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### The Pen Is Mightier than the Coop Board's Borg Queen: A SF/ Memoir

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# The Pen Is Mightier than the Coop Board's Borg Queen: A SF/Memoir

Deletion / April 7, 2014



Marleen S. Barr |

*Joyce Carol Oates defines “the bibliomemoir” as “a subspecies of literature combining criticism and biography with the intimate, confessional tone of autobiography... [It] represents a risky appropriation of an exalted subject, and... fearlessly casts the memoirist’s shadow over the text” (Oates 1, 22). With this juxtaposition in mind, I describe my forays into fiction as SF/memoir. I combine science fiction with the facts of my life. I take risks. I appropriate alleged subliterate (and definitely not “exalted”) science fiction genre tropes and bravely combine them with my reality. This combination results in a newness: an imaginary shadow text version of my real life.*

*Further discourse category denotation deletion: Fredric Jameson presented a lecture called “An American Utopia” at the City University of New York Graduate Center. To solve the problem of “all states being failed states [and] not even dictatorships work anymore,” he calls for a mandatory draft and renationalization of the army. This “universal utopian army” will be a part of a “social revolution” in which fighting to correct the ecological crisis will replace waging war. Jameson’s American utopia is as fictitious as the utopias such writers as Joanna Russ and Kim Stanley Robinson imagine. A scholarly lecture presented in the form of utopian fiction erases the cultural logic of the difference between literary criticism/political theory and creative writing. I am also obliterating categorization differences. The following SF/memoir ignores the expected boundaries which separate science fiction and autobiography.*

Re the letters of complaint addressed to my Fifth Avenue apartment building Coop Board (located on planet Earth in Manhattan, USA): I now wish to describe how Benedict, the newly elected British Board member, tried to dissuade me from engaging with Joan and Marian, two shareholders of a certain age who chair the building's Revolution Committee. Benedict, with an eye toward ultimately becoming a Board member, infiltrated the Revolution Committee to secure its imprimatur under false pretenses. After relying on the Committee's support to accomplish being elected, Benedict betrayed its transparency and democracy mandate.



Benedict? Why did I name my protagonist Benedict? Well Genghis is too bellicose and Adolf is too much. Benedict is just right. Even though the new Board member is Christian and the Pope is Christian, I am not referring to the former Pope named Benedict. The correct name is Arnold, Benedict Arnold. Why? Benedict Arnold acts counter to truth, justice, and the American way; she is a traitor.

—

Once upon a time Benedict Arnold and I had a lengthy tête-à-tête while sitting in the lobby's gravity defying flying robo chairs. The following conversation ensued:

"Beware of shareholders Joan of Arc and Maid Marian. They are using you. They are encouraging you to write letters to the Board," Benedict said.

"How?"

"Think about it. Beware."

"You have not given me an answer, Benedict. Joan of Arc and Maid Marian did not know that I was writing letters. I told no one about the letters. You are not making sense."

"Think about it. Beware. The Board can sue you for defamation."

"Anyone can sue anyone for anything. I wrote the truth. Sue me. Sue me. What can you do me? How, on another topic, do you respond to the fact that my ninety-year-old neighbor wrote a letter about being terrorized during Hurricane Sandy. She states that Android Dracula, the building's Transylvanian Super, broke into her apartment and screamed at her. I had to extricate Android from her domicile. Despite her advanced age, the letter is logical and cogent."

“She did not write the letter. A lawyer wrote it.”

“Your assertion will not fly. I’m a feminist science fiction theorist who wallows in Joanna Russ’ *How to Suppress Women’s Writing*. ‘She didn’t write it’ (Russ). No way. I am a text expert. I can analyze texts with pinpoint accuracy equivalent to Professor Henry Higgins’ nemesis Zoltan Karpathy’s ability to identify verbiage. The letter was written by a sophisticated multilingual *female* European émigré, not a pedestrian lawyer. You have demonized my neighbor and deprived her of her subjectivity. You have done the same to me. Now you are acting in kind regarding my relationship with Joan of Arc and Maid Marian. Sorry Benedict, baby. This is a no go. We all know that this building’s culture is sick. Our entrance canopy, which normally would be emblazoned with the building’s address or name, reads ‘Abandon All Hope All Ye Who Enter Here.’ Since the Board governs via Fascism-lite, this description of the apartment building is apt. The United States of America is alive and well and living in the outside space surrounding the canopy. The building is located in the land of the free, not in North Korea-on-the-Hudson. Joan of Arc and Maid Marian are good neighbors. You, Benedict Arnold, betrayed them. They are my friends, not you. Here they come now. I will serenade them to express my enduring friendship and solidarity:

‘If ever I would leave you, how could it be in springtime?  
Knowing how in spring I’m bewitched by you so  
Oh, no, not in springtime, summer, winter, or fall  
No, never could I leave you at all.’

“Great song. I know from medieval England. Our situation is quite analogous to Camelot on its last legs after that traitor Mordred turned utopia into dystopia,” interjected Maid Marian.

“The entrance canopy, by the way, is made from the cheapest Naugahyde. Android, who cares about kickbacks more than quality products, runs a thriving nauga farm in the building’s back alley. True, naugas are unpleasant animals which resemble a cross between warthogs and hyenas. I named one Hamlet. Why, in relation to Android unabashedly raising and slaughtering naugas for profit, does the Board fail to enforce the building’s no pet policy?,” I continued.

“Beware of Joan of Arc and Maid Marian,” intoned Benedict Arnold.

“You beware. The next time you write love letters in relation to one of your sexually ravenous amoral dangerous liaisons with the married Super, take care not to use condoms made from Naugahyde-lite.”

—

Isak Dinesen and Denys Finch Hatton entertained each other by telling stories. Scheherazade figures here too. Why? I will tell you another story:

Captain’s Log

Star Date 353535

Being a starship captain is no easy enterprise. The job does not simply entail boldly going where no woman has gone before to seek out new life and new civilizations. Think about it. Crew members have to live somewhere. On my starship, the living quarters are organized as a coop system. But Houston we have a problem. I just read the late twentieth century book *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus*. True enough. Our starship's managing agent is also from a different planet. The entire crew consists of humans from Earth; she is a Klingon from hell. And the starship's Coop Board. Oy, don't even ask about the Coop Board. Board members start out as normal human beings—before ultimately becoming the Board/Borg Collective. Gomorrah Horecock is the Board President—and the Borg Queen. As soon as new Earthlings are elected to the Borg/Board, Gomorrah automatically assimilates them. Recently, for the first time in six light years, we had our initial supposedly democratic ship board Board member elections. The Borg Collective falsified the vote count; Benedict Arnold was elected under false pretenses. And the Borg Queen is the Queen of mean. Gomorrah kicks her soiled underwear filled laundry basket at the starship's cleaning staff. (Reality interlude: For true. I am not talented enough to make this up.) Resistance is futile. But enough already. I need a break. I'm going to the Holodeck. Scotty, although this order is not in accordance with usual Star Fleet procedure, use the Holodeck to beam me up some historical personages and fictitious characters. Beam Benedict Arnold down—immediately if not sooner.”

“Hello Captain,” said the respectively historical and fictitious newly arrived Joan of Arc and Maid Marian. Phasers on stun. Ready. Aim. Fire.”

“Benedict Arnold lost the phaser duel. Two ship cleaning contingent personnel threw Benedict's prostrate but still breathing body on top of the underwear in Borg Queen Gomorrah's laundry basket. They jettisoned it out of the ship's garbage disposal hatch.”

“Bye bye traitor,” said Joan of Arc and Maid Marian.

—

Dear Coop Board:

I insist upon the following outcome:

Board President Gomorrah Horecock will never again kick her laundry basket—which contains “the rank sweat” of un-enseamed vaginal secretion sodden underpants “[s]tew'd in corruption”—at building staff to indicate that she desires these men to pick it up. Unlike Hamlet, I say “un-enseamed” in relation to this sixty-four million dollar question: why is a sixty-four year old virgin named Horecock? “Corruption, yes” and “enseamed, no” best applies to Horecock. (Further: “vaginal secretion sodden” is constitutionally protected speech. If you don't like reading these words, imagine how the staff feels when Gomorrah substitutes kicking for politely requesting. Despite the ubiquitousness of transporter rooms and warp

drives, no one has yet invented a way for the words “vaginal secretion” to actually smell. Not so for Gomorrah’s dirty underwear. A close encounter with a *farshtinkener geshtank* is not part of the staff’s job description. (Perhaps only the building’s Jewish shareholders know that I refer to that which is rotten—as in a rotten person—and a foul odor.)

“Error, error,” said the *Lost In Space* robot who just broke into the letter. “Due to the Board’s Fascism-lite ethos, job descriptions do not exist in this building.”

—

I hear muffled words emanating from the lobby’s Winter Coat Drive collection box. It sounds like an English person is saying “I was coming down in the lift and some bloody extraterrestrial force field lift placed me inside this bloody outer garment car boot-like box. I’m talking about bloody clean outer garments, not dirty undergarments. Gomorrah has gone through menopause.”



Joan of Arc and Maid Marian materialized in the lobby—  
with phasers set on kill.

“Why have I been packed in the Coat Drive collection box?” asked Benedict Arnold.

“Because you betrayed us. You are a turn coat. If your Orwellian American early national period boot fits in the lobby’s garment collection box, wear it while being imprisoned and set adrift floating in outer space forever,” hissed Joan of Arc and Maid Marian.

—

Captain’s Log

Star Date 353535.MSB

“Bloody, bawdy villain!

Remorseless, treacherous, lecherous, kindless villain!

O, vengeance!”

“O? ‘Oh, no, not in springtime?’ Oh, no; oy, yes. Oy! Who the hell let Hamlet out of the Holodeck? Put him back. Don’t I have enough trouble contending with Joan of Arc and Maid Marian—not to mention the entire population of Camelot? Oy, vengeance!; good riddance to Benedict Arnold who thankfully has become bad *farshinkener* rubbish. But we must not under any circumstance throw out Robert Goulet and Richard Burton. They are always worth keeping—regardless of which century they closely encounter.”

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