

Book Reviews

To Write Like A Woman: Essays in Feminism and Science Fiction. Joanna Russ. Indiana University Press, 1995; ISBN 0-253-20983-8; \$12.96 (US)

I found reading this collection of essays to be enormously frustrating, not because of the content--which is everything a reader could ask of such a collection, that is interesting, challenging, opinionated and thoughtful--but because I was the only person I knew who was reading it. I had no one to talk with about it!

If you enjoy science fiction, this is definitely a book that you'll want to talk about. I found myself sneaking a few pages at times when I really didn't have time to read. It's the kind of book where, if you flip through, something will catch your eye, you'll start to read and you're hooked.

I especially enjoyed the third essay, "SF and Technology as Mystification." Russ uses the analogy of physical addiction (hypoglycaemia) to describe Star Wars as "addictive culture"--it partially satisfies a need but at the same time exacerbates it.

Publishers and movie-maker's formulas for a "real hit" are obviously those of an addiction: not just enjoyment or desire but *intense* craving (lines stretching around the block), not just intense craving but *sudden intense craving that must be satisfied at once* (opening in sixteen million theatres tomorrow, at a theatre near you!), not just sudden intense craving but *insatiable* craving; thus people see the film many times and--this is a dead giveaway--a minor industry grown up around the film: buttons, sweatshirts, TV programs about how the film was made, TV programs about how the first TV programs about the film were made and so on.

From this she proceeds to define technology, and to point out that endless discussions of technology are themselves an addiction, and besides, are missing the point. That is, talking about technology in and of itself allows us to focus on it in isolation without considering the social, political and economic interests the technology serves.

Russ's review of the film *A Boy and His Dog: The Final Solution* is another high point of the collection. This is a particularly hateful movie--though much-beloved by enough young males that it has achieved "cult movie" status -- and I have often had difficulty in making these boys see why I find it so offensive. (The fact that the male "hero" kills the female protagonist and feeds her to his dog doesn't seem to be enough for them. "But it's only one girl and she was bad. She deserved it.") Russ's analysis is thorough, dead on and riddled with controlled anger.

I could go on, as the range of topics included here is large, varied and interesting. Other essays include: "Towards an Aesthetic of Science Fiction"; "What Can a Heroine Do? Or Why Women Can't Write;" Somebody's Trying to Kill Me and I Think It's My Husband: The Modern Gothic;" and "Recent Feminist Utopias." I highly recommend *To Write Like a Woman*. It's a good book to keep on your nightstand to dip into when you need a quick science fiction fix.

Jan Catano
Halifax, NS

Solution Three. Naomi Mitchison. Afterword by Susan M. Squier. The Feminist Press at the City University of New York, 1995 (Originally published in 1976); ISBN 1-55861-096-0; \$10.95 (US)

Solution Three, originally published in 1976, offers a vision of a future in which our world has been pulled back from the brink of disaster induced by aggression and overpopulation through the