency, politically motivated and transmitted by particular classes of persons. In discussing the Myth of the Frontier as the oldest and most characteristic American myth, he states that the original ideology behind it was "to explain and justify the establishment of the American colonies" (Slotkin "Gunfire Nation" 10). The Frontier is seen as a reproduction of the original colonial experience: the same way as the first European communities were planted into wilderness, the settlers of the west repeated the outward movement by returning to wilderness.

Conflict and violence were a part of the historical process and the mythical representation of the Frontier experience, Slotkin believes. The American identity appeared as a consequence of displacing the natives, enslaving Africans and gaining independence from the authority of the metropolitan regime. The myth of the frontier tells the story of the American spirit and fortune achieved through repeated cycles of spatial separation, temporal regression to a primitive, natural stage and regeneration through violence. Turner's interpretation of the frontier as a garden is included in Slotkin's scenario, but only as a part of the process of defining Americans as a nation. On the other hand, Slotkin agrees with both the germ theory of politics and the racial determinism in giving his interpretation of the Myth of the Frontier, which Turner had rejected as being irrelevant for the birth of the American nation.

"The savage war" occupies a central position in Slotkin's interpretation of the Myth of the Frontier. War against the Native Americans is politically motivated. In his book *The winning of the West,* Theodore Roosevelt had summarized the ideology behind the violence against the Native Americans: "(…) the conquest and the settlement by the whites of the Indian lands was necessary to the greatness of the race and to the well- being of the civilized mankind. It was ultimately beneficial as it was inevitable (Roosevelt 179).

Wilderness is not, though, only the inimical territory, according to Slotkin. It is a place where the American hero, regressing to a primitive state, purges himself of the evils of the civilized world. By fighting the savage, he fights his own dark side. This way, when crossing the border from civilization to wilderness, the American hero gets to become an improved version of himself. Violence brings about regeneration, on a personal and national level.

The first American hero, out of whose frontier experience the American identity was born, is male and white. The American frontier hero myth is well established through the binary oppositions with the Others: women and Indians. According to Annette Kolodny in *The Land Before Her: Fantasy and Experience of the American Frontier 1630-1860*, the early narratives of frontier experiences involving women presented them as "captives in Paradise": vulnerable, passive, ignorant and lacking surviving skills, depending on chance and circumstances. Kolodny believes that the emerging narrative of the male westward conquest, juxtaposed the female captivity narratives, helped developing, through contrast, the "male myth" in the 18th century ("The Land Before Her" 29).

Like in the male- written science fiction, in the literary productions that reflect the frontier experience, women are either represented as unitary products of the patriarchal discourses or symbolically represented. In *The Lay of the Land, Metaphor as Experience and History in American Life and Letters,* Annette Kolodny states that "land- as- woman" (abstraction of essential feminity) has been a central metaphor of the American history right from the beginning: " (…) America's oldest and most cherished fantasy: a daily reality of harmony between man and nature based on the experience of the land as essentially feminine- that is not simply land as mother, but the land as woman, the total female principle of gratification" ("The Lay of the Land" 4). If the early explorers and settlers of the New World experienced the land as maternal garden "a realm of nurture, abundance, and unalienated

labor within which men are truly brothers" (Kolodny, "The Lay of the Land" 4), a real Garden of Eden, the later colonists realized that the success of settlement depended on the ability of mastering the land. The trouble with Paradise (like with the utopias) and its plentifulness was that it made people idle and that "there was no further reason for action" (Kolodny, "The Lay of the Land" 15). The initial pastoral impulse was terminated and, with it, the filial responses to nature were replaced by erotic responses. The land becomes a "Mother raped by her own children" (Kolodny, "The Lay of the Land" 14). The action that the frontier men feel compelled to take is seen in the narratives of the frontier of the 18th century as "destructive masculine power over a vulnerable feminine" (Kolodny, "The Lay of the Land" 24). According to Kolodny, each new settlement repeated the confused and conflicted responses to land as mother and land as incestuous lover. The pastoral possibility is never abandoned until the Frontier was gone. This idea corresponds to Slotkin's assumption that the myth of the frontier tells the story of the American identity achieved through repeated cycles of spatial separation, temporal regression to a primitive, natural stage and regeneration through violence.

Since "the male psyche has seized the power and determined the course of history in the nineteenth century" (Kolodny, "The Lay of the Land" 73) it can be said that the American identity, born on the Frontier between civilization, is a product of patriarchy. Binary oppositions have played an important role, gender as social construct being of major importance. But with the archetypal polarities undergoing radical changes in the 20th century, Kolodny sees the necessity and calls for responsibility in creating new metaphors, "land-as-woman" being a dangerous one. It justified the mastery, control, ownership of the land (in the name of progress and civilization). The masculine power turned out to be an illusion, that endangered the survival of the nation and species.

The feminist sf comes up with alternatives to the masculinist way of ensuring survival; they will try to prove that women are as capable of survival as men and that there are alternatives to using physical force and violence. After all, in Rowlandson's narrative (discussed by Kolodny in *The Land Before Her: Fantasy and Experience of the American Frontier 1630-1860* as the first printed account of a woman captured by Indians), the woman manages "to carve herself an economic niche for herself with her knitting skills" and get food and favors in exchange for her socks. (Kolodny, "The Land Before Her" 18).

Chapter 3: Two Feminist Utopias

As shown in the previous chapter, the feminist agenda of the sf writers of the '70s involved rebellion against the mythologies that promoted patriarchy. The mythologies of the West concerned with the forming of the American nation of and by white males at the frontier between civilization and savagery, by domination of and violence against the weaker Other qualify as "stories" that promote patriarchy. As mentioned in the Introduction, the aim of this thesis is to decide to what degree two representative feminist utopias of the '60-'70s interrogate or endorse two of the Mythologies of the West: the Myth of the garden and the Myth of regeneration through violence. In order to answer this question, this chapter will analyze two feminist sf novels: Ursula Le Guin's *The Left Hand of Darkness* and Joanna Russ's *The Female Man* published in 1969 and 1975, respectively. The reading against the grain of the two novels is meant to provide relevant information for the comparison between them from the perspective of their questioning and/or employing the Mythologies of the West, which will follow in Chapter 4.

3.1. Le Guin's "menwomen"

Ursula K. Le Guin's sf novel *The Left Hand of Darkness* was first published in 1969. Peter Fitting maintains that the book is not a utopia, but can be seen as opening the utopian possibilities of science fiction (143). He also believes that the novel grows out of arguments about sex and gender and the role of women in American society that had been inspired by Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*. Biology determining women's choices in life was argued against by all the waves of feminism. The representatives of second wave a feminism, which is the context Le Guin's book appeared, insisted on the distinction between sex and gender, the second being merely a social construct of patriarchy. Le Guin's novel is considered by Fitting to be an intervention in this debate. It not a direct intervention though; Le Guin uses the *modus operandi* specific to sf, the defamiliarization. Ten years later, Darko Survin, in *Metamorphoses of Science fiction,* will define science fiction as the literature of cognitive estrangement and utopia as the sociopolitical subgenre of science fiction. His theory of cognitive estrangement states that by imagining strange new worlds we might be able to see our own in a new and potentially revolutionary perspective (books.google.no/books). This seems to be Le Guin's purpose with her novel.

In her Introduction to the novel, le Guin defines science fiction in general as thought- experiment that is not actually meant to describe the future, but to describe reality, the present world. *The Left Hand of Darkness* is a thought experiment, imagining a world that mirrors contemporary realities and the mechanisms that lead to them in a critical way. The defamiliarization starts with the setting of Le Guin's story: planet Gethen called also Winter by the Terrans, due to its cold climate. The story "starts on the 44th diurnal of the Year 149, which on the planet winter in the nation Karhide was Odharhahad Tuwa or the twenty- second day of the third month of the spring in the Year One. It is always the Year One here" (Le Guin 2). The main narrator of the story is a Genli Ai, who has been sent as an envoy to Gethen by

the Ekumen, a co-ordination of 3000 nations on 83 worlds, with the diplomatic mission to persuade the Gethenians to join them. Genly Ai's presence is received with skepticism by both the king of Karhide and of the rulers of Orgoreyn, the two major nations on Gethen. These two countries are in Genli Ai's opinion "similar to those in the ancient history of Terra: a monarchy and a genuine full-blown bureaucracy" (Le Guin 143). The only person that is open to Genli Ai and to the idea of a co-operation with the Ekumen is the former "King's Ear" (the prime minister of Karhide), Therem Harth rem ir Estraven. Estraven is accused of treason because of "liking Karhide better than its king" (Le Guin 82). He tries to support Ai, since he considers a co-operation with the Ekumen in the best interest of his world. Both Estraven and Genly Ai take refuge in Orgoreyn to escape the royal disgrace and death. While the politicians of Orgoreyn consider Estraven valuable in their feud with Karhide (caused by a piece of land that both countries claim), Genly Ai is seen as a threat and sent to a so- called "voluntary farm" where the rule was "work or die". Estraven saves him and they cross together the ice- sheet Gobrin, where nothing grows and no creature is likely to survive. The adventure brings the two characters together, despite the racial, sexual and cultural differences.

The most significant of the differences between Estraven and Ai is their sexuality. The people of Gethen are ambisexuals, androgynous, each of them being able to assume the female or male sexuality during the period of the sexual arousal called kemmer, having no sexual predisposition and no choice of the sexual role during kemmer. The Terran male Ai finds Gethenian sexuality disturbing, as the Gethenins find his; they call him "the pervert", since he is in a state of permanent kemmer, with his sexual organs exposed all the time. Their sexuality makes them alien to each other, more than any other aspects. Ai confesses: "Cultural shock was nothing compared to the biological shock I suffered among human beings who were, five- sixth of the time, hermaphroditic neuters" (Le Guin 48). He would have easily

passed as a Gethenian, despite his dark color and his unusual height, weren't it for the fact that he was known as "the pervert".

A whole chapter in the book is addressed "the question of sex" of the Gethenians; it is included in the novel in the form of field notes of a Terran woman investigator, taken during the first Ekumenical landing party on Gethen. Still the issues of sexuality and gender and considerations of how these categories affect society are infused throughout the novel. While the investigator's notes are an attempt to offer an objective analysis of the Gethenian sexuality and its consequences, Ai completes this analysis with subjective reactions and reflections. Ong Tot Oppong, the Terran investigator, tries to keep her analysis objective: she considers the likelihood that the Gethenian androgyny might be a result of genetic manipulations of colonizers from Terra. She describes their sexual behavior with the seriousness of a scientist, but her observations about social behavior betray frustrations very much similar to those of the feminists of the second wave. Le Guin uses the technique of estrangement, introduction the category "manwoman" (Le Guin 94) to call into question the discourses of patriarchy that have shaped gender roles that disadvantage women, based on the biological opposition male/ female. In her paragraphs for consideration, Gethenian society gets a feminist utopian dimensions:

> "Consider: Anyone can turn his hand to anything. (…)The fact that everyone between seventeen and thirty- five or so is liable to be (as Nim put it) "tied down to child- bearing", implies that no one is quite so thoroughly "tied down" here as women elsewhere are likely to be- psychologically and physically. Burden and privilege are shared out pretty equally; everyone has the same risk to run or choice to make. Therefore nobody here is quite so free as free male anywhere else" (Le Guin 93).

Traditional gender roles are absent in the Gethenian society due to the lack of opposition between the essentialist categories of man/woman based on distinct biological traits. Le Guin' "manwomen" are equally free and equally burdened. Any of them can become a mother, even

the King gets pregnant. Le Guin is clearly arguing against biology determining women's choices in life, a major issue of the feminists of all times.

The fact that there are no sexual differences eliminates also all the psychological consequences that sexuality has, according to Freudian theories, on the relationship parents-children. The Terran investigator notices that "there is no myth of Oedipus on Winter". Ai finds surprising the "unpossesiveness" of the relationship between parent and child and his explanation is the absence of sexual differences:

> " Their tenderness towards their children struck me as being profound, effective, and almost
> unpossesive. Only in that unpossessiveness does it perhaps differ from what we call the maternal
> instinct. I suspect that the distinction between maternal and paternal instinct is scarcely worth making;
> the paternal instinct, the wish to protect, to further, is not a sex- linked characteristic" (Le Guin 98-99)

Raising children on Gethen is a communal social responsibility, and not the exclusive responsibility of the person who bears and brings them to life. "A quarter to a third of the adult urban population is engaged full- time in the nurture and education of the children(…)nobody and everybody was responsible for them" (Le Guin 98).

In the article *Postmodern Anarchism in the Novels of Ursula K. Le Guin*, Lewis Call notices that " In *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1969), Le Guin subverted the traditional binary concept of gender identity, to promote the anarchy of gender" (Call, "Postmodern Anarchism"). This subversion of the traditional binary concepts is revealed explicitly by the woman- investigator:

> "Consider: There is no division of humanity into strong and weak halves, protective/protected,
> dominant/submissive , owner/chattel, active/passive. In fact the whole dualism that pervades human
> thinking may be found to be lessened, or changed on Winter" (Le Guin 94).

Call considers that Gethenian gender corresponds to the anti- essentialist, post- modernist gender theories of Judith Butler and Donna Haraway, who sees gender not as absolute

category, but a fluid and flexible one. While the Gethenian androgyny makes impossible the division in binary categories, it makes also impossible "fluid and flexible categories". The polyglossia of discourses that Haraway urges the human society to allow for the survival of the species is not possible in Le Guin's androgynous society where everybody shares the same sex. More than that, the Gethenians adopt the binary oppositions of the patriarchal discourses as soon as they spot an "Other". Ai is "the pervert": his sexuality turns him, more than anything else, into an alien. Estraven is the only one who accepts Ai as he is and sees him as an equal human being. The Terran investigator, in whose consciousness gender roles are deeply embedded, considers this "appalling": "A man wants his virility regarded, a woman wants her femininity appreciated (…) On Winter they will not exist one is respected and judged only as a human being. It is an appalling experience" (Le Guin 95). Le Guin's irony is obvious; it reflects a criticism directed against the values promoted by the patriarchal discourses that have split humanity into two opposite sides. The same criticism is transparent in the way Ai perceive all that is, in his culturally constructed view, "femininity".

In an interview published in New Yorker in 2009, when asked by the reporter if she considers her character Ai a sexist, Ursula Le Guin's answer is:

> " Oh, yes. Not a mean one. Not a misogynist. He just accepted and identified with his society's definition of women as weaker than the men, more devious, less courageous, etc.- physically and intellectually inferior. This gender prejudice has existed for so many thousands of years in so many different society that I had no hesitation in carrying it into the future" (Mishan, "First Contact"))

Ai's prejudices with regard to "femininity" are obvious in his initial perception of Estraven. There is contempt and confusion in his attitude towards Estraven every time he sees his "feminine" side. Ai cannot deal from "man to man" with him because he perceives in Estraven a sense of "effeminate intrigue" (Le Guin 9) "effeminate deviousness"(Le Guin 14), a "womanly, all charm and tact and lack of substance, specious and android" (Le Guin 12). Ai

actually identifies the source of his dislike and distrust towards Estraven in the femininity of the latter. It is for the same reason that Ai cannot accept orders from Estraven at the beginning of their crossing of the Gobrin ice- sheet: "I was galled by his patronizing. He was a head shorter than I, and built more like a woman than a man, more fat than muscle; when we hauled together I had to shorten my pace to his, hold in my strength so as not to out- pull him: a stallion in harness with a mule" (Le Guin 219). For Ai "masculinity" is associated with physical strength, and Estraven's lack of it disqualifies him as a man. Ai's contempt for Estraven physical inferiority, women's implicitly, is made clear in his comparison stallion/ mule.

The same contempt towards the Gethenian's "femininity" is perceived in connection with other characters. The king of Karhide laughs "shrilly like an angry woman" (Le Guin 31). He thinks about the person from whom he rents his room in Karhide as his "landlady for he had fat buttocks that wagged as he walked and a soft fat face, and a prying spying , ignoble, kindly nature" (Le Guin 48). The guards at the voluntary camp are, to Ai's eyes, effeminate, as well, "not in the sense of delicacy, etc, but in just the opposite sense: a gross, bland, fleshiness, a bovinity without point or edge" (Le Guin 176).

This opposition femininity/masculinity is not limited to the physical strength and traits, in Ai's view. The Gethenians, as women, are seen as more practically oriented, unable to see beyond what is physical and displaying a submissive attitude : "To ignore the abstraction, to hold fast to the thing. There was in this attitude something feminine, a refusal of the abstract, the ideal, a submissiveness to the given, which rather displeased me" (Le Guin 213). Gethenians are "afraid of new ways and new ideas" (Le Guin142) and that is why both the authorities of Karhide and Orgoreyn refuse to seriously consider joining the Ekumen, the existence of which they doubt anyway. For them, beyond Gethen there is only "the Void"; there is nothing out there since they cannot see, touch it, reach it. They seem to lack the sense

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of adventure that has lead humanity to crossing the frontier of the unknown. Space exploration seems of little interest to them and flying is something unknown and hard to imagine to the Gethenians: "How would it ever occur to a sane man that he could fly?" (Le Guin 260).

Gethenians seem generally uninterested in progress. Ai describes their society as technologically inferior to worlds that are members of the Ekumen. Terra and Gethen, are like a torrent and the glacier (dynamic vs. static), in his view. The Ekumen has as a purpose "Material profit. Increase of knowledge. The augmentation of the complexity and intensity of the field of intelligent life. The enrichment of harmony and the greater glory of God. Curiosity. Adventure. Delight" (Le Guin 34), as Ai explains it to King Argave of Karhide. The progress of the human race, not only material but also spiritual, is how Ai explains the interest of the Ekumen in the planet Gethen to the authorities in Orgoreyn: "Trade not only in goods, of course but in technologies, ideas, philosophies, art, medicine, science, theory" (Le Guin 136). "Communication rather than transportation"(Le Guin 137). Estraven is the only Gethenian genuinly interested in the progress of the species, beyond national patriotism and loyalty to his king, as his confession to Ai shows: "What does it matter which country wakens first, so long as we waken? (Le Guin 198)

Gethenians do not value progress much; their mastering of the nature was merely of means of survival: "little as they valued progress in itself, they had finally, in the last five or ten or fifteen centuries, got a little ahead of nature. They weren't absolutely at the mercy of their merciless climate any longer" (Le Guin 101). Technological progress of the Gethenians was slow and constant, without any revolutions:

> Four Thousand years ago I should have found their ancestors living in the same place, in the same kind of house. Along in those four millennia the electric engine was developed, radios and power loom and power vehicles and farm machinery and all the rest began to be used, and a machine Age got going,

gradually without any industrial revolution, without any revolution at all. Winter hasn't achieved in thirty centuries what Terra once achieved in thirty decades. (Le Guin 98)

The lack of interest for progress might have as an explanation the fact that the present is more important to the people of Gethen than the future. They are people who never hurry anywhere and are living in the moment:

" Gethenians could make their vehicles go faster, but they do not. If asked why not, they answer "Why?" Like asking Terrans why all our vehicles must go so fast; we answer "Why not?"(…) Terrans tend to feel they've got to get ahead, make progress. The people of Winter, who always live in the Year One, feel that progress is less important than presence" (Le Guin 50)

The focus on the present through sensual receptiveness and awareness is also part of the religious practice of Handdara, the religion of Karhide. Unlearning, regression to a state innocence, inactivity, ignorance and silence are the aims of this religion. "Nusuth"- meaning "it doesn't matter" is the heart of the cult of these people who never hurry and never worry, unless they have an immediate reason. The Fastness, a retreat where people could "spend the night or a lifetime" (Le Guin 55) and where the Haddarata Foretellers "domesticate hunches" is very much like a hippie commune of the 60's. "Time was unorganized except for the communal work, field labour, gardening, woodcutting, maintenance (…) (Le Guin 58). The Handdarata seem more interested in retreat into a Garden of Eden than in progress towards a more technologically advanced future. This garden is silent, robbing the word of the power of hiding realities and constructing mythologies. The anarchy of the Fastness as a place and Handdara as a religion insures complete freedom to the people who live there and practice it: "The Handdara is a religion without institution, without priests, without hierarchy, without vows, without creed" (Le Guin 54). More a way of thought than a religion, it has focus on the individual and not on the group, on present not on the future, reminding of the theoretical frame of the New Wave of science fiction.

Le Guin gives the Land of Karhide some utopian dimension, although it is far from being perfect: it is led by a mad king and a manipulative prime minister. The opening pages of the book show a chaotic ceremony that does not promise any utopia: "The various banners of the great Domains tangle in a rain- beaten confusion of color with the yellow pennants that bedeck the way, and the various music of each group clash and interweave in many rhythms echoing in the deep stone street" (Le Guin 2). Still in this confusion of sound and color, there is a glimpse of Haraway's heteroglossia and noise. In her essay *A Cyborg Manifesto*, Haraway pleads for allowing "a powerful infidel heteroglossia" (181), in the interest of survival of the human species and her "cyborg politics insist on noise" (Haraway, "Simians" 176). There are no constructed binary oppositions to make people take their designated places. No apparent harmony to disguise underlying conflicts. There are no hierarchies in Karhide, "the deputies, senators, chancellors, ambassadors and lords of the Karhide, none of them keeping the step and the rank" (Le Guin 3). The king himself, not only bears children, but acts like a "king-bee" during the ceremony, kneeling along with a mason, and working "methodically" (le Guin 5). There is more equality in this anarchic land of Karhide, less stress about the future and more living in the present than in Le Guin's present. Karhide is a promise of utopia indeed.

Accustomed with the Terran hierarchies and values, Ai does not see this potential. Ai seems to prefer the Orgota people for a while: "The Orgota seemed not an unfriendly people, but incurious: They were colorless, steady, subdued. I liked them I had two years of color, choler, and passion in Karhide" (Le Guin 113). He finds himself more at home in Orgoreyn, due to its resemblance to his world: the politicians, the commensals" are "panhuman" running the country efficiently and their culture is on the path of becoming "dynamic, aggressive, ecology- breaking" (Le Guin 233) similar to other worlds known to him. Still Mishnory, the capital appears to him as an ill- proportion, grotesque city; blurred, vague, fluid, unsubstantial, a little bit unreal (Le Guin145) and in time people fail to convince him because

"they did not cast shadows". They are not real, they are not allowed to be real because "behind every man in Orgoreyn comes the Inspector". They are under the complete control of Sarf, the secret police, whose cars "were forever snooping and spotlighting those dark streets, taking from poor man their one privacy, the night" (Le Guin 80).

Unlike Karhide, Oregoreyn is dark place, this in spite of Yomesh, their official religion, claiming that there is no darkness, only light and that nothing is unseen. It seems to be in fact the opposite of Karhide, a dystopia: an authoritarian, totalitarian state led by an oligarchy of 33 Commensals, heads of the 33 districts that form the Great Commensality of Orgoreyn, with the help of Sarf. There is no freedom of press: "radio, printed bulletins, scientific periodicals, they're all is the Sarf's hands" (Le Guin 153); even the thoughts are controlled, as Estraven explains to Ai: "Here the government can check not only act but thought. Surely no men should have such power over others" (Le Guin 152). The most horrid of the means of control of the oligarchy bears resemblance to the Nazi concentration camps: the so- called "voluntary farms" where there is a rule only ("work or die") are the ultimate method of dehumanizing people, who were already uncomplaining and unhopeful. Ai sees the Orgota as "people trained from birth in a discipline of cooperation, obedience, submission to a group purpose ordered from above. The qualities of independence and decision were weakened in them. They had not much capacity for anger. They formed a whole (…) headless, passive" (Le Guin 173). In the voluntary farms, people are domesticated with drugs, rendered docile and turned into angel- like creatures, through chemical castration. The suppression of sexual desire leads to passivity, to the suppression of volition and aggressiveness, associated by Ai with masculinity.

Throughout Le Guin's novel violence is associated with what the Terran characters- Ai and the investigator, perceive as "masculinity". The woman investigator, speculating about the cause of the androgynous nature of the Gethenians, considers the possibility that it is the

result of a human genetic manipulation of the Terran colonists, that was intended to eliminate the violence associated with masculinity : "Did they consider war to be a purely masculine displacement- activity, a vast Rape, and therefore in their experiment eliminate the masculinity that rapes and the feminity that is raped?" (Le Guin 96). There are no rapes and no wars on Gethen. While the investigator declares herself "a woman of peaceful Chiffewar and no expert on the attractions of the nature of war" (Le Guin 96), Ai seems disappointed in the absence of war and explains it in the terms of the same binary opposition (masculinity/ feminity):

> But on Gethen nothing led to war. Quarrels, murders, feuds, forays, vendettas, assassinations, all these were in their repertory of human accomplishments; but they did not go to war. They lacked it seems the capacity to mobilize. They behaved like animals in that respect; or like women. They did not behave like men, or ants (Le Guin 49)

During the parade in Karhide he notices as a peculiarity the absence of soldiers; the only guns they possess are some relics. Moreover, the Gethenians don't hunt, they only fish and farm. "I had never seen a Gethenian with blood on his hands", Ai realizes (Le Guin 215). Ai seems excited at the possibility of war between Orgoreyn and Karhide. He initially admires Orgorey (that is before being sent to the voluntary farm) for being "an increasing mobilizable society, a real nation- state" and he hopes that they would challenge Karhide to a prestige- competition that would turn Karhide too into a nation, instead of a family quarrel (as Estraven had characterized Karhide). This competition would create "an excellent chance of achiving the condition of war" (Le Guin 49). Ai seems to believe that "war is the sure, quick and lasting way to make people into a nation" (Le Guin 102). The myth of the regeneration through violence seems to be part of Ai's cultural inheritance: building a nation cannot be done without a war against an Other, without blood on one's hands. If Karhide is to become a nation, they are to defeat Orgoreyn, the same way the settlers of the West had to defeat the

savage Indians. Power is about dominating the Other of an unequal dichotomy. Le Guin questions the myth of regeneration through violence as her character Ai undergoes profound changes during his crossing of the Gobrin glacier. These changes will make him question his entire cultural inheritance.

Ai's consciousness is shaped the patriarchal discourses, as that of the woman investigator. She is perhaps more aware than him of this when warning:

> (…) you cannot and must not do what a bisexual naturally does, which is to cast him in the role of Man or Woman, while adopting towards him a corresponding role dependent on your expectations of the patterned or possible interactions between persons of the same or the opposite sex (Le Guin 94).

Ai too realizes that he operates with categories irrelevant to Gethenians and essential to himself, to his own nature (Le Guin 12), but he can't help pointing out constantly, with contempt, to the "femininity" of the Gethenians, as shown above. What Ai considers natural is in fact the gendered identity socially produced through repetitions of ordinary daily activities and imposed through discourses of power, according to Judith Butler. "Repetitions become domesticated and recirculated as instruments of cultural hegemony" (Butler 2551). Once established, this cultural hegemony is consolidated through exclusion and domination of the Other. This Otherness is the result of psychological processes of repression and projection, according to Kari Weil. In her essay "French Feminism's *écriture feminine",* explains that projection is a psychological process involved in the construction of the concepts of masculinity/femininity

> "Masculinity and femininity both derive their meanings, and, more importantly their values, in opposition with each other, but that opposition is produced through a repression of particular qualities on the one side and projection onto the other. Hence the understanding of masculinity as powerful,

reasonable, and essentially of the mind is derived from the definition of the feminity as vulnerable, emotional and essentially of the body (Weil 154).

Le Guin is destabilizing the rigid constructed categories man/woman, masculine/feminine, self/other in her novel, as Butler suggested. Through her androgynous society, she questions the mythologies that empowered men in the detriment of women.

Le Guin casts Ai in the role of the Man. Initially Ai is shown as an embodiment of "masculinity" in which he believes, through contrast with the "femininity" of the Gethenians. He is physically stronger than the Gethenians, he believes in progress for the benefit of the human kind and in the regenerative power of war and violence. He dissociates himself of everything that is "feminine" and is repulsed by the otherness of Gethenian sexuality. He admits that it is his masculinity what compels him to this condescending attitude:

> (…)locked in my virility: no friend of Therem Harth, or any other of his race. Neither man nor woman, neither and both, cyclic, lunar, metamorphosing under the hand's touch, changelings in the human cradle, they were no flesh of mine, no friends; no love between us (Le Guin 213)

Ai never cries, because men don't cry, yet his name sounds, in Estraven's ears, like "a cry of pain from a human throat across the night" (Le Guin 223).

Ai's change begins with the crossing of the glacier Gobrin. Out there in the wilderness, away from civilization, he abandons his designated role and sees Estraven for the first time as an equal human being and begins to accept him as he is: "And I saw then again, and for good, what I had always been afraid to see, and had pretended not to see in him: that he was a woman as well as a man (…). For he was the only one who had entirely accepted me as a human being" (Le Guin 248). Unlike the American frontier where conflicts are solved through violence, on this frontier between civilization and wilderness, acceptance of differences solves the conflict with the Other: "But it was from the difference between us, not

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from the affinities and likeness, but from the difference that love came: and it was itself the bridge the only bridge, across what divided us" (Le Guin 249).

More than friendship seems to actually develop between Ai and Estraven, there is sexual tension as well: "For us to meet sexually would be for us to meet once more as aliens. We had touched, in the only way we could touch. We left it at that. I do not know if we were right" (Le Guin 249). Their love seems impossible, even though the novel was written in a period of free love like the '60s. Le Guin chooses not to go further with this love story and the explanation might be in her interview in The New Yorker: "I was pretty shy about writing about sex. And particularly about sex that might seem, to the usual s.f. reader- to be perverse, kinky, off- putting…S.f. until the late seventies was actually quite chaste, even puritanical" (newyorker.com). Le Guin does not dare to shake the patriarchal establishment as profoundly as the feminists critics of the '90 will. The feminist of the second wave were critically concerned with contesting gender as a construct imposed by patriarchy. But the thought that sex too, not only gender, is a cultural construct, on which Butler insists in her essay, seems to be to materializing in Le Guin's novel. The love story between Ai and Estraven is a proof of that. Even though the love story is not consumed and Le Guin is too shy to actually describe the consummation of kemmer in her novel, she raises awareness to sexual alternatives shunned by a society that imposes a compulsory heterosexuality (according to Judith Butler).

Ai accepts heterosexuality as a given, even though he admits to Estraven that women are more alien to him than Estraven is, as this dialog between the two of them reveals:

"Do they (women) differ much from your sex in mind behavior? Are they like different species?"

"No. yes, No, of course not. Not really. But the difference is very important. I suppose the most important thing, the heaviest single factor in one's life, is whether one's born male or female. In most societies, it determines one's expectations, activities, outlook, ethics, manners, almost everything. Vocabulary, semiotic usage. Clothing, even food. Women tend to eat less…It's extremely difficult to

separate the innate difference from the learned ones. Even where women participate equally with men in the society, they still after all do all the child- bearing, and so most of the child- rearing…"

"Equality is not the general rule, then? Are they mentally inferior?"

"I don't know. They don't often seem to turn up mathematicians, or composers of music, or inventors, or abstract thinkers. But it isn't they're stupid. Physically they're less muscular, but a little bit more durable than men"

Ai: Harth, (…) I can't tell you what women are like (…)women are more alien to me than you are. With you I share one sex, anyhow…" (Le Guin 234)

The knowledge that Ai has about women is what he inherited culturally and has accepted as true, they are myths perpetuated through the mechanisms of patriarchy: men and women are different because they are born different; women are the weaker sex, whose business is raising children, non- violent in nature and less concerned with abstractions and the progress of the human species.

Le Guin clearly questions the veracity of the constructs that are "woman" and "femininity" resulted through the opposition with "man" and "masculinity", constructions accepted by Ai as the truth. Ai himself comes to question the veracity of these constructs. The crossing of the Gobrin ice- sheet is indeed a life changing experience for him: he really gets to know, admire, trust and even love Estraven (this character that is neither man, nor woman, in the sense that a patriarchal discourses define these notions). Estraven possesses some of the "masculine" qualities promoted by the mythologies of the West though: he is Ai's rescuer, he has the survival skill of the Western hero in the wilderness of the frontier, he is driven by curiosity and adventure spirit, he believes in progress for the benefit of his planet. At the same time, he does not have the physical strength of the Western hero, he is weak as a woman (though he compensates for it with will power and self- control), he behaves like a woman and can turn into a woman sexually.

Le Guin advocates indirectly, as Butler will do later explicitly, for the loosening of the categories that have entrapped the self, for a resignification of identity, independently of the binary oppositions with which patriarchy operates. The boundaries between man/woman, feminine/masculine are exploded, leading to a confusion of the boundaries, reminding, to some extent, of Haraway's cyborg as well. Even though Le Guin's characters are not a hybrid between machines and organisms, they are not afraid of "permanently partial and contradictory standpoints" (Haraway , "Simians"154") and they are "less aware of the gap between men and beasts" (Le Guin 233), the same way as Haraway's creature. Still, the Karhidish are seduced by the idea of wholeness and the nostalgia of original unity of the Graden of Eden. The title of the novel is significant in this sense and so is the poem that gives the title of the book:

> "Light is the left hand of darkness
>
> And darkness is the right hand of light.
>
> Two are one, life and death, lying
>
> Together like lovers in kemmer,
>
> Like hands joined together,
>
> Like the end and the way." (Le Guin 233)

 "Perhaps you are as obsessed with wholeness as we are with dualism "(Le Guin 233), is Ai's reply. Nevertheless, Ai comes to question his own identity shaped through oppositions with the Other, either woman or alien. The cost of gaining humanity is losing his "masculinity". Ai has found his garden. It is a feminist garden, where Ai is a human being, not a man. He gets to appreciate it once he regains his humanity, a humanity beyond race, gender, sexuality, hierarchies and even history. Winter, "a marginal world, on the edge" (Le Guin 297) offers Le Guin's main character an alternative of living that turns out to be better than his own world.

Not that it is a land of endless resources, nor a land of opportunity (on the contrary), but it is a place where he can find humanity undivided. He experiences a feeling of estrangement when he meets men and women from his world:

> "But they all looked strange to me, men and women , well as I knew them. Their voices sounded strange: too deep, too shrill. They were like troupe of great, strange animals, of two different species; great apes with intelligent eyes, all of them in rut in kemmer…" (Le Guin 296)

3.2. Russ's "FemaleMan"

In her essay *Towards the Aesthetic of Science Fiction*, Joanna Russ claims that the protagonists of science fiction are always collective, never individual persons. It is the idea that is actually the hero, she concludes ("To Write like a Woman" 5). This seems to be true in Le Guin's novel. Even though women are almost absent, the novel is all about women, more precisely an intervention in the debate about the distinction between sex and gender of the '60s- '70s. Russ's novel is populated by many women, but they are not the main characters in her novel either. It is an intervention in the same debate, but while Le Guin "emasculates" and disarms men for the cause of feminism, Russ empowers women (Disch132) by liberating them of patriarchal labels and restrictions.

In the chapter *Can Girls Play too? Feminizing SF* of his book *The Dreams Our Stuff are Made of*, Thomas M. Disch evaluates that Joann Russ's *The Female Man* "must be accounted the best feminine science- fiction novel of all times". According to Veronica Hollinger in her essay *Feminist Theory and Science Fiction* Russ's novel is a "formally experimental deconstruction of female subjectivity" (129). It has an anarchic structure, challenging the novelistic conventions.

There are four female protagonists, the four Js: Janet, Jeannine, Joanna and Jael, women existing in parallel worlds, "four versions of the same woman" (Russ, "The Female Man" 156). Donna Haraway, discussing Russ's novel in *Modest_Witness@Second_Millennium. FemaleMan©_Meets_OncoMouse, Feminism and Technoscience* claims that: "Although they never attain the mythic singularity of Man, the four main characters pf Russ's novel are a clone" (71). She makes a "typological amendment" (Haraway, "Modest_Witness" 70) to Russ's title character writing it as "FemaleMan" since this creature lives after "the implosion of informatics, biologics, and economics" (Haraway, "Modest_Witness" 70).

Janet comes from a feminist utopian world in the future, Jeannine and Joanna live in parallel 1969s and Jael is from a future world as well, where the battle of sexes became a real war that split the population into two armed camps. It is Jael who brings the other three women together, asking them to unite against Manlanders. These women speak for themselves, in discontinuous parts, all except Jeannine. "They are the modern Everywoman, USA at different stages of her life", claims Gwyneth Jones in the Introduction to Russ's book.

The first to be introduced is Janet Evason, who comes from a future feminist utopia (10 centuries from Joanna's time), Whileaway, a technologically advanced place, from where men are absent (apparently killed by a plague) and women got smarter (as their IQs show) and stronger physically. Janet is described as "a large boy scout with flyaway hair" (Russ, "The Female Man" 25). She gives a short summary of her life in the first section of Part One, and the defamiliarization starts from the first lines when Janet speaks about her mothers and the killing a wolf at thirteen on one of the two continents of Whileaway. Janet is married to a woman and has a daughter who was taken away to school when she was five. Janet's job is officer for Safety and Peace, after having other different various jobs: mining, at a radio network, on a milk farm, on a vegetable farm and in a library, digging fire trails, delivering

babies and fixing cars. Since the dichotomy male/female that generates gender roles no longer exist on Whileaway, there are no men's jobs/ women's jobs.

Russ reveals later in her novel that women on Whileaway use technology (mechanical hands and induction helmets) to compensate for their lack of physical strength. They are in the process of becoming something similar to Harraway's cyborg: the boundary between organic and technology is being blurred in Janet's world. "Humanity is unnatural!" believes one of the Whilawayan philosophers (Russ, "The Female Man" 11). Section 8 of Part one offers a historical overview of life on Whileaway and their scientific progress. A Golden Age followed the Plague that killed all men, when Earth was completely reformed: animal species were re- invented; Terran colonies were re-established on Mars, Ganymede and in the Asteroids; space exploration continued even though they expected to find nothing; genetic surgery allowed the enhancement of intelligence; the induction helmet changed industry forever since it made possible for a workwoman to have the strength of thousands of people; probability mechanics that made possible teleportation was discovered. This is actually how Janet ends up in 1969. Still, in spite of all this technological advancement, Whileaway is described by Janet as pastoral: "Whileaway is so pastoral that at times one wonders whether the ultimate sophistication may not take us all back to a kind of pre-Paleolithic dawn age, a garden without any artifacts except for what we call miracles" (Russ, "The Female Man" 14). Whileaway, though technologically developed, has farms as social centers, "the only family units" (Russ, "The Female Man" 88). Preserving the planet and its resources is a concern of the Whilewayans: "ecological housekeeping is enormous" (Russ, "The Female Man" 14), animals die if not "spoken to affectionately" (Russ, "The Female Man" 51) and Whileawayans are careful to plant trees and berries. When attending a party where alcohol is served Janet exclaims: "How wasteful!" (Russ, "The Female Man" 36). In her essay *Recent Feminist Utopias,* Russ notices that generally feminist utopias are "ecology

minded, with a strong feeling for the natural world" (""To Write Like a Woman" 139). The feminist garden seems to be a result of respecting nature and taking care of resources, which are far from being endless, as the Myth of the garden implies.

The ending of Janet's self-introduction in section one is quite unexpected: Janet confesses she killed four times in duel. Violence is generally associated with masculinity in both patriarchal discourses (which regard physical strength as a masculine feature) and the feminist discourses. The Myth of regeneration through violence sees violence as a necessity for progress and a means of regeneration. The feminists question the motivation for violence, considering it a method of domination of the Other. Russ seems to see violence as inherent to all human beings, not to men only. In an interview on TV, asked if she expected the earth she came to visit to be a peaceful place, Janet answers : No, no one is, completely" (Russ, "The Female Man" 24). Still, Janet considers the motivation for violence to be important: "For sport, yes, ok, for hatred, no". She is surprised to be welcome with a revolver when she was teleported back to 1969:

> Everyone knows that anger is the most intense towards those you know: it is lovers and neighbor who kill each other. There is no sense, after all, in behaving that way towards a perfect stranger ; where is the satisfaction? No love, no need; no need, no frustration; no frustration, no hate, right? It must have been fear (Russ, "The Female Man" 23)

While in the feminist utopia Whileway the motivation for violence is passion, Janet discovers that it is fear that caused violence in the past. Her otherness makes people afraid and capable of violence. All the Js and other women characters in Russ's novel are acting violently or on the verge of becoming violent at certain points in the narrative.

While "murder and theft are difficult to commit" (Russ 53), dueling became a "social nuisance" (Russ, "The Female Man" 12) on Whileaway. A penalty was introduced for those who killed in a duel: "to bear a child to replace a lost life" (Russ, "The Female Man" 12).

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Bearing a child is seen on Whileaway as a social duty and raising them as a communal act. Women bear children at about thirty – "singleton and twins as the demographic pressures require" (Russ, "The Female Man" 49). Motherhood is seen as "both sulk and swank, fun and profit (…)an opportunity to pursue whatever interests women have been forced to neglect previously, and the only leisure they have ever had" (Russ, "The Female Man" 49). While attending to the spiritual needs of the child, for five years, Whileawayans do not have to work, either inside or outside their homes, the other members of the family (a family has twenty to thirty members) taking care of the housework. After the age of five, children go to school and get a very practically oriented education- learning mechanics, gymnastics, medicine, swimming and shooting; at the age of 17 they are assimilated into the labor force doing easier practical work; at 22 they are allowed to learn jobs that imply more advanced knowledge. The early separation of the children from their mothers makes children independent, but at the same time leaves them with a dissatisfaction that is seen as an essential motivation for progress: "we would become so happy we would sit down on our fat, pretty behinds and soon we would start starving (Russ, "The Female Man" 53).

Throughout the novel, Russ stresses the fact that the Whileawayans work all the time, even though the work- week is sixteen hours and they have time to celebrate "Anything at all/ Nothing at All (Russ, "The Female Man" 101). Heather J. Hicks in her essay *Automating feminism: The Case of Joanna Russ' The Female Man,* argues that

> Russ' s text is an attempt to rethink women's work in a historical moment when liberal feminists were campaigning to put women to work while the New Left – increasingly wedded to the concept of postindustrialism- was claiming that cybernetic automation would soon make work obsolete (Hicks, "Automating feminism")

Hicks believes that Russ' s novel is a response to both these tendencies. She sees work as a key to women's liberation, as the liberal feminists did, which is particularly obvious in the

case of the characters living in the altenative1969, Jeannine and Joanna. At the same time, Whileaway is the utopia the New Left had imagined possible through the gradual embrace of automation. Still, the outcome of technological progress is not on Whileaway as predicted by the New Left. Work is not replaced by creative and non-economic activities. The Whilewayans work all the time, or they claim to do so. The only time when they do not is when they are old (and some hope to get grey hair early) or raising a child. One of the Whileawayans, Elena Twason, "run mad and unable to bear the tediousness of her work, flees above the fourty- eight parallel intending to remain there permanently" (Russ, "The Female Man" 55). Elena is "going bad at the age of 60" (Russ, "The Female Man" 139). She is brought back forcibly and executed by the S& P officer Janet. When she finds her, Janet calls her Elena Twa, taking away the ending "son" of her name. It seems like, by rejecting work, Elena rejects what is perceived in Russ's culture as "masculine".

A possible explanation for Russ's emphasis on work on Whileaway could be, according to Hicks, that the writer invites the reader to interrogate whether work should remain an important category for women when it is no longer an economic imperative. Work is an essential category for the Whileawayan identity. The explanation might be found back into their past (Russ's present) when their ancestors had to fight against the patriarchal culture for their right to work, a residue of the battle of sexes. This might be a common feature with Haraway's cyborg which secures its power to survive by seizing the tools that marked women as other (Haraway, "Simians" 175). Work is a category used by patriarchy in creating gender roles: men are active, preoccupied by future and the progress for the humanity, creators of nations while women are passive, preoccupied by the immediate, practical of the domestic arena. Hicks considers as a possible explanation for this centrality of work in the Whilewayan society the fact that, once men disappeared from Whileway, so did the binary oppositions masculine/feminine, public/private , work/leisure. Work became a totalizing category, taking

over the binary work/leisure. Hicks also thinks that work gets a negative valence in Russ's novel, finding this position similar to Donna J. Haraway's (who actually found in Russ's novel an inspiration for her myth of the cyborg). She speaks of the feminization of work: "To be feminized means to be made extremely vulnerable; able to be disassembled, reassembled, exploited as reserve labor force; seen less as workers than as servers" (Haraway, "Simians" 166). Work does not seem to bring women independence, as the feminist of the second wave expected (despite and because of technology), but it brings equality in the sense that men become as vulnerable in a capitalist world.

Though not a perfect place, Whileaway as imagined by Russ is a feminist utopia, a better place for women, through the absence of men and, implicitly, the dichotomies that made women the weaker sex, prays for men and turned them into sexual objects:

> There is not *being out too late* in Whileaway, or *up too late*, or *in the wrong part of town*, or *unescorted*. You cannot fall out of the kinship web and become sexual prey for strangers, for there is no prey and there are no strangers- the web is world- wide. In all the Whileaway there is no one who can keep you from going where you please (…), no one who will follow you and try to embarrass youby whispering obscenities in your year, no one who will attempt to rape you, no one who will warn you of the dangers of the street, no one who will stand on the street corner, hot- eyed and vicious, jingeling loose change in his pants pockets, bitterly bitterly sure you're a cheap floozy, hot and wild, who likes it, who can't say no, who's making a mint of it, who inspires him with nothing but disgust, and who wants to drive him crazy. (Russ, "The Female Man" 81).

On Whileaway, women are themselves not a reflection of men's desire. They are comfortable with their own sturdy bodies, walking naked inside and wearing pink or grey pajamas outside; they hack off their hair with clam and lipstick will never stay on Janet's lips. Their lack of interest for their physical appearance, their lack of "femininity", is something that Joanna finds liberating and Jeannine has a hard time understanding.

The second of the Js introduced by Le Guin in her novel is Jeanine, a librarian living in New York City in an alternative 1969 (not Russ' 1969, the year she wrote the novel), in which the Second World War never happened (nor the revolutionary changes of the '60s) and the Depression still continues. Jeanine is the embodiment of "femininity", entrapped in this patriarchal construction against which the feminists argued, but accepted as a given by her. Jeannine is preoccupied by her looks and dreams of "catching" a man through her feminine power and getting married:

> "If I had the money, if I could get my hair done…He comes into the library; he's a college professor; no, he's a playboy (…)She casts her eyes down, rich in feminine power. Had my nails done today. And these are good clothes, they have my own individuality, my beauty (…)'There is something about her', he says. 'Will you go out with me?' Later on the roof garden, drinking champagne, 'Jeannine, will you-'" (Russ, "The Female Man" 15)

She claims to Joanna that she enjoys being a girl and she keeps repeating it to Joanna as if to convince herself: "I enjoy being a girl, don't you?(-…) I like being admired. I like being a girl. I wouldn't be a man for anything. Not for anything" (Russ, "The Female Man" 86).

She is passive in the relationship with her impotent boyfriend whose presence is a "horrid shock to her" (Russ, "The Female Man" 3), but she ends up accepting his marriage proposal, pressured into it by her family; marriage is women's only solution for a decent living and being socially accepted in Jeannine's 1969. "Stupid and inactive. Pathetic. Cognitive starvation. Jeannine loves to become entangled with the souls of the furniture in my apartment" (Russ, "The Female Man" 92), this is how Joanna describes Jeannine, confessing in the end of the novel that she is "poor as-I-once-was (Russ, "The Female Man" 206). Jeannine is the only character who does not speak for herself. Her story is narrated in 3rd person, using an omniscient point of view. Russ has probably chosen this narrative point of view to suggest that Jeanine does not dare to speak for herself, not until later in the novel.

Jeannine gets pushed around throughout the story by her family, her boyfriend and the other Js. She feels at first she does not belong in the feminist worlds of Janet and Joanna: " I don't belong here" she confesses to Joanna when they first meet in a bar and Joanna agrees: I can't imagine how she got there except by accident (Russ, "The Female Man" 7).

But she is "The vanishing woman" (Russ, "The Female Man" 4) as Cal, her boyfriend calls her. She vanishes gradually first into her own imaginary world, Joanna's world, in Whileaway and finally Jael's world. It is with her dreams of Whileaway that her changing begins, with a feeling of loss, of dissatisfaction, the feeling that Betty Friedan had called "the problem that has no name": "Everything suggest to Jeannine something she has lost (…)everything in the world wears a faint coating of nostalgia, makes her cry, seems to say to her 'You can't'. She's fond of not being able to do things; somehow this gives her a right to something" (Russ, "The Female Man" 103). Jeannine begins questioning the role patriarchy imposed on her as weak, unable to manage without a man by her side, but she realizes the responsibility that comes with the doubt. A new role means giving up what she has already learned. Domesticity is part of this role. Almost three pages describe minutely the housework she does before visiting her family, in order to get over the anxiety caused by dreaming about Whileaway, and then she decides she ought to get married. Jeannine feels worthless unless she is validated by a man: "The lines of her figure are perfect, but who is to use this loveliness, who is to recognize it, make it public, make it available. Jeannine is not available to Jeannine(…) *If only* (she thinks) *he'll come and show me to myself*". (Russ, "The Female Man" 107) Both her mother and brother remind her that she is getting old, that she ought to get married and Joanna ironically joins this patriarchal chorus:

> "Jeannine, you'll never get a good job (..) There aren't any. And if there were, they'd never give them to
> a woman. (…)They are all boring anyway, hard and boring. (…)You're getting old. You ought to marry
> someone who can take care of you, Jeannine" (Russ, "The Female Man" 111).

All this social pressure makes Jeannine snap and she turns for a moment into Janet and twists her brother's thumb. *"Touch me again and I'll knock your teeth out"* (Russ, "The Female Man" 122), she threatens her brother. It is the first sign of violence that this character shows, her rebellious moment that ends up with the confession made to Joanna: "I want something else". Something else than walking in her Mommy's shoes, being "a caretaker of childhood and a companion of men" (Russ, "The Female Man" 116). Something else than cleaning her own place over and over again "without making anything of it" (Russ, "The Female Man" 106). Something else than a man who wouldn't listen to her because "you can't expect a man to listen to everything" (Russ, " The female Man" 106). She feels that her "knowledge was taken away" (Russ, "The Female Man" 121) from her, knowledge of the roles she was supposes to fulfill (feminine, homemaker, wife, mother,) and she no longer was "fit to exist" (Russ, "The Female Man" 119). "Who am I, what am I, what do I want, where do I go, what world is this" (Russ, "The Female Man" 119), she asks herself as Friedan's white middle class housewives did. Jeannine hesitates between the safety of the role attributed to her by patriarchy and taking the chance to escape it. Russ' s character is tempted by the comfort of having a kitchen of her own (an ironic reminder of Wolf's "A Room of One's Own"): "she had never known anything so solid and beautiful as the kitchen in the morning sunlight" (Russ, "The Female Man" 128). She would like Cal to protect her, like man are supposed to do. At the same time, Jeanine dreams of freedom, of being a mermaid and keeps bumping into the other J's, only apparently against her will. "The first class sleeping beauty" (Russ, "The Female Man" 128) awakens by herself before being awaken by the tall, dark and handsome stranger.

Jeannine's awakening is not pleasant though: it comes with fear and frustration, that leads to enjoying Jael's violence. When Jael asks her if she had ever killed everybody, the naïve Jeannine seems to lose her innocence: "Something had gotten into Jeannine's clear,

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suffering gaze; something had muddied her timidity. What can render miss Dadier self-possessed? What can make her so quietly stubborn?" (Russ, "The Female Man" 159). When Jael kills a man in front of the Js, Jeannine is the one who remains calm, while Joanna is ashamed and Janet is weeping (Russ, "The Female Man" 176). She is the only one who agrees to Jael bringing her armies on her Earth and in her time, being surprised that Joanna and Janet could hesitate to do business with Womanland: "I don't mind. You can bring in all the soldiers you want. You can take the whole place over; I wish you would" (Russ, "The Female Man" 204). Jeannine is ready for the battle of sexes.

Unlike Jeannine and later Jael, Joanna seems to believe that this battle can only be won if she turns into a man, not opposing The Man. The character Joanna is the author herself, Joanna Russ, a thirty-five year-old professor of English (but an alternative authorial voice is present in the novel as well). Joanna enters the novel when she had just changed into a man: "a female man, of course; my body and soul were exactly the same". She is the woman of the Russ's 1969, frustrated by the role society has designed for her. She despises the feminine Jeannine, longs for Whileaway, envies Janet's freedom and she would like to be Jael, for a while. While Jeannine is (in the beginning) accepting her woman's role and enjoying her own femininity, Janet is unaware of such a role and Jael is an extremist men-killer, Joanna rebels against patriarchy because she has "a man's brain" (Russ, "The Female Man" 196) and she loves her job. She crosses the borders of the areas claimed by patriarchy as being "masculine". In addition to being smart and highly educated, Joanna likes "bars, hotels, air-conditioning, good restaurants and jet transport" (Russ, "The Female Man" 7). Staying at home, cooking, cleaning and raising kids (the feminine arena of domesticity) is not appealing to her. Before meeting Janet (discovering this future/possible alter ego), Joanna was very much like the "feminine" Jeannine. She existed only in the opposition with The Man:

-all I did was

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dress for The Man

smile for The Man

talk wittily to The Man

sympathize with The Man

flatter The Man

understand The Man

defer to The Man

entertain The Man

keep The Man

live for The Man (Russ 29)

The use of majuscules in "The Man" points to the God- like position of the man in the

dichotomy man/woman. Russ is ironic to the idea that women exist only as peripheral

members of a dichotomy, in which men occupy a central and domineering position.

When Janet enters Joanna's life (when Joanna starts questioning patriarchy and becomes

a feminist), she begins to gain weight, her make- up feels too heavy and her panty- hose and

bra uncomfortable and her brassiere hurts. At the same time, Janet's nudity around the suit

makes her uncomfortable and Joanna tries to censor her constantly: "Janet you must… Janet,

we don't… but one always (…) That's different (…) I couldn't (Russ, "The Female Man"

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herself was taught to accept as appropriate womes's behavior. This social knowledge is

generated through what Butler calls repetitions that have become "domesticated and

recirculated as instruments of cultural hegemony" (2551). These repetitions are

metaphorically summed up in the blue book/ pink book, "WHAT TO DO IN EVERY

SITUATION" (Russ, "The Female Man" 46), books for men/women, that the participants at a

party on Riverside Drive use when in doubt about how they are supposed to react to the opposite sex. This makes them "plastic people" (Russ, "The Female Man" 39), alienated of their self, lacking individuality, of which they have been robbed by convergent discourses turned into social norms. Men and women are two distinct categories in opposition at this party, who behave according to the roles for which the blue and book are scripts. The dialogs between the participants have a theatrical quality; they seem a rehearsed mis- en- scéne with characters whose names remind of the Greek tragedies: Lamentissa, Wailissa, Aphrodissa, Eglantissa, etc. The ridicule of these female characters and the fact that they have names pointing to characteristics considered typically feminine can be interpreted as a protest against the essentialization of women.

The only disruption in this social charade is Janet, who, by being herself, causes confusion, especially for the male characters of the play, who find themselves in need for flipping their blue books. She sits "feets apart- a daughter of Whileaway never quails!" (Russ, "The Female Man" 37), she has a scar she'd gotten in a duel, she's a cop and dumps on floor the man who grabs her wrist. Janet does not know that, according to the pink book, she's supposed to wait for someone to rescue her, "to yearn for a rescuer" (Russ, "The Female Man" 45). Women have "certain physical limitations" (Russ, "The Female Man" 43), explains one of the men, who engages in a monologue about women in Janet's presence (Joanna always hovering over her). He ends up getting physically abused by Janet. The rules of both books, the blue and the pink, are scriptures of patriarchy. They claim the centrality and superiority of man in the unbalances dichotomy man/woman. Women are only supposed to act as enhancers of "masculinity". "*Girls back down- cries- manhood vindicated*": this was the role that Janet was supposed to play, if she were aware of it. Janet is not familiar with the rules of these "books" and she does not back down, but totally humiliates and confuses The Man. Joanna knows the rules though, because, before turning into a man, she had to turn into

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a woman. Amanda Boulter explains Joanna's/Russ's reason for this: "In becoming first a woman and then a man, the female man intends mischief. She exposes the discursive methods by which men have appropriated the signifiers of humanity to assert that she too can claim that power" (Boulter, "Unnatural Acts").

Russ shows that "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman", as Simon de Beauvoir claimed in her treatise *The Second Sex*. Family is one of the mechanisms through which patriarchy establishes hierarchies that place women in the position of passivity and dependence. Joanna, as Jeannine and Laura (a rebellious teenager who falls in love with Janet) is taught her place into this hierarchy by her family:

> I had, at seventeen, an awful conversation with my mother and father in which they told me how fine it was to be a girl- the pretty clothes (…)and how I did not have to climb the Everest, but could listen to the radio and eat bon- bons while my Prince was out doing it" (Russ, "The Female Man" 146)

The resemblance between the message Joanna gets from her parents and that which Laura gets from her mother, when she told her she did not want to be a girl, is striking:

> Oh, no, being a girl is wonderful . Why?. Because you wear pretty clothes and you don't have to do anything; the men will do it for you. She said that instead of conquering Everest, I could conquer the conqueror of Everest and while he had to climb the mountain, I could stay home in lazy comfort listening to the radio and eating chocolates" (Russ, "The Female Man" 65)

This resemblance may be meant to strengthen the idea of women as products of patriarchy resulted through repetitive discourses, using family as ideological apparatus. In her essay *Recent Feminist Utopias*, Russ agrees with Simon de Beauvoir that puberty is "the time when the prison bars of "femininity, enforced by law and custom, shut the girl in for good" (Russ, "To Write Like a Woman" 143). Training a woman to become "a proper woman" is a complex process and implies profound (re)structuring, according to Joanna and Russ, implicitly:

> There is the vanity training, the obedience training, the self- effacement training, the deference training, the dependency training, the passivity training, the rivalry training, the stupidity training, the placation training (Russ, "The Female Man" 146).

Joanna refuses to be broken; she realizes it is her sex that puts her in a position of inequality to men, in spite her PhD, her professorship, her engineer's contract, her ten thousands a year, having a housekeeper, a reputation, the respect of her colleagues, growing strong, having an IQ past 200 (Russ 129). Joanna is ready to become a man, but the process "demands a certain disembodiment" (Russ, "The Female Man" 129) and "leaving smiles and happy laughter at home" (Russ, "The Female Man" 129). She had to unite contraries in her own persons "two systems of values, two habits of expectations, almost two minds" (Russ, "The Female Man" 133) to be allowed to be part of the mankind, and the process is shown as a painful one, similar to electrocution. No matter how painful the change and the losses, Joanna refuses the existence at the peripheries of the dichotomy man\woman; she claims the central position of a man, because she wants to be part of mankind:

> Years ago we were all cave Man. Then there was the Java Man and the future of the Man and the values of Western Man and existential Man and economic Man and Freudian Man and the Man in the moon and modern Man and eighteenth century Man and too many Mans to count or look at or believe. There is Mankind (…) If we are all Mankind, it follows to my interested and righteous and right now very bright and beady little eyes that I too am a Man and not at all a Woman. (Russ, "The Female Man" 135)

Section 3 of part seven ends with a violent threat: "*I'll break your neck*", a threat addressed to those who would not treat her as a man. Her violence, that springs out of frustration, materializes into the third of the Js, Jael. Jael is visible in Joanna's self description:

> I am a sick woman, a madwoman, a ball- breaker, a man- eater; I don't consume men gracefully with my fire- like red hair or my poisonous kiss; I crack their joint with this filthy ghoul's claws and standing on one foot like a de- clawed cat, rake at your feeble effort to save yourselves with my taloned hinder

feet: my matted hair, my filthy skin, my big flat plaques of green, bloody teeth. I don't think my body would sell anything (Russ, "The Female Man" 131)

Jael's presence is announced earlier in the novel, at the beginning of PART TWO, a mysterious character, "a blonde Hallowe'en ghoul an top of the SS uniform" and she reappears in Part EIGHT with the same question "Who am I? I know who I am, but what's my brand name?", Jael is The Woman Who Has No Brand Name", she refuses to be a product of patriarchy. She comes from a future world where the war between sexes has exploded into a real war and she has brought the other Js together to ask for permission to bring women soldier into their own times and spaces.

Jael, also called Alice Reasoner, having the code name Sweet Alice lives in a ultra-modern penthouse and works for the Bureau of Comparative Ethnology as a specialist in disguises. She welcomes the three Js, acknowledging them as parts of herself: "welcome myself, welcome me, welcome I" (Russ, "The Female Man" 152), repeated genotypes, "modified by age circumstances, by education, by diet, by learning, by God knows what" (Russ, "The Female Man" 155). To the three Js she is a terrifying presence, because she is invisible and, when she shows herself, she looks like a scary creature, a deformed woman with silver hair, steel teeth, crippled hands with silver painted nails and silver, unnatural eyes. Her laugh sounds like "some mechanical vulture on a gigantic heap of garbage on the surface of the moon were giving one forced shriek for the death of all organic life" (Russ, "The Female Man" 153). Jael reminds of Haraway's cyborg- she seems to be a hybrid between machine and organism, human and animal, fictional and lived experience, physical and non-physical, but she is not a utopian creature at all. The world she lives in is not a utopia either, but a dystopia: people living in underground cities while on the surface there was "Nothing but gravel, boulders, space and stars" (Russ, "The Female Man" 159). Only the rich people, mostly Manlanders, live on seven hilltops. Russ ironic remark: "What is this passion for

living underground?"(Russ, "The Female Man" 159) points to the fact that women are still in an inferior position, even in a world in which men and women live separately. Jael is an exception: she lives in a hi- tech palace with gardens, which she acquired when she became rich and influential. She explains to the three Js that, on this future, possible Earth, half of the population had been buried after a bacteriological war, The War between the Nations. "A rather nice war" Jael evaluates, since it wiped the have- not nations, leaving more resources to the survivors. Even so, an increased separatism of the remained population occurred that lead to the Polarization and finally the Split- into new sides of haves and have- nots: Manlanders and Womanlanders. Jael sees war as positive for the progress, much as the myth of regeneration through violence: "it gets things moving" (Russ, "The Female Man" 158). She is exciting at the prospect of a war between men and women, much like Ai in Le Guin's novel: "something real ought to be settled by something real without all this miserable drifting. I'm a fanatic. I want to see things settled" (Russ, "The Female Man"158). While thinking and acting like a man, Jael is critical to men's violence and questions their reasons for violence, when analyzing a society set in the past, where she was sent in disguise: "Those primitive warriors are brave men- that is they are slaves to fear of fear (Russ, "The Female Man"182).

Jael is the embodiment of feminist frustration, which she expresses violently. She kills one of the Manlanders because she would not put up with his misogyny. While Boss starts the conversation by claiming to believe in equality between men and women and disapproving the cultural "nonsense of woman's place and woman's nature" (Russ, "The Female Man" 169), he gradually proves the exact contrary.

> "Most women- given a choice- will hardly choose to give up domesticity (…). Most women will
> continue to choose the conservative caretaking of childhood, the formation of beautiful relationships,
> and the care and service of others. Servants. Of. The. Race" (Russ, "The Female Man" 170)

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"'(…)most women aren't used to think a thing through like this. They can't do it systematically. Say, you don't mind my saying that about "most women", do you?'"(Russ, "The Female Man" 171)

Jael feels "drained of personality" (Russ, "The Female Man" 171), and pumps adrenaline in her own blood, because she knows what's coming next: "the uncontrollably curious grab, and then the hatred" (Russ, "The Female Man" 172). "You want to be mastered" is one of the Boss's last words before Jael kills him.

All men in Russ's novel are enforcers of patriarchy: from the men at the party Joanna and Janet attend, to Joanna's colleagues and the "he" with no name representing The Man, they all believe women to be worth less than themselves or, in the best case, being something else than themselves- the Other. Domesticity is a woman's domain, according to all these men. One of the men at the party believes that "women are lucky you don't have to go out and work" (Russ, "The Female Man" 35), while another thinks that women add a "decorative touch" (Russ, "The Female Man" 43) to the office. Joanna's colleagues can't see past her sex: "(…) if you walk into a gathering of men, professionally or otherwise, you might as well be wearing a sandwich board that says: LOOK! I HAVE TITS" (Russ, "The Female Man" 129). She is "banished from the categories of culture and consigned to those of the biology" (Haraway, "Modest _Witness" 71).

Most of Russ's men have aggressive and offensive outbursts towards women (the only one who doesn't is, ironically, Jael's robot lover). The cause may lie in the patriarchal belief that "Men are physically stronger than women" (Russ, "The Female Man" 44), as one of the male characters present at the party states. Ironically, he gets beaten by Janet who is surprised by his lack of skills: "Why make pretentions to fight (she said) when you can't fight? I am trained of course (…)All this uneasy agression"(Russ, "The Female Man" 48). It seems that Janet believes, the same as Jael, that violence is not an inherent quality of men, but an artificial practice, a developed skill (Russ, "The Female Man" 181). Jael thinks that men "rely

too much on their strength" (Russ, "The Female Man" 175) and the two Js prove them wrong. The characters Janet and Jael, one a policeman, the other a killer are Russ's way of questioning the cultural constructs of women as the physically weaker Other, unable to survive outside their domestic environment and men, as physically stronger and able to dominate women. This cultural constructs are so strong that they seem to some of Russ's women inescapable. That is why two of Russ's women, Joanna and Laura, dream of becoming men.

Laura Rose Wilder, a teenager from Anytown, USA, dreams of becoming Genghis Khan, the cruel and powerful founder of the Mongol Empire and that Janet is going to teach her how to shoot. She dreams of being a man because the role imposed on her through the patriarchal apparatus gives her no chance of being happy: " I'm a victim of penis envy (said Laura) so I can't ever be happy or lead a normal life" (Russ, "The Female Man" 64). Russ seems to consider, the same as Kate Millet, that Freud and psychoanalysis are a part of the apparatus that enforces patriarchy and, implicitly, oppresses women. Although Laura knows her role well, she rebels against becoming the product into which the patriarchal discourses aim to turn her. She wears men' shirts, shapeless jeans, has short hair and wears glasses, likes to read philosophy and has a sexual relationship with Janet, going against the role imposed on her by a patriarchal society. She goes against what *everyone knows*:

> *Everyone knows* that much as women want to be scientists and engineers, they want foremost to be womanly companions to men (what?) and caretakers of childhood: *everyone knows* that a large part of woman's identity inheres in the style of her attractiveness (Russ, "The Female Man" 60)

While Joanna challenges the polarity of gender, becoming a "female man" through her career Laura challenges the polarity of sexuality through her homosexual love affair with Janet (who comes from a lesbian society and whose only issue is the age difference). Through Jael, who was "brought up to be a man- woman" (Russ, "The Female Man, 181), Russ challenges both

the gender role polarity and the sexual polarity: she is an assassin whose lover is a robot with the anatomy of a man and the role of a woman. He is a domestic creature who serves drinks, curls himself at Jael's feet and laughs "at the right places" (Russ, "The Female Man" 178). The changed and the half- changed of the Manland are another way of challenging the dichotomy man/woman that patriarchy employs in casting gender roles. They are failed "real-men", who did not make it through the sex- change surgery and that makes them a substitute for women- sex objects, servants, weak, can't protect themselves, the champions of "the forced choices" (Russ, "The Female Man" 165). Through these deviants from the patriarchal dominant heterosexuality, Russ does exactly what Butler and Haraway will be advocating for 20 years later: she loosens the rigid boundaries between men and women; she creates border confusion into the apparently ordered patriarchal society. This disorder that Russ creates through her characters liberates women, gives them a chance to find their identity, not a unified self, but a fragmentary and heterogeneous one.

In her article *Unnatural Acts: American feminism and Joanna Russ's The Female Man*, Amanda Boulter discussing the title of the novel states: "*The Female Man* is an ironic title, which both acts as a metaphor for the possibilities of cross- identification, and also exposes the incompatibility of the categories "female" and "human". For Russ , women are made alien by condensation of all humanity into Man" (Boulter, "Unnatural Acts).

Chapter 4. The feminist utopias and the Mythologies of the West

The previous chapter was an analysis of two representative feminist sf novels of the '70, meant to prepare the ground for a comparative study that will show how their authors endorse or question two of the Mythologies of the West: the Myth of the Garden and the Myth of the regeneration through violence. Slotkin believes that mythologies exemplify and historicize

ideologies. Do Le Guin and Russ consider the two Mythologies of the West to be instruments of the ideology of patriarchy, exemplifying, historicizing and supporting it? Or do the feminist authors employ them in their novel uncritically?

4.1. The Feminist Garden

What the Myth of the garden and the feminist utopias, in general, have in common is mainly the utopian characteristic. Utopia, the non- place and the good place, that was inspired, according to Fátima Vieira, "by the Myth of the Golden Age, among other mythical and religious archetypes (…) by the promise a happy afterlife, as well as by the myth of Cockaygne (a land of plenty) (Vieira 5), is part of the discourses that shaped both the myth of the western garden and the feminist garden. But while in the Mythologies of the West the location of Garden is historically based beyond the American frontier that marks the meeting point between savagery and civilization (Turner 3), the feminist garden is beyond the frontier of what is known and familiar, beyond reality, somewhere in another space or time. In the two feminist sf novels discussed in the previous chapters, Le Guin's utopia is on planet Gethen (Winter), while Russ's on a future/possible Earth, Whileway.

What makes the Myth of the western garden utopic is the promise of free land, prosperity and equality for everyone. An early articulation of this myth is in Fredrick Jackson Turner's essay *The Significance of the Frontier in American History,* in which he states his belief that the space beyond the Frontier is the cradle of the American identity. Unlike the American myth of the garden which promises a good place and equality for everyone (though women are not explicitly mentioned), the feminist utopias are particularly interested in making the world a better place for women. The utopias in *The Left Hand of Darkness* and *The Female Man* are critical reactions to the unjust treatment of women in their respective

societies as a result of the patriarchal discourses and they criticize the patriarchal practices and attitudes, promoted through the mythology of the garden as well. Their critique is not direct: both Le Guin and Russ use cognitive estrangement, the technique specific to sf, to attain their goal. They imagine worlds where sexual and gender inequalities do not exist and contrast them with their own world. The "gardens" imagined by the two authors are basically worlds without men: on Gethen there are no "real men", only androgynous humans possessing "feminine" qualities, which makes them lesser men in the Terran male Ai's view; on Whileaway men have been wiped out, apparently by a plague, actually by the feminists of a parallel Earth, as a consequence of a real battle of sexes. Le Guin and Russ cast doubt on the myth of a common garden for everyone (man and women) and react to the presence of women in the Myth of the Garden merely as symbols. The binary opposition man/ woman employed by patriarchy empowers men and leads to women being dominated and marginalized. This is the case in Turner's myth of the garden: women are not as real presences as men are; they are mostly symbolically represented- in nature and family.

Turner's use of the term "everyone" for those who belong into the garden beyond the Frontier is quite vague. Turner does not make any direct reference to women in his essay, but the Myth of the garden springs from nature. Land- as- woman has been a central metaphor in the history of the American frontier, according to Annette Kolodny. In her book *The Lay of the Land, Metaphor as Experience and History in American Life and Letters*, the author claims that land was perceived by the frontier men as "essentially feminine" (4). The first settlers of the New World, regarded the land as a nurturing mother (Kolodny "The Lay of the Land" 5), and were overwhelmed by pastoral impulses that the richness of the land gave them; these impulses are later terminated because they realized it annihilated their reason for action. A successful settlement depended on "the ability to master the land" (Kolodny "The Lay of the Land" 7), the settlers decided; metaphorically, they raped their mother, and turned

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it into a passive mistress. The frontiersman's attitude towards land can be seen to reflect their attitude towards the women. On the other hand, women's own narratives of the frontier experience generally show them as "captive in Paradise": weak, passive, vulnerable, incapable of survival, according to another of Kolodny's books, *The Land Before Her: Fantasy and Experience of the American Frontier 1630- 1680*. Kolodny considers that the male myth of the 18th century is a result of the juxtaposition of the female stories of captivity with the male narrative of the westward conquest (Kolodny, "The Land before Her" 29). The frontier hero, white and male, is defined through opposition with both the Indian and the Woman.

Turner's frontier heroes, the makers of the American identity are the hunter, the trader and the farmer, white and male, for whom nature is the lover they exploit and bring to submission, according to Kolodny's interpretation. The farmer occupies a particularly central position in Turner's mythology of the garden. Henry Nash Smith considers Turner's "frontier hypothesis" to be inspired by the myth of the garden, but also by the agrarian theories that idealize the societies of farmers: "a beneficent power emanating from nature is shown creating an agrarian utopia in the West. The myth of the garden is constructed before our eyes" (Smith 255). Turner's societies of farmers are primitive organizations based on the family (Turner 31). This reference to family implies the presence of women on the frontier, since the patriarchy- ruled society has imposed "an idealized and compulsory heterosexuality", according to Judith Butler (Leitch 2548).

Le Guin and Russ treat men the same in their respective utopias: men are present absences, shadows only, as women are in the Turner's patriarchal garden. At the same time, the two sf writers reject the traditional patriarchal model of heterosexual family. Many feminist theorist like Gayle Rubin, Adrienne Rich and Monique Rich, have reached the conclusion of the "centrality of obligatory heterosexuality in the oppression of women"

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(Haraway, "Simians" 137). According to Haraway, the feminists' "key struggle is for the destruction of the social system of heterosexuality, because sex is the naturalized political category that founds society as heterosexual" (Haraway "Simians" 138). Le Guin and Russ do attempt to subminate the compulsiveness of heterosexuality by introducing alternative sexualities: androgyny in Le Guin's novel and lesbianism in Russ's.

Le Guin's androgynous humans can sexually be both male and female, all of them can carry children and everybody is responsible for raising them. Since there are no sexual differences, there are no gender roles: "Anyone can turn his hand at anything" (Le Guin 93). Seen through the eyes of the Terran woman investigator, Gethen is a truly egalitarian world, where everybody is equally burdened and equally free: it is a feminist utopia, since sex has been deprived of the power to split humanity and ascribe women gender roles that would place men in a power position. Gethen, Karhide in particular, is a feminist utopia, in spite the imperfections of its political and social system. Even Ai, who is the embodiment of patriarchal culture, realizes in the end that Karhide is a better world. His friendship with Estraven makes him question the patriarchal discourses. The mythologies of the west taught him that only a real man could survive the wilderness. In spite of his femininity that Ai so much despises, Estraven has the strength and the survival skills of the American frontier hero. His strength, "dothe", is not physical but of spiritual nature; it is "strength out of the dark" (Le Guin 190).

While Le Guin's character compensates spiritually for his lack of physical strength, Russ's women compensate through technology for their lack of physical force culturally associated with masculinity. Both Le Guin and Russ seem to attack the false belief stated by Gayle Rubin in her paper *The sex- gender system*: "To survive materially where men and women cannot perform the other's work and to satisfy deep structures of desire in the sex/gender system in which men exchange women, heterosexuality is obligatory" (Haraway,

"Simians" 137). The Whileawayans use inductions helmets and mechanical hands in their farming activities. Technology is part of the identity of the Whileawayans, they are a hybrid between organism and machine, reminding of Haraway's icon of the feminism, the cyborg. Power is no longer about physical strength and size, but about technological control and miniaturization. Men are rendered unnecessary on Whileaway, as is shown in the violent future of Jael (who is a kind of cyborg as well). Russ's Whileaway becomes a feminist utopia through the defeat of Manland and the absence of men. Still, Whileaway, like Le Guin's Karhide, is not a perfect world. The emphasis on work (Whileawayans work all the time, except when raising a child or are old) and the drastic consequences of trying to escape the working system (Elena Twason is executed for trying to run away from work) indicate trouble in the feminist paradise.

As in Turner's garden, farms are the social centers and the only family units of the Whilewayan society, but the resemblance stops at that. The families of Whileaway have twenty to thirty members, all women, grown-ups and children resulted from same- sex marriages, since there are no men on Whileaway. Being a mother is both a social duty and a privileged position, since taking care of the children up to the age of five is the only responsibility of a mother. The other members of the family share the other responsibilities. Russ questions what Haraway calls "the regulatory fiction basic to Western concepts of gender", which "insists that motherhood is natural and fatherhood cultural" ("Simians" 135). In other words she questions the naturalization of sex. She questions the model of the family within which domesticity is women's arena, promoted by the patriarchal discourses in general, including in Turner's mythology of the garden and so does Le Guin. A woman can be a hunter, a farmer as well as a miner or a police*man* in *The Female Man*. At the same time, a man can be a land*lady* and a king can carry a child as in *The Left Hand of Darkness.*

Le Guin and Russ undermine the centrality of man's position in the binary opposition man/woman and free women from the role assigned to them through patriarchal discourses. They do not see only gender roles as cultural constructs of patriarchy (to which the myth of the Garden contributed), but sexual identity as well, as Judith Butler claims in her text *Gender Trouble: feminism and the subversion and feminism*. She considers that the body only appears to be a "a passive medium that is signified by an inscription from a cultural source figured as "external" to the body" (Butler 2542), but there are actually a multiplicity of forces that break through the surface of the body and disrupt the cultural practices imposed by patriarchy, like heterosexuality. These forces are set free by the Russ and Le Guin in their respective utopias. They are what Kristeva calls "abjections", deviants from the compulsory heterosexuality of Turner's myth of the garden. Russ and LeGuin take pleasure in the confusion of boundaries, allowing for relativism, pluralism, heteroglossia, for which Haraway pleads in her essay *A Cyborg Manifesto*.

While the feminist sf writers reject the traditional patriarchal model of the heterosexual family and the marginal position of women in the western garden, their utopias involve, as the Myth of the garden, a return to primitiveness (despite technological sophistication level of Whileaway, in particular). In Turner's view, primitiveness is associated with the wilderness beyond the civilization. Untamed and unexplored nature means also a richness of resources for Turner's frontiersmen. The Myth of the Garden is "rooted strongly in material prosperity" insured of the existence of free land (Turner 28). The attitude towards nature in the feminist utopias is different. Nature is to be protected, helped and enjoyed, not possessed and exploited. They are generally ecology minded. Of the two novels discussed, this attitude is particularly obvious in Russ's novel. Whileaway is a technologically advanced society, but nature is central in the Whileawayan society. The Whileawayans are protective with the resources of the planet: Janet criticizes wastefulness; they are planting trees and berries,

speaking to their animals affectionately and the housekeeping is ecological. Whileaway is described by Janet as pastoral and this return to nature is considered "the ultimate sophistication" (Russ, "The Female Man 14). Children are allowed to explore the wilderness, develop their survival instincts and hunt. Janet killed a wolf and took a paw as a trophy to show to her family, when she was thirteen, alone on the North Continent, the wild part of Whileaway. Whileaway is a technologically advanced society, but scientific progress and technology seem to be merely as means of survival, not purpose. Their closeness and respect for nature does not seem affected by the mastering of technology.

While on Whileaway the regression to primitiveness is related to physical closeness to nature, on Gethen this regression is more of a spiritual nature. Gethenians' mastering of nature is only a matter of survival on the cold planet Winter. They are not interested in the quantitative progress (to use Iver B. Neuman distinction quantitative/qualitative progress): they show no enthusiasm for conquering new frontiers, expanding and fighting enemies in the process. They do not need challenges to put their manhood to the test, as the frontier hero does, since they are not "real men" (their sexuality and femininity disqualifies them as men in Ai's eyes). They do not need cars or planes to make them move faster. The explanation is that "The people of Winter, who always live in the Year One, feel that progress is less important than presence" (Le Guin 10). The Gethenians live in the present and they prefer what Iver B. Neuman calls the qualitative progress: they are focused on the embetterment of the self and of the structure they are already part of. Winter seems to be what Guy Debord in his work *The Society of the Spectacle* calls "static societies": "A static society organizes their time in terms of its immediate experience of nature, on the model of *cyclical* time" (Debord 126). It is always year one on Winter and that might indicate that the Gethenians refuse progress; their movements are restricted to their limited space and this restriction causes repetition, cyclicity, return to the purity of primitiveness. Moreover, Handdara, the religion of Karhide, teaches

unlearning, inactivity, a return to innocence, ignorance and silence. Refusing the irreversible time, the historical time, Gethenians refuse both progress and giving power and authority to the "owners of history" (Debord 132), in other words they refuse control and hierarchies. The chaotic ceremony in Karhide described in the beginning of the novel is representative in this sense.

Anarchy ensures equality for everyone in Le Guin's utopia, as it does in Russ's Whileway and generally in the feminist utopias. They share "an embrace of anarchy, empathy and egalitarianism" (Crawford 199). Unlike the feminists, Turner sees anarchy as a downside of the frontier individualism, otherwise a quality that Turner consider important in the shaping the American identity: "The frontier is productive of individualism. Complex society is precipitated by the wilderness into a kind of primitive organization based on the family. The tendency is anti-social. It produces antipathy to control, and particularly to any direct control" (Turner 31). Le Guin and Russ question the value of individualism and the idea of private property and insist on communal living as a better alternative for individuals.

While idealizing the agrarian society, Turner, as Henry Nash Smith notices, uses also the theory of progressively higher social stages (Smith 255): "the evolution of society from agrarian simplicity towards greater complexity is assumed to bring about improvement" (Smith 257). This is, according to Smith's analysis, one of the contradictions of Turner's frontier theory. It is true that Turner insists on the repetitiveness of this evolution hunter-trader- farmer, with each new frontier implying a regression to primitiveness. At the same time, he seems to agree with Grund as well, who declares in his work, *Americans*:

> It appears then that the universal disposition of Americans to emigrate to the western wilderness, in order to enlarge their dominion over inanimate nature, is the actual result of an expansive power which is inherent in them (…)destined to go on until a physical barrier must finally obstruct its progress (Turner 7).

The motivation for pushing the frontier is not only the myth of the idyllic garden where time is cyclical, but the expansionist progress that is inherent to the Americans. Turner states: "the demand for land and the love of wilderness freedom drew the frontier ever onward" (Turner 22). It seems as if he tries for a while to resist the flow of the historical time through his pastoral communities (frozen societies, where time is cyclical and there are no conflicts, much like in the feminist utopias), but he finally gives in. What happens then is what happens with all societies which start believing (or ideologically manipulated into believing) in quantitative progress. According to Guy Debord, "kinship ties begin to dissolve. From then on, the succession of generations leaves the sphere of purely cyclical nature in order to become an event- oriented succession of power. Irreversible time is now the time of those who rule" (Debord 132). Unlike the cyclical time, the historical time is a time of conflict, of violence and of blood. Turner's garden is threatened from the inside: the frontiersmen's expansive drive brings violence into the garden.

4.2. No war in the feminist garden

Richard Slotkin believes that Americans have assigned the violence they have experienced in relation with the frontier a mythical significance:

> "What is distinctively "American" is not necessarily the amount or kind of violence that characterizes our history, but the mythic significance we have assigned to this kind of violence we have actually experienced, the forms of symbolic violence we imagine or invent and the political uses to which we put that symbolism" ("Gunfighter Nation" 13) .

Conflict and violence were a central feature of the process of establishment of the American colonies, but their mythologization was necessary, the ideological task of the myth being to explain and justify colonization (Slotkin, "Gunfighter Nation"10). Slotkin believes that American identity and democracy, the expanding economy and the dynamic and progressive

American civilization were culturally explained through the conquest of the wilderness or displacement of Native Americans who originally inhabited it ("Gunfighter Nation"10), in other words through violence. Territorial expansion was associated with progress, therefore violence was justified. Theodore Roosevelt, in his book *The Winning of the West* claims: "the conquest and the settlement by the whites of the Indian lands was necessary to the greatness of the race and to the well-being of civilized mankind. It was ultimately beneficial as it was inevitable" (Roosevelt 175).

Science fiction authors Ursula K. Le Guin and Joanna Russ question in their novels both the inevitability and the benefic effect of violence, as a means of attaining progress. Moreover, they reject overall progress in the "masculinist" expansionist, quantitative sense as well. John Michael Greer defines "the story of progress" that motivates both the mythologies of the west and the sf space operas as:

> "the belief that all human history is a linear trajectory that has risen up from the squalor and misery of the prehistoric past through ever-ascending stages of increased knowledge, prosperity, enlightenment and technological sophistication and will inevitably continue to do so into a limitless future" (Greer 30)

The two feminist sf writers resist the linearity of this story of progress, even though Russ's utopia is a technologically advanced world. They rather believe in what Iver B. Neuman calls quantitative progress, with its focus on individual betterment and gradual improvement of the structures of which the individual is a part. Diplomacy, dialogue, empathy and spirituality replace violence as means of progressing towards a better world. Inspired by the ideas of New Wave of science fiction, the two feminist writers create worlds where people are more concerned with their present and not the future, with inner space rather than outer space. They resist the linear trajectory of the historical time that generates hierarchies through opposition and violence towards a weaker Other. They are settling for the peaceful anarchy and communal living of the cyclical time.

On Le Guin's Gethen it is always Year One. To the people of Karhide, "progress is less important than presence" (Le Guin 50). The Terran Ai, the envoy of the Ekumen is surprised by the lack of interest of the inhabitants in progress. They never hurry, they won't have their cars run faster and they do not show any interest in exploring the space beyond their own planet (they do not even have the verb "fly" in their vocabulary!). The Ekumen on the other hand has a purpose: "material profit. Increase of knowledge. The augmentation of the complexity and intensity of the field of intelligent file(…) Curiosity. Adventure. Delight" (Le Guin 34). In other words, the expansionist, quantitative progress for the putative benefit of the human race, promoted by the patriarchy, through mechanisms including the mythologies of the West. The only character in Le Guin's novel who is interested in this kind of progress is Estraven. But even he thinks diplomacy is the key to progress, not violence. That is why he avoids a conflict with Orgoreyn (even though this makes him a traitor and puts his life in danger) and he sees the co-operation with Ekumen in the best interest of his planet. Estraven defines patriotism as "The fear of the other. And its expressions are political, not poetical: hate, rivalry, aggression (Le Guin 18). Le Guin clearly questions the Myth of regeneration through violence against the Other with this remark. At the same time, Estraven sees a co-operation with the Ekumen as a means of progress for Estraven's whole planet, an impulse towards a linear trajectory and an escape from the cyclical time. Estraven wants to learn how to fly, wants the increased knowledge, prosperity, enlightenment and technological sophistication promised by the expectations of progress, but he does not kill in the process. On the contrary, Estraven sacrifices his own life for the sake of the progress of his humankind. Estraven uses what Ai perceives as his feminine features (charm, intrigue and deviousness) for attaining his goal of progress for his planet. In addition, he compensates for his lack of his physical strength with spiritual abilities: he enters the state of *dothe* which gives him the physical strength to save Ai and cross the glacier Gobrin. Estraven is in touch

with his spirituality and practices the Handdara, the religion of Karhide that teaches unlearning, regression to primitivism, to a state of innocence and silence, with "Nusuth" (no matter) being a key concept.

Estraven's embrace of primitivism and spirituality might be a hint to the cultural values of the Native Americans. While Estraven and the people of Karhide embrace primitiveness, the Frontier heroes reject it. Primitiveness might be for the Frontier hero what Judith Butler calls in her text *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* "something originally part of the body (…) expelled from the body, discharged as an excrement, literally rendered Other" (2546). The Myth of regeneration through violence involves regression to the primitive. The territorial expansion followed repeated cyclical pattern of separation from the civilization and regression to the primitive (Slotkin, "Gunfighter Nation" 11). The frontiersmen purge themselves of the evils of the civilized world in the wilderness in this way, believes Slotkin ("Gunfighter Nation" 14). At the same time, they reject primitiveness, "discharge it as an excrement" and project it on the Indians, who become Others. By fighting the Indian, the frontier heroes fight their own "otherness": "The Indian wars are, for these heroes, a spiritual or psychological struggle which they win by learning to discipline or suppress the savage or the dark side of his own human nature" (Slotkin, "Gunfighter Nation" 14). Projection is a useful psychological process in justifying violence. The frontiersmen "made the Indians scapegoats for the morally troubling side of American expansion" (Slotkin, "Gunfighter Nation" 12), blaming Native Americans as instigators of a war of extermination.

Estraven and the Karhides do not suppress the savage or the dark side of their human nature. "Light is the left hand of darkness/ and darkness is the right hand of light" (Le Guin 233) is their belief. Without darkness there is no light, that is why they embrace the primitiveness of their own nature. Russ's Whileawayans have the same attitude to primitiveness as Le Guin's Karhides, only that it is manifested in their relation to nature. In

spite of the technology, the closeness to nature is important to the Whileawayans. Farms are the social centers of Whileaway; at the same time, the planet is described by Janet as pastoral, while she wonders whether the return to a garden without artifacts is the "ultimate sophistication" (Russ, "The Female Man"14). It is Russ's way to show a break the linearity of time and the preventing the forming of hierarchies. It can be safely said that both Le Guin and Russ question the attitude of the Frontier hero who, by fighting the Indian, fight their own primitiveness. "Slaves to fear of fear" (Russ, "The Female Man"182) is the way Jael describes the warriors of a past Earth, a possible reference to the heroes of the West.

The attitude of the frontier hero towards the Indians symbolizing primitiveness mirrors the attitude that the settlers of the New World had towards land. In *The Lay of Land,* Annette Kolodny claims that each new settlement repeated the confused and conflicted responses to land as mother and land as incestuous lover. They reject the pastoral impulses triggered by land as mother and cyclical time preferring the linear historical time that leads to progress and domination through violence of the land, which turns into a raped lover. Both the settlers of the New World and the frontiersmen hesitate between the conflicting impulses of peaceful living of the cyclical time and progress through violence of the historical time. The trouble with Paradise was that it made people idle, giving them "no further reason for action" ("The Lay of Land" 15). This is the reason why, in Kolodny's opinion the settlers chose the second option, as the frontiersmen and the space cowboys will do. The American male hero, whether conqueror of the wilderness of the American West or of the wilderness of the space, will always reject utopia in favor of "continued struggle and progress" (James "Utopias and anti-utopias 222). "Maybe we weren't made for paradise (…) maybe we were meant to fight our way through… Maybe we can't stroll to the sounds of the lute- we must march to the sounds of drums"("Utopias and anti-utopias" 222) are Captain Kirk's reflections in *Star Trek* used by Edward James in explaining the hostility to utopias of the male sf writers. Butler

claims that "Repetitions become domesticated and recirculated as instruments of cultural hegemony" (2551). The repeated history of progress achieved through violence distilled into cultural essence (like the Myth of regeneration through violence) is used is an instrument of patriarchy. Patriarchy consolidated its hegemonic cultural identity through the exclusion and domination of the Other, practice turned into an orthodoxy by the Myth of regeneration through violence.

When it comes to violence in general, the two feminist writers generally hesitate between two attitudes: they either consider violence an innate characteristic of men or a characteristic attributed to them by patriarchy as a means of domination of a weaker Other. In the chapter *Can girls play too? Feminizing sf* in his book *The Dreams Our Stuff is Made of,* Disch claims that feminists generally see violence as "something innate in the nature of man, a sex- specific mark of Cain" (Disch 126). This supposition implies that progress is just an excuse for manifesting an innate quality. "One assumptions of (…) feminist science fiction in general is the equation of male sexuality with aggression and physical violence", Disch points out (132). If his observation is true, the assumptions of the feminism in a sense reinforce and are reinforced by the regeneration- through- violence myth. To support his claims, Disch quotes from Le Guin's novella *The World for the World is Forest*: "The fact is the only time a man is really and entirely a man is when he's just had a woman or just killed another man (qtd. in Disch 126). Sexuality and violence is what defines a man in opposition with an Other, be it a woman or a weaker man, seems to be Le Guin's claim. They are means of domination that gain men an advantageous position. While feminists reject essentialism when it comes to women and femininity, do they do the exact opposite when it comes to men and masculinity? Does Le Guin see violence as an innate characteristic of men or a feature of the social construct that is "masculinity" in *The Left Hand of Darkness*?

To Le Guin's character Ai, violence seems to be a central feature of what is socially accepted as masculinity. The Gethenians' inability to mobilize and go to war makes him compare them to women or ants. War is in Ai's opinion the quickest and lasting way to make people into a nation. It is only through violent opposition with Orgoreyn that Karhide can become a nation. In Ai's view, defeating and dominating the Other through violence is to be the best way for a disorganized gathering, "a family quarrel" (Le Guin 6) like Karhide, to become a nation. His belief is informed by the Myth of regeneration through violence: war, "the savage war" is, in Slotkin's opinion, at the core of the process of colonization and of building of the American identity. Le Guin's construction of Ai is ironic though: he is an obvious caricature of patriarchal discourses. His ideal of masculinity corresponds to the frontier hero, and violence against the Other is a significant feature of this mythological character. The people of Gethen are nothing like this and Ai despises them for their lack of masculinity, or more precisely for their overt femininity, in opposition with masculinity. Ai's knowledge of women turns out to be highly deficient though as his discussion with Estraven shown. What he knows is culturally transmitted information through discourses like the regeneration- through- violence myth.

The Terran investigator on the other hand, connects masculinity with male sexuality. She assumes that the purpose of the genetic manipulation which lead to the Gethenians' androgyny was eliminating violence and it turned out to be a successful experiment. Le Guin's utopia is a place with no rapes and no wars. In Karhidish, there is not even a word for war (Le Guin 34). Le Guin seems to hesitate between the two attitudes mentioned above: she connects violence with both sex and gender roles. These attitudes reflect two theories about the origins of patriarchy, discussed by Barbara Smuts in her essay *The Evolutionary Origins of Patriarchy*. One the one hand, there is the evolutionary theory, which focuses on sexuality and reproduction as an origin of patriarchy. On the other hand the feminist theory, which

rejected any role for biology in the origins of patriarchy. Smuts claims that the two theories do not actually exclude each other, but they are both "focus on power and sex" (Smuts "The Evolutionary Origins"). This might explain Le Guin's hesitation. While suggesting that violence is an innate quality of males, connecting it with sexuality, she also questions the culturally transmitted idea that masculinity is necessarily violent by reshaping Ai. Once he gets to know Estraven, to appreciate him as a human being, he starts questioning the behaviors implicit in the myth of regeneration through violence. Regeneration and progress can be attained peacefully; the lack of violence does not make Estraven a lesser man. This is the truth experienced by Ai (in opposition to what he had been taught by mythologies) and the message transmitted by Le Guin. Estraven conquers the wilderness of Gobrin, the way the frontiersmen conquered the wilderness of the West and he reaches his goal of progress for his planet, without killing anyone in the process. Estraven comments during the ceremony with which the book begins: "Very- long- ago a keystone was always set with a mortar with ground bones mixed with blood. Human bones, human blood. Without the blood bond, the arch would fall, you see. We use the blood of animals these days" (Le Guin 5). Spilling human blood is as little necessary for making a building stronger as it is for holding a nation together, seems to be what the peace- loving Estraven believes.

Le Guin questions the power of violence to generate national identity and regenerate and the necessity for violence at all. Violence is almost absent from her utopia (Karhide): there are no soldiers, "not even imitations soldiers" (Le Guin 2) in the parade in Karhide and guns are "only relics of a more barbaric past" (Le Guin 3). In the dystopian Orgoreyn, on the other hand, people are made docile and powerless through the control of the Sarf and the threat of the voluntary farms.

While in Le Guin's garden violence is almost absent, in Russ's novel there is plenty of it, but it lacks the mythological dimension attached by the Myth of the regeneration through

violence; it is not politically motivated. The violence of Russ's female character comes mostly from frustration caused by the limiting gender role imposed on them by patriarchy. Jeannine, the librarian that lives in a 1969 parallel with Russ's, is so frustrated with marriage being her only option to have a decent life, that she invites the violent Jael and her soldiers to take over her world and use it as she wishes in her battle of sexes. Joanna's violence is mostly verbal: she constantly attacks and parodies the mechanisms of patriarchy that put men on top and she threatens to break the neck of everyone who would not treat her like a man. Joanna wants to become a female man out of frustration with the crippling role that society attributed to her as a woman. Jael is the embodiment of this frustration, the embodiment of feminist frustration in general. By her alternative name Alice Reasoner and her code name Sweet Alice, Jael is neither reasonable, nor sweet. Impulsive and aggressive, Jael acts like a stereotypical man and looks like a cyborg. She is the cyborg "spat out of the womb- brain of its war- besotted parents (Haraway, Modest- Witness 51) and at the same time what Merrick calls in essay *Gender in Science Fiction* a "woman dominant" (Merrick 243) in a story of battle of sexes. She is a caricature of The Man.

While Jeannine enthusiastically takes her side in this battle of sexes, Joanna and Janet refuse to condone organized violence. In spite of her frustration with the gender inequalities and her revolt against a culture that causes them, Joanna says no to Jael's aggressive way of making the world better for women. Merrick, discussing stories of battle of sexes and dominant women, comments: "Whilst they may at least hint at the vision of a more equal gendered social order, this possibility is undermined by figuring female desire for greater equality in terms of a (stereotypical) masculine drive for power and domination" (Merrick 243). Joanna does not want to undermine the possibility of a gender equal social order by behaving like a stereotypical man. She does not believe in the Myth of regeneration through violence against the Other. "To oppose it, is to maintain it!" (151), claims Estraven in

Le Guins' novel. This is why Russ might have Joanna choose (instead of opposing The Man) to allow plurality, by adding to the binary male/female a new category: the "female man", however ironic this is. Russ is this way loosening the boundaries between rigid of man/woman, self/other as Butler suggests, allowing pluralism, relativism, a heteroglossia of discourses, which Haraway considers important for the survival of the species.

Janet on the other hand, comes from a world without men and without hierarchies. Violence is not absent in Whileaway though. The explanation might be that provided by Merrick in the above-mentioned essay: "Without the constraints of ingrained assumptions about gender roles, female characters have access to an entire range of human behaviors" (Merrick 248). The women of Whileaway do not know that violence is associated with masculinity and dominance and are unaware of the mythological significance attached to it by the American Myth of regeneration through violence. Violence is triggered by passion, believes Janet who confesses to have killed four people in a duel: "it is lovers and neighbors that kill each other. There is no sense, after all, in behaving that way towards perfect strangers; where is the satisfaction? (Russ, "The Female Man" 23). Killing people one does not know for material profit and/or power and in the name of progress is not something a Whileawayan would understand. This is a critique addressed by Russ to "the savage war"- a war against perfect strangers, turned into a mythical trope and an ideological convention in order to justify the extermination and expropriation of the Indians. While seeing violence as a behavior inherent to all human beings (no one being completely peaceful, in Janet's opinion), it is also seen as a necessity, but only in a survivalist sense. Girls are taught to hunt on Whileaway and defend themselves. Janet beats up a man and wonders why he wanted to fight if he did not know how. Like Jael, who is a trained killer, Janet, who is a policeman, has acquired and developed her physical strength and abilities to fight "as a man". Their motivations for violence are different though: while for Janet it is for defending herself and

for the well- being of her community, for Jael violence has the same motivation of domination of the others as in the Myth of regeneration through violence. Jael is a parody of masculinity: her ultimate purpose is to dominate Manland through violence. She is yet another way for Russ to question the Myth of regeneration through violence. This character is part of what Merrick identifies as stories where traditional gendered hierarchies are overturned. The effect is parody and criticism: "Such role reversal engaged with gender to the extent that they parodied or criticized contemporary gendered norms through the familiar sf trope of defamiliarizing the familiar" (Merrick 234).

Whileaway is another option of the role reversal stories, only that Whileawayans are not aware of it, since there is no man on their planet: "The other available option was to postulate a set of "human behaviors" available to both men and women and depict female "heroes" capably carrying out "men's work" (Merrick 234). These women carry out men's work and fight like men. Technology compensates for their lack of physical force. Russ seems to promote the idea that technology, generally seen as a goal of the masculinist expansionist story of progress, can turn out to be, ironically, a threat to the construct that is masculinity. One of the central feature of this product of patriarchy that is masculinity is physical strength, but physical strength becomes redundant in the contest of the technological advancement. Merrick supports this idea: "As technology development brings into question the boundaries of the organic, it can be seen metaphorically to threaten the embodied qualities of physical strength which inform social constructions of masculinity" (Merrick 254). Donna Harraway believes that power is no longer size either: "Minituarization has turned out to be about power" ("Haraway, "Simians 153). Her icon of feminism, the cyborg, is similar in this respect to Russ's Whileawayans.

Le Guin and Russ show in their sf novels that progress can be achieved strolling to the sounds of lute. Edward James claims that "By definition there is no conflict in utopia (…) but

the perpetual and unending struggle for a better world" ("Utopias and anti-utopias 222). Their struggle does not involve the domination of an Other though. Laura Rose dreams in Russ's novel to become Genghis Khan, but she finds out that the world can be changed peacefully, through love.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

One of the old Whileawayan philosophers in Russ's novel defines mythmaking as "exercising one's projective imagination on people who cant't fight back" (Russ, "The Female Man" 149). Joanna Russ and Ursula K. Le Guin' speak in their novels for the people who can't fight back (the Other) and question the Mythologies of the West as instruments used by patriarchy to justify violence against them. At the same time, they employ elements of these mythologies, only that they reassemble them to fit the feminist agenda. Donna J. Haraway speaking about her icon of the feminism explains that "The cyborg is a kind of disassembled and reassembled, postmodern collective and personal self" ("Simians" 163). Russ and Le Guin do exactly that in their feminist sf: instead of dismissing or opposing completely the cultural heritage transmitted through the Mythologies of the West, they disassemble and reassemble these mythologies. There is a feminist Garden similar in its utopianism with The Myth of the Garden, only that it's a better place for women that the mythological garden. There is violence in this feminist garden, only that it does not have any mythological significance attached to it as an excuse the dominate the Other.

The *modus operandi* specific to science fiction, defamiliarization, is a useful tool in disassembling and reassembling mythologies. Russ and Le Guin imagine new worlds, but there are in both novels elements that remind of the Old West, the geographical birthplace of the Mythologies of the West. The Frontier between the savagery and civilization becomes a

space and/or time frontier. Ai crosses the space frontier to diplomatically "conquer" Gethen. Janet crosses the time frontier to meet a past civilization. The frontier is symbolical as well in the two novels: it is a frontier between patriarchal values and the feminist values, the old and the new civilization.

Le Guin and Russ wrote their novels in a period when the American society was going through a period of social discontent and rebellion, the feminist movement being one of the manifestations. American women were protesting against the gender role ascribed to them by patriarchy and were claiming their right to be treated as equals of and by men. The feminist literary criticism of the second wave of feminism, the feminism of the '60s and '70s, insisted on the distinction between sex and gender, distinction that had roots in Simone de Beauvoir's idea that one is not born a woman, but rather becomes one. The feminists of this period believed that sex refers to an anatomical difference, while gender is a construct of patriarchy with the ultimate purpose of claiming the superiority of The Man. This construct that is The Woman, in opposition with The Man, is planted in the social consciousness through different discourses, The Mythologies of the West being an example. By questioning the Mythologies of the West as a patriarchal discourse, Le Guin and Russ question the ideology of patriarchy and its products. They do not engage into a violent battle of sexes though, even though the feminist frustration penetrates through both texts. They liberate women from the suffocating dichotomy man- woman by allowing a plurality of discourses. This is what the theorists of the third feminist wave, Judith Butler and Donna Haraway will advocate for a some years later.

Science fiction is the genre that gave Le Guin and Russ the freedom to experiment with thoughts and to ask "what if?". The New Wave of Science fiction had led to some changes that made the genre appealing to women. The genre had appeared as boys' literature, according to Disch, describing space adventures of male space heroes. The New Wave of

science fiction drew attention to the lack of depth of the genre. The initiators of change in sf thought it was time for the sf writers to turn their attention to Earth instead of space, to now instead of future, to private instead of public. These new ideas made the genre appealing to women and led to the rebirth of the utopia. While male sf writers rejected utopia, because perfect worlds meant lack of motivation for progress, women sf writers re- invented the genre. The expansionist progress (central to the male- written sf writers and the Mythologies of the West) is rejected by the feminist writers, who prefer the peaceful quantitative progress of personal betterment. So is the historical time, which, according to Guy Debord, generates hierarchies through violence against the Other, in favor of cyclical time that allows peaceful equality for all the members of the static societies, which organize their time in relation with nature.

The feminist utopias do not feature perfect worlds. They are better worlds for the Other or at least worlds that could provoke readers to reflect about the condition of the Other of the respective writers' contemporary societies. Le Guin's Gethen is a better world in the sense that there are no sexual discriminations and no gender roles, since there are no opposite sexes. Russ's Whileaway is a better world for the same reasons. Jael's theories about wars, anchored in the culturally transmitted dichotomy "Us and Them", make no sense to Gethenians, nor to Whileawayans. There are no two sides in the two feminist utopias, therefor no wars.

Le Guin's and Russ's feminists gardens are not perfect Gardens of Eden. They bear a certain resemblance to the American Myth of the Garden, rooted in Fredrick Jackson Turner's essay *The Significance of the American Frontier*. Le Guin and Russ manifest the same preference for the qualitative progress and cyclical time, as apparently does Turner. Russ even shares the same ideal of society of farmers, with farms being social centers and the only family units on Whileaway and pastoral living being "the ultimate sophistication" (Russ, "The

Female Man" 14). Russ does not idealize these societies of farmers though: there is a constant emphasis in Russ's novel on work. Whileawayans work all the time. They seem to be captive in a social web, the members of the community depending on each other and working for a common purpose. Whether it is a consequence of the battle of sexes (women have seized the tools that marked them as other and can't let go) or a consequence of the absence of men on Whileway (that made work become a totalizing category) the insistence on work robs the utopia of its perfection.

Le Guin's utopia, Karhide, is not pastoral, on the contrary. It is a country on a cold planet, where natural resources seem scarce, nothing like the image of the frontier promoted by the Myth of the Garden, where free land ensures equality for everyone. The return of the people of Karhide to nature and primitiveness is spiritual. Handdara, the religion of Karhide, teaches unlearning, a regression to state of innocence and ignorance reminding of the biblical Garden of Eden. The resemblance with the mythological Garden of the American West is their preference for the qualitative progress and the cyclicity of their existence. The people of Karhide are uninterested in the expansionist progress and the refuse of historical time of progress brings the advantage of an egalitarian society. There are no hierarchies of any kind in Karhide. No one is the "owner of history" (Debord 132) and there are no Others.

The resemblance between the two feminist utopias and the Myth of the Garden ends at this point, because the frontier garden is populated by shadow- like Others as well. Women are only hinted at with the idea of family, which traditionally includes women or symbolically represented, in the land- as -mother. Russ and le Guin reject the compulsory heterosexuality imposed by patriarchy, through discourses like the Myth of the Garden. Patriarchy and the Myth of the Garden sentence women to a life in the shadow of the Man. The two feminist free the woman from the unbalanced dichotomy man/woman by employing new sexualities (androgyny and lesbianism) that would prevent the naturalization of sex and justify the gender

roles. As a consequence, Russ's women can be hunters, farmers, miners and policemen. They can do the jobs that patriarchy has claimed as men's jobs, with a little help from technology, which compensates for men's superior physical strength. At the same time, biology does not impose domesticity on women. Child raising, for example, is the responsibility of the whole society in both feminist novels.

Women are not the only shadows in the mythological Garden of West. Turner states in his essay that "the demand for land and the love of wilderness freedom drew the frontier ever onward" (22), which means that, in spite of idealizing the pastoral living of the farmers communities, he admits the inherent expansionist drive of the Americans, that breaks the cyclicity of time and leads to expansionist progress. Grund quoted by Turner speaks of the "disposition of the Americans to emigrate to the western wilderness to enlarge their dominion over inanimate nature" (qtd. Turner 7). But it is not only inanimate nature that the Americans encountered in the western wilderness. They met the Indians and they met them with violence. The peacefulness of the Garden of the West is disturbed by the American expansionist drive that leads to violence against the Other. The feminist gardens of Russ and Le Guin and the Myth of Garden have in common the utopian dimension of an egalitarian society. But while the two feminist utopias turn out to be imperfect, but better for everyone, the mythological Garden of the West is only perfect at the surface. Deep under this surface, there are some silenced voices of Others. The unleashed force of the American expansionist drive brought to the other myth of the West discussed in this paper: The Myth of regeneration through violence.

Russ and Le Guin question, beyond any doubt, the Myth of regeneration through violence. They undermine the mythological significance attached to violence. According the Richard Slotkin, the American identity was achieved through violence against the Other (the Indian). Violence was justified since the territorial expansion was associated with the progress

of the civilized humankind. The two feminist writers refuse the story of expansive progress and consider violence against the Other unacceptable. Their utopias are worlds of peaceful progress, qualitative progress. In Le Guin's novel, Gethen and the Ekumen represent antithetical worlds from the perspective of their view on progress: the feminist view vs. the patriarchal. The people of Gethen, where it is always Year One, live in the present are not interested in the expansionist progress, while the Ekumen (of which Terra is a part) believes in progress in the sense promoted by patriarchy through the Myth of regeneration through violence. This is most obvious in Ai's attitude towards war as the only way to build national identity. Le Guin questions violence as a means of progress through her both main characters: through her ironical construction of Ai and through Estraven who, in spite of sympathizing with the ideals of the Ekumen, rejects violence in favor of using methods that are considered "feminine" by the Terran Ai and his spiritual powers. He will ultimately sacrifice his own life for the progress of his world. Russ's female characters reject war as well: Joanna and Janet refuse turning the battle of sexes into a war of sexes. They refuse achieving the role of dominant women by using the tool of patriarchy, violence. Instead of opposing The Man, Russ's female characters choose to undermine the crippling opposition male/ female by coming with sexual alternatives to the compulsory heterosexuality, like lesbianism and new gender categories like that of "female man".

The Gethenians and the Whileawayans refuse wars, but their utopias are not completely non- violent or lacking conflicts. Violence lacks the mythological dimension attached to it by the Myth of regeneration through violence though. In Le Guin's novel it is mostly associated with the male sexuality and considered an innate quality of men. Gethenians' androgyny is suspected to be the result of a genetic experiment that had as a purpose eliminating violence. No males, no violence, thinks the Terran investigator. Still, there are conflicts and there is cruelty on Gethen, too. In Russ's utopia violence is considered

a natural manifestation, inherent to all human beings, while fighting is an acquired ability that women can learn as well as men. The motivation for violence is different though of that of the American Frontier hero, of domination of the Other under the excuse of progress. Passion or survival are the causes of violence in the Whileawayan society. Acting violently against perfect strangers makes no sense for Janet as it does to the frontier hero, as it does to the frontier hero.

Edward James in his essay *Utopias and anti-utopias* claims that utopias in general "may be posing more questions than presenting solutions" (226). Russ and Le Guin pose questions on the condition of the women in their respective societies, but they also provide a similar solution for the betterment of their situation. The solution provided by their novels is promoting a women's identity that is no longer confined to the suffocating patriarchal dichotomies promoted through patriarchal discourses like the Mythologies of the West. The solution is basically Haraway's cyborg, this post- gender creature, unafraid of "permanently partial identities and contradictory standpoints" ("Simians" 154).

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