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Resisting Trump and Embracing Flem Snopes

Guest Blogger / September 21, 2018
BY MARLEEN S. BARR



Cover of *WHEN TRUMP CHANGED: THE FEMINIST SCIENCE FICTION JUSTICE LEAGUE QUASHES THE ORANGE OUTRAGE PUSSY GRABBER*, the author's new short story collection about Trump.

In my new *Academe* article “Sex and the Single Feminist Science Fiction Scholar,” I focused on “sex” in light of #MeToo and was silent about the “feminist science fiction scholar” aspect of my professional life. I entered the Way Back Machine to state that I escaped being sexually abused. This is not to say that my time as a young scholar was a utopian panacea. Quite the contrary. The adverse impact upon my career I experienced in the Virginia Tech English Department did not involve the fact that I am a woman. I was besieged by textism (the term I coined to describe discrimination against texts), not sexism. More simply stated, I was persecuted because I am a New York Jewish science fiction scholar. The men who ran the department at the time (Arthur M. Eastman, Hilbert Campbell, and Michael Squires) thought that science fiction was crap; the department community was not, to say the least, welcoming to New York Jews. Although I became a prolific science fiction scholar who is proud to have received the Science Fiction Research Association Pilgrim Award for lifetime achievement in science fiction studies, I have never fully recovered from the harm the Virginia Tech English Department inflicted. I drew upon my experiences there in a humorous way in my novel *OY PIONEER!* My protagonist Professor Sondra Lear closely encounters colleagues from hell at Blackhole State University. After all of these years, this is the first time I have ever mentioned the Virginia Tech English Department perpetrators by name.

I finally did it. I succinctly stated the truth. Before doing so, I spent years rapaciously publishing feminist science fiction criticism. Naming names is an act of retribution after a lengthy passage of time. I waited until the old order of sexism and textism is being replaced by #MeToo and respect for science fiction writers I wrote about early in my career (such as Ursula K. Le Guin and Octavia E. Butler). I suppose that this makes me analogous to a New York Jewish feminist science fiction scholar version of Flem Snopes. It is, however, still too painful for me to provide details. I want, instead, to go back to the present. I wish to discuss “feminist science fiction scholar” in terms of current sexual harassment.

I have recently applied my feminist science fiction expertise to resisting the Sexual Assaulter- In-Chief. The fact that the president of the United States bragged about pussy grabbing appalled me to the extent that I published the first single-authored short story collection about Trump, *WHEN TRUMP CHANGED: THE FEMINIST SCIENCE FICTION JUSTICE LEAGUE QUASHES THE ORANGE OUTRAGE PUSSY GRABBER*. Like her creator, Sondra has moved on from Blackhole (even though the book, for old time's sake contains a story called “The Virginia Tech Duck Pond Engenders Stephen K. Bannon's Swamp Thing.” Bannon is a Virginia Tech alumnus; enough said.) I threw every science fiction trope I know at Trump. Sondra subjects our president to close encounters with feminist extraterrestrials, alternative Hillary winning history, Godzilla-esque metamorphosis, lock up in the Phantom Zone—and that's on a good day. Spaceships from feminist separatist planets routinely land on Trump's White House lawn. In the end, I transport Trump to a galaxy far far away from us.

Will Trump call feminist science fiction a fake book? The point is that feminist science fiction parody—a component of the science fiction subgenre I call “Trumppunk”—is powerful. Those men at Virginia Tech who never grabbed my pussy and who tried to snatch my career did not quash my initial professional conviction that feminist science fiction is important.

The title of my Trump anthology is derived from Joanna Russ's iconic story "When It Changed" which is about what happens when men come to a feminist separatist utopia. I did not change. The feminist science fiction force is still with me!

Guest blogger Marleen S. Barr, who received the Science Fiction Research Association Pilgrim Award for lifetime achievement in science-fiction criticism, teaches English at the City University of New York. Her latest book is the first single-authored Trump fiction anthology, When Trump Changed: The Feminist Science Fiction Justice League Quashes the Orange Outrage Pussy Grabber.

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