

Gender and Environment in North-American Science Fiction by Women

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My stay at the Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society (RCC) is framed within the activities that have been planned as part of the research for and execution of my PhD thesis at the English Department at the University of Murcia (Spain). My research focuses on the connections between feminism and gender issues, on the one hand, and environmentalism, on the other, in North-American Science Fiction written by women. Particularly, I focus on the historical convergence between environmentalism and radical feminism from the sixties to the end of the twentieth-century and their relevance at the dawn and further development of the US ecofeminist movement. Through the study of a selection of the works of some of the most renowned authors of the genre, such as Ursula K. Le Guin, Margaret Atwood, Octavia Butler or Joanna Russ, among other less-known ones, I aim to create a genealogy of ecofeminist concerns within Science Fiction, while also placing these authors in the historical context of feminist and environmentalist activism.

Among the chapters I have outlined for my thesis, I have included one on the history of the environmental movement in the US and its intersectionality with the feminist movement through figures such as Ynestra King, Charlene Spretnak, Janet Biehl or Catriona Sandilands. In this chapter, which I will finish researching and hope to draft completely during my visit to RCC, I will also discuss branches within the environmental movement, such as deep ecology or social ecology, as well as their connection with the debates that helped develop the different aspects of ecofeminism. The interdisciplinary nature of my research will result in the linking of social and environmental changes in US history within the framework of Science Fiction.

In my visit I also hope to gather information for a subsequent chapter dealing with the ecofeminist critique of technology. By making use of the resources at hand in the RCC's library collection, I will be able to further develop this chapter in terms of depth of analysis in order to showcase these Science Fiction authors' criticism of the anthropocene, mostly in relation to the means in which technology frames the relationships between humans and nature. It will also allow me to further understand and analyze the alternatives these authors offer to anthropocentrism from both an environmentalist and a feminist standpoint.