BRAVE NEW WORLDS

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The *Digital Literature Review*

The *Digital Literature Review* is a journal showcasing undergraduate student work in literature and cultural studies. The journal is produced by undergraduate students at Ball State University who are involved in the *Digital Literature Review* immersive learning project. Our goal is to provide a forum where undergraduate students can showcase their research projects and disseminate their valuable contributions to ongoing academic conversations.

The *Digital Literature Review* is published annually in the spring. The deadline for submissions is in early January. We welcome original articles relating to each year's theme. Articles should range from 3000-5000 words: every article is reviewed by undergraduate students on the journal's editorial team. Notification of initial decision is in February. All authors receive constructive feedback concerning submissions.

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Chasing a Brave New World: Utopias, Dystopias, and Literature

By Jacob Garrett, *Co-Lead Editor*

"I abhor the idea of a perfect world — it would bore me to tears." - Shelby Foote

Imagine, dear reader, if you will, a perfect world. When you reach the end of this sentence, simply close your eyes and take a few minutes to think about the ideal society in which you would want to live, going over all the customs, laws, beliefs, and other aspects of this society that you think would make it the peak of human achievement and understanding. Have you got a clear picture in your head? At least the start of one? Good.

Now, I guarantee you, absolutely nobody will ever want that same society.

Sure, there may be people who would be willing to live there. I'm putting faith in you and assuming that you haven't come up with a post-apocalyptic hellscape worthy of analysis in our previous issue (although, if that's your thing, go ahead and keep on brooding). There may be many aspects of your society that I and others would agree with and desire in our own utopias, and it may honestly sound like a great place to live; however, it will never be perfect. Not to anyone else, anyway. The most essential quality of utopias, other than the impossibility of their achievement, is that they are entirely subjective. The dictionary definition, "an imagined or hypothetical place, system, or state of existence in which everything is perfect" ("Utopia"), is about the only thing that can be agreed upon.

This contention over the creation of the ideal world has sparked the genesis of numerous utopian experiments over the years, with varying results. Some utopian experiments, such as various monasteries and abbeys, were able to survive quite as they were originally meant to, with little interference from the outside world. Other ventures, such as the town of New Harmony, Indiana and the communities established by the Shakers in the United States, met with initial success, but slowly

dwindled until they either became regular towns or faded into historical obscurity. Still other utopian experiments led to a great deal of civil strife; the Mormon communities that formed in the Midwest and western territories in the mid-1800s are a prime example. Perhaps the most famous (and notorious) examples of utopian experiments in the past century were the U. S. S. R., founded by Vladimir Lenin as an adaptation of Marxist principles to the largely agrarian Russian Empire, and Nazi Germany, in which Adolf Hitler brought forth his genocidal, twisted vision for a perfect world.

The Soviet Union and the Third Reich are perfect examples of how one's utopia can easily become another's dystopia. For Hitler and his true followers, the white-supremacist fascism that reigned from Berlin was the ideal form of government and should be spread to the rest of the world. For Jews, the Romani people, LGBTQ+ individuals, communists, and anyone that publicly criticized him, however, every day could bring death in the blink of an eye. In the Soviet Union, furthermore, each successive leader instituted their own idea of what a Marxist-Leninist utopia should be, ranging from the capitalist-communist hybrid of Mikhail Gorbachev to the brutal repression of Iosif Stalin, who actively attempted to erase the ideas of Lenin and Lenin's followers that did not fit with his conception of the world's premiere socialist utopia.

The same debate over the constitution of a perfect world and the fine line between utopias and dystopias has been kept alive in literature for over 500 years, ever since the publication of Utopia in 1516 by Thomas More. In his seminal work, More imagined an island community with little contact with the outside world, quite similar in conception to a monastery, in which everyone considers themselves equals and no one feels the need for deception. More's utopia, however, was of course not satisfactory to everyone that read his work (and would be quite unacceptable today, with its embrace of authoritarian government and slave labor), and authors have been taking their own cracks at the subject ever since. Such varied company as William Shakespeare (who created his own island utopia in *The Tempest*), Margaret Cavendish (whose revolutionary 1666 piece *The Blazing World* is considered by some to be a forerunner of science fiction), Karl Marx, H. G. Wells, and Octavia Butler have all created their own twists on the utopian ideal and what it might entail.

Utopias weren't just a hopeful pastime, however; they have also been used since their inception to criticize the societies in which their authors live. By creating an ostensibly perfect community, the

omission of certain aspects of one's real-world society or inclusion of aspects never seen there before provided a lucrative outlet for voicing one's dissatisfaction with the current state of affairs. In *The Tempest,* we might find numerous veiled criticisms of imperialism and colonization through the treatment of the island native Caliban. In the otherworldly society that Cavendish creates, she takes aim at the rigidly patriarchal society that she lives in and contemporary perceptions of gender, religion, and power. Marx, in writing *The Communist Manifesto* with Friedrich Engels, offered a never-before-seen socio-economic analysis of capitalism and an alternative to the economic system that had evolved to oppress millions of working-class men and women across the world. Numerous other works, as well, such as *Herland* by Charlotte Perkins Gilman and *Ecotopia* by Ernest Callenbach, experimented with utopias based around conceptions of gender, environmentalism, race, age, and more.

In recent decades, as literary movements such as modernism and postmodernism have embraced a strong degree of cynicism, a turn to dystopias rather than utopias to criticize contemporary society has become very popular. From the early dystopias of Aldous Huxley and George Orwell to young adult series like *The Hunger Games* and *Divergent*, from the novels of Margaret Atwood and Ursula K. Le Guin to television shows like *Black Mirror* and *The Twilight Zone*, and from the societies created by Ray Bradbury and Kazuo Ishiguro to the cinematic universes of *The Matrix* and *V for Vendetta*, we have seen an explosion of popular dystopian fiction rife with scathing criticism of misogyny, religious extremism, political authoritarianism, collective ignorance, conceptions of being and existence, and economic and class divisions.

With this effusion of utopian and dystopian literature, it can be all too easy to feel overwhelmed by the sheer amount of material, and the theoretical aspects of these works can sometimes be lost among the the spectacle of the stories. In this issue of the *Digital Literature Review*, we invite you, dear reader, to take a journey with us into the deeper aspects of utopias and dystopias in literature and to look long and hard at what we have unearthed. We begin with an essay by Kory Wise, "Ideological State Apparatuses in Dystopian Novels," in which the author examines Louis Althusser's theory of Ideological State Apparatuses in *The Handmaid's Tale*, *Fahrenheit 451*, and Dave Eggers's novel *The Circle* in the hopes that you will be able to more easily recognize the elements of dystopian

societies and the tactics that they use. After this introduction to some dystopian theory, we provide some in-depth looks at various authors. In "From Dystopia to Utopia: Tonal Shifts and Perspective Change in H. G. Wells's The Food of the Gods" and "Ayn Rand's Utopian Visions in Theory and Realization," authors Katie Patyk and Ben Sapet examine the ways that Wells and Rand, respectively, explore their own ideas of utopia in their novels. Katrina Brown widens our perspective in her essay "Native American Stereotypes in Literature: The Noble Savage, the Utopian Man," in which she examines the construction of utopian ideas of Native American society by Europeans and white Americans since the arrival of Christopher Columbus. We then return to a study of an individual author with "The Formation of Separatism in Shelley's *The Last Man*: A Struggle to Overcome the Primitive and Live in a World of the Abject," where author Mikayla Davis discusses Mary Shelley's flouting of traditional Romantic ideas of utopia in her novel *The Last Man* with a focus on the theory of abjection.

In the center of our journal, we have a pair of essays which offer feminist examinations of distinct topics in Ursula K. Le Guin's science-fiction novel *The Dispossessed*. Natalie Kuss, in "Family and Feminism in Ursula K. Le Guin's *The Dispossessed*," examines the role of the family on the anarcho-communist society of Anarres and the implications that this non-traditional family structure has for both modern feminism and the formation of an egalitarian society. Marlee Jacocks, in "A Feminist's Call for Anarchy," chooses to focus on the system of government — or, rather, lack thereof — in this same society, comparing it to the affluent capitalist society of Urras from which the anarcho-communists originally came and asserting that the anarchy that Anarres is based upon and its rejection of patriarchy and capitalism are critical to the formation of feminist forms of government and its universal acceptance. These two papers are followed by "An Inverted Dystopia: Margaret Cavendish's Utopia, *The Blazing World*," in which Julie Santini examines Cavendish's use of witch theory and the ways in which she dismantled traditional ideas about systems of belief.

Our final four authors in this edition of the *Digital Literature Review* have all chosen to examine relatively recent portrayals of utopias and dystopias in literature and media. Allison Akers takes on ideas of divinity and its implications for utopias in "Divinity and its Imitation in the Utopian Visions of *Death Note* and *Parable of the Sower*." In "Offred Versus June: The Purpose of the

Protagonist in *The Handmaid's Tale*," Grace Goze discusses the main character of Offred's role in her own story and the differences between the portrayals of her in Margaret Atwood's novel and the recent Hulu television adaptation. Author Marisa Sloan provides a historical anchor for discussions about utopias and dystopias in her paper, "Donors of the Floating World: The Dystopian Livelihoods of Ishiguro's Clones and Yoshiwara Courtesans," in which she examines the mindset of the main characters of Kazuo Ishiguro's novel *Never Let Me Go* and why they think the way they do about their station in society, comparing their experience to that of courtesans in Edo Japan. Lastly, in my own paper, "Pay-to-Play: The Utopia for Capitalists in *Black Mirror's* 'Fifteen Million Merits,'" I examine the second episode of Charlie Brooker's popular dystopian anthology as a utopia for the capitalists that run the commune in which it takes place, comparing it to the American company towns of the Industrial Revolution and examining how elements of this society are already creeping into our own lives.

Dystopian and utopian fiction can be highly entertaining and provide a great escape from the world around us; however, seeing it only as a means of entertainment severely detracts from what this type of literature aims to achieve: criticism of the society in which we live. It's tossed around all the time in the news and on social media that we're living in a dystopian world, with comparisons to *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *Brave New World* dropped all over the place, but the very point of those books was to keep the scenarios listed within their pages from happening in the first place. If we are already so close to those societies as some would have us believe, then it would be far too late to save ourselves. Dystopian and utopian fiction forces us to hold a mirror up to ourselves and examine whether this is really the world in which we want to live. With this issue of the *Digital Literature Review,* we hope to move beyond these superficial declarations of modern dystopia and examine just what makes these societies what they are and how they form. We hope, dear reader, that you come away from this journal with an informed conception about this ancient genre of literary thought and criticism; however, we also hope that you come away with the wherewithal to recognize the emergence of potential dystopias and the knowledge of how you can fight against them.

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Ideological State Apparatuses in Dystopian Novels

By Kory Wise

ABSTRACT

Dystopian novels have been topping best-seller lists for nearly a hundred years, but not many people have examined why this is the case or what makes them so effective at warning readers about what we could become in a not too distant future. Perhaps it is these texts' connection to the real world that plays into our fascination with the genre. This paper establishes this connection by examining the worlds of three popular dystopian novels and the ways in which they support Louis Althusser's theory of Ideological State Apparatuses. This study will ideally enable readers to recognize the tools and real-life strategies that structure dystopian fictional worlds.

For roughly a century, dystopian novels have been a popular genre of literature among people of all ages. There is something about them that captures our imagination, makes us fear the worlds they construct, and forces us to ask probing questions about our own lives and societies. Their ongoing popularity begs readers to ask whether there is a common element to these novels that keeps people coming back for more. What are the overarching themes or ideas that make them effective at warning humanity of what it could become? What are some of the tools they use to do this? One answer to these questions lies in Louis Althusser's theory of ideological state apparatuses and the ways in which dystopian novels throughout the last century illustrate his ideas. This study will examine *Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury (1953), *The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood (1985), and *The Circle* by Dave Eggers (2013).

In "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," Althusser examines the ways in which a state asserts power over its subjects and controls them for the purpose of reproducing labor power. He sees this happening in two ways. The first is directly through Repressive State Apparatuses, or "RSAs," a "hard power" which belong entirely to the public domain (Althusser). These are controlled directly by the state and act as agents enforcing the state's will in an obvious manner, predominantly by repression (Althusser). This includes such things as the police, army, prison system, judiciary—anything that is state-controlled. Althusser believes this apparatus operates primarily through both mental and physical coercion and violence.

The Ideological State Apparatuses, or "ISAs," meanwhile, are part of the private domain and are controlled or influenced by the subjects within the apparatus (Althusser). This "soft power" includes things like churches, schools, families, culture (literature, fashion, sports, technology, etc.), and tools of communication (press, radio, television, etc.) that create an ideology, or "a system of the ideas and representations (images, myths, ideas or concepts, according to the case) which dominate the mind of a man or a social group" (Althusser; Lin). The goal of the ISA is to brainwash people into accepting the state's ideology not through violence but through the desire to avoid scorn and humiliation. Authors of dystopian literature fear ISAs the most because they enable the state to maintain its power, force a loss of identity among individuals, and strip subjects of the knowledge and ability they would need to easily go against the state.

It is important to note that these apparatuses do not need to be born of malicious intentions or some "evil empire" seeking to take control of a people for its own benefit. On the contrary, they are often the result of good intentions that yield negative results. After all, the etymological definition of "dystopia" is "bad utopia"—a utopia that has failed or gone horribly wrong ("Dystopia"). This is certainly true of the dystopian societies found in *The Circle*, *The Handmaid's Tale*, and *Fahrenheit 451*, worlds in which people have given up their freedoms and liberties for the sake of the greater good or are in the process of doing so. Whether born of good intentions or not, though, the ISAs Althusser wrote about are on full display in these dystopian novels, all of which show, in a grotesque way, how ISAs can be used to oppress the individual.

Perhaps the most important Ideological State Apparatus to Althusser is the educational ISA, or the system of different public and private "schools" through which "students" learn the rules of good behavior, develop their civic conscience, and learn to respect the rules of order that enforce their inferiority (Althusser). Atwood uses this idea to form the foundation of her fictional society, Gilead, in *The Handmaid's Tale*. In the book, the women of Gilead are forced to enroll at the Rachel and Leah Re-education Centers to learn lessons of sexual morality, the importance (or mission) of childbearing, and obedience to God (Atwood 88). The Handmaids are inferior to their teachers, the "Aunts," whose job is to train the maids and transfer the ideology of the state unconsciously. The Aunts justify the young women's situation by telling them to "think of it as being in the army" (Atwood 7). They are also told that, as time passes by, their situation will become more ordinary and they will grow used to it (Moradi and Azizmohammadi 80).

Re-education does not take place solely at the Rachel and Leah Centers, though. It also occurs all throughout the women's lives as Handmaids. Anytime they go against the law or show disobedience toward the Marthas, their superiors, or their Commanders' wives, they are reprimanded and punished (Atwood 16). The women are also prevented from being able to educate themselves. Tools for self-education, like books, are restricted in Gilead. Typically, they are kept out of sight and locked away in boxes (Atwood 137). The reason for this is that books hold promise within their pages. As Offred says,

They dealt in transformations; they suggested an endless series of possibilities…They suggested

> one adventure after another, one wardrobe after another, one improvement after another, one one man after another. They suggested rejuvenation, pain overcome and transcended, endless love. The real promise in them was immortality. (Atwood 157)

Books would offer too much hope to the Handmaids who read them, giving them the idea that perhaps, if they all stood as one, they would have enough power to overthrow their oppressive society. Gilead could not afford for this to happen, so these educational tools were restricted.

Ray Bradbury uses the educational ISA in a similar way in his novel *Fahrenheit 451*. In his futuristic American society, books are banned and "firemen" hunt down and destroy any book that remains in the country. People can be arrested or killed for reading or owning books of any kind, because, much like in Gilead, books can lead people to ponder issues such as freedom and happiness. Having non-questioning, non-reading citizens on its hands allows the government to enforce its own will much more easily. One way in which it does this is evident when the young Clarisse tells protagonist Guy Montag about a typical school day. Important social and educational activities like talking or asking questions are not encouraged (Bradbury 27). Instead, students are subjected to "an hour of TV class, an hour of basketball or baseball or running, another hour of transcription history or painting pictures, and more sports" (Bradbury 27). When they are in class, there is no teacher-student interaction, because students are fed information by a film-teacher for hours at a time (Bradbury 27). Captain Beatty of the fire department also provides detail about how the school system has been changed in this futuristic society: "School is shortened, discipline relaxed, philosophies, histories, languages dropped, English and spelling gradually neglected, finally almost completely ignored" (Bradbury 53). In her article, "Subject and State: Ideology, State Apparatuses and Interpellation in *Fahrenheit 451*," Evrim Koç says that, without classes like science, mathematics, ethics, etc., students are not taught to think or question as they should, which is exactly what the ruling ideology desires (117). Instead, intellectuals become the outsiders, ignorant individuals become the norm, liberal arts colleges shut down, and the educational ISA maintains an easily controlled society that is unfriendly to reading, thinking, and questioning.

In *The Circle*, Dave Eggers shows how the educational Ideological State Apparatus can be used to produce a society that celebrates education and knowledge but still has a similar effect on its people

as the world of *Fahrenheit 451*. One of the eponymous technology company's mottos is "All that happens must be known," and knowledge is celebrated as a fundamental human right (Eggers 68, 303). In fact, to withhold knowledge from somebody, to deprive them of something to which they have a right, is viewed as stealing from them (Eggers 303). As a result, the Circle works to create a collective record of everything that happens in the world, giving people the tools they need to know everything. It begins with SeeChange cameras being placed around the world to "know the previously unknown" and allow people to tune in to live video streams from any location in the world (Eggers 63). Not long after, people are willing to "go transparent" and wear a camera around their neck to broadcast every event of their day to day lives (Eggers 210).

The result of this ideology on the Circle's customers is similar to that of the educational ISA in *The Handmaid's Tale* and *Fahrenheit 451*. While the company's actions are veiled as promotion of individuals' rights and education, they only serve to promote the knowledge of the collective or the company as a whole. No individual can truly access all the information available to them at once, and as the novel demonstrates, when they do, it has adverse effects on them. The main character Mae's ex-boyfriend Mercer is driven to commit suicide after he can no longer handle the harassment of people across the world, and her close friend Annie, an executive at the Circle, has a mental breakdown when information concerning her family's history is made public (Eggers 466, 495). The rapid pace at which these feeds are updated, as well as the large amount of information for people to consume, creates a knowledge overload that individuals are not able to sift through. They are unable to be free-thinking individuals that stop and consider the information being presented to them. Much like in *Fahrenheit 451*, they consume whatever they can without giving it much thought, making them easy to control. As a result, only the RSA, in this case the Circle, is able to benefit from the educational ideology that they have forced upon the society.

According to Althusser, another Ideological State Apparatus that is vital to a state's survival is the communications ISA, because it crams messages of "nationalism, chauvinism, liberalism, moralism, etc." into people's lives every day (Althusser). This ISA involves a manipulation of the tools of communication that are widely available to the public, such as television, technology, or even talking face to face. In *Fahrenheit 451*, the dominant tool of communication is the television. Large

Large TVs cover all four walls of people's living rooms, and even when people are not watching them, they have their "ears plugged with electronic bees that…[hum] the hour away" (Bradbury 16). Citizens are tuned in to the entertainment industry at all times, especially in their private spaces, and this provides the ideal opportunity for it to reinforce the state's ideology as if they were in the public space. According to Joseph Hurtgen, from his article, "Archival Domination in *Fahrenheit 451,*" because all their time is consumed by this media, people have no time or ability to actually communicate with one another, and they just become reflections of what they see and hear on the screens (38). This is most evident in Montag's wife, Mildred, who comes to reflect the pacing of television shows in her bodily movements:

> The door to the parlor opened and Mildred stood there looking in at them, looking at Beatty and then at Montag. Behind her the walls of the room were flooded with green and yellow and orange fireworks sizzling and bursting to some music composed almost completely of trap drums, tom-toms, and cymbals. Her mouth moved and she was saying something but the sound covered it . . . The fireworks died in the parlor behind Mildred. She had stopped talking at the same time. (Bradbury 56-7)

Not only has the television stopped Mildred from being able to effectively communicate, Hurtgen argues, but it has also "colonized" her speech, as seen in the fact that she stops speaking when the sounds from the television cease (41). This also symbolizes her closer relationship to the television than her own husband (41). Because of people's close bonds to their televisions, the only conversations that take place in these households are between the state and the private citizen, not between living, breathing people (44).

The state is then able to deliberately manipulate this television-centered society by broadcasting things that suit its political agenda. For example, when Montag is being chased by a mechanical hound near the end of the novel, it is broadcast on every TV screen across the country, turning it into a show that encourages people to tune in and do their part in stopping this "criminal" (Bradbury 141). When Montag manages to escape, the broadcasters show the hound catching a different individual who they claim is Montag, but they do not show the individual's face clearly (Bradbury 143). People are just expected to believe that the government did its job and caught the

traitor who went against the societal norm. Hurtgen says that this type of broadcast, while providing entertainment to its viewers, also ensures that the public is aware of the state's power, producing obedience and conformity in those who watch (39). In this case, the state uses the communications ISA to secure its authority, keep its citizens in line, and form their mindsets according to its own will.

The Circle utilizes the communications ISA in a similar way. Much like with Bradbury, the apparatus in Eggers's novel seemingly celebrates communication by doing everything it can to foster communication between people and provide the tools needed to make it easier, but the end result is actually much different. The Circle encourages relationships among people and participation in events and activities by assigning each of its employees a "PartiRank" (participation rank) that reflects their level of engagement with the company and the people who work there (Eggers 101). When people do not respond to one another's invitations or messages, their PartiRank goes down, and this reflects the way they are perceived at the company. This creates a society in which everyone believes that everyone else needs to be responded to, taken seriously, and given time and attention.

This emphasis on everybody's voice mattering eventually creates a world in which no one can really be heard, thereby effectively silencing communication. As Mercer tells Mae, "the tools you guys create actually manufacture unnaturally extreme social needs" that eliminate one's ability to effectively communicate (Eggers 134). It is impossible for anyone to respond to the thousands of "zings," texts, and phone calls they receive in one day, but when they do not, friendships end and people are offended, as was the case when Mae was unable to answer attempts to communicate with her in a "timely" manner of a few minutes (Eggers 114). It also allows the state to drown out the voices of dissenters, or at least ignore them until tragedy occurs, as it does when Mercer commits suicide (Eggers 466). In place of critical thought and opinions, the Circle reinforces its company mantra hundreds of times a second, and because people are unable to process all of the messages they are taking in, the products that constitute the communications ISA really only benefit the Circle itself.

Because both *Fahrenheit 451* and *The Circle* warn about the use of technology to oppress people, as do other dystopian novels such as *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley, *1984* by George Orwell, and *We* by Yevgeny Zamyatin, it is necessary to draw an explicit connection between the two novels and consider why this is the case. To start, one must reflect on the idea of a dystopia as a "bad

utopia." Utopian visions imagine the perfect human society as something that exists in the future, hopefully to be achieved after we make even more technological advancements that will help us achieve harmony. This is true even of Thomas More's *Utopia*, the first of such books to be written. Dystopian novels tell stories in which this does not end up being the case. If a utopia were to fail, it is logical that technology would be one of the direct causes, especially since it is still new to us in scope of human history. We cannot predict where it will take us next or assume that we totally understand its role in our lives. It is understandable, then, that dystopian authors would have so many anxieties about the role of technology. Bradbury was certainly fearful of the role that he saw television playing in the future, as well as the prominence people gave it in their lives, and Eggers is apprehensive of twenty-first century technology like the internet, mobile phones, and social media. While there is great potential for technology to improve the lives of mankind, as we have seen in our own present age, there is an equal potential that it can be taken too far and used for control, surveillance, and oppression, as seen in *Fahrenheit 451* and *The Circle*.

Finally, Althusser writes about the religious ISA and the ways in which it can be a powerful tool for the state's advantage. This frequently involves the perversion, manipulation, or all-out destruction of a particular religion, or all religious faith, in a society. This is most evident in *The Handmaid's Tale,* in which the state participates in the cherry-picking of Christian scriptures to suit its needs and agenda. Specific verses that extol the value of marriage, emphasize meekness and humility, and absolve men of adultery, as long as its purpose was for childbirth, while condemning women for the same crime are used to construct the laws of Gilead. Other verses that are central to the Christian faith, but would contradict the religion and morality the state is trying to construct, such as Jesus' command to "Do to others as you would have them do to you," are conveniently overlooked or ignored (*New American Bible,* Luke 6:31). It is this "scriptural precedent" that allows the state to justify its behavior (Atwood 16). Most of the authorities' usages of scripture, however, are inaccurate interpretations or just plain lies. Once again, Offred's incorrect recollection partway through the novel of a phrase allegedly from "St. Paul in Acts" illustrates this fact (Atwood 117). Christian tradition, of course, holds that St. Luke wrote the Acts of the Apostles. It was certainly not St. Paul, whose epistles predate the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts. Offred is unable to recognize this, though, because

of the education she received at the Rachel and Leah Centers, so she must take the authorities at their word. This demonstrates the state's manipulation and perversion of the actual Christian faith to suit its political needs.

The religious lessons in Gilead are not solely enforced at the Rachel and Leah Re-education Centers. Religious imagery and slogans can be found all throughout the society, constantly reinforcing the importance religion should hold in one's life and its value to the world as a whole. This can especially be seen in the names of places and propaganda. First of all, there is the name of "Gilead" itself, a place mentioned multiple times in the Bible (Genesis 31:25, Numbers 32:1, and Judges 10:4). Within Gilead, though, all the stores the Handmaids visit also have biblical names. For instance, there is "Loaves and Fishes," a reference to Jesus' miraculous feeding of the five thousand; "Milk and Honey," a reference to Canaan, the ancient Israelites' long-awaited promised land; "All Flesh," possibly drawn from Jesus' Bread of Life discourse in the Gospel according to John; and "Lilies," a reference to a line from Jesus' Sermon on the Mount in the Gospel According to Matthew. All these things are undoubtedly meant to be subconscious reminders of the Handmaids' place in Gilead and the lessons they were taught early in their re-education.

Unlike Gilead, the apparatus in *The Circle* does not use religion to further its agenda. On the contrary, the Circle is intent on superseding religion to become the people's sole source of inner enlightenment. The company's ideological mantra, "Secrets are Lies / Sharing is Caring / Privacy is Theft," almost acts as a religious creed or profession of faith (Eggers 305). It is this mantra that the Circle hopes will inform their customers' code of ethics, not traditional religion. It is through following this code of ethics and using the products that the Circle provides that people will be able to reach enlightenment and become, like God himself, "all-seeing, all-knowing," and all-powerful (Eggers 71). Traditional morals and ethics will no longer be necessary, because the people can police themselves using their technology. Religion itself, therefore, will eventually become obsolete, finding itself replaced by the Circle.

In many ways, Eggers does try to draw connections between the Circle and religion, using traditional religious ideas and imagery to show how the Circle is the fulfillment of everything religion had been trying to do over the millennia. The three founders of the company, for instance, Eamon

Bailey, Ty Gospodinov, and Tom Stenton, are known throughout the world as the Three Wise Men, a reference to the three foreigners who followed a star to find the newborn Jesus and brought gifts to him (Eggers 19). In a way, these three men can also be seen as a symbol of the Holy Trinity, the God at the head of this particular religion. Each man has a unique role he plays in the company and a specific face he shows to the public. Mae almost deifies them at the beginning of the novel, considering herself unworthy, or at least extremely lucky, to be in their presence (Eggers 27). Religion is also used to emphasize the cult-like nature of the devotion and idealism that believers in the Circle have placed in its rise to power. Eggers introduces an unknown man, a former priesthood candidate who left the seminary to pursue a career in technology, to deliver the message he wants his audience to hear: where religion and faith have failed, the Circle will succeed (398). In his eyes, the company is a fulfillment of everything religion has been striving for, of everything God has wanted humanity to become (Eggers 399). Mae and her friend Francis, though, are so blinded by their faith in the Circle that they laugh in the man's face, showing they have already abandoned God to follow the religion of the Circle (Eggers 399).

The futuristic United States in *Fahrenheit 451*, meanwhile, has largely set out to destroy anything that remains of religion by burning religious texts and everything they represent. The scriptures that gave rise to the religion of the world have almost entirely been wiped out. According to Montag, the Old and New Testament that he steals "might be the last copy in this part of the world," showing that the Jewish and Christian religions have also disappeared from the world, or at least Montag's part of it (Bradbury 72). This is logical, because religion does not fit well with the materialistic, self-centered society this apparatus has constructed. Faith and spirituality are not necessarily "fun," so there would be no need to hang on to them. Additionally, religion and religious belief lead individuals to ask philosophical questions about their state in life and give them an option for faith, hope, freedom, intellectualism, etc. This, of course, would pose a threat to the state's security, so it has been deemed evil and removed from society.

This does not mean that the state never uses religious ideas or imagery to suit its own needs. They can still be a powerful tool in a world that might have fond memories or affections toward the religious belief of the past. As a result, religious figures like Jesus Christ have been changed from

loving, liberating teachers to simple members of the family. As Professor Faber tells Montag, “Christ is one of the 'family' now. I often wonder if God recognizes His own son the way we've dressed him up, or is it dressed him down? He's a regular peppermint stick now, all sugar-crystal and saccharine when he isn't making veiled references to certain commercial products that every worshipper absolutely needs” (Bradbury 77). Citizens, especially older ones, may remember Jesus as a person who is supposed to be trusted, a man whose word is honest and believable. Why then would he lie to you while making a commercial pitch on TV? This example shows how the repressive state apparatus deliberately manipulates the religious ISA for its own ends, to reinforce its ideals and consumerist culture. Any religion in this society has been stripped of what it originally meant or intended for its people.

Louis Althusser’s theory of repressive and ideological state apparatuses clearly provides an effective way to examine the worlds of dystopian literature and learn why they are so potent at warning their readers of what the world could become. This is an important conversation to have, because reading this type of literature and trying to make connections enables us to recognize these things in our own lives. While many of us will never encounter an evil empire that suppresses its own people just to maintain its power, we will still encounter something similar on a smaller scale. Perhaps it will be a minority group whose civil rights are being infringed upon, or a government whose policies could open the door to misfortune in the future. That is why we read these novels in the first place. They touch on our fears, but they also enable us to open our eyes and recognize these things before they happen to us.

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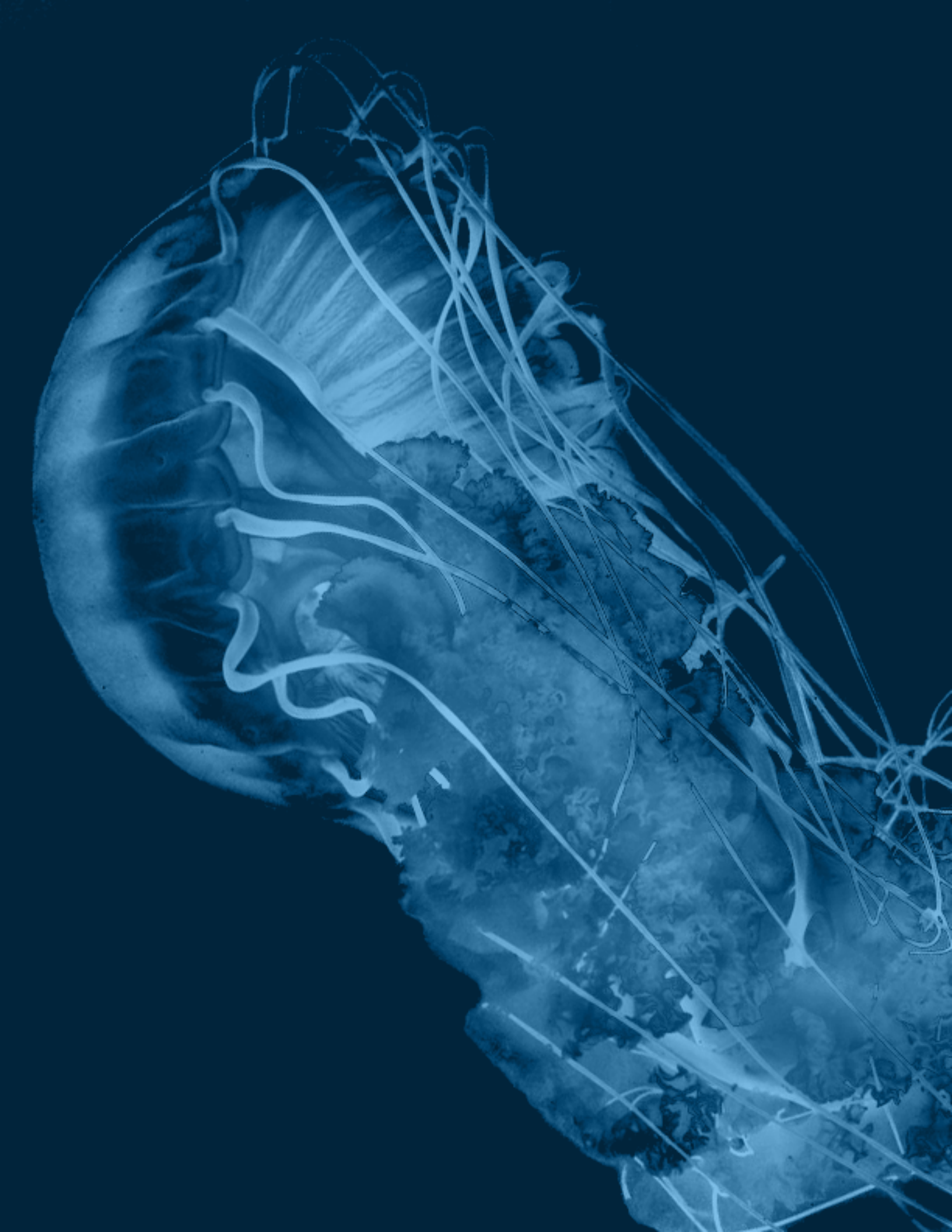

From Dystopia to Utopia: Tonal Shifts and Perspective Change in H. G. Wells's *The Food of the Gods*

By Katie Patyk

ABSTRACT

Many science fiction novels discuss either utopian or dystopian ideas. H.G. Wells's novel, The Food of the Gods, is unique in that it addresses both. This paper argues that H.G. Wells' s use of tonal shifts in The Food of the Gods signals a change from a dystopian society to a utopian one. Human refusal to adopt inevitable evolutionary change creates the former, while a superior race's acceptance of it promises hope for an ever-improving future.

One of the questions that H.G. Wells pursued throughout his life was "How will humans exist?" This is addressed in many of his novels, including a little-known work titled *The Food of the Gods*. *The Food of the Gods* is a speculation on human evolution, which occurs as different forms of Herakleophorbia (The Food of the Gods) spreads across Britain. The novel is divided into three subsections, referred to as Books One, Two, and Three. While the first book is nearly comedic in its description of giant chickens plaguing the town of Hickleybrow, books Two and Three take on a much more serious tone in which the Children of the Food strive for acceptance in a world where they are rejected. Wells's tonal shift between the first two subsections of *The Food of the Gods* demonstrates his belief that human resistance to evolutionary change creates dystopia, while a superior race's acceptance of it creates a utopia that promotes growth and change.

Whether or not something is utopian or dystopian all depends on one's positioning. Gregory Claeys, in "The Origins of Dystopia," claims, "…the socialist engineering of human behaviour via the reconstruction of society; and the eugenic engineering of human behaviour via biological manipulation, were viewed widely as both positive and negative developments" (109). The reconstruction of a socialist society and the eugenic engineering of human behavior present in *The Food of the Gods* clearly favors the Children of the Food while presenting a disadvantage to humanity. The transition from dystopia to utopia occurs after Book One, once the Children of the Food gain agency.

Wells' use of dystopian elements demonstrates the folly of humans attempting to avoid evolutionary progress. Michael Page, in *The Literary Imagination from Erasmus Darwin to H.G. Wells*, states, "*The Food of the Gods*…suggest[s] that as technological changes occur, human consciousness must grow along with it" (187). The world becomes a dark place for humanity because of its refusal to adapt to the changes their world is undergoing. Dr. Winkles notes, "Everybody can see that you [Bensington and Redwood] are up to a disturbing thing. And the human instinct is all against disturbance, you know" (Wells 545). Humanity does its best to resist all variants of bigness that become a part of the world that they inhabit.

One of the first ways humanity attempts to resist evolutionary change is simply through attacking any of the animals that become big due to outbreaks of the Food. Outbreaks occur

constantly, though they start with a man named Godfrey and his encounter with a giant wasp. Though Godfrey manages to kill the wasp and remain unscathed, the same cannot be said for others who encounter giant wasps. The narrator explains, "There was one victim, a grocer, who discovered one of these monsters in a sugar cask…He struck it to the ground for a moment, and it stung him through the boot…He was first dead of the two" (509). Deaths continue to occur as giant chickens and rats plague the town of Hickleybrow and its surrounding villages. In every account of these attacks, humans claim that they are the victims.

Despite their claims of victimization, however, the humans are always the first to open fire. When humans choose to leave the giant-sized animals alone, there are only "…reports…of mere passings or descents" (509). Clearly, leaving the animals alone would have caused less destruction. The narrative suggests this during the giant chickens' descent upon Hickleybrow. After one of the hens grabs a child in its beak, the narrator states, ". . . [the curate] hurled his mallet with all his might and main…it frightened the hen. It might have frightened anyone" (514). It is only after it is attacked that the hen causes some sort of destruction by putting a foot through a weak place in the tiles of Fulcher's roof. The narrator's attitude as well as the results of these attacks suggests that trying to rid the world of bigness may not be effective. The result of humans attacking the giant animals usually comes at a cost to them instead of the animals they want to kill.

Another way in which humanity attempts to evade evolutionary change is through political opposition to bigness. Dr. Winkles notes, ". . . the Society for the Total Suppression of Boomfood claims to have several thousands of members" (545). The Society finds Caterham, a politician, to help them attempt to make it punishable by law to make and store The Food of the Gods without special permission for anyone under the age of twenty-one. Other societies spring up as a result of the creation of The Society for the Total Suppression of Boomfood as well, such as The Society for the Preservation of Ancient Statures. Because of all the political societies forming around the issue of Boomfood, the Prime Minister decides upon a Royal Commission on Boomfood. Humanity seems to assume that if The Food of the Gods is put under restrictions by the government that it will cease to produce evolutionary change.

It quickly becomes clear how foolish is the thought that political organizations can stop

evolutionary change. The narrator states ". . . so soon as the plant or animal was fully adult, it became altogether independent of any further supply of food" (552). Stopping the creation and storage of The Food of the Gods might be effective in stopping outbreaks; however, it is too late to quell the spread from the plants already affected and mature.

The beginning of Book Two also demonstrates how futile is any political attempt to control the spread of the Food of the Gods. The narrator explains, "In spite of prejudice, in spite of law and regulation, in spite of all that obstinate conservatism that lies at the base of the formal order of mankind, the Food of the Gods, once it had been set going, pursued its subtle and invincible process" (563). The narrator tells readers outright that none of humanity's attempts at resistance, pursued in Book One, will succeed by the time readers reach the first page of Book Two.

The story of the released convict epitomizes humanity's loss of control of bigness. The convict was imprisoned before the creation of The Food of the Gods and not released until 20 years after the Food has been altering the landscape of Britain. The narrator explains, "To most men the new things came little by little and day by day, remarkably enough, but not so abruptly as to overwhelm. But to one man at least the full accumulation of those two decades of the Food's work was to be revealed suddenly and amazingly in one day" (585). Wells's inclusion of the convict's view of the world serves to demonstrate just how much the world has changed since the beginning of the novel, which none of the main characters would have noticed since it was a gradual change for them. The convict's astonishment at how the world looks demonstrates how the world is changing to fit the Children of the Food's needs instead of the needs of humanity.

Book Two of *The Food of the Gods* marks where the tone changes from humans comedically failing to prevent their dystopian world from changing, to one where more utopian hopes are introduced through the Children of the Food. However, conditions do not improve for humanity. In fact, humanity's dystopian environment loses comedic value and gains more of a foreboding sense of dark consequences. Humans continue to perish in attempts to stop outbreaks and ultimately begin war with the Children of the Foods over reproductive rights.

There is no opposition to the opinions of humanity until Book Two because the humans who had eaten and would become Children of the Food were children with no agency. However, by Book

Two, the Children of the Food inherit agency from their parents and use their own voices as they become agents in their own right. The narrator explains, ". . . The Children of the Food, growing into a world that changed to receive them, gathered strength and stature and knowledge, became individual and purposeful, rose slowly towards the dimensions of their destiny" (564). The narrator implies that the Children of the Food are meant to be in charge of the world, that it is their destiny to become the rulers of mankind. The counter perspective of the Children of the Food that begins to be offered in Book Two contributes to the change in perspective that is noticed between book one and further subsections.

In order to fully understand the change in tone, one must understand what Wells's position regarding the issues of ". . . the socialist engineering of human behaviour via the reconstruction of society; and the eugenic engineering of human behaviour via biological manipulation . . ." (Claeys 109). Wells is a promoter of eugenics and socialism, and therefore would have found the horror of humanity at the transition of their society purely foolish and comedic.

Jerry Bergman, in *H.G. Wells: Darwin's Disciple and Eugenicist Extraordinare*, claims that ". . . eugenics became for Wells, as well as for many other Darwinians of his time, a key to human salvation" (117). Darwin's theory of evolution left open the possibility that evolution could lead to "stagnation and regression" instead of advancement (Bergman 117). Wells's way of preventing regression and stagnation was to have an oligarchy picking the best and the brightest of humanity. Bergman notes, "Wells believed that evolution, operating on its own, was not 'progressive,' but needed to be 'directed' by the educated elite" (118). Wells feared that without some kind of control over evolution that humanity would fail to improve and start to regress.

Wells developed his opinions regarding socialism and eugenics from T.H. Huxley, his professor and a fellow Darwinian. Ken Davis, in "*The Shape of Things to Come*: H.G. Wells and the Rhetoric of Proteus," notes, ". . . [Huxley] made a profound impact on Wells and provided the paradigm for his entire personal, political, and literary life" (111). Huxley, like Darwin, believed that humans descended from animals and that humanity is no less susceptible to acting instinctually or barbarically. Huxley also believed that the human conscience was the result of evolution and that it could be developed even more. As Davis writes, ". . . we may just be able to transcend our animal origins, and replace

biological evolution with social evolution" (111). It was through Huxley that Wells became interested in using eugenics to improve society and to form a more perfect state through socialism.

Consistent with his belief in socialism, Wells's conditions for utopias follow the vision of the Marxist theorist Ernst Bloch. According to Bloch, ". . . all art is in essence utopian, since it provides an image of the world as it might be if it were improved" (James 125). *Food of the Gods* exemplifies utopian thinking by imagining an improved world consisting of human giants. Furthermore, Bloch claims that utopias ". . . must remain fragmentary, dialectical, partially unfinished: the work of art does not satisfy in its autarkical self-completion, but as becoming" (James 126). If a society is perfect and has no room for improvement, it is easily destroyed because it will no longer evolve. Instead, the society must be continually self-improving, always on the brink of perfection.

The Food of the Gods maintains the idea that the first generation of the Children of the Food is only the beginning of an idyllic structure. Cossar's son proclaims, "We fight not for ourselves but for growth-growth that goes on forever. Tomorrow, whether we live or die, growth will conquer through us" (Wells 639). The Children recognize that their generation will not be the best generation of Children of the Food. They will fight against humanity to ensure a better future for those who will follow them. They are fighting for "growth," for the evolution and betterment of humanity (639).

In *The Food of the Gods*, the future always promises to be better than the present, a clear tenant of Bloch's rules for utopia. *The Food of the Gods* ends on the promise that humanity will be forced to evolve, but gives readers no real sense of a conclusion. One never finds out how the great battle between the humans and the Children of the Food ends, but one can assume that it ends with the triumph of progress. However, society can never be perfected because of the implication that it is through continued "growth" that improvement, and thus utopia, endure (639). If the novel had a firm conclusion, the possibility of utopia would cease to exist.

In Books Two and Three of *The Food of the Gods*, Wells's utopian vision is visible through the Children of the Food. Simon James, in *Maps of Utopia: H.G. Wells, Modernity, and the End of Culture*, explains that "Wells's utopias are . . . in dialogue with . . . previous literary utopias: Plato, in particular is a constant point of reference" (127). Throughout their childhood, the Children of the Food display different kinds of Platonic requirements for utopia that the regular humans fail to do.

The Children of the Food are not restricted by the laws and rules that govern humanity and are therefore able to see what would be best for the world.

One of Plato's requirements for utopia that Wells incorporates in *The Food of the Gods* is a want to do work. James states, "Individuals in utopia should not labour from compulsion, but from accurate Platonic recognition of the common good, and because their labour is a type for which they are well fitted, and for which they have been adequately trained" (131). Cossar's giant sons are invested in doing labor for the common good when they are young. For example, they attempt to build a road that would be much more efficient than the current road system. The narrator explains, ". . . one morning about dawn…[they] had set to work to make a road about the world…driving that road straight as a bullet toward the English Channel . . . " (Wells 591). The lawyer who tells Cossar's sons that they cannot build straight through so much privately owned property even admits that having a straight road might be more advantageous to everyone as opposed to the lanes that currently exist; however, he is too bound by human laws to allow Cossar's sons to continue their project.

After being deterred from building one road to go around the entire world, Cossar's sons move to a different project that they believe will better life for regular humanity: building a giant house for many people to live in. One of the sons states, "Lots of them [humans] haven't houses fit to live in… Let's go and build 'em a house close up to London, that will hold heaps and heaps of them and be ever so comfortable and nice…." (592). The boys legitimately want to make the society they live in better and more pleasant for everyone, but once again, humans prevent them from doing so. After these two attempts, the giant children begin to recognize that the world as it is does not allow for progress toward the common good. This realization ultimately leads them to realize that they must be in control of humanity in order to be constantly progressing towards utopia.

The Children of the Food are more fit to survive in the new world that the Food of the Gods has created. However, this is not simply based upon the fact that they are the immune to attacks from giant rodents, which to them are merely normal sized rodents, nor is it based upon the fact that they are simply stronger than regular humans. James reminds us that another component of Plato's utopia is education. He states, "In Plato's *Republic*, the purpose of education is to enable its recipients to know good, and thus to do good . . . . For Wells . . . scientific education is the essential foundation of

the ideal society" (129). Therefore, it is not good enough for the Children of the Food to simply be more physically fit to survive in their environment. They must also be well-educated.

The importance of education in the lives of the Children of the Food becomes particularly obvious when the lives of Cossar's sons are juxtaposed with the life of Caddles. Cossar's sons are well-educated. The narrator recounts, "Cossar…[did] get building…a comfortable well-lit playground, schoolroom, and nursery for their four boys . . . " (Wells 552). Cossar's sons are provided with an area that is meant to help fill them with all the knowledge that they will need to be well-educated adults later in life. Compare this to Caddles, whose education lies in the hands of the Vicar of Cheasing Eyebright. Of his education, it is said that, "He [the Vicar] never taught the monster to read- it was not needed; but he taught him the more important points of the Catechism . . . " (577). Compared to Cossar's sons, Caddles's education is barely existent, putting him at an immediate disadvantage.

It is Caddles's lack of education that ultimately results in his death. James explains, ". . . the fate of Caddles . . . proves that size and strength alone are not sufficient for evolutionary security" (James 151). Caddles is not equipped with the tools that would allow him to live. He has the potential to live up to the standards set for the Cossar brothers, but he is consistently treated as though his giantness is a disability. As Caddles begins to enter puberty, he is thought of as ugly by the Vicar, who explains his looks as, ". . . the degenerate strain coming out in him . . . " (Wells 575). He is viewed as a burden by Lady Wondershoot and the rest of Cheasing Eyebright. Yet, Caddles shows an immense capacity for intellectual thought. The narrator explains, "In spite of the simple instructions of the Vicar…he [Caddles] began to ask questions, to inquire things, to *think*. As he grew from boyhood to adolescence it became increasingly evident that his mind had processes of its own-out of the Vicar's control" (581). Caddles, despite being treated as though he were a degenerate, is capable of intellectual thought. It is the townspeople of Cheasing Eyebright who keep this possibility from him.

Caddles attempts to escape the town that is holding him back from his full intellectual potential, but this only leads to his demise. The narrator asks, "What was he seeking? He wanted something the pigmy world would not give, some end which the pigmy prevented his attaining, prevented even his seeing clearly, which he was never to see clearly" (613). Humans, the pigmies, do not want to educate someone who presents a threat to their existence. For the humans of the novel,

exempting those who are related to them, educating the Children of the Food will only allow them to slowly wipe out humanity as they know and understand it.

Because the Vicar and the rest of the population of Cheasing Eyebright refuse to educate Caddles, he does not understand the consequences of resisting arrest when he is in London. He does not even understand what blood is. The narrator states, "He was stung and wrenched by pain. What was this, warm and wet, on his hand?" (617). Caddles grasps for understanding and knowledge of the world around him, but he attempts to get it from the people who view him as a problem instead of those who will fight to protect him. This is not a disadvantage that Redwood and Cossar's sons face. They have their parents to defend them. Caddles is utterly isolated, while Cossar's sons thrive and live to see the beginning of what will be the replacement of humans with the Children of the Food.

That the Food of the Gods is distributed to certain children, and ultimately removed from the giant children who are deemed unfit to have it, suggests that the existence of the Children of the Food is controlled through eugenics. Wells himself ". . . loathed 'the masses' and believed that birth control was crucial to ensuring a brighter human future . . . a small elite would control such decisions. . . " (Herrick 107). Bensington and Redwood in many ways make up this small elite in their distribution by deciding which children will receive the Food of the Gods to and which ones will not. The children that they choose tend to be upper or upper-middle class, such as the princess or one of their own children. Meanwhile, Mrs. Skinner manages to distribute some of the Food to Caddles, who is very much lower class. Because he is lower class and cannot ensure "a brighter human future" with his lack of education, Caddles must die (Herrick 107).

Survival of the fittest is an ever-present idea in *The Food of the Gods*. James Herrick, in *Scientific Mythologies: How Science and Science Fiction Forge New Religious Beliefs*, explains, "Wells's vision of the humanity to come is perhaps most passionately presented in a little-known book titled *The Food of the Gods* (1904)" (106). Wells was a huge promoter of the Eugenics movement and believed in Friedrich Nietzsche's idea of the *Übermensch* or "overman." Herrick explains that the overman is "The idea of a superhuman . . . the person of superior intellectual, spiritual, or physical capacity. . . the individual who rises above the run of ordinary humanity" (102). The Children of the Food have risen above ordinary humanity simply through their physical traits. The ones that survive

are also well-educated, perhaps even beyond the humans in the novel.

Wells, through his narrator, suggests throughout the novel that the Children of the Food are to be the overman. When describing Redwood's child, the narrator states, ". . . presently little Redwood, pioneer of the new race, first child who ate the Food, was crawling about his nursery . . ." (552). Already in Book One, there is foreshadowing of what is to come. Redwood's child is a "pioneer of the new race" (552). He is what humanity is going to become: bigger, better, stronger. Compared to ordinary humans, these giant children can do extraordinary things. They are humanity's next evolutionary step, which is why at the end of the novel all humans seem likely to be exterminated. Humans would not allow this new race, The Children of the Food, to progress.

By the end of the novel, Redwood (father) has fully come to terms with the fact that humanity must be abolished. He tells Cossar, "It isn't *our* youth…They are taking things over. They are beginning upon their own emotions, their own experiences, their own way. We have made a new world, and it isn't ours. It isn't even sympathetic . . . " (634). Redwood is cognizant that the Children of the Food are the next stage in the growth of humanity. He recognizes that it was his job to start this race by feeding his son the Food of the Gods, but he now sees that this was the only part he was meant to play. He knows he must step back and let the overman take control. Herrick explains, "Science fiction has a long history with such 'progressive' understanding of human evolution, often portraying the current human race as but a step along the way to something grander" (101). Redwood seems to be the face of this progressive understanding in *The Food of the Gods*.

While Redwood seems to be one of the only members of humanity that understands they must cease to exist to allow for progression and growth, the Children of the Food themselves all seem aware of this by the end of the novel. One of them states, ". . . you cannot have pigmies and giants in one world together…it is for the little people to eat the Food" (Wells). The Children of the Food choose to turn to ecological warfare in order to remove humanity from existence. They plan to force all of humanity to become giants by spreading the Food in the air, making all of those who are still growing susceptible to its effects. Eventually, there will be no humans left, at least as they are originally understood in the novel. In order to continue the advancement of the human race, The Children of the Food are forced to begin war with humanity.

By the end of *The Food of the Gods*, Wells has shifted from a completely dystopian world to one of a hope for utopia through the newly emergent overmen. Page notes that when "the novel shows the fathers protecting the children against the prejudices of the 'little people' and educating them for the future…[it] shifts from being a novel of giant menace, to something different: a utopian novel …" (188). The change that Page refers to occurs after Book One. It is through this change that Wells demonstrates the folly of trying to escape evolutionary progress and how, in attempting to escape that, humanity will probably be destroyed. It is those who accept progress and growth, such as Redwood and the Children of the Food, who will inherit the Earth, not those who oppose it.

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Ayn Rand's Utopian Visions in Theory and Realization

By Ben Sapet

ABSTRACT

Ayn Rand sought to reframe the world around a distinctly utopian sense of domineering individualism. Her philosophy vilified altruism and extolled selfishness in the name of her human ideal. With its unwavering faith in the free market and adoration of industrial magnates, Rand's often problematic philosophy has gone on to shape American economic and political models. This essay explores how Rand's philosophy manifested in her fiction and, in turn, in American culture.

To seriously study Ayn Rand is a political, often taboo, act. Philosophers rarely take time to refute her ideas and critics rarely analyze her work. Perhaps rightly, there is a certain stigma attached to Rand scholarship. That stigma comes from the idea that, regardless of the scholar's stance, bringing Rand into critical conversation condones her philosophy by legitimizing it. This reservation comes, in part, from a fear of being associated with Rand's fervid defenders and from the iconoclastic power of her ideas.

Ayn Rand wrote in the tradition of philosophical fiction, also known as the novel of ideas. In philosophical fiction, authors use storytelling rather than discursive philosophy to convey an ideology or a way of seeing the world. Rand's novels *The Fountainhead* and *Atlas Shrugged* follow this convention as they seek to situate and demonstrate a guiding ethic for the world. Rand's ethic came to be known as Objectivism. At its core, Objectivism sought to re-center philosophy and policy around the individual—the antithesis to the collectivist movements she saw forming around the world.

These ideas took hold in the contemporary American society as they interwove with the national myths of meritocracy, earning one's place, and rugged individualism. Not only do Rand and her philosophy maintain a devout following, but her books continue to sell extraordinarily well and spread to new audiences. As Rand's ideas merged with conservatism in the Reagan era and more recently with the Tea Party movement, her philosophy has come "to live just as much in the real world as in her fictional worlds." Analyzing Rand's ideas and methods through the lens of utopian thinking offers insights as to how her utopian view of America inspired conservative-libertarian economic and political movements with far-reaching influence. Studying the appeal of these guiding utopian ethics and ideals offers an opportunity to study how they have been realized and systematized.

Writing in such a contentious area, I (like many others who write about Rand) feel it's best that I acknowledge my personal stance. I find her beliefs—in unfettered, laissez-faire capitalism, and placing the self above others—problematic and often destructive. At the same time, however, these beliefs have a distinct power—especially given her ability to situate them in vivid fictional, utopian/dystopian worlds and characters. As her ideas have leaked out from static literary worlds and nonfiction essays into real-world policy and attitudes, scholars have a profound opportunity to better understand the now foundational political and economic beliefs of the modern world by studying

Rand and her impact.

WHAT IS OBJECTIVISM?

Rand grounded her philosophy in the idea that an objective reality carries on apart from human consciousness—hence the name, "Objectivism." Given this reality, Rand places the onus of pursuing knowledge and satisfaction on humans. She lionizes this pursuit alongside humans with the hunger to take what they want from that reality. In that sense, Rand divides people into the earned and unearned, the creators and consumers. As they appear in her literature, the "earned" are often the titans of industry who take what they want and innovate to get there. These movers and shakers are what we might call "the one-percent," the ones whose relentless self-interest leads them to innovate and shape the landscape of reality. Rand's first major novel, *The Fountainhead*, depicts the struggle of an ambitious architect whose innovative designs draw the ire of critics, writers, publishers, and other architects who disparage the change. The hero-protagonist, Howard Roark, must resist the overwhelming pressures of conformity and push back against this "unearned" established mindset to make his mark on reality. For Rand, the "unearned" are those who leech off others' innovation and progress. Relying on others to prop oneself up is a cardinal sin in Objectivism. Rand identifies and detests the sort of passiveness of every day monotonous life. The heroes are those who bend reality around themselves, while the villains are the majority who coast through that reality untroubled by the valiant efforts of those who create.

Alongside self-interest and taking lies the Randian value of creation. With the Objectivist view of an immutable reality lies the foundation for those "earned" and "unearned" in terms of how they relate to that reality, whether they are a participant in it who makes their mark or a person buffeted by that reality. She sees the ultimate human heroism as creating and negotiating the trappings of that reality. As an author, Rand follows this spirit of creativity and negotiation in her work. Existing social structures, such as socialism and religion, that oppose her view of human nature become targets in fiction. She seeks to advance her own philosophy while breaking down collectivism and the "flock" mentality. To do this, she opts to create utopian worlds conceived of as an idealized conflict between her heroic innovators and the sheep who follow in tow.

The worlds in Rand's works of fiction serve to establish her philosophy in the context of imagined, exaggerated worlds where character tension and ideological clashes are elevated to a dramatic, world-shaking level. Rand creates some of this tension by placing utopia inside and alongside dystopia, such as capitalist havens inside increasingly collectivist societies. The utopian communities are treated as the last bastion of human heroism in the face of systems and trends that lead people to a passive life of impeding progress. This stands in stark contrast to many dystopias in which progress and the people who strive for it are the ones who endanger society. Like many utopian thinkers, Rand's utopian leanings center on idolizing an extreme reversal of the status quo. For Rand, that extreme reversal involves shedding the government incentives and nationwide social programs that characterized the American government in the 1940s and 50s. She saw taxation to benefit society as theft that facilitated leeching from the most productive members of society. With the looming growth of socialism and communism, Rand's utopias sought to reinforce the promises of capitalism and the American ideals that brought her to America from her native Russia.

UTOPIA IN RAND'S LITERATURE

Rand's first mainstream novel, *The Fountainhead*, reflects the early stages of Objectivism. It focuses on her ethic of heroic creativity in the face of an objective reality populated by collectivists, who push down individualism in favor of unchallenging mediocrity. This focus on individualism and ferocious creativity came to Rand after spending fifteen years in the United States, a country with values and systems that aligned with her ambition and iconoclastic thinking. Given her exposure to freedom and the opportunity to pursue her desire, she explores the motivation to do so and separate oneself from "the masses." In his essay "The Basic Motivation of the Creators and the Masses in *The Fountainhead*," Onkar Ghate (a member of the Ayn Rand Institute) articulates the kind of motivation Rand sees guiding the metaphorical architects of her utopia:

> The root is that Roark's basic motivation in life is completely unconcerned with and unaffected by other people. His goal and his pursuit of it are purely independent and selfish…Roark's goal is to build. He wants to transform, for himself, the earth into his vision of a more uplifting, more human place. This desire would remain even on a desert island; only its implementation

would change: he would not build gas stations or skyscrapers but, say, a hut or a cabin (245). Through Roark, her model of the ideal creative spirit, Rand aligns her utopian vision of the creative spirit with a state of internal, deeply resolute motivation. Traditionally utopias are considered imagined ideal communities, but Rand's creative ideal is a solitary state of mind unburdened by others' expectations.

Atlas Shrugged, Rand's next novel (released in 1957), continues to push on the utopian creative solitude of her heroes but introduces higher stakes as those internal utopian states of mind clash with a world leaning toward a dystopia for thinkers like Rand and her characters. The premise of *Atlas Shrugged* is that the world's tide shifts in the direction of nationalizing industry and redistributing wealth—a trend no doubt inspired by the spread of socialism and communism in the 1950s. As protagonist and railroad tycoon Dagny Taggart watches the mines becoming nationalized and innovative inventions destroyed, the world's moguls and innovators begin to vanish. Taggart continues resisting collectivization until she receives an invitation from the mysterious John Galt, a pioneer of individualism and reason, who has been persuading innovators to go on strike. Taggart joins Galt and the major composers, inventors, and industrialists in their utopian colony, watching as the collectivists languish and flail without guidance from the Randian-capitalist heroes. While *The Fountainhead* addresses the world and the masses in terms of a hypothetical, stiflingly mediocre form of groupthinking, the world of *Atlas Shrugged* places her philosophy and her heroes solidly in a context akin to her experience as a member of the Russian bourgeoisie, where the Bolsheviks' utopian, collectivist goals spelled dystopia and ruin for her family. Every detail through the eyes of the main character, Dagny Taggart, paints the dystopian world as one fading to gray with only echoes of the innovators who once shaped the world.

Once Dagny is accepted to join Galt's Gulch, the self-sustained, laissez-faire utopia to which all the innovators have disappeared, she and the reader are introduced to the book's essence, an enormous 30,000-word speech by John Glad, spoken almost directly to the reader, about what would formally become Objectivism.

In the extensive, exploratory biography, *Ayn Rand and the Worlds She Made*, Anne Heller recounts a story from the editing process for *Atlas Shrugged*:

> Pursuing what he thought was his editorial duty, [her editor], too, suggested a number of cuts, including cuts in John Galt's speech. When Rand refused, he appealed to Bennett Cerf [the firm's founding editor]. The high-spirited founding editor met with the author. "Nobody's going to read that," he told her. "You've said it all three or four times before…You've got to cut it." Answering with a comment that became publishing legend, she said, "Would you cut the Bible?" (282)

Like many others, Rand saw *Atlas Shrugged* as her magnum opus, but it was also much more than a work of literature to her. It was written as a living narrative of her philosophy, one in which the highs of her utopian visions could be realized and her brushes with dystopian Soviet collectivism could be weaponized in favor of her ideal brand of individualism and capitalism. Galt's speech, specifically, served a sort of Objectivist Manifesto, with decrees of radical individualism and rationality such as the following:

> The most depraved sentence you can now utter is to ask: Whose reason? The answer is: Yours. No matter how vast your knowledge or how modest, it is your own mind that has to acquire it. It is only with your own knowledge that you can deal. It is only your own knowledge that you can claim to possess or ask others to consider. Your mind is your only judge of truth—and if others dissent from your verdict, reality is the court of final appeal. Nothing but a man's mind can perform that complex, delicate, crucial process of identification which is thinking. Nothing can direct the process but his own judgment. Nothing can direct his judgment but his moral integrity. (Rand, *Atlas Shrugged* 935)

As a sum of her experience and philosophy and as an ode to the industrious spirits of her father and grandfather, *Atlas Shrugged* is inseparable from its author. Rand and *Atlas Shrugged* mirror one another as Rand's striving to articulate a utopian state of being was, itself, living by that utopian ethic.

MANIFESTING THIS UTOPIAN THOUGHT

At the center of her narratives, Rand saw an ultimate purpose of worshipping the heroic ideal of man. That is, someone who embodies her ethics of internal motivation, unbridled creativity, and ruthless pursuit of his goals. Rand's goal, then, is to create a path to living like the ideal by first

espousing it in her fiction. Many religious texts use the life and teachings of a central figure to model an ideal path and inspire a change in individuals' values—the Buddha and Jesus are good examples of such figures. Rand essentially uses that same, demonstrably powerful technique to present an antithesis to the messages of humility and altruism in these religious texts. Rand's ideal resonated enough to elevate her to a sort of guru at the head of a movement. Her often conservative, libertarian followers clamored for her treatises on the value of selfishness and evils of living for others. In placing utopian ideals on the individual in her fiction, she created a space for a "movement of individuals," itself a real-life utopian thought community, one that has grown over time and even been institutionalized with the Ayn Rand Institute and other, similar endeavors.

Even with the formal establishments to advance it, Objectivism first gained most of its converts and influence through Rand's novels. Despite its impact on the spread of her ideology, Rand had decidedly mixed and sometimes contradictory thoughts on the persuasive powers of literature. In her fiction, Rand often depicts literature as a tool to manipulate the weak-minded. She addresses this specifically in the critically-celebrated, yet unpopular author, Lois Cook from *The Fountainhead*. Cook's work, and literature in general, is hardly on Randian protagonist Howard Roark's radar: he is the self-driven man with little need for the outside guidance of literature. On the other hand, Peter Keating, one of Roark's dull, unambitious contemporaries, loves Cook's work precisely because he does not understand it: simply absorbing it makes him feel superior to others. To Rand, such literature written and read in bad faith; and the "it was profound, because he didn't understand it" attitude relies on a mutualistic relationship in which little-to-no meaning is made (qtd. in Brühwiler 6). The author earns praise by instilling in the reader a sense of inferiority and the reader feels unduly enlightened.

Rand levies a similar criticism against "propagandist" literature in support of socialist regimes portrayed in her fiction. According to political scientist Claudia Brühwiler, "The Communist regime, as Rand depicts it, obviously subscribes to the idea of literature's transformative power; otherwise, it would not censor individualistic novels and promote tales acting out Marxist clichés" (Walker 5). Rand derides "regime literature" for its use of hammy tragedy and unilateral thinking to create scenarios in which capitalists are unquestionably evil and, in turn, agitate the people against them.

At the same time, however, Rand's literature champions the individual just as unambiguously as those communist tales of "a poor, honest worker" battered by capitalism. Her utopias are almost entirely black-and-white. The heroes are the earned, individualistic creators and the villains are unearned moochers and collectivists of the masses. Rand's interpretation of Aristotle's *Poetics* is telling of her own approach to persuasive literature: "Aristotle argues that 'fiction was more important than history' since fiction presents things 'as they might be and ought to be'" (Podritske and Schwartz 128). Rand uses wholly unambiguous worlds and characters to create the illusion that her utopia (whether it is a state of being or a world of laissez-faire capitalism) can be the only real option. As she divides, categorizes, and judges what ought to be (much like Aristotle), she makes truth claims that appeal only to one side of rationality, calling a different (probably equally rational) approach unfair and irrational.

This unambiguous thinking carries a definite allure: one can simply defer to the richly depicted truth in the novel. Brühwiler describes Rand's ideal role for readers, saying they "should not surrender to a plot and its heroines, but rather find a means to express themselves and resist whatever might lead them astray" (9). The critics and scholars who did express themselves and resist her sway were Rand's enemies because they subscribed to "non-Objectivist thought." Meanwhile her other enemies, the passive readers who came with the sweeping popularity of her fiction, would go on—in the spirit of deference to a powerful idea—to bring her utopian worlds into the real one. The paradox of Rand's utopian manifestations lies in the way the conquering power of her ideas creates devotees who, by becoming followers, immediately break with the spirit of Rand's utopian individualism. With her literature, Rand attempted to manifest a utopian ethic that would oppose a status quo she felt had harmed her. Despite her fervent defenses stating otherwise, she dealt in the methods of conversion she sought to diagnose—those with the black-and-white, see-the-world-through-my-fictional-one types of literature used in the religious and collectivist movements she so opposed.

The conquering power of Rand's fiction is best embodied by a scene from her own fiction. Rand's heroine Dominque Francon is perpetually downtrodden by seeing evil, anti-Objectivist people of the world win out over the heroes who earn their place. When she first sees Howard Roark—the rugged Randian hero of the story—she describes him as "the abstraction of strength made visible,"

before beginning her assertive days-long effort to seduce him (Rand, *The Fountainhead*, 247). Then, in one of the most notorious moments in *The Fountainhead*, Howard, after having learned of her desire, comes in uninvited and rapes her, despite her attempts to resist. Rand's camp often describes this scene as a forceful realization of her unconscious desire to be conquered by powerful individualism (Mayhew 206). Setting aside the horrible implications and rape apologetics involved in this interpretation, it offers an insight into the Randian view of their own Objectivist philosophy: that the beginning of a journey toward becoming a true individual starts with encountering the dominating force of an individual who lives for himself and is prepared to take what he wants.

Rand and her utopian heroes strive to act as that dominating force and, in large part, they have. Politicians and economists have gobbled up her works, finding affirmation and a guiding ethic for their conservative and libertarian views—and, in turn, cementing Rand's utopian narratives into crucial discussions about social security, welfare, and American capitalism as a whole. In a sense, Rand's unambiguous, convincing narratives of individualism and opportunity to stand out and earn one's place in the world helped systematize and engrain the very myths that drew her to the United States. In a 1991 Library of Congress survey, Americans named *Atlas Shrugged* the second most influential book in their lives, with the first being the Bible (Heller xii). We see the power of her utopian vision carry on today in an America in which billionaire moguls and the top one percent of society have been moralized to the point that one has been elected president. Her work's legacy carries on with continued high readership and a playing field of modern politics and economics run by people who look to Rand's ideal men as inspiration. As her legacy continues to stretch and become entrenched in American systems, looking to the utopian foundations of her thinking presents a distinct opportunity to unpack the motivations behind decades of Rand-inspired anti-socialist stigma, Reaganomics, Tea Party conservatism, and unwavering faith in capitalism.

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Native American Stereotypes in Literature: The Noble Savage, the Utopian Man

Katrina Brown

ABSTRACT

Historically, Western White society has portrayed Native American societies as utopias that we can look to for political, spiritual, and artistic inspiration. For example, Columbus's original "Letters of Discovery" began this tradition by writing the natives as a primitive, pure, communal society, and Montaigne's "Of the Cannibals" continued this tradition with his similar portrayal of native peoples. Such portrayals ultimately lead to harmful stereotypes, expectations, and marginalization of Native American people by White society. With the aid of Robert Berkhofer Jr's The White Man's Indian, this essay explores the idea of the noble savage in conjunction with utopian ideals and breaks down the process by which Native ways of life have been falsely portrayed as utopias. Additionally, it explores the consequences of such stereotypical depictions and looks at attempts to dispel such utopian myths.

Humanity has always been dreaming of utopia: a better, easier way of life could always be imagined, hoped for, perhaps even pursued. Religious utopias such as Christianity's Heaven and the Garden of Eden are just two pieces of evidence, along with Greek classics like Plato's *Republic* and Plutarch's *Lycurgus*. It is a part of being human: utopian visions represent humanity's potential for good taken to the extreme, whereas dystopias represent humanity's potential for extreme evil. It should be no wonder then that utopian ideas existed long before Thomas More coined the term in 1516. These ideas, developed in the petri dish of Western thought, before the discovery of the Americas, later became a cultural reference point that New World colonizers used to frame their interactions with Native peoples. Ideas about the inherent goodness of nature versus the corruption of civilization, mixed with the Natives' perceived naivety, culminated in a tradition of portraying Native American culture as utopias—one which still stands today. This stereotype began with Columbus and the concept of the "noble savage" but can be traced through history and is still visible in the ways Native people are written and conceptualized by some present-day thinkers. Ultimately, such stereotypes have been and continue to be harmful to Native people, refusing to afford them full humanity or modernity. Limited to what mainstream White society allows them to be, Natives continue to be othered by these harmful stereotypes despite contemporary efforts to change the narrative through both political and literary movements.

BEGINNING OF THE "NOBLE SAVAGE"

Images of Native societies as utopian began with the first European colonizers who stepped foot on American soil. In his book, *The White Man's Indian*, Robert Berkhofer Jr. explains that as the first Spanish, French, and English explorers came across Native societies and people, they made sense of the American Natives through two distinctly European cultural frameworks: Christianity and civilization, two ideologies so intertwined that they were assumed to be one and the same. In the process of making sense of the Natives, the colonizers tended to fall on one side of a cultural interpretation or the other: that the Natives were a gentle and naive people or they were savage cannibals. Berkhofer summarizes the process which ultimately resulted in these two European conceptualizations of the Native, writing,

> Spaniards debated what means were necessary to bring the Indian in line with their ideals of Christian civilization according to European criteria. Was the nature of the Indian so bestial as to demand force and ultimately enslavement to accomplish his conversion to Christ and Spanish ways, or was the Indian sufficiently rational and human to achieve these goals through peace and example alone? (11)

In the end, this debate was never exactly solved so much as responsible for the image of the Native as either savage—murderers and cannibals outside the realm of God, morality, and civilization—or as noble—like Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, naive and simplistic, children of God who live as nature intended. European culture had, at least until that point, imagined that the biblical garden of Eden or some utopic paradise lay to the west, and such imagination overlaid the way European colonizers viewed and wrote back to Europe about the Natives. This explains, then, the origin of the mystery and conflicting ideas surrounding the Native—ideas still found in the American subconscious today. It is because of these two interpretations, and their dual longevity, that Western culture for so long performed the cognitive dissonance necessary to conceptualize the pre-colonial Native as gentle, sentimental, living in some ways in an elevated society, but at the same time the ferocious, subhuman savage who must be subdued. Columbus and later colonizers often meshed these two extreme visions of Natives into what later came to be called the "noble savage": people who were uncivilized, yet represented the natural good in humanity, untouched by modernity, preserved as Adam and Eve had been before taking a bite of the apple. Though the Natives practiced habits of "savagery" as well, which many condemned, those who were proponents of the goodness of the Natives dismissed these as a result of not knowing better. Their societies were described as utopias, or at least having utopian values, though it is important to note that they were never considered better than European societies and "always stood in Christian error and deficient in civilization according to Spanish standards of measurement" (Berkhofer 11). Christopher Columbus wrote of the Natives and their utopic societies in his 1493 letter: "all go naked…They have no iron or steel or weapons…well-built and of handsome stature… they refuse nothing they possess… content with whatever may be given to them" (60). In *Mundus Novus,* Amerigo Vespucci wrote "…all things are held in common. They live together without king, without government, and each is his own master…they live according to nature…They live one

and each is his own master…they live according to nature…They live one hundred and fifty years and rarely fall ill" (6). Here, these colonizers set the tone for the noble savage tradition, and it is important to recognize the utopic values they associate with Native societies: social equality, collectivism, care for the earth, innocence and inherent goodness, physical superiority, and living as nature intended. Such ideals are tropes of the utopian genre still today and have followed White society's conceptualization of the Native as well.

WHY IT WORKED: THE PATHOLOGY OF UTOPIAN THOUGHT

The concept of the noble savage was especially useful to White society because of its theoretical implications and was utilized within literature and political/ philosophical arguments. Berkhofer writes,

> Whether employed in political and philosophical treatise or play, novel, satirical essay, or imaginary voyage, the noble American Indian scored specific points against religious beliefs and institutions, the nature of education, the organization of government and codes of laws, the prevalence of commerce and the organization of the economy, the general social system and social inequality, and the very complexity of life and corruption of civilized and sophisticated customs in general. (76-77)

In other words, the supposed existence of Natives' utopian lifestyles in many ways challenged the legitimacy of European institutions and cultural norms. However, these utopian lifestyles were ones that existed only in writing; explorers documenting their travels, the Natives, and their lifestyles approached them with preconceived notions of what was desirable, good, and normal, as well as the prevalent European science and religion. Columbus and Vespucci, among all the other European explorers, therefore judged the Natives by how they did not conform to European standards (demonization of the savage) or how they fit into preexisting European narratives and myths (the Garden of Eden to the western horizon). In other words, Native customs and society were always being taken out of context by Europeans and were judged by European norms and ways of thinking. In the end, the concept of the "Native" and their society as imagined by Europeans was more of a European invention than anything representing the reality of the Natives.

One of the most notable examples of Natives used as tool for European education is Michel De Montaigne's fictional essay, *Of the Cannibals*, which presents Natives as noble savages from which much can be learned. Written in 1580, almost 100 years after European exploration of the New World had begun, Montaigne takes full advantage of the noble savage image, using it to critique European lifestyles for being artificial and far from what nature intended. At the heart of his essay is his opinion of the Natives—that they are not savage for not being civilized under a European definition, only different. He writes:

> [I] find that there is nothing barbarous and savage in this nation, by anything that I can gather, excepting, that every one gives the title of barbarism to everything that is not in use in his own country. As, indeed, we have no other level of truth and reason than the example and idea of the opinions and customs of the place wherein we live: there is always the perfect religion, there the perfect government, there the most exact and accomplished usage of all things. *They are savages at the same rate that we say fruits are wild, which nature produces of herself and by her own ordinary progress; whereas, in truth, we ought rather to call those wild whose natures we have changed by our artifice and diverted from the common order*. (Montaigne, 115; emphasis added)

Here, not only does the narrator argue that Natives are not savage, he employs the noble savage trope by arguing that civilization corrupts men and that the lack of such corruption reveals humanity's original "good" nature. Even the imagery of the wild fruit as the most good and natural form furthers the idea that Natives were (and are) spontaneous objects produced by nature, presented for consumption by those who were willing to take advantage of them. In this way, the utopian, or noble, Native was useful when critiquing the institutions and norms of the time, and, at the same time, was used as a static specimen, dehumanized and used as a tool to analyze Western culture.

If Native Americans as individuals have been portrayed as noble savages, Native American societies have been portrayed as utopias. But why do the two go hand in hand? The very origin of the utopian name and genre can help answer this question. Thomas More, in naming his work *Utopia*, created a phrase that simultaneously meant a "good place" and "no place." Utopia then, is inherently a place that exists in the mind, in the imagination, even as a collective social dream of some society

where something or everything is somehow better than in the dreamer's society. Nonetheless, utopia cannot exist outside of this dream. But why?

This question answers itself: a society made up of imperfect people cannot be perfect. Human nature is a mysterious mixture of good and evil, and society is a reflection of this mixture on a grand scale. Therefore, a perfect society cannot be achieved until a perfect set of people emerge. Such a theme is common in utopian societies: inherently better citizens must be present in order for an inherently better society. Such a theme is found in early works such as *Lycurgus* and Plato's *The Republic*. It can be traced through Karl Marx's *The Communist Manifesto*; and it continues into contemporary works such as Ursula Le Guin's *The Dispossessed*.

Even in works where the general public is not perfect, a utopian work can still make the statement that at least *some* inherently better people must exist in a utopia, through works where an extrinsic social structure is in place to provide or even control the *common* people. Though the better nature of all people in a utopia is not implied in such cases, they do imply the existence of at least some better people who run the government and must keep the others in check. Such ideas can be seen in Evie Shockley's "separation anxiety" as well as H.G. Wells's *A Modern Utopia*.

Where, then, do Native Americans and the noble savage fit in? The short answer becomes that the creation of the noble savage myth was so effective—and to some degree still is today—because it provided the missing link that "allowed" utopias to be possible. In other words, if Native Americans were portrayed as noble savages, a people who are *inherently better* by virtue of being uncivilized (think Adam and Eve), then Native American societies were simultaneously portrayed as inherently utopian. The portrayal of the noble savage was so useful for Western society because it supposedly allowed them a way to gain knowledge of how to create a better society through contact with a better people. This habit of White society looking to Native culture for wisdom is a trope that is still here today—with harmful effects on Native people.

THE NOBLE SAVAGE TODAY

Today, the savage portrayal of the Native American has fallen out of fashion, as it is the more obviously dehumanizing and harmful of the two extremes. Yet, many make the mistake of thinking

that the noble, or utopian, portrayal of the Native American is a way of elevating and paying homage to Native culture. However, the utopian vision of the Native American is harmful in ways that are less visible but which are, in the long run, just as destructive. Such idealized visions of Native people have stuck around to the modern day and are present everywhere—from sports team logos to commercials to children's books and movies. The image of the Native American as being in touch with the earth, as living in a communal society with little organized government or laws, and as possessing an inherent superiority or goodness is one that is familiar to the average American. Such imagery is harmful as it does not accord Native Americans full humanity, and it is not historically truthful; rather it idealizes, objectifies, and attempts to mold indigenous peoples into the White idea of what a Native American should be. Berkhofer observes that the modern vision of Native Americans allows no room for an actual modern Native American, as "[i]n spite of centuries of contact and the changed conditions of Native American lives, Whites picture the 'real' Indian as the one before contact or during the early period of that contact" (28). He goes on to point out the cognitive dissonance performed by White society: "If Whites do not conceive of themselves still living as Anglo-Saxons, Gauls, or Teutons, then why should they expect Indians to be unchanged from aboriginal times, Native Americans ask of their White peers?" (29). Such a condition is evident in, for example, the objectification of Native Americans through their use as sports mascots. Names such as "Chiefs," "Redskins," or "Braves," along with some form of accompanying "Native" imagery are common and are even used by national teams. A headdress, tomahawk, or chief in profile are all examples of this cultural phenomenon which reduces the "Native" to a thing of the past, a caricature of no higher significance than the animals and objects that comprise the majority of mascots. Such a conception ignores the reality of present-day Native Americans and does not allow them to simultaneously sustain a contemporary identity and their heritage. For, "[i]f the Indian changed through the adoption of civilization as defined by Whites, then he was no longer truly Indian according to the image, because the Indian was judged by what Whites were not" (Berkhofer 29).

Another example of the modern portrayal of the noble savage, or the idealized Native, is within the realm of children's books and stories. Two prominent Native American depictions are Disney's 1995 *Pocahontas*, and the American Girl doll, Kaya, along with her accessories and book set.

Pocahontas features Pocahontas as the noble, romantic savage—innocent, one with nature, and inherently good—while Pocahontas's betrothed, Kocoum, is the perfect savage, attacking John Smith with a tomahawk and consequently dying from John's musket. Kaya's books feature a representation of Nez Perce life (Northwestern Native American tribe) that is utopian on further investigation: although the book takes place in a seasonal gathering of upwards of 1,000 people, everyone communally shares the harvest of salmon from the river, work is done equally, and there is no hard and fast government or set of laws. The image of the Native American as an in-tune steward of the earth is also prominent in this children's work: on the American Girl doll website, Kaya's catchphrase is "Respect and protect the Earth because we are all connected" (Kaya). Not surprisingly, Kaya is the only Native American doll, her story set in 1764. She is among ten other historical dolls: six White dolls from different periods, two African American dolls, one Latina doll, and one Pacific Islander doll. It is clear from a glance at this single cultural artifact what effect the Eurocentric gaze has: the dolls representing minority groups are all represented as Whites see them and represented in periods where they historically were relevant to Whites. Kaya is a "traditional" Nez Perce girl from 1764, and her existence as the only Native American doll plays a role in perpetuating the image of the utopian Native American. The African American dolls are representative of the two historical images Whites have of that minority—slavery and the civil rights movement. The Pacific Islander doll from Hawaii is representative of Pearl Harbor, and the Latina doll representative of Mexico's independence. The White dolls, on the other hand, represent different "mainstream" time periods during which all of the above minorities were present or had their own movements and history but were not considered relevant by White society. All in all, the Kaya doll, though it may have been created with the purpose of educating young people and paying tribute to Native Americans, simply solidifies the single image mainstream society has of Natives as gentle, traditional, and stuck in the past.

The noble savage stereotype is present in modern media as well, for example through the Native's portrayal in the 1971 Crying Indian advertisement by Keep America Beautiful—an ad that is well remembered today, produced by an organization that is still active. This ad, which Keep America Beautiful's website proclaims an "iconic symbol of environmental responsibility and one of the most successful PSA campaigns in history," is a one-minute clip showing traditionally dressed Native

Americans paddling down a river past waste and pollution, cars and littering, with one Native man finally looking at the camera and shedding a single, solitary tear (Mission and History). Such an image was so successful precisely because it played off of White America's ideas of what Natives were—stewards of the land, stoic, a thing of the past. Even the attire—buckskin garments, headdresses, and embellishments of beads, quills, and feathers—plays into the Native American as a concept. Native Americans existed in the 1970s, just not in the minds of the American public. To them, the Native American ceased to exist after they were relegated to their reservations—after settlers had pushed as far west as they could. Here is the result of the Native and modern civilization when posed as diametrically opposite—when there is no room for a modern Native American and he is sequestered to the past, used as a symbol, a token, and ultimately as a fantasy to market to the White public.

Cumulatively, this compilation of images and narratives Whites have constructed surrounding what a Native American looks and behaves like creates a cultural constraint on what they are allowed to be. If they are too modern, they cease to be Native; too traditional and they become stuck in the past. If contemporary groups are too vocal about their condition, the rhetoric becomes "it happened a long time ago and doesn't matter now;" if they are too quiet they are complicit in their own destruction, loss of land, and loss of heritage. In the long run, the narrative Whites have constructed around Native Americans has become a trap, one which constricts the agency of Natives and which has historically shaped America's policies and histories concerning them.

A culture which eternally confines a group to one set of expected actions, customs, and traditions more or less forces Native Americans to be a sort of living museum. Here, Native American customs of antiquity (as Whites imagine them) are expected to be practiced, and if they are not, Native Americans are seen as not being true to their heritage. Often, dystopian literature can come eerily close to the issues of everyday life, and this topic is no different. Evie Shockley writes about the concept of a living museum in her short work "separation anxiety." Set about 100 years into the American future, it portrays a dystopia where African Americans and Whites are separated: more specifically, African Americans are separated into "ghettos" in order to preserve black culture. Meanwhile, it is assumed that other minority groups are also sequestered into their own camps. The main character, a dancer, must perform traditional dances that cannot be changed or modified, and

every aspect of daily life is studied and monitored, again in order to preserve the culture. In this context, Shockley's work creates an uneasy comparison when juxtaposed with Whites' conceptualizations and subsequent expectations of Native Americans. In Shockley's work, the concentration of a minority into its own community and its forced atrophy closely mirrors the real life fate of the Native American.

Such portrayals however, as seen in history and contemporary works, are harmful, and the flattening out of Natives into the noble savage figure allowed for their historical oppression. The perpetuation of such myths continues to be harmful today through the same "flattening out" process, which creates expectations for contemporary Native American societies, expecting them to conform to Western expectations about what is "Native enough". These myths are perpetuated through pop culture so seemingly benign that to see them as harmful is almost counterintuitive; such is true of the story of Pocahontas, which later became a Disney movie, or of the Keep America Beautiful campaign commercial, which featured a crying Native American as he looked upon a littered urban landscape. Such portrayals of Natives in modern culture create expectations that become ingrained in the everyday American, limiting what American culture allows Natives to be.

DECONSTRUCTING MYTHS ABOUT NATIVES

In the end, harmful Native stereotypes permeate American culture, and though the stereotype itself and the harm it brings is being recognized more and more, addressing the issue comes with its own challenges. Pushback against this harmful rhetoric has come in the form of Native American writers reclaiming their stories and the way in which indigenous people and culture are presented. Native stories such as *Ceremony* by Leslie Silko, *The Birchbark House* by Louise Erdrich, and *House Made of Dawn* by N. Scott Momaday exemplify Native American authors rejecting the flatness of earlier Native American characters and choosing to write complex tales with complex characters who deal with day-to-day contemporary struggles within the context of their Native identity. Such stories are so important, because, in these stories, Native characters are given full humanity, in which they are allowed to have flaws, and need not be simply the wise stoic character the Whites can learn from. By recentering the stories on Native people and their complexity, and especially on the modern

challenges they face between their American and Native identities, these authors create narratives in which Natives are allowed to be dynamic and where Natives' lifestyles are authentic to the Natives of today. In telling Native stories, these authors are able to expand readers' ideas of how a Native person can experience life.

The Native American struggle for recognition, sovereignty, respect, and the fulfillment of the promise to "life, liberty, and the pursuit to happiness" is much larger than what can be captured in an article or in any book. However, mining into the collective American subconscious, understanding how we as a society have created certain meanings, and being socially conscious of how we think about Native Americans and why, are small steps toward changing for the better. Such a goal is utopian in nature, for in its constant yearning to be perfect it makes us better, allowing for a better world than what we had before.

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The Formation of Separatism in Shelley's *The Last Man*: A Struggle to Overcome the "Primitive" and Live in a World of the Abject

By Mikayla Davis

ABSTRACT

In an analysis of Mary Shelley's The Last Man*, this essay focuses on the impact of the plague on society's mentality and function. The plague, explained as a manifestation of the "primitive" and the abject—based on the concepts of Douglas and Kristeva—leads to social separatism, dystopia, and moral regression. Paired with analysis of language and the character Adrian, the essay concludes that Shelley's greatest warning is against the objectifying of humanity as potential abjections.*

The Romantics were a group intent on pouring forth their emotions, all the while falling victim to the idealizing of the world. One of the great sources of their fancies was nature and all its reverential beauty and abundance of life. Yet, Romantic author Mary Shelley blurs this assumed dichotomy—in which beautiful life and nature are united as one in opposition to death and destruction—in her novel *The Last Man*. *The Last Man* is an apocalyptic plague novel that chronicles the life of Lionel Verney and his extended family as they attempt to survive in dwindling numbers. Although fantastical, *The Last Man* portrays a more honest sense of the world than other Romantics texts by portraying all the ways in which the good and bad, life and death, are two sides of the same coin. Expanding on this image, Shelley's novel displays the consequences of paying attention to only death, or the bad side of the coin. Shelley depicts this by creating the plague—a picture of nature and death as a united pair—and focusing on society's ability to treat the clean versus the unclean. With the theories of Mary Douglas and Julia Kristeva as a foundation, readers can see how the plague, which succinctly provides Shelley's characters and their community with a clear example of "death infecting life," represents the ultimate form of the primitive and the abject (Kristeva 4). By using the ultimate form of the primitive and abject, Shelley reveals the human tendency to fear the reality of death in life so much so as to regress in societal values and morality. This regression manifests through a separatist mentality. Shelley ultimately provides hope and a way out of this regression into separatism by creating a character who models how to live compassionately toward humanity, despite the constant shadow of death and disease that are the great abjections of our lives. In this context, we can see that Shelley marks separatism as leading to dystopia. Similarly, the intensity of such a dystopia is increased by the failure to accept that the abject is a part of life.

The plague in *The Last Man*, more than threatening society with disease, threatens society's system of values and its desire to ignore life's abjections. The spreading of the plague in Shelley's novel is not wholly physical—that is, not clearly defined as contagious via bodily contact—but its consequences are. No matter how the plague is caught, the disease shows itself in a physical taint of the body. This physical taint draws forth images of what Douglas calls "the primitive." The idea of the primitive is characterized by an emphasis on the state of material items. Physical uncleanliness, such as "contact with corpses, blood or spittle" trumps any spiritual concept of uncleanliness within society

(Douglas 13). The state of the soul and spirituality is acknowledged less, in terms of cleanliness, than contact with a physical object that is unclean. Note that Douglas uses the word "primitive" in order to describe the secularist understanding of the past's treatment of the unclean. Douglas does not mean "primitive" to be a description of the reality of the past, but as a description of how secular culture frames the past's customs in comparison to its own. That is, secular culture views itself and its understanding of the unclean as advanced and logical by contrast to the past. I will use "primitive" not for its negative connotations, but in the sense that it is the belief that the material and the physical constitute the distinction between what is clean and unclean.

Douglas next asserts that all understandings of dirt are merely a product of categorization. This claim is an important one for understanding Shelley's argument regarding a regression of values within *The Last Man*. Douglas explains the relativity of the unclean through the idea that "shoes are not dirty in themselves, but it is dirty to place them on the dining-table; food is not dirty in itself, but it is dirty to leave cooking utensils in the bedroom"(45). Thus, any society's perspective of the physically unclean thing is actually a matter of categorization and context. From here, any behavior against an unclean thing is revealed to just be "the reaction which condemns any object or idea likely to confuse or contradict cherished classifications" (Douglas 45). This last statement is essential to Shelley's novel because of its characterization of the unclean as a threat to "cherished classifications."

The plague is the ultimate destroyer of classification within *The Last Man*; it blurs all lines and thoughts of borders or rank. Shelley's narrator at one point acknowledges that "all the world has the plague" (193) and that "one beggar had become of more worth than a national peerage of dead lords" (234). The narrator recognizes that no one category of social class or worldly identification prevents disease from affecting a person. In many ways, this makes the plague the abject writ large. The abject, more than just an "other," is that which "disturbs identity, system, order" and that which "does not respect borders, positions, rules" (Kristeva 4). The plague certainly has no respect for borders within Shelley's novel, nor does it fail to disturb the identity of individuals and nations. Shelley's plague is the fullest form of abjection, because it not only disturbs identity and systems of order but accomplishes this through the spreading of corpses and death. As Kristeva points out, "the corpse, seen without God and outside of science, is the utmost of abjection. It is death infecting life. . . . It is something rejected

from which one does not part" (4). The plague is certainly the purveyor of corpses within Shelley's novel and thus the purveyor of the abject. In one scene, Shelley's narrator describes that "every day a frightful gap was made in [his] troop—they died by the tens, by fifties, by hundreds" (326). Such an increase in the plague signifies an increase in society's saturation and confrontation of corpses and the abject. The plague and its great distribution of corpses is therefore a twofold image, reflecting both the "primitive" fear of the physically unclean and the ultimate abjection. Shelley develops this twofold image within *The Last Man* and demonstrates how a society that focuses on the physically unclean as the ultimate threat will regress in its values and ability to cherish human life. Essentially, the focused opposition to that which is physically tainted creates large-scale separatism and morally tainted communities.

There are several instances in the novel in which Shelley argues against a separatist nature, and its role as a response to the endemic abject, by eliminating individual autonomy and developing exclusive collectives. As Mark Canuel provocatively suggests during his analysis of agency within *The Last Man*, Shelley appears to implement the idea that "an argument about . . . agency can be made by eliminating agents" (150). Her examples of the separation of communities into group identities is described through a language of tribalism. That is, Shelley uses descriptions that connote tribal behavior when presenting a people's division into exclusive groups. Tribal, in this case, reflects Shelley's sense of the word. As part of the 19th-century British Empire, in which there was imperialism and the subjugation of communities deemed less civilized, Shelley frames tribes as groups that necessarily and inherently participate in pillaging, fighting, and nomadism. Although these are narrow definitions about the constitution of a tribe and carry misconceptions, they serve to overtly portray a divided people within the novel. As such, I will use the idea of tribalism only when demonstrating how Shelley's language works to emphasize a division between communities. Aside from demonstrating her demarcation of divisions, I will use the term "separatism." Separatism more accurately portrays Shelley's underlying argument, which is aimed against the division of a community into exclusive groups. This division, caused particularly by the fear of the abject, is what reflects a communities' regression in values and morals.

Shelley describes several instances in which, amidst the plague-ridden world where national

boundaries have withered, a group will form and take to regional domination. In one such scene, Shelley writes:

> "A number of people from North America…had set sail for the East …Several hundreds landed in Ireland…and took possession of such vacant habitations as they could find…As they exhausted the produce of one spot, they went on to another. At length they began to interfere with the inhabitants, and strong in their concentrated numbers, ejected the natives from their dwellings, and robbed them of their winter store. A few events of this kind roused the fiery nature of the Irish; and they attacked the invaders" (235).

The separatism in this scene is clearly marked by Shelley's identification of two groups: one as "invaders" and the other as "natives." She creates a scene in which people have decided to disregard other communal life, through "interfering" and "ejecting" inhabitants, so as to benefit themselves. With material danger, uncleanliness, and the abject at the forefront of their minds thanks to the plague, which is reflective of the "primitive" mindset, the invading separatists—or tribe—treat the other communities more like objects and less like human lives. Shelley describes this as a case in which "human beings, unwithheld by shame… ventured on deeds of greater wickedness, or gave way more readily to their abject fears" (213). Thus, in order to deal with the plague—that is, their abject fears—the group has decided to see humans as *potential* corpses and the *potential* abject; if humans are potential threats, even when not yet contaminated by the plague, then they are essentially objects to be repressed and rejected. Here, the primitive mindset tackles the issue of uncleanliness preemptively and, under this fear-ridden and regressive belief, the separatists can set aside any moral quandary when pillaging and fighting other communities. Shelley further suggests this is the case when she writes that the tribe from North America actually "took delight in thrusting the possessors from their houses" (237). Their actions are not simply survival based in this moment. By calling the inhabitants "possessors," the invader's motivation more clearly becomes driven by a desire to overcome other groups, who they necessarily see as the opposition. This divisive perspective only builds off of itself, as Céline Kermisch's conceptual exploration of risk and virtue-responsibility will imply. The ethics explored in Kermisch's article suggest that, by "concentrate[ing] rather on 'outsiders' in order to increase the loyalty to the group," these tribes end up focusing "on the

reinforcement of the social cohesion" (96). This cohesion, though, is exclusive to the "tribe." Therefore, the reinforcement only promotes more opposition to those on the outside than it does a kind of unity. As one group builds its exclusivity, a sort of ripple effect begins to occur. Shelley demonstrates this with her increasing examples of separatism.

Shelley's next example of a separatism in response to the abject comes when a group, once united as one, now finds itself separated into three: "the more numerous division of emigrants… assumed a superiority of rank and power; the second party asserted their independence. A third was formed by a sectarian" (300). The three groups, once united by the commonality of being humans all threatened by the abject plague, now cling to selfish divisions. During one tense moment between the three factions, a "contest arose concerning the distribution of the pillage; the chiefs of the first division demanded that the whole should be placed at their disposal" (Shelley 301). The way that the groups designate "chiefs," call themselves "divisions," and begin to fight over "pillage" is a clear example of Shelley's tribalism and a separatist nature. Once again, such separatism is made all the more justified by the tribes in light of their "primitive" perspective, when each groups' people simply represent the potential abject meant to be overcome. The natural consequence of such division, though, is strife: "the three divisions, armed, met in the Place Vendome, each resolved to subdue by force the resistance of its adversaries" (Shelley 301). Just as the first example of separatist behavior ended in fighting between the tribe from North America and the Irish, so too does this example culminate on the battlefield with the intent to "subdue" one's "adversaries." By repeating the acts of separatism, Shelley shows how the objectification of humans as *potential* abjections can only lead to more division and strife. To rebuke this regressed behavior into a focus on the physical taint, Shelley develops in contrast a character of spiritual and moral purity: Adrian.

Adrian confronts each of the previous divided groups and acts as a model for how to live a life of love despite having the knowledge that humans are the *potential* abject and physically tainted. When the opposing groups face each other on the battlefield, Adrian rises up to quell the impending fight using specifically Christian, spiritual language: "as you worship God, in whose image those also are created…shed not a drop of precious human blood" (Shelley 240). He calls upon the tribes to recognize the human body as precious because of its spiritual significance and not to see their fellow

humans as reminders of death or objects with which to defeat. He continues, sermon-like, shouting that "pardon, succor, and brotherly love await your repentance. You are dear to us, because you wear the frail shape of humanity" (Shelley 240). Adrian recalls not only the values of spiritual cleanliness, but the worth of human life and "precious… humanity." He does not deny the reality of death but focuses on life and its value above all the physical risks surrounding him. In another instance, when the three tribes are about to strike one another, Adrian rises as a model of "love, unmingled with fear" (Shelley 304). He is described as someone who "never flinched from danger, nor was actuated by other motives than care for the general welfare" (Shelley 304). He is a purveyor of moral purity. He is also an advocate for human worth and compassion because he is motivated by "love" and "care for the general welfare." Although afflicted by the knowledge of the plague and the pervasive abject around him, just as his comrades are, Adrian does not let the "primitive" mentality direct his actions or lead him into separatism. As such, Adrian demonstrates what humanity can be in spite of a world engulfed by the plague—indeed, the abject.

Shelley ends her argument with the idea that separatism will retreat through the demonstration of unity. She argues this during one scene in which Adrian arrives and "the late adversaries" are said to have "warmed to affection at the sight of him" (Shelley 303). They pause their objectifying of the other groups and recall a sense of affection for the individual when he walks in the space between their three divisions. As Adrian draws attention away from separatism, he reminds the tribes how morally pure "agency" is both an individual and communal responsibility (Canuel 150). A few sentences later, Shelley writes how "no distinction was now visible between the two parties, late ready to shed each other's blood" (304). Adrian's character changes the discourse between the separate groups and inspires unity under the name of love for humanity. His cherishment of human life, rather than treatment of humans as objects, leads the people groups out of their regression—characterized by the "primitive" perspective, by their tainted morals, and by a separatist behavior—back towards valuing humans as individuals.

The juxtaposition of separatist language with that of Adrian's language regarding moral purity, reveals Shelley's argument that society and humanity need to cherish life, demonstrate compassion, and live in unity. Since humans live with two sides of the same coin, life and death, the novel teaches

that to reject one side of life out of fear is to reject the other. Shelley may use the most extreme, pervasive example of the abject and its most extreme, divisive consequences, but in doing so she effectively reveals society's deeper struggle to act compassionately as it copes with life in death. Just as Shelley exposes her characters to this reality, so too does she assert that all of humanity ought to be "suddenly seized with the conviction, that love [is] the only good in life" (308). Shelley's greatest warning, then, is that to just focus on potential threats and let oneself objectify humanity is to reject the coin of life itself. Essentially, "to avoid" encountering death and abjection, Shelley acknowledges that we would have to "quit the world" (193). Yet, in doing so, we achieve neither a life of true community and compassion nor peace until death has come. It is only by accepting the coin as it is and knowing that in "human nature…beauty and deformity are often closely linked" that society can begin to act with compassion and spiritual reverence for humanity, no matter the physical threat or "abject fears" they may face (Shelley 213).

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Family and Feminism in Ursula K. Le Guin's *The Dispossessed*

By Natalie Kuss

ABSTRACT

The current American familial structure consists of a mother who serves as the housewife and a father who serves as the breadwinner. Although American society is breaking away from this norm, the nuclear family structure is still idealized, causing women to struggle against the patriarchal confines of this structure as they choose to remain single, enter the workforce, and refuse to reproduce. Ursula K. Le Guin's The Dispossessed *utilizes the utopia genre to explore a fictional planet, Anarres, that values collectivism over individualism in an attempt to become truly egalitarian. This essay analyzes the egalitarian structure of Anarres through the experiences of the main character, Shevek, and uses it to examine the anti-feminist issues of the current familial structure of America.*

INTRODUCTION

The stereotypical, idealized version of the American family includes a mother who remains inside of the home and a father who acts as the sole "breadwinner." This romanticized idea of the American family has prevented and discouraged women from pursuing their desires outside of the home for centuries. Although many Americans boast about the gender equality of the United States, others believe America must continue to develop as a society before it can be considered truly egalitarian, due to the patriarchal structure of the country that still exists today. The long-held belief that the stereotypical nuclear family structure must prevail continues to make real gender equality impossible. The struggle between following the status quo of forming the traditional family and the desire to break free from the pressures of society is reflected within current utopian literature and film. Consequently, theories about what changing this structure would do to a society continue to develop.

Ursula K. Le Guin utilizes the utopian narrative of her novel *The Dispossessed* to promote collectivism over traditional familial bonds as a model to achieve an egalitarian, feminist society. The anarchical structure of Le Guin's fictional planet Anarres helps the reader imagine how society would change and evolve if the current ideal family structure was removed and replaced with an egalitarian, collectivist model. By creating a world where men and women are truly equal, she creates a blueprint for how feminism can emerge and thrive in a new social structure unlike our own and imagines how this change affects traditional familial structures.

The Dispossessed challenges the ideal American family and proposes that its current structure prevents the formation of an egalitarian society.

LIFE OF ANARRES—A BRIEF SUMMARY OF *THE DISPOSSESSED*

Anarres is a unique planet within the world Ursula K. Le Guin constructs in *The Dispossessed*. We discover more about Anarres from the experiences of the main character of the novel, Shevek. Shevek is a physicist who travels from his home planet of Anarres to Urras in order to complete his theory on a device that would allow for instant communication between planets. Anarres was founded by Odo, a woman who was imprisoned on Urras for her radical ideas of collectivism until her eventual

release. This division between Urras and Anarres has created tension between the two planets to the point that only one port exists to allow the entry and exit of goods shared between them.

In comparison to the individualistic nature of Urras, the Anarresti value collectivism and have structured their society around the idea that everyone must work together towards the betterment of the planet as a whole. This has drastically affected the way their government and laws are structured. In her article "Mapping the Walls of the Dispossessed," Sandra Lindow describes the judicial system of Anarres as "a loose system of committees based on a kind of town hall democracy where individuals must state their cases and convince others of the validity of their needs" (175). Anarresti are free from the confines of law and government. Shevek himself provides evidence of this structure during a conversation with one of his childhood friends, Tirin. He states:

> Are we kept here by force? What force—what laws, governments, police? None. Simply our own being, our nature as Odonians. It's your nature to be Tirin, and my nature to be Shevek, and our common nature to be Odonians, responsible to one another. And that responsibility is our freedom. To avoid it, would be to lose our freedom. (Le Guin 40)

This quotation further indicates that Anarres is structured as a collectivist, egalitarian, and anarchical society. The Anarresti value freedom above all, allowing them to act in accordance with their own wills.

Through Anarres' efforts to become more egalitarian, women are treated equally to men and, therefore, the structure of Anarres supports the concepts of feminism as well. This is also evidenced by Shevek during a conversation he has on his trip to Urras with his guide, Dr. Kimoe. Shevek is told that there are no women on the ship because that type of employment is not considered "women's work" on Urras. Dr. Kimoe proceeds to question the roles of men and women on Anarres in response to Shevek:

> Kimoe tried to explain status, failed, and went back to the first topic. "Is there really no distinction between men's work and women's work?"
>
> "Well, no, it seems a very mechanical basis for the division of labor, doesn't it? A person chooses work according to interest, talent, strength—what has the sex to do with that?"
>
> "Men are physically stronger," the doctor asserted with professional finality.

> "Yes, often, and larger, but what does that matter when we have machines? And even when we don't have machines, when we must dig with the shovel or carry on the back, the men maybe work faster—the big ones— but the women work longer. . . . Often I have wished I was as tough as a woman." (Le Guin 20)

Shevek's explanation shows that all genders are valued on Anarres because they are judged on their ability to help the planet, not whether or not they are male or female. As long as they can provide beneficial support to the planet, they are considered equal.

FAMILY ON ANARRES

In their efforts to collectivize, the Anarresti have redefined the concept of family, creating an opposition to the traditional familial structure of American society. The community raises each child through various institutions created with the aim to better the society as a whole, which leaves both men and women free to pursue their own interests outside of the home. The reader is introduced to these organizations through flashbacks to Shevek's childhood. In one flashback, Shevek is left by his father, Palat, to be raised in a nursery when his mother, Rulag, is given a job in a distant location. When Palat drops Shevek off at the nursery, the following dialogue occurs between him and a nurse:

> "The mother's been posted to Abbenay," the man says. "She wants him to stay here."
>
> "Shall we take him into the nursery full-time, then, Palat?"
>
> "Yes. I'll be moving back into a dorm."
>
> "Don't worry, he knows us all here! But surely Divlab will send you along after Rulag soon? Since you're partners, and both engineers?"
>
> "Yes, but she's . . . It's the Central Institute of Engineering that wants her, see. I'm not that good. Rulag has a great work to do" (Le Guin 27)

This conversation reveals that Rulag's work, which is implied to be important to Anarres by Palat's response, takes precedence over raising Shevek. Shevek is "taken full-time," suggesting that he will no longer be raised by his parents. The Anarresti have attempted to remove the need for parents to remain with their children and replace it with a collective responsibility of the society to raise them instead. By doing so, the people of Anarres free women from the confines of the traditional American

family structure, where they would be pressured to remain in the home to raise their child. The removal of the traditional American maternal figure in the family may bring about questions of how this may affect the child. Many who support women remaining in the home believe that without a mother present, the child's mental and emotional health may be negatively impacted. In opposition to the argument that children require a mother figure to properly function and mature, Kathleen Gerson, in her article, "Resolving Family Dilemmas and Conflicts: Beyond Utopia," states that "Decades of research have shown consistently that employed mothers pose no harm to their children and, to the contrary, offer significant benefits" (182). Gerson supports the idea that children who are separated from their mothers actually benefit from this separation instead of being harmed by it. Her argument provides opposition to the strongly held American belief that a maternal figure is necessary to produce successful individuals.

The idea that maternal figures are not necessary to raise successful children is also promoted by *The Dispossessed*. Shevek leads a generally fulfilling life, even after being raised without his parents' presence. He forms friendships with Tirin and Bedap during his time at school that last for the duration of the novel. Shevek finds a life partner, Takver, and they have children, further exemplifying his ability to form lasting relationships and properly convey affection towards others. He is able to travel to Urras and complete his communication device, proving his ability to be successful and make an impact on not only the society of Anarres, but also on the entire universe within the novel. Although Shevek struggles to find his place within his own society, he eventually finds a path to happiness and fulfillment.

The structure of Anarres continues to break down the traditional stereotypes of the American family by promoting non-traditional relationships. Instead of marrying and forming nuclear families, most citizens of Anarres do not commit themselves to one person for their entire life. They are free to "copulate," as they call it on Anarres, with whomever they want, whenever they want. This concept frees women from the idea that they must be partnered to one man to form a family and commit themselves to the role of housewife to ensure the success of the nuclear family and society as a whole. Anarresti women are removed from the typical judgement that women currently face in American society for being too promiscuous, as Anarres is more focused on the betterment of the society than

the individual. This idea is reflected in Rulag's own success away from her family. When Shevek finally encounters her again as an adult, she is part of the PDC, one of the most influential institutions on Anarres. Rulag makes a name for herself away from her family, becoming one of Bedap's (a colleague and friend of Shevek's) and Shevek's toughest opponents when they want to travel to Urras. The narrator states:

> Somebody had told Bedap that Rulag was an engineer, and he had found in her the engineer's clarity and pragmatism of mind, plus the mechanist's hatred of complexity and irregularity. She opposed the Syndicate of Initiative on every issue, including that of its right to exist. Her arguments were good, and Bedap respected her. Sometimes when she spoke of the strength of Urras, and the danger of bargaining with the strong from a position of weakness, he believed her. (Le Guin 263)

Rulag holds respect within Anarresti society, thus exemplifying women's success when not held back by the sexism that prevents them from advancement in American society today. Rulag's pursuit of power is supported by the people of Anarres because her efforts benefit the society as a whole. Without the belief that the betterment of society is more important than one's own pursuits, women like Rulag would possibly be confined to the home to raise their children instead of being allowed to enter the workforce to help improve life on Anarres. Anarresti women are free to pursue their own success as opposed to feeling obligated to ensure the success of their family. Le Guin breaks down gender norms promoted through the traditional American family structure by showing that pursuit of bettering a society does not discriminate based on gender.

SUPPORT FOR FAMILIAL BONDS WITHIN COLLECTIVIST SOCIETIES

Despite the benefits ascribed to a rejection of traditional family bonds in *The Dispossessed*, collectivism might also signal a loss in the form of the nuclear family and the potential loss of individual desires and pursuits for the cause of the collective. In this collective process, the role of the family unit within a society can become lost and misconstrued as it seems less important. Le Guin may show the benefits of collectivism for certain oppressed groups within American society, such as women and homosexuals, but leaves the reader questioning whether or not societies can be both

collectivist and still maintain traditional familial structures that we are accustomed to today. I

In an effort to answer this question, other, we might turn to real world examples. In Christoph Brumann's article "All the Flesh Kindred that Ever I See," the author examines societies that removed familial bonds entirely in favor of collectivism and compared them to societies that were both collectivist while promoting the formation of traditional families. His study directly correlates to Le Guin's own exploration of the effects of removing familial bonds in *The Dispossessed*. He analyzed the Shakers, a communal sect that developed from a Quaker splinter group that promoted collectivism through the weakening of familial bonds. He then compared them to other utopian communities, including the Hutterite colonies, the kibbutzim, and the Bruderhof, who promoted both collectivism and the traditional family structure. (Brumann). Instead of weakening familial ties in hopes of strengthening the society as a whole, the other communities studied by Brumann did both instead and were successful. He concludes his study by stating:

> When it comes to active long-term survival . . . communes built on monogamous marriage have proved more successful, and it is the three most impressive present-day communes—the Hutterite colonies, the kibbutzim, and the Bruderhof communities—that show the strongest sense of family and kinship. Moreover, the most promising alternative family policies are pursued by those contemporary groups that—owing to the influence of alternative culture—leave the question of partnership and family up to the members, and refrain from enforcing any unusual arrangements, but are still mainly monogamous. (417)

The combination of family and collectivism creating a positive impact is also seen within *The Dispossessed* through Shevek's own efforts to break free from the collectivist nature of his home planet and to form his own family. His long-term relationship with Takver causes him to strive for greatness throughout his life as she supports his endeavors, including his trip to Urras. When discussing the possibility of Shevek leaving Anarres for Urras, Takver states "Go to Urras . . . . Why not? They want you there. They don't here! Maybe they'll begin to see what they've lost, when you're gone. And you want to go. I saw that tonight. I never thought of it before, but when we talked about the prize, at dinner, I saw it, the way you laughed" (Le Guin 278). Takver's desire to assist Shevek in his decision and her support of his idea, even at the cost of never seeing him again, shows how the

familial bonds Shevek has formed help to promote the creation of his communication device, which proves to be collectivist itself as it would benefit all planets. Without the strong familial bond between Shevek and Takver, Shevek may not have been able to convince himself to leave Anarres. Collectivism and familial bonds work together within Shevek's narrative, showing that neither one nor the other can exist on its own and be successful. American society currently promotes the traditional family structure over a more collectivist way of life, blind to the idea that incorporating both could be beneficial.

CONTEMPORARY IMPLICATIONS

The Dispossessed directly challenges the notion that feminism means the end to familial values as we know them. Through Shevek's story, Le Guin shows how both men and women alike can pursue endeavors outside of the home without the collapse of both families and society as a whole. The success of both Rulag and Shevek serve as an example of how the traditional familial structure can be altered and still provide positive results. Currently, American society holds that someone, mainly the mother, must remain in the home in order for children to be raised successfully. With a lack of funding for proper childcare and the negative stereotype of the "stay-at-home dad," America gives women little choice other than to remain at home with their children or face the scrutiny that comes with entering the workforce. If American society promoted the success of both men and women based on their ability to help the country, as shown by the collectivist example of Anarres, it would benefit greatly from their combined efforts. In order for this to occur, America would have to abandon the widely-held belief that a mother must remain in the home to raise her child or else the child will be at risk.

Although *The Dispossessed* is a fictional story, it redefines family by providing an alternative to the traditional American family structure that many defend to this day as the most effective way to raise children. Utopias like Anarres are expected to be "perfect" for their inhabitants, but in this pursuit, there will always be someone that suffers for the benefit of the society. In *The Dispossessed*, it can be easy to assume that there must be some victims of the collectivist, egalitarian societal structure of Anarres, and that these victims are the children who are raised by institutions as opposed to parents. Instead, Le Guin depicts success stories of both men and women who were raised through

this structure. As feminism continues to force societies to change their ingrained social norms, novels such as *The Dispossessed* create an important representation of how societies might promote both familial values and feminist pursuits. Readers should not expect to find their ideas supported by literature; instead, they should expect to be challenged and ready to assess their own implicit biases and stereotypes. One can only hope that stories such as *The Dispossessed* continue to inspire readers to fight for the equality of all citizens and improve the quality of life of men and women alike.

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A Feminist's Call for Anarchy

By Marlee Jacocks

ABSTRACT

While Ursula Le Guin's novel The Dispossessed *has been categorized as a science fiction and utopian novel, I argue that it should also be considered a feminist utopia. With influences from feminism and Marxism, Le Guin uses both theories to create a comparison between two political systems—anarchy and democracy—to ultimately reveal that anarchy is more conducive for feminism. The anarchic system of government provides women with more agency than capitalism, because women are free from class and gender oppression. Theorists such as Lewis Call and Daniel Jaeckle define the anarchy that is established in* The Dispossessed. *The distinct female characters in* The Dispossessed *demonstrate the clear differences between the two political systems. Additionally, I argue that* The Dispossessed *is a feminist text with the ultimate purpose of demonstrating how women can reach equality and ultimate agency in an anarchic state due to Le Guin's example.*

"A Woman's Place is In the House" flashes in bold, black font as the newly elected Congresswomen of 2019 scroll across the screen each standing confidently *and* proudly. These women represent an important statistic for all women in the United States; they are the 35 women who make up the most diverse class of Congress in terms of race and gender (Filipovic). Despite this progress, equal representation of women in the United States is still shockingly behind in both politics and the private sector. Furthermore, despite the continuously growing number of women who have declared a presidential run in 2020, there has still never been a female president. In any given political system, there are distinct differences and disparities between the roles of men and women. Often times women are marginalized, particularly in cultures dominated by a patriarchal system and a long-standing history of male governmental rule, as is the case in the United States. In response, feminism has moved through multiple waves over time to focus on different needs for women and other marginalized groups. Given this current context within the United States, and being a woman in leadership positions myself, I still cannot help but ask: Where are the women? Even in utopian fiction, where gender equality might be expected in an imagined perfect society, the question still stands.

Feminist utopias specifically provide an image of what an ideal world would look like in which women are actually equal to men, or in some cases a satirical perspective of a world where women are superior to men. According to William Marcellino, "feminist utopian works critique dominant male power and focus and offer some kind of imagined, idealized society that is not characterized by male power and focus" (203). Ursula K. Le Guin takes up this call in several of her novels and essays, but explicitly in *The Dispossessed*, in which she creates a feminist utopian society that not only emphasizes the roles of women, but also challenges the traditional conventions of a feminist utopia with a male protagonist. By comparing the role that women play in a utopian political system with their role in a traditional Western political system, Le Guin evokes a clear distinction between women's current situation and the potential for a better future. The comparison of a woman's role on the two different planets Le Guin portrays have led many scholars to read the text as a feminist utopia. The dynamics of Le Guin's ambiguous utopia allow the reader to consider women's places within different institutions, such as the anarchic state on Anarres and the capitalist society on Urras. Combining these portrayals of women and politics, I argue that capitalism fails to recognize the work

of women and the equality they deserve, while the anarchic system of government in Ursula Le Guin's *The Dispossessed* fantasizes about a dissolution of patriarchal and capitalist oppression that allows for the incorporation of feminist forms of government and therefore establishes anarchy as an agential system for women while also proving that feminism is a cause for all.

The setting of *The Dispossessed* alternates between life on the planet Anarres and life on the planet Urras. The alternation between planets also creates a relationship between an anarchic and democratic political system that puts the two systems in constant comparison. Life first began on Urras, but the world became a dystopian society when revolutionaries began to challenge the system. Urras is a democracy that reflects the governmental system of the Western world. A woman named Odo was the leader of the revolution on Urras, and she began to form her own society. It is not just a coincidence that this society was founded by a woman, especially once more female characters are introduced to the story. Takver and Rulag are the two main female characters who guide the consideration of a feminist utopia while representing what life is like for women on Anarres, with Odo setting the foundation. After a revolution, the Odonians left Urras to form their new society on what is technically the moon of Urras. This moon became Anarres and they became the Odonian society. This process is what establishes the utopian context of *The Dispossessed*. The cause for revolution pushed Odonians to think about a more ideal world, and when given the chance to start a new society, they created a utopia.

Anarres is the planet on which the protagonist, Shevek, lives with his partner Takver and their two children. Their way of life is defined by the anarchic system that dominates Anarres. Lewis Call categorizes both Anarres and Le Guin herself as proponents of anarchy. In the simplest terms, anarchy is often defined as a system with no government. There are no laws and no overarching institution of power which governs society. Anarchy as a political and philosophical theory began around the early nineteenth century and challenged the oppression from capital and the state (Call 87). As the definition of anarchy evolved through the twentieth century, ethnic power and gender power were added to the forms of oppression that anarchy sought to dispel (Call 87). *The Dispossessed* is categorized as an anarchist state because the people of Anarres are "free of the inequalities of capitalism and the injustices of state power" (Call 88). For example, there is no

distinction between male or female names, which helps to eliminate any gender bias or prejudice that might normally exist. There is no way to tell, based off of a name, whether a character is a man or a woman. Furthermore, there is freedom from class oppression because labor is assigned randomly through the means of a computer system in order to ensure there is no distinction of class. Le Guin creates a utopian society on the foundational elements of anarchy—no central government and freedom from oppression.

The form of anarchy Le Guin creates is considered by Daniel Jaeckle to be "a highly traditional anarchist society" (75). This includes freedom from the state as Call identifies, but Jaeckle also defines anarchy in terms of freedom from "organized religion, and private property" (75). On Anarres, there is both a sense of individuality as the people exercise their own free will, but also a great sense of responsibility to maintain a functioning society without an overarching form of government. Social and political power are neither desired nor valued on Anarres, because they are considered repressive rather than agential. As Jaeckle claims, Anarres functions with "no government, church, or ruling class" (76). To the Western reader who is accustomed to a highly systematic form of government and way of life, the utopian anarchy seems initially difficult to imagine.

Despite this claim of difficulty, Le Guin provides copious details to help the audience understand life on Anarres, and more specifically, how a society can still function effectively and efficiently with no government through decentralization. Odo's main goal when starting a new society on Anarres was decentralization—to move away from large or central governments to smaller organizations. Furthermore, Shevek describes how "the network was not to be run from the top down. There was to be no controlling center, no capital, no establishment for the self-perpetuating machinery of bureaucracy" (Le Guin 95). The people of Anarres were successful in fulfilling Odo's plans for society. There is no form of currency on Anarres and society is largely communal. If an Anarresti is not copulating or partnering, then they sleep in dormitories. Meals are served in dining courts and each territory receives the "same share and share alike for food" mentality (Le Guin 111).

This communal style of living is maintained through education. It is ingrained in the minds of children at a young age that, "Nothing is yours. It is to use. It is to share. If you will not share it, you cannot use it" (Le Guin 27). The emphasis on sharing is what allows Anarres to maintain an anarchic

system. The lessons taught to children are determined and administered by the single challenge to Le Guin's anarchic state—the Production and Distribution Coordination (PDC). This is the only system on Anarres that would closely relate to any form of government. The PDC is a "network of administration and management" that functions for the purpose of assigning jobs (76). Even though the PDC seems to resemble a type of government, Shevek makes it clear that the PDC "do not govern persons; they administer production" (76). In this sense, Le Guin is successful in creating and establishing an anarchic system.

Le Guin, in essence, offers an alternative to the capitalism that permeates every aspect of Western government. Tim Libretti argues that Le Guin's portrayal of a utopian society is "radically different from contemporary U.S. capitalist society" so that Le Guin is able to fully address "the question of human nature" as a means to represent a utopian society as a possibility (308). In other words, Le Guin recognizes human nature, with an influence from Marxism, as being characterized "by an imaginative drive to create" rather than to work or make a profit (306). This is evident from Le Guin's own writing in her article "Why are Americans Afraid of Dragons?" which explains how "work" is defined in the U.S. capitalist society. "Dragons," in the context of Le Guin's article, represent fantasy and imagination. To answer the question in her title, Le Guin argues that Americans are afraid of these "dragons," because they fear the pleasure that fantasy and imagination provide, because this pleasure takes away from the focus and emphasis on work ("Dragons"). In capitalism, life is defined by work. Anarchy is defined by its contrast with capitalism because of its opposition to the capitalist mindset that prevents people from freedom. Marxism influences this definition of anarchy to set the foundation for a life that is not entirely determined by work. According to Le Guin, freedom comes with imagination, which she defines as "the free play of the mind, both intellectual and sensory" ("Dragons"). Essentially, creativity and unrestraint are what provide freedom, but these elements cannot be found in capitalism, thus Le Guin turns to anarchy as a utopian model.

The anarchic system that Le Guin creates in *The Dispossessed* not only creates a society with more freedom, but it also especially provides women with more freedom and agency. According to Le Guin, the inability to employ imagination in the context of capitalism is a challenge for men. Many men in America have "learned to repress their imagination" and "to fear it," which has consequently

prevented them from experiencing pleasure and delight (Le Guin "Dragons"). This lack of pleasure and delight is one of the ways in which the capitalist society in the United States is persistently supported and maintained.

Anarchy in *The Dispossessed* calls into question these elements of capitalism and reveals their harmful nature to women, while providing a better alternative. Le Guin's text ultimately becomes a feminist piece as she provides women with the utmost agency by dispelling and eliminating capitalist barriers in an anarchic system. The system of capitalism is riddled with faults that have proven to create lasting disparities, especially in regard to gender. The system infringes upon multiple individual freedoms, but the greatest discrepancy lies in the treatment of more than half the population—women. Capitalism was created by men to be implemented in a patriarchal society. It fails to take into consideration the work of women publicly and privately, while providing them with little to no agency to receive the same freedoms that men experience. Essentially, capitalism forgets women, especially when considering reproduction. The most glaring fault of capitalism is that it does not recognize the fact that through the means of reproduction women are responsible for supplying the laborers who produce and create capital. Even more, reproduction in and of itself is a form of labor, but capitalism does not acknowledge this significant and necessary work on the part of women.

With influence from Marxism and the 1970s "Women in Work" movement, Le Guin is provided a platform to challenge capitalism's oppression of class and gender. Erik Wright defines Marxist theory, as well as feminist theory, as "emancipatory theoretical traditions in that they envision the possibility of eliminating certain forms of oppression from social life" (39). In relation to *The Dispossessed*, Marxism is the first step to anarchy because it identifies anarchy as the end goal. In order to be liberated, the people must first reject capitalism, then enter a state of socialism that eventually gives way to an anarchic system. Anarchy is the goal because, according to Marxism, it allows for the most freedom. Marxist theory focuses specifically on freedom from class oppression and envisions a classless society, but it fails to take into consideration the place of women when envisioning this ideal society. Marxist feminist movements have realized this discrepancy and the "Wages for Housework" movement started the demand for women to be paid in the workplace as well as for their labor in the home in terms of "child care, cleaning, emotional support, even sex" (Jaffe).

Le Guin manages to do what capitalism and Marxism fail to do for women and provides the "Wages for Housework" movement with a model society in her depiction of the anarchist Anarres.

The Dispossessed provides an alternative reality with perceived feminist ideals, but Le Guin puts pressure on the common notions of a utopia by subtitling her novel an "ambiguous utopia." The power is thus placed in the hands of the readers as Le Guin experiments with what really constitutes a utopia. She envisions "what an inhabitable, ideal society might look like," according to Jim Jose, as is usually the utopian process (180). Jose describes Le Guin's ideal society as consisting of "a political life based upon consent" and a "non-sexist and non-racist, essentially egalitarian" society (180). The anarchic system on Anarres establishes a political life based upon consent by allowing individuals to govern themselves rather than be governed. Jobs are considered work assignments, and they are determined by PDC based on the need and benefit to society (Le Guin 48). Work is not defined in terms of gender either, as women and men are assigned to jobs alike.

This is most evident in the way in which Takver, Shevek's partner, and Rulag, Shevek's mother, treat their work. Traditional roles in patriarchal society determine that the man works to support the family while the woman stays home to care for the children and do domestic work. Le Guin directly challenges these traditional gender roles. When Shevek is finishing school, he notices that the girls in his class "wanted to complete their training and start their research or find a post they liked" (Le Guin 55). Takver is one of these girls and is studying biology. When she and Shevek begin their partnership, Takver works as a "fish geneticist," essentially researching ways of increasing fish for food (Le Guin 185). Not only does Takver have a job she is passionate about, but she excels at it. She runs her own research projects, and contrary to traditional gender roles, Takver is the one who often works more hours and spends more time at the office for her work when compared to Shevek's posting assignment (Le Guin 187). This only occurs, however, because of the anarchic system, which provides women with more freedom to work as they wish. Takver does not have to fill the traditional role of a woman staying at home to clean and raise their children, because these tasks are eliminated by the anarchic system. On Anarres children are raised in a communal setting where it is someone's job to teach and care for the children. Thus, Takver is able to work without the burden of domesticity, because the anarchic system eliminates the traditional roles of the patriarchal system.

Le Guin also portrays the increased freedom of women in an anarchic system in terms of work through the character Rulag. Growing up on Anarres, children are sent to school where they learn with other children their age. They sleep in dormitories and spend all their days in these schools, because under anarchy, there is no concept of individual possession, even in the sense that birth parents are not responsible for raising their own children. Partners have the option of keeping their children at home when they are young, but by a certain age, partners are no longer the main caregivers for their children. This familial system is particularly freeing for women. Shevek's mother left at an early age, and while this caused some abandonment issues for Shevek, it was perfectly normal and expected in society on Anarres. For the Western reader, though, Shevek's abandonment issues work to set-up a critique of our own gendered proprietary assumptions about child rearing. This system of anarchy, in comparison to the patriarchal and capitalist system, reveal how women do not have to be responsible for the traditional child rearing roles. Instead, women are provided with every opportunity to focus on their work and not be solely responsible to care for their children. For Rulag, "work comes first … It has always come first" and anarchy is what made this possible for Rulag to do just that (Le Guin 123). The communal, anarchical system on Anarres provides women with more agency than the patriarchal, democratic system of the United States.

Le Guin makes this distinction between the two systems most obvious with Shevek's visit to Urras, the neighboring planet of Anarres. Susan Benfield claims that "through Shevek's observations of Urras, Le Guin paints a vivid picture of the abuses and inequities to which centralized government that is based on the protection of property is prone" (128). Urras is everything that Anarres is not. The political system on Urras closely relates to the democratic and capitalistic system of the United States. As Shevek travels around Urras and meets more people, the true distinction between women on Urras and Anarres is evidently presented. On Urras, women have little to no freedom or agency.

When Shevek arrives on Urras, he asks the same question proposed at the beginning of this paper: Where are the women? More specifically, Shevek asks "why there were no women on the ship" used to travel from planet to planet, and the response is that "running a space freighter was not women's work" (Le Guin 16). The comparison is obvious then, that work on Urras is far different than work on Anarres. The distinction becomes even clearer when the man from Urras asks Shevek, "Is it

true, Dr. Shevek, that women in your society [Anarres] are treated exactly like men?" (Le Guin 16). Such a question defines the perception and treatment of women on Urras. On Anarres, Shevek worked alongside other scientists who were women, but on Urras there are no female scientists or teachers (Le Guin 73). In fact, women rarely work on Urras, which fulfills the standard established by both capitalism and the patriarchy.

The capitalist expectation of women is defined and surrounded by domesticity, with no actual expectation of work or power, whereas women on Anarres are expected to do their fair share of the work. While on Urras, Shevek meets Vea, and she becomes the main representation of women on Urras, just as Takver and Rulag are the representation of women on Anarres. Vea is married to a wealthy man who travels regularly for work. With her husband's money and his regular absences, and without having to work herself, it initially appears as though Vea possesses a sense of freedom. This appearance is merely an illusion, though. As Shevek attempts to learn from Vea about the position of women, Vea challenges the notion that women on Urras are inferior to men. She claims that she is able to do what she likes to do, and more specifically, that the women actually run the men on Urras (Le Guin 215). While Vea may think she influences the men, it is clear that she does not, and her perceived freedom on Urras is misperceived. She does not actually possess any agency and is instead limited by the political system dominated by men.

Furthermore, unlike the women on Anarres, Vea is entirely characterized and defined by her role as a woman. This is represented by the focus on Vea's physical appearance. Shevek introduces Vea by describing how "Her breasts, shoulders, and arms were round, soft, and very white" (Le Guin 196). When Shevek sees Vea again in another interaction, he notices "Vea's slender feet, decorated with little white shoes on very high heels" (Le Guin 212). Each description of Vea resembles the literary device called a blazon – where the female body is compartmentalized in terms of its description. The female body is catalogued to redefine her as a material object that is the sum of her parts. Takver recognizes this characterization of women on Urras and sees them as "women who used their sexuality as a weapon in a power struggle with men" (Le Guin 212-213). As Shevek goes on to describe Vea, he says that "She was so elaborately and ostentatiously a female body that she seemed scarcely to be a human being" (Le Guin 213). Shevek's thoughts reveal how women like Vea on Urras

are treated like objects. There is no description of their mind and their capabilities, rather these women are broken into pieces based off of over-sexualized descriptions from men. Vea is merely a body, and as Shevek reveals, it is difficult to see Vea for the human she is. Essentially, as a woman on Urras, Vea is a piece of property and an object to be owned by men. Shevek recognizes this, as he reminds Vea that "you know that in the eyes of men you are a thing, a thing owned, bought, sold" (Le Guin 215). With his Anarres background, Shevek is able to clearly see through the illusion of Vea's self-proclaimed agency. Through Shevek's bluntly honest reflections of women on Urras, Le Guin characterizes Urras as a planet dominated by men with a political system also focused on men.

Vea then serves to highlight the stark contrast between women on Anarres and Urras. While Vea is under the false impression that she possesses agency and freedom as a woman of Urras, her message is significant to establishing *The Dispossessed* as a feminist text. Shevek asks what it is Vea does and she replies, "Why, run the men, of course!" (Le Guin 215). The significance in this quotation lies in the challenge it presents to the patriarchal society on Urras. According to the men, they are in power and rule the women, but unbeknownst to them, there are women willing to challenge their power. In *The Dispossessed*, this woman was Odo, but outside of the utopian realm, this woman is Ursula Le Guin herself.

The contrast between Takver on Anarres and Vea on Urras represents the exact elements and goals of a feminist utopia according to Carol Pearson in that "feminist utopian fiction usually begins by showing how women are profoundly alienated and limited by patriarchal society; they then go on to acquaint the reader with an alternative potential" (50). Vea, and the few other women Shevek interacts with on Urras, appear largely alienated and ultimately dispossessed when compared to the inclusive society that consists solely of men. In contrast, the position of Takver on Anarres seems far more freeing and appealing for women, especially in terms of an alternative to Urras. The chapters of *The Dispossessed* alternate between Shevek describing Urras then Anarres, and thus the narrative constantly shifts from a society in which women are inferior, to the alternative society where women are equal. This organization has the effect of creating an obvious comparison between how the world is and how the world could be.

The male narration of this story, then, supports the claim that feminism is not just a cause for

women, by women. While this initially proposes a critique of the feminist attempt from Le Guin herself as she recognizes that, "the utopia was (both in fact and fiction) founded by a woman [i.e. Odo], the protagonist is a man; and he dominates it in…a very masculine fashion" (Jose 183). While the protagonist is indeed a man and the majority of the narrative revolves around his complicated Temporal Theory of Time, I believe that Shevek dominates in a masculine way with the purpose of further benefiting feminism. On Anarres, there is no need to defend the role of women and their equality, but on Urras, it is necessary to challenge and question the inferiority of women. Considering the status of women on Urras, though, it would be nearly impossible for a woman to go to Urras and be taken seriously for her work in science, to be treated as an equal, and to consider equality for women. Shevek is able to do so, however, because he is a man in a man's world.

Shevek is not just any man, though. Before even stepping foot on Urras, Shevek confronts the Urrasti on their notions of women. When discussing work, Shevek explains that, "A person chooses work according to interest, talent, strength—what has sex to do with that?" (Le Guin 17). Immediately, Shevek challenges the idea that women should not work certain jobs, by asking a very simple, yet revealing question. Shevek asks a question that provokes thought in the real world, not just the fictitious dystopian world of Urras. For the most part, work in the twenty-first-century United States is still defined by traditional gender stereotypes, such as nursing and teaching being female-dominated fields and business and sales being male-dominated fields. Shevek has to be the character to ask this question, because on Urras he is perceived to have the authority and credibility to present such an idea to other men.

Shevek is also a man who would not be the same without the women in his life. He makes it clear that he has been influenced by intellectual and inspiring women, and this gives a specific power to women. The senior physicist at the Institute where Shevek studies physics is a woman, and Shevek claims that she "had the best mind among them"—them being women and men (Le Guin 56). Furthermore, Shevek defends the women in his life in front of the other physicists on Urras. One of the physicists ask, "Do you find any women capable of original intellectual work, Dr. Shevek?" and he responds by telling them, "Well, it was more that they found me. Mitis, in Northsetting, was my teacher. Also, Gvarab; you know of her, I think" (Le Guin 74). This exchange is significant in that first

Shevek recognizes that it was women who played an integral role in shaping him into the physicist he is and the theories he establishes. Shevek gives credit to women, when women on Urras receive chastisement and belittlement for their forced role of inferiority. Secondly, Shevek reveals to the Urrasti physicists that one of the Anarresti physicists they worked with was a woman. All along, they were unable to tell because of the lack of distinction between male and female names on Anarres. Knowing that a woman was writing and proving complex physics theories forces the Urrasti men to confront their belief that women are incapable of "original intellectual work" (Le Guin 74). Before learning of her gender, Oiie, a Urrasti physicist, believed that Gvarab was capable of producing intellectual work, and now that he knows Gvarab is a woman, Oiie can no longer confidently uphold his claim that women are incapable and deserve to be inferior. This one instance has the potential to critique other notions of women's incapacities harbored by the men on Urras. In his role as protagonist, Shevek provokes such critiques and provides a platform for feminism in a system dominated by male power.

Le Guin furthers Shevek's feminist platform by describing an instance of gender role reversal. Takver's job is intense, and many others are not able to do the work that she does. Shevek teaches classes and works on his theories, among a multitude of colleagues. As per the protocol on Anarres, people are required to work and complete their assignments but not to over-work themselves. Takver works outside of the home, while Shevek would often times work in the home. Sometimes Shevek would work himself to the point of fatigue, and when Takver "saw how hard Shevek was used she protested. She would have cried out as Odo's husband, Asieo, did once, 'For God's sake, girl, can't you serve Truth *a little at a time*?'—except that she was the girl and was unacquainted with God" (Le Guin 188). In this instance, there is a very clear gender role reversal as Shevek compares his partner to Odo's husband while also comparing himself to Odo, a woman. In doing so, Shevek is provided with an even stronger platform for feminism, because he himself has been in the position of the wife, at least metaphorically speaking. Comparing Shevek to the role of Odo allows him to use this freedom to reveal the agency women deserve and respond to the oppression women face.

To put this feminist reading in context with anarchy, then, it is the anarchic state that provides Le Guin with the freedom and flexibility to write a feminist utopia. In her article "Is Gender

Necessary?" Le Guin says, "To me the 'female principle' is, or at least historically has been, anarchic" (qtd. in Pearson 54). She goes on to say about *The Dispossessed* that "I think men mostly have to learn to be anarchists. Women don't have to learn" (qtd. in Pearson 54). To put this in context with the conversation pertaining to anarchy, capitalism, and Marxism, men have to learn to be anarchists because they are accustomed to creating and implementing laws. These laws are what guide and dictate men, whereas women can separate themselves from the law because for so long they have been separated from the world of capitalism and politics. Only until recently have women truly become part of the conversation when it comes to writing and passing laws.

Pearson suggests in her analysis of women and politics in utopian texts that anarchy is potentially the result of a feminist utopia. This is to say that a feminist utopia functions best when there are no laws and no form of government to enforce any form of oppression. According to Pearson, this is the case because for women, "The socialization to serve and to sacrifice one's own needs for those of others makes it possible for women to envision a society in which people cooperate, instead of competing, and nurture instead of dominate one another" (54). This has been proven outside of utopian worlds as well. U.S. Congresswoman, and current Speaker of the House, Nancy Pelosi served on the Foreign Affairs Committee during the Kosovo war in the later 1990s. When reconstruction began after the war, Pelosi recognized the importance of including women who were survivors of rape and abuse during the war. She recognized that by strengthening the women, the family becomes stronger as a whole and is better equipped for developing a society. It took a woman to focus on cooperation and nurturing a community back to prosperity, rather than implementing competition or domination.

Feminist utopias provide an example and image of what a world would look like with more female leaders. Perhaps, it would look more like anarchy on Anarres. Society would function under the priorities of equality and cooperation. Government would not enforce laws that create divisiveness or oppress marginalized groups; rather, government would only exist in the form of a computerized system that assigns jobs. Women, and men, would be free from domestic restrictions, if they so choose, to pursue a career and focus on work. Anarchy is often times a political system that evokes sensations of fear and extreme hesitancy, but when anarchy functions successfully in its true form,

as it is represented in *The Dispossessed*, then it erases images of arbitrary chaos and instead evokes a desire for freedom from oppression and the ability to live according to one's own personal rule.

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An Inverted Dystopia: Margaret Cavendish's Utopia, *The Blazing World*

By Julie Santini

ABSTRACT

This new interpretation of Margaret Cavendish's The Blazing World *(1666) shows that women engaged with witchcraft theory in early modern Europe. Remnants of the early modern witch-craze exist in theoretical texts by the men who were at the heart of defining and defending the 'truths' about witchcraft. Notably, as cases of witchcraft were predominantly against women, women's voices remain unheard. Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle, was a rare example of a woman attempting to insert herself into intellectual circles like the Royal Society. Having frequented the circles of men that believed they were scientifically proving witchcraft, it is unlikely that Cavendish did not have her own opinions on the subject. By showing how Cavendish's dystopian science-fiction novel echoes men's theories about witchcraft, the parody she makes of their theories is brought to light and earns her a place in the wider scholarship on the subject.*

Historically, written language has been a male dominated discipline used to shape society. Despite their position on the margins, women held opinions about these predominantly male thought processes. An early and rare example of a woman parodying male perceptions of society can be seen in the work of Margaret Cavendish, duchess of Newcastle (1623-1673). In her work *The Blazing World*, Cavendish subverts elements of witchcraft theory to demonstrate how belief systems are constructed, how they shape society, and the fragility of such constructs.

The early modern European witch-hunts were accompanied by many publications on witchcraft theory. They described witches and explained how to do away with them. Men were predominantly the authors of these texts and frequently cited one another as they continuously redefined witchcraft by building dystopian worldviews. Such dystopias were characterized by women succumbing to devil-worship in the absence of men. An important textual example is the Catholic French jurist Jean Bodin's *On the Demon-Mania of Witches* (1580), which was more widely discussed as witch trials became more common (Clark 116). Other examples include King James I's *Daemonologie* (1597), and medical writer William Drage's *Daimonomogeai* (1665). Since women generally existed on the margins of society and were allowed to function only in relation to men, they were defenseless against such accusations. A woman unattached to a man was marginalized further and more easily targeted as a witch. Stuart Clark notes that "the facts of the matter are that witches could not possibly have ridden to sabbats, worshipped devils, and come away with the power of maleficium" (3). And yet, the persecution of mostly women was a reality in Europe well into the seventeenth-century.

Despite women's place on the margins of society, Cavendish was one woman who attempted to participate in its male dominated intellectual circles. Margaret Cavendish frequently struggled to be seen as an intellectual equal by her male contemporaries—namely at the Royal Society, which in the 1660s was beginning to give the "existence of witchcraft scientific credibility" (Clark 303). Unlike some of the great thinkers of her time, Cavendish did not believe in witchcraft. This paper will demonstrate how Cavendish's utopian text, *The Description of a New World, Called the Blazing World* (1666) inverts dystopian ideas by male authors and thinkers by alluding to tropes in witchcraft narratives in ways to render them utopian. Before expanding on this, it is worth knowing more about

Margaret Cavendish and her contemporaries.

Margaret Cavendish was born into the wealthy gentry Lucas family in 1623 as the youngest of eight children. Following the outbreak of the English Civil Wars (1642-1660), Margaret's mother allowed her to become the Queen's maid of honor and join the King's court at Oxford in 1643. A year later, Margaret fled to France with Queen Henrietta Maria and, in 1645, she married a royalist, William Cavendish, Marquis of Newcastle (Mendelson 9). By 1653, Margaret was living in London where she spent her time productively writing, attending lectures, and studying natural philosophy (Mendelson 9-10). The Royal Society was formed in 1660 and only tolerated the presence of women they perceived as potential patrons, which Cavendish was. Thus, Cavendish spent the better part of her career attempting to assert herself in a man's world. She did so by being a prolific writer and publishing opinions on natural philosophy under her own name at a time when women typically published anonymously. Her works often considered issues of gender, putting into question if women were truly in subordination to men in society (Fitzmaurice). Through writing, Cavendish remained in constant dialogue with her male contemporaries.

Unlike many of her contemporaries at the Royal Society, Cavendish did not believe in witchcraft. In 2007, Jacqueline Broad's article, "Margaret Cavendish and Joseph Glanvill: science, religion and witchcraft," examines differences between Cavendish and Glanvill's approaches to natural philosophy to understand why Glanvill, a fellow of the Royal Society, believed in witchcraft and Cavendish did not (493). Broad's article is a rare exception, as scholarship seldom links Cavendish to witchcraft, even when it links witchcraft to natural philosophy. For example, Stuart Clark's 1997 chapter on the Scientific Revolution and witchcraft excludes Cavendish but focuses on how Royal Society fellows—Joseph Glanvill, Henry More and Robert Boyle—thought of witchcraft as a "proper subject for science" (297) and used it to "protect traditional Anglican theology" (300). More broadly, scholarship on witchcraft has evolved from the belief that witches were real to the examination of witches and witchcraft as textual constructs by intellectuals in the medieval and early modern periods.

These medieval and early modern textual constructs became an enduring and evolving belief system that resulted in the persecution of many across Europe. In his 1997 book, *Instruments of*

Darkness, James Sharpe declares interest in studying how so many individuals managed to be convinced that witches were real (8). More specifically, his book aimed to explain how differing groups of people, many intelligent and educated, were able to believe in witches by way of avoiding what Edward Thompson refers to as "the massive condescension of posterity" (6-7).

Recognizing Cavendish as an intelligent and educated person of the time may avoid this "condescension." Her lack of belief in witchcraft permeates *The Blazing World* by offering a subtle critique of belief in witches. Subtle, because elements of witchcraft, such as the sabbath and witches' familiars come through the text but are unnamed in any overtly recognizable way. *The Blazing World*, possibly the first science fiction written by a woman, is an alternative world created by Cavendish as a utopia for women. It has been argued that Cavendish "turns Bacon's *New Atlantis* on its head" (Mendelson 31). The idea of turning something on its head is fitting with how Blazing World has been set up globally, whereby the planets are aligned at extreme poles, so that one may travel from one world to another via a narrow tunnel (Mendelson 24). Both of these descriptions insinuate an inversion. European intellectuals frequently viewed and explained things through binaries such as good and evil, male and female, or hot and cold (Briggs 99). Furthermore, in witchcraft theory, inversions signify disorder and the malign. Going forward, this paper will discuss how Cavendish inverts elements of her own society by creating a society that mirrors it; turns it "on its head." In her society, Cavendish has women rule in place of men, as demonstrated by the story's protagonist, the Empress. As we will see later, the character of the Empress can be likened to a witch. However, before focusing on her, it would be best to get a sense of the world in which she lives.

The story begins when the main character, known only as the Lady, enters another world, following a ship accident with a merchant who kidnapped her. Upon her arrival, the Bear-men, Fly-men, Bird-men, Fish-men, Ape-men, and other creatures welcome her. The Blazing World's Emperor wants to worship her like a deity but makes her his wife when she explains that she is only mortal. Through their union, she becomes the Empress and acquires power. She asks the creatures and Spirits many questions about the World, finds a Platonick female friend in the Duchess, and makes changes to all she sees as problematic in religion, philosophy, and science. Due to news of war in her homeland, she eventually returns home to fight the enemies.

As a work of fiction, *The Blazing World* allowed Cavendish to safely critique the ideas men published at the time, many of which came to be accepted as fact due to a belief in men's authority on all things intellectual. As Clark says: "The damage that could be inflicted on witchcraft beliefs by skepticism depended on how these beliefs were defended. But because demonology presupposed doubt, it often anticipated the attacks made on it, with the result that the great witchcraft debate became circular and inconclusive" (195). This suggests that theories on the subject were fragile and required regular reaffirmation. Cavendish demonstrates her own way of instilling belief through the Empress. Instilling belief could be done through "Art," which was how she "kept [citizens] in constant belief, without inforcement or blood-shed; for she knew well, that belief was a thing not to be forced or pressed upon the people, but to be instilled in their minds by gentle perswasions" (Cavendish 102). From this, Cavendish appears to suggest how belief systems can be more organically established through trust building. Additionally, it is a subtle critique of witchcraft theorists who managed to instill a belief that led to the persecution of innocent women, as well as advice for political rhetoric. In her *Philosophical Letters*, she wrote of how "many a good, old honest woman hath been condemned innocently, and suffered death wrongfully, by the sentence of some foolish and cruel Judges, merely upon this suspition of Witchcraft, when as really there hath been no such thing" (Cavendish). This statement demonstrates Cavendish's awareness of the plight of those around her. A stable society requires trust, and trust relies on truths. Here, Cavendish inverts the falsity of witchcraft to the truth of its non-existence in order to render a dangerous world for the persecuted a haven.

Cavendish creates a utopia where persecuted people from her society are permitted to exist. She uses various figures condemned in the seventeenth-century to populate her utopia, namely women. Women were most targeted during the witch-hunts, and there is little in the literature that explains why (Clark 116). In her note to the reader she explains: "I have made a world of my own: for which no body, I hope, will blame me, since it is everyone's power to do the like" (Cavendish 60). This statement ridicules what fictional works by men about witchcraft created in the material world: a witch craze. Though a wealthy woman, she continued to be marginalized within the intellectual circle she wished to frequent, the Royal Society. Regardless of status, the role of women in society remained precarious. Using her position of status to publish under her own name highlighted the implications

a piece of writing could have on society. This act of publishing rendered her vulnerable to scrutiny since she often had different opinions from her contemporaries. Differences lead to factions, which lead to marginalization, negating the agenda in Blazing World to create a unified world.

Leaving the religion of Blazing World unnamed avoids divisions and unifies the world. Though Cavendish was Anglican, she had minimal interest in any particular religion. Her lack of specification for the religion in Blazing World where they "unanimously acknowledge, worship and adore the Onely, Omnipotent, and Eternal God" advocates for the root of religion to be the same (Cavendish 72). This unanimity means their religion can be a version of any religion and, therefore, can include anyone. Having the Empress establish a religion and build churches also means it can be any gender's religion. The Empress's creation of her own congregation, where she can preach and be head, opposes the exclusion of women. Upon her arrival to the Blazing World, she believes them to be Jews or Turks because there are no women. She asks why

> "bar them from religious Assemblies? It is not fit, said they, that Men and Women should be promiscuously together in time of Religious Worship; for their company hinders Devotion, and makes many, instead of praying to God, direct their devotion to their Mistresses." (Cavendish 72-73)

While women's exclusion insinuates that they are a wrongful presence, the questioning of whether they were Jews or Turks emphasizes that it does not matter. Both religions' exclusion of women makes them the same. In witchcraft, women were often perceived as the sexually insatiable gender. However, in Blazing World, men are also held accountable when it comes to sexual desire. Cavendish portrays administrative beings as eunuchs "To keep them from Mariage: For Women and Children most commonly make disturbance both in Church and State" (73). Thus, if a man in politics has not been "fixed," he may also make a disturbance.

The initial inability to determine if the men were Jews or Turks is rendered futile by the new religion that unifies and welcomes women. Despite being called by different names, the new religion that unifies and welcomes women. Despite being called by different names, the similar rules likened the religions to one another. Mendelson notes that when Cavendish mentions that "numbers are onely marks of remembrance," she refers to "the mystical numerology of Christian cabbalists from the

'Germatria' of Jewish Cabbalists" (105). This Christian borrowing from Jewish tradition further illustrates the futility of creating differences between religions based on their names while their practices resemble one another. Much of witchcraft theory was intertwined with religious debates. Prior to being intellectual and theoretical, books on witchcraft were evangelical and concerned with piety, aimed "at clerical practice, and their religiosity was the religiosity of churches" (Clark 437-438). Like women, Jews were a marginalized group that was, historically, demonized (Mendelson 172). Additionally, Jews were associated with the anti-Christ and would flock to him (Clark 427). The expectation was that Jews would convert to Christianity (Mendelson 174). However, as mentioned, Christianity borrowed from Judaism. As the group Cavendish refers to in the Congregation is guessed to be a group of Jewish women, they would have been doubly marginalized.

Cavendish had close friends in the crypto-Jewish Duarte sisters who, like her and her husband, were "singled out for persecution for their religio-political allegiance" (Mendelson 184). For some theorists, the persecution of witches was similar, as it may have had an anti-Catholicism agenda, as in *Discoverie of Witchcraft* by Reginald Scot (Sharpe 54). This is significant because, as Robin Briggs argues, "The stereotype is obvious; it consisted of inverting all the positive values of society, adding a lot of lurid detail (often borrowed from earlier allegations), then throwing the resulting bucket of filth over the selected victims" (32). By using an illustration that encompasses many factors, Cavendish demonstrates being cognizant of more than she often receives credit for. Contrary to these converging variables, the Empress's religion remains vague and is only specified insofar as being a religion and exclusively for women.

The idea of an all-female congregation is like a witches' sabbath. Cavendish's Congregation of Women resembles a coven where women possess qualities unseen by men, including their true female power. The Empress established "a Congregation of Women" where the women "had quick wits, subtile conceptions, clear understandings, and solid judgments, became, in a short time, very devout and zealous Sisters" (Cavendish 100). This illustration of the congregation inverts what witchcraft theory describes as the sabbath. For witches, the sabbath was a meeting of women that followed the making of a pact with the Devil filled with "nocturnal conspiracy, black magic, child murder, orgiastic sexuality and perverted ritual" (Briggs 32). For Cavendish, though, there was no coercing from the

Devil's part, as the Empress is the leader of the other women. Rather, the fact that she is a female author reporting on a female meeting offers an inside scoop, whereas a female meeting as reported by man can only have the legitimacy of hearsay. The witches' sabbath depended on frailty and gullibility as elements of the female condition (Clark 117). Another element of the female condition in witchcraft concerns emotions.

The Empress's friendship with the Duchess demonstrates a palette of emotions associated with witches. Ambition, melancholy, and lust were seen as traits that women and the Devil had in common (Clark 113). To associate certain emotions with witches renders those emotions negative. Cavendish decriminalizes those emotions by endowing her main characters with them. These emotions were expressed when "Truly said the Duchess to the Empress (for between dear friends there's no concealment, they being like several parts of one united body) my Melancholy proceeds from an extreme ambition" (Cavendish 121). The Duchess's ambition is to be a Princess. Cavendish was cursed with a similar ambition, as she prefaced and concluded her book with the idea that she could not be Caesar or Alexander. From this, an ambition to rule from the position of having a major title can be seen as predominantly masculine, as her model references are male. Melancholy was seen as an illness. Based on what is known of Cavendish, this form of sadness may be a result of the disappointment caused by rejection from a male dominated society. Like the aforementioned unnoticed intellectual qualities, these emotional aspects of the female condition were misunderstood by men. Cavendish defends these gender differences by reminding the reader that "there are so many irregular motions in Nature, and 'tis but a folly to think that Art should be able to regulate them, since Art itself is, for the most part, irregular" (100). Thus, the condemnation of these emotions as diabolical was a consequence of male fears.

Lust was another sinful emotion throughout the period and can be seen in the relationship between the Empress and the Duchess. Their relationship was such that "they became Platonick Lovers, although they were both Females" (Cavendish 121). The "although" in the sentence implies the unusual nature of such a relationship between women. This emotion may be perceived as lust given that "Souls of Lovers live in the bodies of their Beloved" (Cavendish 118) and "Your Soul, said the Empress, shall live with my Soul, in my Body; for I shall onely desire your Councel and Advice"

(Cavendish 146). Similar situations were less frequently discussed in theoretical texts, though they did exist. Women in Fez allegedly "seduced women who came to seek their counsel," which turned them away from their husbands. Gerhild Williams argued this type of sexual activity to be a threat to the social order (81). However, Cavendish redeemed Blazing World's society from this in an act with the Duke. When "the Duke had three Souls in one Body," the Empress and the Duchess, the Duchess grew jealous, but realized "that no Adultery could be committed amongst Platonick Lovers" (Cavendish 133). By having everyone participate, lust is legitimized, or neutralized. The male authority, the Duke, also partakes. Alternatively, this lustful encounter echoes the sex that allegedly took place with the Devil at the Sabbath, when all the witches at the meeting engaged with him. From this exchange with the Duke, and the Empress getting her power from the Emperor, the male figures are most like the Devil throughout the narrative. The act of sex may be seen as an act of worship within a context "[t]hat the Power the Devil gives, is on condition of worship to him" (Drage 24). By endowing these characters with these diabolical traits, Cavendish sheds light on how man created what came to be known as the witch, or the Empress, via a certain union. Within this context, the legitimization of the act comes from the legitimization of marriage where the Devil, as known in witchcraft, does not exist. However, if man creates the witch, man is the devil. Despite this, generalizations cannot be made of men at the time, as evidenced by the support Cavendish received by her husband, from whom she herself received her title.

Generally, the Duke and the Emperor empower rather than control or stifle women. Contrary to the Devil having power over Witches, the Emperor gifts the Empress power. When the Emperor meets the Lady, "he conceived her to be some Goddess, and offered to worship her," before she refused and gave her worldly possessions through marriage (Cavendish 69). In this moment, Cavendish subverts the theories of witchcraft by writing: "But her subjects, who could hardly be perswaded to believe her mortal, tender'd her all veneration and worship due to a Deity" (70). Alternatively, witches were seen to be possessed by the Devil and thus burned as opposed to worshipped. As King James clarifies "the Witches ar servants onelie, and slaues to the Devil" (9). Contrary to this, rather than answer to the Emperor, the Empress finds freedom in their union. By showing a man who encourages women in society, Cavendish reasserts that women are creatures of

intelligence who merit being consciously active members of society, as opposed to the servants of their male counterparts. Her husband may have been her real-life model for this, as he frequently lent her the support and encouragement the rest of society did not. Additionally, she affirms that she is not against men and does see the potential for equality among the sexes.

The power of one's sex can be superseded by the power of the sexless soul. The question of how many souls can occupy a body arises in witchcraft theory and is addressed in *The Blazing World*. In witchcraft theory, Satan typically possesses a woman, making her a witch, while in Blazing World, the Empress succeeds in entering the vehicles of others, rather than being entered by others. The vehicle is the body that a soul uses to travel. This contrast demonstrates how the female controls as opposed to succumbs to being controlled, or possessed, in *Blazing World*. In the case of Mary Hall of Gadsen in 1664, two devils allegedly possessed her. When they spoke from within her, they often said: "We are onely two little Imps…sometimes we are in the shape of Serpents, sometimes of Flyes, sometimes of Rats or Mice" (Drage 33). Imprisoning a witch was a solution to having Satan leave her "if Satan will give leave; however, her bewitching of others is prevented" (Drage 24). From this perspective, the woman has no agency and acts only as a conduit for the Devil who sends his minions. Alternatively, in Blazing World, when the Empress asks the Spirits "whether souls did chuse bodies? They [answer], That Platonicks believed, the souls of Lovers lived in the bodies of their Beloved" (Cavendish 113). By enabling her to do this, Cavendish returns power and agency to the female figure. It also renders positive something perceived as negative: possession. Sending her animal-men to do things the way witches allegedly did with their imps likens the Empress to a witch. However, while narratives told by men depict witches as villainous, Cavendish renders similar actions done by the Empress pure, as it is for the beloved. And unlike Cavendish's experience with the Royal Society, what she can and cannot do is not at the mercy of a male figure. Instead, the Empress has her own assistants.

Rather than being subordinate, the Empress has her own subordinates. The males in *Blazing World*, aside from the Duke and the Emperor are generally half man and half animal. The Empress assigns each a specialized profession for their species (Cavendish 71). In witchcraft, these hybrid creatures are known as Imps. According to William Drage, "sometimes the Witches send their Imps" (11). This signifies that witches had assistants to do their bidding. However, because the witches are at

the service of the Devil, they are somewhat at the service of the Imps: "These Imps that the Devil commands some Witches to nourish, do instigate them to give them command to do evil" (Drage 16). By being at the Devil's command, witches lose power over the Imps through a feedback loop created by this triad. Contrarily, Cavendish restructures the hierarchy by removing the Devil—an overseeing male. In the *Blazing World*, when the hybrid-men first appear, the Lady has just arrived in the strange place where the Bear-men and Fox-men are "waiting on her" (Cavendish 64). They are immediately established as servants and Imp-like. Later, when the Empress is displeased, the Bear-men seemingly cower as they were "troubled at her Majesties displeasure concerning their Telescopes, kneel'd down, and in the humblest manner petitioned that they might not be broken" (Cavendish 79). Again, the Bear-men appear like witches' Imps. The Empress, then, had employees fitting the same profile as witches. The Empress herself appears witch-like by having Imps at all. Cavendish has orders come directly from the Empress as opposed to her being a conduit used by the Devil. However, unlike the service her fictional characters received, Cavendish's reality was marked by continued opposition.

Many fellows of the Royal Society challenged Cavendish's belief in keeping religion and philosophy separate. Where religion is the immaterial, philosophy is the material. This is where believers in witchcraft differ from non-believers. The aforementioned Glanvill, More, and Boyle endorsed the immaterial (Clark 298), while Cavendish believed that something from nothing was impossible:

> For how is it possible, that a natural nothing can have being in Nature? If it be no substance, it cannot have a being, and if no being, it is nothing; Wherefore the distinction between subsisting in another body, is a meer nicety, and non-sense; for there is nothing in Nature that can subsist of, or by it self (89).

Alternatively, William Drage believed the world did come from nothing:

> This world was made of nothing, by Spiritual Power, and may be resolved into nothing again by the same Power; and we can resolve dense Bodies into Air, and coagulate Air into Water; and the Devil, quatenus a Spirit, can do that, that a Spirit can do; but as being the worse, and weaker then God, he varies; but by Gods permission he is able to do much (19).

By opposing intangible ideas of witchcraft, such as Drage's argument in support of making something

out of nothing, Cavendish demonstrates the impossibility of the existence of witches by mocking Glanvill's ideas that the immaterial activity can exist in nature (Clark 302).

Cavendish uses the idea of an army going to war to criticize the idea that immaterial spirits can have material effects to counter ideas like those of Glanvill. The Spirit without a body accomplishes nothing. Though the spirits are present throughout, they become useless at a time of war because:

> Spirits could not arm themselves, nor make any use of Artificial Arms or Weapons; for their Vehicles were Natural Bodies, not Artificial: Besides, said she, the violent and strong actions of War, will never agree with Immaterial Spirits; for Immaterial Spirits cannot fight, nor make Trenches, Fortifications, and the like. (Cavendish 143)

Cavendish refutes the idea that the immaterial can affect the material in a material way. This contradicts what theoretical texts believed to be possible, such as Drage's belief "[t]hat one Spirit may destroy an Army of men" (25). Unlike basic travel, war must deliver material results. Bodin discusses travel in these terms of how

> [s]ometimes both the body and the soul are transported, and this ecstacy is common with witches who have a formal pact with the Devil. They are sometimes transported in spirit, with the body remaining insensate; and sometimes in body and soul when they go to night assemblies. (65)

These night assemblies would have been the sabbaths, as previously mentioned. It was believed that witches could physically be asleep, while their spirit flew itself to elsewhere (Roper 104). Such a superpower proposes a contradiction to the weaker female sex that typically succumbs to the devil in witchcraft theory.

Contrary to witchcraft theory, the Devil is only present in the Blazing World when discussing the Creation of the World, or the book of Genesis. Witchcraft theory depends on the presence of the Devil. When discussing good and evil, there is no evil to match or supersede good. That there was a supernatural Good, which was God; but they knew of no supernatural Evil that was equal to God" (Cavendish 114). The good of God is always superior. Some believe that Eve was the first witch, having been seduced by the Devil and tempting Adam (Clark 113). As argued by King James I, among others, the reason for Eve and women's seduction by the Devil is because "that sexe is frailer then man" (114).

By that logic, how did the weaker sex, Eve, then succeed in tempting the stronger sex, Adam? From this, it can be said that theories of witchcraft are irrelevant, from Cavendish's perspective, since the supernatural Good of God would always supersede it, rendering the demonic notion of evil inferior and nonthreatening. The Spirits tell the Empress that, in the Creation of the World, "the Devil was within the Serpent" (Cavendish 109). As seen earlier, the Imps sometimes take the shape of a serpent. This is the only instance that the Devil is perceived as anyone. This drove them out of Paradise.

Belief and imagination play a role in the creation of reality. The immaterial is a suspension of reality. For instance, the Spirits explain that Any Mortal can be a Creator "for every humane Creature can create an Immaterial World fully inhabited by immaterial Creatures, and populous of immaterial subjects" (Cavendish 123). In reevaluating the Ancients, she realizes that "no patterns would do her any good in the framing of her World; she was resolved to make a World of her own invention, and this World was composed of sensitive and rational self-moving Matter; indeed, it was composed onely of the rational, which is the subtilest and purest degree of Matter" (Cavendish 126). Her society and its imagined societies displeased and neglected her, so she made her own.

Cavendish had a difficult time fitting in with the intellectual men because she was their inverted counterpart. In 1667, a year following the publication of *The Blazing World*, Cavendish was stereotyped by Samuel Pepys as ignorant on a visit to the Royal Society (Mendelson 13). It does not seem unlikely that she was accustomed to this perception of her, as her frustration pours out of *The Blazing World*, which functions as a translation of these real-life experiences into fiction. Cavendish's utopia creates space for women, primarily by having women rule it, as the Empress leads conferences as well as preaches in the congregation. This creation of a female space due to male ineptitude is not unlike her real life, as seen in her experience with printers. While earlier on Cavendish went through several printers and complained about their work, she eventually settled on Anne Maxwell in 1666, whom she worked with for a long time, printing and re-printing her works (Montgomery 25). Kaylor Montgomery notes how Maxwell is then one with technological aptitudes and parallels their friendship to that of the Duchess and the Empress (26-27).

Given the theories on witchcraft having been invented or perpetuated to push certain agendas, such as re-Christianization or explaining the inexplicable, it seems understandable that theories were

seldom set in stone. Authors managed to take on languages and adopt formats that looked familiar and were thus understood to propagate the desired thoughts for the time. With *Blazing World*, Cavendish offers a voice to women by publishing under her own name, as this was atypical of women. By creating a world where the female characters are central and leaders, she inverts the expectations of women as often dictated by men. This interpretation means to uncover, perhaps, another layer to Cavendish's *Blazing World*, further demonstrating its nuanced composition and her critique on the Royal Society but, more specifically, analyzing the consequences of work by men as it led to the deaths of innocent women.

Hopefully, this is only the beginning of Margaret Cavendish's inclusion into the study of witchcraft theory. To continue excluding her would be to continue proving her point as we enter the mid twenty-first century. Whether moving backwards or forwards in time, the tragedy of the present is that change has been minimal for women, as women continue to parody their societies as Cavendish did. For instance, *The Washington Post* published "The Hideous, Diabolical Truth about Hillary Clinton," a satirical piece by Alexandra Petri about Clinton which reads like an early modern text on witchcraft, weeks before the 2016 election. Though it is meant to be a "light" take on the news, the public's comments suggest that individuals would read such a piece as fact. Other commentators explicitly advocated for the satire's accuracy. That such parody persists over three hundred years later renders Cavendish's work all the more relevant today, as neglecting works from the past only brings our present closer to it.

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Divinity and its Imitation in the Utopian Visions of *Death Note* and *Parable of the Sower*

By Allison Akers

ABSTRACT

This paper explores the impact of divinity and divine imitation in the anime series Death Note *by Tsugumi Ohba and the novel* Parable of the Sower *by Octavia Butler, comparing the philosophies of their respective protagonists and the success of their utopian visions.* Death Note's *protagonist's utopian vision become dystopian because of his violent tendencies and pursuit to become a god, while* Parable of the Sower's *protagonist's utopian vision succeeds because of her trust in others and her view of god as an ever changing force that people must shape to survive.*

INTRODUCTION

Divinity and utopia are often intertwined. Utopia represents an idealized society and shapeshifts based on a person's perception of a perfect world. The utopian concept has existed for hundreds if not thousands of years, even if it did not have the title of "utopia" that Thomas More coined in 1516. Early examples exist in Christian narratives such as the Garden of Eden and the prospect of eternal paradise beyond the earthly plain, if a person is virtuous in life and follows teachings in the Old and New Testaments. In modern examples, literature and television shows such as Octavia Butler's *Parable of the Sower* and the anime adaptation of the *Death Note* manga series by Tsugumi Ohba focus on returning paradise to Earth, although the success of each work's utopian vision is determined by the protagonists' view of God and how they choose to imitate divinity. *Death Note's* utopian vision is a failure because its main protagonist focuses on obtaining godhood, while *Parable of the Sower's* vision is successful because it relies on the betterment of society and viewing God as change.

Butler's novel highlights issues like dependence on material possessions, class status, and family dynamics to correct them and create a perfect representation of what society should be in post-apocalyptic Los-Angeles, while *Death Note* focuses on human nature's violent tendencies and purging the world of sin in modern Japan. Utopia for one person cannot exist without encroaching on the happiness of another, leading ultimately to failure, sometimes at a catastrophic level; it is a desert mirage: beautiful and full of possibility and hope, but when examined up close, it dissolves into nothingness. Pure utopia cannot exist on Earth, because humanity is flawed. It seems logical, then, that a perfect being, or deity, would be the sole entity that could create a perfect world. *Parable of the Sower* recognizes that human imperfection and stresses that God is an ever-changing force, while *Death Note* explores the consequences of when a person tries to achieve godlike status to rule over a society and the disastrous consequences that follow for its protagonist.

Death Note follows Light Yagami: a genius, hard-working high school student who finds a black notebook referred to as the "Death Note." It allows him to kill anyone he pleases by writing their name in it, and he forms a tenuous alliance with Ryuk—the *shinigami*, or "death god," that dropped the notebook in the human world. Light starts using the Death Note to eliminate major criminals in

the world in hopes that he will someday rid the world of everyone who he has judged to be evil and thereby become a god. His utopia stands on the idea that he is the sole person who can save the world. However, as the police start investigating and he matches wits against a brilliant detective, Light starts eliminating anyone who gets in his way, including innocent police officers. His plans for a perfect society seem to be precluded by those who are unwilling to accept change or recognize the overall good that Light is doing in the world, at least in his own mind.

Light's inevitable death at the hands of police is not due to society's ineptness at recognizing his perfect vision. Light's utopia fails because it is founded on violence, selfishness, and pride. In contrast, the Earthseed settlement created at the end of *Parable of the Sower* is built on a sense of trust and community. Lauren Olamina, Butler's protagonist, recognizes that utopia is formed not just by one person but through the efforts of many to create a better society. While Light relies on intimidation and violence to achieve his goal, Lauren and her friends care for one another and see each other as equals who are all trying to escape their own dystopias. Light only views others as puppets in his master plan, resulting in the deterioration of his mental state and the loss of focus on his noble, if misguided, efforts to rid the world of crime.

GOD AND UTOPIA'S IMPACT IN *DEATH NOTE* AND *PARABLE OF THE SOWER*

Death Note, an anime series set in modern-day Japan and referencing Japanese gods of death like the *shinigami*, draws inspiration from other cultures and themes. In fact, *Death Note* explores concepts that date back to early Greek, Hellenistic, and Roman periods. In his article, "The Divine Human Being," Helmut Koester explains that, in early Greek civilization, being godlike did not strictly adhere to a person being good. Rather, it was "reserved for those special individuals who, by their powerful and inspired deeds, had demonstrated that they were in fact more than just human" (Koester 244). This can be applied to *Death Note* from episode one, where Light discovers the Death Note and uses it to control death and eliminate criminals. Light is committing hundreds of murders, but his actions fit the Greek model for a divine person, as he is intelligent, powerful, and given power to control others' deaths by the influence of a *shinigami*. He is fighting for a just cause, to create a better world, even if he is going about it through drastic means.

As he kills innocent police officers and detectives that try to catch him later in the series, though, the theme of divine imitation transfers into the Hellenistic and Roman periods of the concept of divinity, where Koester states that divinity became a tool for "shaping philosophical theory and religious propaganda" (244). Divinity was ascribed to those in positions of power, such as emperors and kings, and limited to men because women were unable to hold those same positions (244). This version of godhood becomes Light's central aim. He wants to secure the power and glory of a divine being without considering the consequences of his actions to the innocents who stand in his way. The power of a god tempts Light, but he does not accept the responsibility that that power entails. It also feeds into his callous treatment of Misa Amane, who shows up in Episode Eleven and becomes Light's partner in crime. He uses her as a pawn for his own gain and does not value her life above the criminals he kills.

Death Note not only draws inspiration from older versions of Christianity but also modern tenants of it. Being godlike in modern Christianity refers primarily to enacting good deeds and, in some cases, martyrdom, according to Anders Petersen's article, "Attaining Divine Perfection through Different Forms of Imitation," but the idea of revering and worshipping a being that has ultimate control over life and death remains firm (13). This premise of reverence and worship is present in *Death Note* as well. Light hopes to achieve godlike reverence for himself, but his interactions with actual gods undermine this concept of showing the divine respect and reflect Light's selfish nature. Episode One displays this when Light first encounters Ryuk and treats him as more of an accomplice or servant (albeit bribing Ryuk to do his bidding with apples can be construed as a metaphor for the forbidden fruit that the serpent tempted Adam and Eve with in the book of Genesis). Initially, Light shows some fear of Ryuk, but once he realizes Ryuk will not harm him, he grows confident and explains his master plan to rid the world of crime and become a god in the process. The flaw in this conversation is when Ryuk remarks that if Light murders all criminals, the only bad person left will be Light himself. Light disregards him, saying, "I have no idea what you're talking about. I'm a hardworking honors student who's considered to be one of Japan's best and brightest" ("Rebirth" 00:20:51-00:20:59). Light believes his academic prowess is enough to judge others for their sins. The thought does not cross his mind that intelligence is not enough to condemn people. Until this point in

his life, Light has been a person of exemplary character and success; he has been praised for all his achievements. Since he has been put on such a high pedestal by peers, friends, and family, Light cannot fathom being wrong. This justification points to larger issues that prevent his utopia from coming to fruition, such as self-absorption, confidence, and hunger for power, which become dangerous factors as the series progresses. Light is not concerned with Ryuk's observation about him being the sole bad person left once his work is finished, because he believes his hard work and intelligence justify his actions. His merits serve as a shield to deflect any dissenting opinions others have of his actions, and from this point, it becomes clear that Light is incapable of examining the flaws in himself that he is so shrewd at seeing in others.

Lauren Olamina's concept of the divine contrasts to Light's idea of divinity and the traditional concept of God found in Christianity. While she was raised in a Baptist household, Lauren does not see God as an entity the way many people believe in a "big-cop-God or big-king-God" or the way that others think "God is…nature" (Butler 15). Her family and many of the townspeople believe God watches over them and that He will steer them through dark times. In essence, a supreme being polices their actions, executes justice, and controls the world around them. If the townspeople are faithful and virtuous, they will be safe from the evil outside their walled community. However, Lauren states, "Some say God is a spirit, a force, an ultimate reality. Ask seven people what all of that means and you'll get seven different answers. So what is God?" (Butler 15). No one offers Lauren a clear definition of what God is; even people who have a similar concept of God have different thoughts or views on how God acts or what God specifically is. This creates a schism between her beliefs and those of the people around her.

Since her world is subject to violence and poverty, the idea of God as a sentient being does not sit well with Lauren. She compares the sentient God that her father and others believe in to "a kind of big kid, playing with his toys. If he is, what difference does it make if 700 people get killed in a hurricane" (Butler 16). In Lauren's mind, this God is not benevolent. He allows bad things to happen to good people, because humanity exists for his amusement. Any suffering people experience is not his concern. Lauren cannot comprehend a being that would allow evil to exist in the world or stand by and watch people destroy themselves and others. The discrepancy of views concerning God's presence

and the divine, coupled with the poor, dystopian world Lauren finds herself in, leads her to stray away from conventional beliefs of God. She concludes that God is not a sentient being or nature. Rather, "God is Change," which is a concept that shapes humanity and that humanity can shape (Butler 17). God is neither responsible for hurting people nor for helping them. The poor state of Lauren's world is humanity's fault, and humanity must make amends for what it has done and help others. After her town is set ablaze, Lauren decides to change what displeases her in her world and spread her teachings without being dogmatic or treating the people who accompany her as servants or mindless pawns. She recognizes that they must all band together to survive.

LIGHT'S AND LAUREN'S PHILOSOPHIES

Light and Lauren are also set apart in their reasoning behind creating a perfect society. Light is concerned with his own ego and power more than the well-being of those around him. He does not start with the intention of forming a functioning society. He wants to eliminate sin from the world. As early as Episode Two, internet cults start to worship him and his murders, thinking that a god is passing judgement on the wicked. He sees the world as a thing that he can shape to suit his own needs, rather than a home for other people as valuable in terms of life as himself. He allows himself to be enthralled in the persona that internet cults have created for him. Philip H. Jos points to the tendency of the frightened to look to a higher power, which is arguably what followers of Light do in Death Note. It makes sense to worship someone and be spared rather than fight and be killed. It also points to Light's worshippers experiencing an "us versus them" mentality, where they are excited for the destruction of sinners and for a god to lead them. Light's utopia hinges on this prejudice and fear with his followers, leading to an unsustainable belief system and shaky society.

In contrast, Lauren's utopia is focused on a better world and the importance of life. Jos explores the effects Earthseed has on society and how it provides a non-dogmatic structure and belief system (1). Jos mentions that "fear is a dominant shaper of human thought and behavior" and that "the core message of all great spiritual traditions is 'Be not afraid'" (1). Lauren sees her Earthseed religion as a solution to a dying society, writing in her Earthseed journal that "when no influence is strong enough/ To unify people/ They divide" (Butler 103). The harsh environment Lauren and her

friends are exposed to greets them with violence, death, and struggle. It is relentless and will not cease until someone decides to fight for a better world. Lauren wants her teachings to reach other people and for them to recognize that they can either unite and influence change or divide and be destroyed by it.

When comparing these two belief systems, though, Light exhibits an understanding of something akin to Lauren's Earthseed religion in *Parable of the Sower*—that God is change. Lauren describes in her writings: "All that you touch,/ You Change./ All that you Change,/ Changes you./ The only lasting truth/ Is Change./ God/ Is Change" (Butler 79). In Lauren's religion, God is not a static being. God is a dynamic concept, ever-changing in the universe and being altered by people daily, which both aligns and contrasts with the world of *Death Note*, regarding how Light changes his world and the presence of gods. Death gods like Ryuk may exist in Light's world, but Light's perception of deification is skewed. Once he discovers the Death Note, and Ryuk explains that it is Light's to keep and use as he pleases, he realizes that the notebook is his ticket to godhood. It grants him control over life and death and puts him farther up on a pedestal away from normal people. Light recognizes that all the Death Note influences, all the evil lives it can take, can change the world for the better. However, if Light had thought about the concept of change and God as Lauren does, he may have stopped and realized that using the Death Note changes himself as well as the surrounding world. Each murder brings Light further from his once noble cause of ridding the world of evil and closer to becoming a monster consumed by power. Light's behavior becomes predatory and he develops a twisted view on the concept of God and change instead of Lauren's original philosophy of Earthseed, leading to his downfall later in the series, while Lauren succeeds in creating her Earthseed community.

The other factor shaping Light's philosophy and its ultimate failure is the influence of Ryuk. Despite how Light seems to dismiss and not revere Ryuk, Ryuk is still a god and an influencer. He is by Light's side nearly all through the series, and when Light sees that Ryuk does not care who is killed or to what end Light is using the Death Note, it sends a message that Light's actions are valid. The two characters also begin their tenuous friendship with Ryuk dropping the notebook in the human world because he "was bored," and Light began using it because he "had been bored too" ("Rebirth" 00:16:57

-00:18:22). Compared to Lauren, who created the Earthseed religion to help others and understand a cruel world, Light did not have anything else to do with his time. Being a god was a pastime, something that could hold his interest when school and sports could not. This points to the larger issue that, while Light was trying to rid the world of evil, it did not fall strictly into his intent. Killing criminals became a byproduct of using a notebook that could give him godlike status. Ryuk's own boredom and lack of purpose reinforces Light's disinterest in others as well. In Episode Four, "Pursuit," Ryuk says, "We [the shinigami] lead meaningless, empty lives… we no longer even know why we exist. In fact, I doubt there's any reason for our existence at all" ("Pursuit" 00:05:22-00:05:38). This quote not only reinforces the idea that the *shinigami* have no definitive, virtuous purpose, but that taking human life has no meaning. In the grand scheme, regardless of whether what they are doing is right or wrong, Ryuk thinks it is pointless, but they still have this immense and horrible power to kill others. If a god like Ryuk does not care who Light kills or how many die, why should Light have the slightest bit of guilt? Those around Light are pawns to fulfill his ego, rather than people to save.

THE INFLUENCE OF GIFTED INDIVIDUALS

The impact of gifted individuals on society and what happens when society fails the gifted is also important when evaluating what creates utopia versus dystopia. Douglas W. Texter focuses on Lauren's gift in *Parable of the Sower* and argues that gifted children can change society for the better by rising above the ordinary to achieve greatness. He relates this to Lauren and her belief system that is Earthseed, and how she and her group begin a new community amidst a rotting society. Lauren's linguistic prowess and "ability to empathize with and organize others around a shared mission" allows her to create a better life for her and her friends (Texter 15). However, Texter also insists that gifted individuals who are cast out or ignored can become bored and narcissistic, which lead to problems later in society. Lauren is an individual who has positive gifts and traits: she shares pain and pleasure with those around her, and she is also smart. She takes it upon herself to create a new belief system in Earthseed and lead her friends and followers to a safer life.

Texter's observations can also be applied to *Death Note*, in which Light is an example of gifts

that are not exercised properly. Light tells Ryuk he wants to become a god, to have people know of his existence," and thinks he can create a better world. Light shows traits of narcissism and does not put confidence in anyone but himself. He thinks he is above everyone and should be the one to pass judgment on the wicked, while failing to acknowledge his own flaws. Light's inflated sense of importance and disregard for others is arguably his greatest downfall, because it isolates him from family, friends, and his sense of right and wrong that he still clings to in the beginning before spiraling into madness at the end of the series.

Light's narcissism and Lauren's selflessness contribute to the execution of their ideas, as well as their respective failures and successes. Jerry Phillips examines the reinvention of utopia and degeneration of American society in *Parable of the Sower* and Lauren's success in creating a utopia at the end of the novel. Lauren's view of God shapes her utopia, and Phillips insists, "In Lauren's view, change or God has no necessary direction" (4). By believing that God is an ever-changing force without distinction between good and evil, Lauren can focus on the chaos and problems that have arisen in society and overcome them. She does not ascribe her misfortune to God hating her or her being deserving of awful things. Lauren believes that God only exists as change. She creates the conditions needed for a better society through her view of reality and Earthseed, where people help each other and do not focus so much on the exchange of goods and money to survive (Butler 22). This will result in a sense of community and goodwill towards others, prompting people to change for the better and strengthen their community. Lauren changes her environment through her teachings and actions. She protects the people in her group and considers them to be a makeshift family, even going so far as to share her view on God with them, which produces trust and camaraderie between Lauren and her group members. Conversely, Light works in solitude, outside occasional help from Ryuk and Misa. He does not share his views on morality and justice with other people outside one or two humans and relies on anonymous strangers to worship his god-like persona that circulates on the internet. In Light's quest to become a god, he does not consider that he needs to change. He believes he is infallible, and everyone must bend to his will or face lethal consequences.

Karen Slawner also examines the justification for violence to preserve order and justice, beginning with references to the death penalty in the United States of America and assessing the

moral problems associated with some acts of violence being legal while others are illegal. Slawner discusses the Final Solution's results that attempted to create an Aryan utopia, where the Nazi party viewed genocide as a rational solution. They were concerned with defeating a common enemy and tried to eradicate the Jewish population in the most efficient way possible. Slawner asserts that law is often built upon the foundation of violence, where violence is used to preserve it, and it is through the condemnation of violence that justice can be achieved (460). In the context of *Death Note*, Light is also trying to achieve a utopia through violence. Most of his victims die of heart attacks, and Light kills thousands to wipe the Earth of crime. Although Slawner's argument focuses primarily on governments executing violence, it can also be applied to the individual. Light kills those who contest his moral code or law under the pretense that he is the only person capable of cleansing the world of crime and violence. Slawner states that violence does not equal justice, arguing that "by deconstructing law and by revealing its foundation upon violence that we can move toward justice" (460). To her, violence for the sake of justice is not true justice, which contradicts Light's rationale. His violence is only a means to grab power and instill fear. Light's goal is to become a god in a perfect world, and madness precludes his sense of justice as the series progresses. However, examining Light's endeavors from Slawner's point of view provides insight into the inherent flaws in Light's judgement. From her quote, it becomes clear that Light was doomed from the start and that true justice is not won through violence, especially at the hands of a single person.

Not only does violence create dystopia, but there are social and economic problems that also prevent Light's utopian vision from being a true utopia. Jim Miller delves into the causes of dystopia in Octavia Butler's works, arguing that *Parable of the Sower* highlights cultural, economic, and environmental problems that contribute to the violence and dystopian elements in Butler's futuristic version of America—issues that are not at all addressed by Light in *Death Note*. Miller explains that these problems are all interconnected and refers to the division of the rich and the poor in Butler's novel. He states, "There is a constant low-level class warfare going on between the have-little and the have-nots. The walls protect Lauren's neighborhood, but simultaneously make it a target for those who covet what little they have" (Miller 14). Lauren's community, while poor, is still wealthier than others outside the community walls, up until the neighborhood is burned and pillaged for resources.

It highlights the larger issue of people committing crimes to preserve themselves and their family members. Furthermore, people who are discriminated against because of their race cannot get into primarily white, gated communities. Then, they must settle for low-paying jobs on the outside or fight and kill to survive, perpetuating a cycle of destruction, while Lauren's Earthseed community seeks to combat these issues through diversity and community. Lauren does not exclude the people she travels with based on their race or gender and recognizes that they all have done terrible deeds to preserve themselves and survive. She does not blame her friends for their actions.

However, Light targets criminals without much remorse. Lauren knows that people outside communities must fight to survive; not all of them want to commit crimes for fun, like pyro addicts, and even she kills people to survive. Lauren tries to keep her and her companions safe on their journey and, as they bond, they become stronger and settle down to create a diverse, safe community. *Death Note* does not address issues of racism or class differences. This might be because the main setting is Japan and Light comes from a well-off, middle-class family, but it is nonetheless an important issue and contributes to the overarching reason why Light's utopia fails. He wants to punish people because of their crimes, while not examining the reasons why these people commit crimes. Light's morality is black and white, where those who steal or murder are always at fault. Without a grasp of complex issues like racism, class disparity, and environmental problems, Light is unable to consider that some criminals may not deserve to die. They might be stealing to feed themselves or trying to create a better life in a desperate way. Light's worldview leaves no room for moral gray areas. There are those that are good, bad, or against him, and the latter two categories are punished accordingly. Light's and Lauren's approaches to their societal issues determine the failure and success of their utopias, where Light ignores them, and Lauren recognizes that crime is only a symptom of a larger issue.

CONCLUSION

The promise of utopia in *Death Note* is one that is obscured and sabotaged from the moment that Light discovers the notebook. Although his intentions to create a pure world are noble, if misguided, they are precluded by his desire to reign as a god and feed his ego. Light's inability to

consider other factors that drive people to commit crimes, as well as Ryuk's lack of guidance and his use of violence in the place of true justice, are all catalysts to his inevitable downfall. At the end of the series, in Episode Thirty-Seven, "New World," Light is finally caught and discovered to be the killer that detectives have been searching for for the last few years. Light tries to talk his way out of it, laughing maniacally and insisting that, while he is Kira, he was the only person "who could create a new world" ("New World" 00:11:39-00:11:44). Despite the people he has killed, Light still clings to the notion that he is special—that he is the only person who could have ever gotten this far and created a world almost crime-free. He still does not see the negative impact, even when the lead detective, Near, tells him that he "has only confused himself with a god" ("New World" 00:12:05-00:12:07). Near does not toy with the idea of Light being right. He shows him what he truly is—a sick man trying to imitate a god. When Light attempts to use the Death Note one last time, he is shot and flees the scene, bleeding and dying. Ryuk watches him from afar before writing Light's name in the *Death Note*. Light dies on the middle of a staircase in a warehouse alone, symbolizing that he was caught between the life of a normal person and ascending to become something greater. In another context, it could also mean that he dies in nothingness, as Ryuk mentions in Episode One that humans who use the notebook can neither go to heaven or hell" ("Rebirth" 00:15:05-00:15:11). He leaves behind a legacy of terror and a world gripped with fear at committing a single wrong deed, not a utopian paradise.

In his quest to achieve a better world, Light became a monster far from a god. He strayed from justice, fighting for himself rather than the betterment of others. His quest to godhood removed him from what it meant to be human: to show compassion for those who are not perfect and to recognize his imperfections. A utopia founded on the premise of violence or the purging of those who do not fit a strict idea of "good" cannot exist, and those who try to be gods will ultimately fail. Lauren's community in *Parable of the Sower* thrived because it was founded on the betterment of other people, not just Lauren herself. She saw those around her as equals and treated them as she wanted to be treated. Humanity is flawed, and it is only through recognizing those flaws and the societal pressures that push people to commit crimes that people can move towards a better version of themselves and their world. If those flaws are not recognized, and people do not learn to embrace each other as Lauren and her friends did, it leads to chaos and further strife. Light chose to see the world in rigid

constructs of good and evil, without evaluating his own judgement or each person based on their merits. He saw only their problems and dismissed their lives. Light might have evaded capture and caused terror for years, imposing his ideas of good and evil on people, but in the end, he died a cruel, heartless psychopath, akin to the criminals he killed. The world of *Death Note* is far better off without him trying to impose his own flawed will on others, while Lauren's world in *Parable of the Sower* is better with her and others changing it without trying to be gods.

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Offred Versus June: The Purpose of the Protagonist in *The Handmaid's Tale*

By Grace Goze

ABSTRACT

Margaret Atwood's The Handmaid's Tale *has recently made its way back into popular culture and media. This is a consequence of the streaming service* Hulu *launching a web television series based on the novel. The protagonist, Offred, plays a crucial role in both tellings of the story, but that role shifts depending on the medium. Within the novel, Offred lacks the characteristics of a hero, demonstrating complacency in her tortured position. Meanwhile, the Offred of the* Hulu *series is a rebel, an empowered woman who refuses oppression. These intentional portrayals of Offred speak to the inevitable distinctions between visual and written storytelling.*

As screen adaptations of books continue to flourish, it is no surprise that Margaret Atwood's politically charged novel, *The Handmaid's Tale*, has become an award-winning *Hulu* exclusive series. The series, which shares the name of its inspiration, was an instant hit among viewers who praised its relevancy to today's political and social issues, especially those surrounding women's rights. The dystopian plot of the show and novel are essentially the same; Offred shares her day-to-day life as a handmaid in the nation of Gilead. Gilead, which was formerly the United States, is undergoing a fertility crisis, forcing them to adopt polyamorous relationships modeled after the bible story of Rachel and Jacob. As a handmaid, Offred is forced to carry a child for a powerful family in Gilead. The nature of this dystopian ritual is a paradox, for handmaids are exalted for their fertility but slaves to a system with particularly cruel and unusual punishments.

However, one could certainly say the Offred that lives between the pages of Atwood's novel and the Offred that is brought to life on screen by actress Elisabeth Moss are two different characters. Within the 1985 novel, Offred's resistance towards the government is very subtle, leaving her status as a hero debatable. On screen, Offred is shown as a rebel, overtly committing transgressions against the Republic of Gilead. This stark contrast leads one to question why Atwood's original Offred acts the way she does and how these actions contribute to the themes of the novel as a whole. While she is the main character of *The Handmaid's Tale*, Offred is not its hero. She carries potential for heroism, as amplified and utilized in the *Hulu* series by the same name, but ultimately, Atwood choses to keep her indifferent and complicit, which both strengthens the realism and warning within the novel. Further, Offred's complacency highlights the grueling nature of dystopias and their ability to strip an individual of identity due to totalitarian rule.

The debate over Offred's heroism within *The Handmaid's Tale* is not a new one. For as long as the book has been in print, scholars have argued over Offred's role in her own story and what that implies about the rest of the novel's messages. When analyzing the textual evidence, it is clear she is not the story's hero. The first place a reader can see this is Offred's complicity in the Republic of Gilead. This society thrives on the oppression of women. Offred lives in this world not reading, not writing, and not making her own choices because its leaders have an overly conservative outlook on the role of women. While it can be agreed that Offred's values do not necessarily match those of

Gilead's, she still voluntarily acts according to those values. Looking at her position as a handmaid, Offred does not feel as if she was forced into this position. She describes the Ceremony by saying it is far from "making love"; however, she reflects, "Nor does rape cover it: nothing is going on here that I haven't signed up for. There wasn't a lot of choice but there was some, and this is what I chose" (Atwood 94). Although all her options contained unfavorable consequences, Offred recognizes she was still able to choose a different fate. It is true that her chances of survival are highest as a handmaid, but in making herself one, Offred willingly gives up the rights to her body and her identity, a consequence that is common in dystopian novels.

By choosing to be a handmaid, Offred "fails to maintain her identity . . . because in Gilead even apparent forms of resistance or attempts to create, maintain, or grasp an identity frequently turn into complicity with the regime" (Stillman and Johnson 75). Understanding this helps deconstruct the obvious counterargument that Offred participates in transgressions against Gilead, particularly by having a relationship with Nick. While this relationship is illegal and Offred risks her life by pursuing it, the very existence of it has Offred fulfilling Gilead's expectations of her as a woman. She enters the relationship to satisfy her desire to be touched, which "directly enmesh[es] her into the system of sex, power, and corruption that characterizes the actual workings of Gilead and powerfully construct her as a being who defines herself by her body" (Stillman and Johnson 76). This exemplifies the dystopia's control over Offred. It is built to put her in a box she cannot escape. Instead of strengthening her sense of self, this relationship buries Offred's motivation to escape. She decides, "I no longer want to leave, escape, cross the border to freedom. I want to be here, with Nick, where I can get at him" (Atwood 271). It is here the true colors of Offred's illegal relationship show themselves; it is not a rebellious act, but rather one of desperation, showing that Offred, like the rest of her society, is satisfied by a few compensations. Her environment is successfully working to melt her personal goal of freedom by making her one with its corruption.

Although these actions can clearly classify Offred as less than heroic, it is also often argued that Offred is incapable of rebelling. The restraints of her position force her into a victim role she is unable to shake. Along these lines, scholars have claimed that as a victim, the fact that Offred's story exists is resistance enough; "The handmaid's voice breaks silence, for she is heard. [They] can finally neither

appropriate nor invalidate her voice" (Jones 11). Offred's position as a handmaid forces her into a life of silence. The totalitarian government censors her from expressing criticism of their rule. Figures, such as Aunt Lydia, work to reshape her mind and doubt her identity, leading some to believe "her individual speech produces a profusion of words and desires that are not allowed . . . . She revives the capacity for individual and spiritual emotional life" (Staels 49). This interpretation is important to consider. Offred's narration is a significant tool used by Atwood to deliver the story with a more humanizing touch as opposed to having an omniscient, outside narrator. The survival of her story allows her to exist, yet the survival of her story reveals "that Offred has played a role in her own oppression, whether or not she can do anything about it" because as with most dystopias, the continuation of the undesirable society comes from a failure to act (Weiss 122).

Memories narrated by Offred of the time before the coup illustrate how complicity and complacency have always been a part of her identity. Although it can be argued that Offred's "memory of the past brings back to life the excluded pole in Gilead, such as the existence of love and humanity," more prominently the memories display how Offred favors inaction (Staels 49). Her inaction in the time before diminishes her claim to victimhood because this is what ultimately led to the existence of Gilead. Throughout the entirety of the novel, Offred overtly comments on her political and social indifference concerning her rights. Profound but chilling, Offred notes,

> We lived by ignoring . . . . There were stories in the newspapers, of course, corpses in ditches or the woods, bludgeoned to death or mutilated, interfered with, as they used to say, but they were about other women, and the men who did such things were other men . . . . We were the people who were not in the papers. We lived in the blank white spaces at the edges of the print. It gave us more freedom. (56-57)

It cannot be an accident how closely this quote mirrors the famous German Lutheran pastor Martin Niemöller's response concerning the Nazi's rise to power. Addressing the cowardice of bystanders, Neimöller warned:

> First they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out – Because I was not a socialist. Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out – Because I was not a trade unionist. Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out – Because I was not a Jew. Then they

came for me – and there was no one left to speak for me.

The connection between the two sends a powerful message to the reader. It is possible Atwood wants her audience to see the reality of choosing to ignore major societal issues like pollution of the environment and discrimination. Incidentally, both of these contribute to the fall of the United States in this novel: pollution causing the fertility crisis and inequality of women leading to their purely domestic lives.

Offred's attitude towards the persecution of others prior to the coup directly impacts where she ends up. Some have gone as far as to say Offred "is more like a 'good German' than a freedom fighter" (Greene 311). Mimicking the creation of Nazi Germany, Gilead was birthed out of many people sharing Offred's view: If the issue does not directly involve me, I can ignore it, and it will go away. The problem with this logic, of course, is that the issue does not go away – it only grows.

This fault of Offred is highlighted by the juxtaposition between she and the other women in her life, specifically Moira and her mother. Where Offred "lacks courage [and] is too apolitical to take a stand as her right are being abolished," the audience sees Moira and her mother taking a strong stance against the patriarchal society (Weiss 134). Focusing on Moira, her resistance and awareness are easily noted. She not only is brave enough to attempt an escape, but she also is able to maintain her wit and humor after being condemned to Jezebel's. Before Gilead, Offred remembers Moira addressing the dominating nature of men in the context of sex; "the balance of power was equal between women so sex was an even-steven transaction" (Atwood 172). As a response to this, Offred mocks Moira and trivializes the issue she was trying to comment on. Similarly, when Offred recalls her mother, an active feminist, her tone is not one of admiration or interest. In fact, she thinks critically of her mother remembering, "They ignored me, and I resented them. My mother and her rowdy friends. I didn't see why she had to dress that way . . . or to swear so much" (180). It is evident that Offred has lived her whole life uninterested in taking a stance on anything. Choosing to only be concerned with her personal life, Offred fails to see how these issues directly affect her ability to live the life she holds so dearly. In writing Offred this way, Atwood hammers home the nature of dystopian societies. Atwood is choosing to focus on the average person's response to oppression rather than making Offred the savior of the situation.

There is evidence to support that Offred can recognize the mistakes of her past and regrets not acting sooner, but ultimately, these feelings are not enough to motivate her to change her ways. Instead, Offred often resorts to denial or romanticizes that someone else will act on her behalf. During her conversation with Moira at Jezebel's, Offred is disappointed that Moira's attitude towards Gilead reflects her own: "I don't want her to be like me. Give in, go along, save her skin. That is what it comes down to. I want gallantry from her, swashbuckling, heroism, single-handed combat. Something I lack" (249).

Comments like this drive home the complacency of Offred. She continues to wait for change to come about without contributing because "knowing that she herself cannot commit such unlikely heroics, Offred also fails to think about undertaking the single, specific actions that could aid resistance to Gilead (both before and after the coup)" (Stillman and Johnson 80). Further, as the novel draws to a close, Offred gives into this reality. She acknowledges what she has become, and no longer works to fight it. Following the death of Ofglen, she laments, "everything I've resisted, comes flooding in . . . . I want to keep on living, in any form. I resign my body freely, to the use of others. They can do what they like with me. I am abject." Most disturbingly, she adds, "I feel, for the first time, their true power" (286). In this Atwood creates another undeniably famous parallel; this time to well-known dystopian novel, *1984*. Offred's surrender of herself to the regime mirrors Winston's final moments of "re-education," resulting in his love for Big Brother. Similarly, Offred has been broken to the point where she resigns her ability to fight back. The government's presence at this point is too overwhelming, highlighting how dystopias function on their people's hopelessness.

As a reader, one must wonder what Atwood's purpose was in centering her novel around such a weak protagonist. For in the end, albeit Offred does presumably escape, in more ways than one, Gilead has won the battle of Offred's will. Before getting in the van, Offred is fully willing to continue her life as a handmaid, resigning her body to the use of Gilead and her relationship with Nick. Offred is not a hero and not legitimately a victim; she is just an average person, which is exactly who she is supposed to be. The weaknesses of Offred reflect the weaknesses of the average person. It is unlikely that the audience of the novel would survive any better than Offred does, which highlights the cautionary part of this cautionary tale. It has been written that "our own cowardice or selfishness

does not excuse Offred's; instead, her cowardice and complicity convict us all, because we share it" (Stillman and Johnson 137). This is what makes Offred and her world so real; it is grounded in history and the most common faults among all humans.

Likewise, her lack of rebellion is a characteristic of the dystopian genre, for "Dystopian regimes are then kept in place by the acquiescence of a complacent citizenry that accepts and may even enjoy its comforting oppression. The common image of a dystopian society is that it is the exact opposite of a utopia; in the latter, people are generally happy, while in the former, they are miserable" (Weiss 134). Offred is no more than an example of how dystopian regimes keep their power. While dystopias are characterized by the misery of their people and utopias the happiness of their people, "the two genres mirror each other in many ways, particularly in that most residents of dystopias are happy or at the very least satisfied, and the (supposed) rebels are anomalies in their societies" (Wiess 134). Arguably, Atwood does not want to write the story of an anomaly. The story of the rebel is often one where good triumphs over evil, but the overall message can appear weak. The fear evoked from the reader that they will become Offred, a woman trapped in hero-less situation, is far more motivating than believing every seemingly doomed society has a secret, unstoppable rebel in its midst.

It can be said, then, that Offred's purpose is that of a "reverse role model." Readers are meant to criticize her actions and hopefully be inspired not to follow them. The book thrives on Offred's indifference because the reader is inside her head. She paints her world bleakly, sharing the injustices of her society. Her narrated thoughts are not only extraoardinarly detailed, but they are the strongest things characterizing Offred since she so rarely speaks. This, of course, leads to the discussion of why an on-screen Offred departs so much from novel Offred. While all types of story-telling are built on the same concepts, visual story-telling and written story-telling are very different beasts.

That being said, visually, Offred must be a hero. The most obvious reasoning being that a rebellious protagonist is inherently more interesting to watch. Undoubtedly, the stakes in Atwood's novel are high, but they do not necessarily rely on heavy action from any of the characters. Conflict and tension are created from the paranoia inside Offred's head. For example, when Offred's Commander, the man whose child she must carry, asks her to break several rules by playing Scrabble with him, Offred's narration lasts for pages; whereas, on screen, there is less time dedicated to this act

simply because Offred does not need to describe the Commander, his office, and the way she is feeling. The dystopia is shown through set and acting. The many elements of production work to create its tone, mood, and appearance. Although the *Hulu* series does utilize voiceover to share some of Offred's inner thoughts, the show is not reliant on it, relying more on physical movement, vocal inflection, and facials to communicate Offred's state of mind. These techniques are privileges only granted to visual-storytelling. In this case, showing Offred as a hero has more effect than leaving her complicit. Where the novel forces the audience to confront their complacency, the show forces the audience to admire a strong woman who speaks out against injustice.

The *Hulu* series makes Offred easy to admire. Right from the start, they establish the strength in her character by directly departing from the novel. At the end of the first episode, the viewer learns that Offred's real name is "June," a name that is used in the novel, but is never confirmed as Offred's true identity. June declares her name while staring right at the viewer (Moss). This scene frames the tone for the rest of the season. Already, in the very beginnings of the show, June is defeating an obstacle Offred could never overcome — holding on to an identity that is completely her own, unshaped by her life in Gilead. Furthermore, June acts in situations a closer reader knows Offred would never participate in. Later in the season, June openly rebels against Aunt Lydia during a ritualized event much like the book's Salvaging, an event where the handmaids are ordered to stone a rapist to death. In this scene, Aunt Lydia commands the handmaids to stone Janine to death because of a crime she has committed. June refuses and inspires the rest of the handmaids to follow suit. She acts fearlessly (Moss). This attitude contradicts a timid Offred who upon hearing of Ofglen's suicide thinks, "I'll say anything they like, I'll incriminate anyone. . . . I'll confess to any crime, I'll end up hanging from a hook on the Wall" (Atwood 285). While the context of the world remains the same, the way June interacts with it is starkly different.

Alongside the need for more action, it is possible the *Hulu* series cashes in on Offred's potential to be a hero to enhance the show's attempt to be relevant in today's political and social climate. In order to play up its renewed relevancy, the show utilizes modern day technology and concepts, such as smartphones and Uber, in June's flashbacks. It takes Atwood's dystopian world and puts it in today's terms. Today, for lack of better phrasing, the strong woman is "in." With social movements like the

Women's March and the #MeToo movement, the portrayal of women in media has become more important than ever. Despite what an indifferent Offred teaches the audience in the pages of *The Handmaid's Tale*, it very well could not translate to screen. Given the time and the medium for retelling this story, it is far more resonant for the audience to see a rebellious June. Atwood's original themes and messages remain the same; they are just reframed through a protagonist that takes action and inspires the audience to do the same.

Being that Offred is the story's narrator and sole voice, it is crucial to examine her role in the larger themes the novel addresses. No matter the lens, historical, feminist, or political, Offred's interpretation of the dystopian world around her impacts any literary analysis of *The Handmaid's Tale*. As mentioned above, Offred is the narrator; she is the story's protagonist, but she is not its hero. After closely examining the text, it is clear to see that Offred's potential for heroism is never reached within the pages of Atwood's novel. Despite her ability to narrator her story to the reader, Offred's complicity and complacency within Gilead, and before Gilead, proves her to be playing a part in her own oppression. She plays this part to the point that she can barely be considered a victim, especially when compared to the resistance of her mother, Moira, and Ofglen.

As the story is retold via *Hulu*, the character of Offred is in many ways reformed. To reiterate, *Hulu*'s Offred is rebellious and not easily silenced. This Offred is better known as June, and her characterization inspires viewers to rally behind her in her fight to change Gilead. Meanwhile, Atwood's Offred forces readers to confront their own sense of indifference and ignorance when it comes to politics and their basic rights. This evolution of Offred's character and the plot of *The Handmaid's Tale* forces one to consider the role of the story as time passes and old issues show themselves with new faces. Although these two versions of Offred contradict one another, neither are wrong. It can be argued that Offred's purpose is to explore dystopian literary tradition and teach the audience about awareness. The novel Offred demonstrates the consequences of choosing to ignore our surroundings while on-screen Offred shows us the rewards of becoming aware. Regardless of the tactics, both the original medium and the renewed medium successfully work to spread Atwood's commentary and cautionary tale. They use a dystopian environment to elicit responses from two different minded characters. Simultaneously, as the story continues to spread, interpretations of

Offred will always continue to emerge and evolve.

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Donors of the Floating World: The Dystopian Livelihoods of Ishiguro's Clones and Yoshiwara Courtesans

By Marisa Sloan

ABSTRACT

The text Never Let Me Go *envisions dystopianism through the eyes of a group that is simultaneously subjugated and compensated by class structures. Due to the synchronous glorification and euphemization of their oppression, the fate of these characters ties historical threads to the livelihoods of Yoshiwara courtesans in Edo Japan. These parallels are drawn from historical and sociological lenses, inspired by scholars Cecilia Segawa Seigle and Kelly Rich on courtesan life and environmental influence.This dichotomy between perception and reality is born from the subjective nature of what it means to be educated and cultured. The relativity of privilege is then is weaponized by those in power, who ensure that both marginalized groups internalize their class and grow complicit in their own exploitation. In light of these parallels, the fluidity between utopian and dystopian livelihoods manifests, and therein seeps beyond the literary realm.*

It is almost instinctual to think of utopian and dystopian societies dichotomously; the conditions for anyone affiliated with the government is Elysian while everyone else is either subject to dehumanization or brainwashing. Note the subjugation of individuals in canonical dystopian works such as *1984*, *Brave New World*, and *The Handmaid's Tale*. The degree to which a group is exposed to the beneficial or noxious aspects of their society is dictated by class. While it would be counterintuitive to assert that the lower classes would not be subjugated to the worst of a society's dystopian conditions, it is too simplistic to think that a certain class will always be influenced in the same way, or that those of the lower classes necessarily perceive their bondage as dystopian. Kazuo Ishiguro ponders this disjunctive relationship between the perception and reality of oppressed groups in dystopian and utopian societies in his seminal work *Never Let Me Go*. This story details the life of Kathy H., who embodies how a group internalizes being contained, nurtured, and compensated by class structures, which are subsumed within a dystopian framework.

Kathy H. has neither a last name nor parents because she is a clone. Due to the method of her birth, her destiny is dictated by her obligations as a second-class citizen. In her early twenties, Kathy must become a "carer," someone who eases the physical and psychological pain of "donors," clones who are set to die within a few years. Carers tend to donors during rounds of "donations," the surgical removal of organs. The health of the donors declines until their third or fourth donation. Then the donors die, or more euphemistically, "complete." The cycle repeats as droves of clones are raised in isolated institutions and brought, willingly, to donation centers.

Recoiling at the notion of anyone agreeing to organ removal is expected, but disregarding the clones' rationale is missing Ishiguro's commentary on class. Although current discourse and criticism of *Never Let Me Go* often focuses on the ethics of cloning or the importance of memory, what is paramount to the novel is the psychosocial factors that bind the clones together to form their sense of social class. The socialization and collectivist culture that is impressed upon the clones within their contained environment explains why the clones not only submit to their suicidal trajectory, but also later enforce the stipulations imposed on them. Consequently, it is a small wonder that Kathy's perspective portrays the seemingly positive effects of the system; Kathy's childhood is utopian in comparison to the upbringing of other clone groups.

As imaginative as Ishiguro is for constructing a convincing perspective of the educated, cultured slave, there is an equally intriguing historical figure that embodies utopian and dystopian conditions within slave systems: the Edo courtesan. Within the grounds of Yoshiwara, the licensed red-light district of Edo Japan (1603-1868), indentured prostitution was not only legalized, but a keystone of ukiyo (floating world) culture. The floating world was a district immortalized for its ribald theater and pleasure quarters: a utopia for the upper echelons of society. When one thinks of the floating world, the elegant and fashionable courtesan comes to mind as seen in ukiyo-e (woodblock prints). The splendor of a courtesan's intricate kimono and pristine makeup thus obscures the reality of her servitude.

In order to understand the psychosocial factors influencing the clones and the courtesans, a historical and sociological approach is needed to examine the physical and sociocultural environment that influences and perpetuates such exploitative systems. Delving into the headspace of the ostensibly content groups in both narratives not only mitigates the reader's horror, but also illuminates the subjectivity of utopian and dystopian conditions in the context of an oppressed group's limited history. Therefore, while the two groups might initially seem disparate, the forced prostitution system in Yoshiwara parallels the lives of the clones in *Never Let Me Go* closely, almost blurring the distinction between reality and fiction. Both narratives demonstrate not only the fluidity between utopian and dystopian livelihoods, but also how class structures can enmesh individuals within both extremes.

THE FOUNDATIONS OF YOSHIWARA

After years of civil unrest, the unification of Japan under the Tokugawa administration, the last dynasty of feudal Japan, ushered in an era of peace. Beginning in the order of highest prestige, the shogunate enforced the stratification of society into the following classes: samurai, farmer, artisan, and merchant. This rigid social system was also steeped in Neo-Confucian ideals, characterized by moralism and an adherence to traditional social roles, which were tools for securing political hegemony. A key example of government incentivization for adhering to class-based norms was the promotion of the *Official Records of Filial Piety* by the shogunate. Essentially, the record

"documented monetary rewards issued by the shogunate and the *daimyo* (feudal lords) to low-ranking warriors and commoners who had shown exemplary virtuous conduct and could thus serve as role models for their fellow commoners" (Ambros 105). This methodology was effective because it inflated lower classes with an artificial sense of superiority; it provided people whose lives were submitted to backbreaking work in rice fields "with an ideological rationale for enduring their own hardships" (Fukushima 91). As will be demonstrated later, this incentivization for adhering to ideological systems imposed by higher institutions influences the clones in multiple ways.

Considering that the hedonistic zeitgeist of the Edo period is almost diametrically opposed to such social stringency imposed by the shogunate, it is apparent that Ieyasu's administrative controls had weaknesses. Samurai, so valued during the warring years, became displaced in a society that was steering away from militarism. Additionally, as Japan's rice-based economy shifted to mercantilism, merchants became among the wealthiest members of society, despite their lack of social prestige. Samurai and the nouveau riche merchants became privy to literary and artistic circles, which broadened the market for the world's oldest profession. Once they acquired licensing, bordello operators were able to advertise the services of courtesans within the context of the already glamorous and sybaritic Yoshiwara.

Now that Yoshiwara history has been established, it can be made apparent how the courtesans' experience reflected that of Ishiguro's clones.

CLASS DIVISIONS

Kathy H. is a product of the Hailsham estate, an isolated institution in the English countryside that echoes a boarding school. Hailsham students cannot leave the premises, but because there have been stories manufactured that students who leave the Hailsham gates never return, the students are not apt to run away. This geographic restriction is ignored in light of how idyllic their childhood seems otherwise. Some Hailsham privileges include the following: each week the students are monitored by nurses to ensure optimal health, there is a sports pavilion in which to exercise, no student ever goes hungry, and the teachers, referred to as "guardians," provide a humanities education. In this alternative English society, Hailsham students do not have a conception of how comfortable their

upbringing is in comparison to non-Hailsham clones. Of course, Hailsham students pay for this picturesque childhood at the cost of their lives.

While Kathy and her classmates are imbued with their own sense of privilege throughout their lives, one can detect the cracks in Hailsham's utopian mirror beginning in Kathy's childhood. One of Kathy's earliest memories of developing a sense of class with her fellow clones is when she and her classmates walk past Madame, a woman who visits the Hailsham estate to take the students' best artwork and add it to her Gallery. To the students' surprise, when they walk alongside her, Madame is repulsed by them. When reflecting on that experience, Kathy states that in life there comes "the moment when you realize that you really are different from them," meaning original humans (Ishiguro 36). Kathy says this in her characteristically prosaic voice, which indicates both her internalization as a second-class citizen, and her normalization of such treatment.

This sense of being different from people in the outside world is also communicated through various aspects of Hailsham education and culture. For example, the lessons that students receive about sex education is a clear indication for them to stay within their class, since Kathy speaks about the world outside as if the people in it are from a culture far removed. This division between herself and original humans is made particularly apparent by her continuous reference to original humans as "them" and clones as "us." In regard to assimilating to the norms of original humans, Kathy explains to the reader, "we had to behave like them. We had to respect the rules and treat sex as something pretty special" (63). Clone assimilation also manifests itself in the classes the clones have to take, one of which is referred to as Culture Briefing. The sessions involve students role playing various professions in the outside world, such as servers or police, so that they understand how to interact with people in roles they will never fill themselves.

Another keystone of Hailsham culture is the Sales, which is a place where students exchange tokens for items they want, often the artwork of classmates. This miniature economy is part of the reason that the other students bully Tommy, one of Kathy's best friends, and later her lover, so harshly. Since Tommy is not good at art, he can cannot contribute to the Sales and is like a waste on the clone bartering system; it is a troubling utilitarian philosophy for the children to develop at such a young age. Granted, being primed to give away their art and function within an economic system

primes the clones to give away their organs later in life.

One of the most chilling moments in the novel is when the guardian Miss Lucy, who seems to be having a crisis of conscience, tells the students that their destinies are predetermined as donors. None of the students raise any objection in response because they have already accepted their roles in life. Oddly enough, Tommy finds it more distressing for Miss Lucy to rescind her claim that he need not be good at art than to tell him that his life is controlled by a system that she operates within and benefits from. Of course, Tommy's distress over being a poor artist is intimately linked with his feeling of being unable to perform properly in society. Tommy's later remorse over not having anything in Madame's Gallery aptly reveals how difficult it has been for him to try to fit within a certain sphere (i.e. art), which in turn serves as a microcosm of the pain the clones, estranged from greater English society, experience by committing themselves to the donation system.

In her essay comparing the text to the film adaptation of *Never Let Me Go*, Hatice Yurttas cites Ishiguro, stating that "the reason for the clones' willing submission to the system is the social codes and their sense of belonging to a class" (Yurttas 10). Indeed, the clones place their social codes before their own agency. When Kathy takes Ruth, her other childhood friend who ails from a poor donation, and Tommy to see an abandoned ship, Ruth reinforces her identity as a clone by insisting that her purpose in life is to donate. She says to Tommy, "After all, it's what we're supposed to be doing, isn't it?" as an indication of her complete acceptance of the system that has already physically entrenched her within its clutches (Ishiguro 223).

Once separated from wider society, the clones divide themselves further via arbitrary differences, which are embedded in the mythologies of the Hailsham privilege. For example, Ruth's distress over not being able to find her "possible," the human that she is grafted from, in the town of Norfolk unearths tension between Kathy's friend group and the couple Chrissie and Rodney, who are non-Hailsham graduates. The two groups experience an emotional distance as the couple seems to disingenuously console Ruth, who believes that her "possible" is the key to her identity. While reliving that moment, Kathy concludes that the couple was in fact "relieved that things had turned out the way they had" to avoid grappling with "this notion of theirs that there were all kinds of possibilities that were open to us Hailsham students that weren't open to them" (163). It crystallizes in that moment

that the search for Ruth's "possible" is just a way for Chrissie and Rodney to get information about "deferrals," which are rumored postponements, apparently exclusive to Hailsham students, to becoming a carer for couples who are properly in love.

This internalization of class, while leading the clones to assist with their subjugation in the system by becoming carers, becomes even more toxic when they adopt the mentality of their oppressors. For example, Kathy looks down on carers who are not as successful as she is, such as when she refers to one carer as "a waste of space" (3). She finds comfort in the praise of guardians and hospital staff. Additionally, her complacency is strengthened by the clone equivalent of a promotion at work, which is being able to choose her own donors. Kathy quickly explains to readers, who she believes are non-Hailsham students, that "it's only for the last six years they've let me choose" to quell potential resentment and dispel the assumption that her choice in donors is derived from her Hailsham roots (4). The clones never acknowledge that these small acts of favoritism segregate them from one another socially, which is part of what prevents them from rebelling.

Within the confines of Yoshiwara, the courtesans developed their own sense of belonging to a class as well. As a world of its own, Yoshiwara had its own customs, language, and traditions that served to solidify the connections between its inhabitants. For example, the brothels were clearly influenced by imperial traditions; Yoshiwara was referred to as 'arinsu-koku' (country of the arinsu language) because the courtesan's dialect had a "distinctive sentence-ending" (Segawa 9).

The hierarchical system of the courtesans was also complex, and orchestrated as such in order for "its denizens [to be] self-complacent with their value system" (Segawa 7). At the top of the social order was the seasoned and most esteemed courtesan: the *tayū*. The *tayū* of Yoshiwara were like Hailsham students: the most ostensibly privileged class. More accurately, the *tayū* suffered fewer indignities than the average courtesan. A distinct benefit of being a *tayū* was that she did not have to sit in a lattice parlor during the day and be ogled by passerby through a screen in order to acquire clients (Fig. 1). The structure that separated courtesans from men walking the streets resembled the bars of animal cages, which fit the lens in which clients viewed them. A *tayū* could also reject clients by refusing a cup of sake at their initial meeting.

The opportunity to accept or reject clients, like Kathy's opportunity to select donors, might

initially incline one to diminish the harsh realities of the *tayū's* life. However, such a status was not concrete. Courtesans had to visit the *ageya* (house of assignation) each day to meet with a client, and if no one showed, she would be at risk for demotion. This situation was known euphemistically as "grinding tea," which required her to pay out of her own funds on a clientless day (Segawa 80). Additionally, similarly to a Hailsham student, becoming a *tayū* was like winning a genetic lottery. A *kamuro* (teenager) would debut as a tayu upon becoming a full-fledged courtesan, and there was little chance for mobility for those who were not chosen. In addition to those hurdles, the *tayū* had to climb her way up the ranks for years in order to choose her own clients.

It was also well-known that many of the courtesans came from impoverished peasant families, who sold them in order to pay off debts to a *daimyo* (feudal lord). Thus, daughters might enter the bordellos as young as six years old, starting as attendants to sister courtesans, in order to learn their craft. The child's contract entailed ten years of indentured servitude, but due to the debt policies of Yoshiwara, most contracts carried on for many years afterward, and in some rare but tragic cases there were courtesans who were indebted for their entire lives. Additionally, it should be noted that courtesans had to pay part of their debt every single day and double on holidays known as *monbi*. A courtesan had to pay out of her own funds for her retinue and clothing as well. In essence, Yoshiwara women were irrevocably affected by the class in which they were born.

PANOPTICISM

While thinking about her early days at the Cottages, the transitional space between Hailsham and donation centers, Kathy testifies to her isolated and confined upbringing by commenting, "if you'd told me that within a year, I'd not only develop a habit of taking long solitary walks, but that I'd start learning to drive a car, I'd have thought you were mad" (Ishiguro 116). That sentiment should strike most readers as odd, considering that most people do such activities as adolescents and certainly find nothing radical about the experience. Additionally, when recounting the experience of Madame finding her alone in her room at Hailsham, Kathy comments as an aside, "it was a sort of rule we couldn't close dorm doors completely except when we were sleeping," indicating that surveillance is embedded in her conscientiousness as a backdrop to everyday life (71).

In regard to how the repetition of environment fosters normalization, Kelly Rich frames the influence of Hailsham on its graduates as its "poetics of space," which is essentially the physical and psychological infrastructure of Hailsham itself (638). Hailsham's infrastructure is defined by the guardians' strategic divulgence of information to students over time, the parental role the guardians assume to prevent the clones from distressing over their origins, the superficially comforting boarding school environment, an apparent advocacy of the arts, and encouragement to minimize contact with the outside world. These qualities thus form Kathy's "infrastructural consciousness," or overall perception of Hailsham (Rich 634). Rich also argues for the potency of Hailsham's marketing, claiming that "Hailsham's emphasis on a kind, beautiful environment plays an even stronger role in [the clones'] repression than the euphemistic language" (633). This sentiment rings true in light of the fact that Kathy still considers herself to have been lucky as a Hailsham student after she has lost both Ruth and Tommy to donations.

Similarly, there was an infrastructural consciousness embedded in the everyday lives of Yoshiwara courtesans. By virtue of making their appointments at *ageyas* and entertaining high clientele, courtesans were already considered more privileged than the cheaper, unlicensed prostitutes. Additionally, in some cases, *tayū* had a one-room "suite," an artificial display of prestige that inevitably invoked jealousy and competitiveness from lower-ranking courtesans. That is not to imply that the courtesans, particularly the *kamuro*, did not at times look to each other for support, since like the clones they had to forge familial ties with each other. Nevertheless, the system was inherently designed to create divisions that would incentivize each woman to work as hard as she could to climb the bordello ladder.

Yoshiwara courtesans and Hailsham students also parallel each other in terms of their long-term connections to their roots. A primary method through which the Yoshiwara recycled its workers was by former courtesans becoming *yarite* (retired courtesan). Essentially, *yarite* worked in conjunction with the operators in teahouses to supervise current courtesans. They were like carers with a guardian's mindset. *Yarite* instructed the most promising *kamuro*, inculcating in her the social codes of Yoshiwara by teaching her in ways of deception and advising her against falling in love (Segawa 43). The *yarite* possessed a room at the top of the staircase where she could monitor the

activity below, which was quite a panoptical arrangement. Admittedly, the courtesans were accustomed to that heightened sense of surveillance in between their proprietors knowing all of their business and being merchandised to clients and passerby on a daily basis.

As a testament to the courtesans' sense of isolation, the Yoshiwara district was surrounded by a moat and could only be accessed via the "Bridge of Hesitation," which came to be known as such because potential clients would wait at the entrance, contemplating whether or not they wanted to spend hundreds of dollars for one night in the pleasure districts. Courtesans were also not allowed to leave the premises without accompaniment, which enforced their sense of belonging to the bordellos. While the courtesans arguably had a greater desire to leave their spaces than the clones, most of them became resigned to their fate, just as Tommy quelled his childhood outbursts.

THE CULTURED SLAVE

A significant talking point for Miss Emily, the former headmistress of Hailsham, in justifying the plight of the clones is that the clones have been able to produce art and learn about the literary canon, albeit they can never apply their knowledge outside of their circles. During Kathy and Tommy's visit to Miss Emily and Madame for a deferral request, Miss Emily insists, "You've had good lives. You're cultured" as condolence and encouragement (Ishiguro 256). Yet is being cultured enough to justify whether one's life is good or bad, especially when "cultured" is subjective? Another key element of Rich's essay is that Ishiguro's work is a "deliberation over the meaning-making potential of state infrastructures and whether their promises of cultural value actually sustain those whose lives are thoroughly instrumentalized" (633). Indeed, the pseudo-comfort that the English state aims to produce with its art initiative is certainly a failure in terms of emotional fulfillment for the clones past their childhoods.

The argument of an arts education has also been used in an attempt to glamorize courtesan livelihoods. The *tayū* were renowned for their adroitness in various art forms, including calligraphy, poetry, painting, music, and tea rituals. However, the courtesans learned these arts as a means to accentuate their charms and further appeal to clientele. The bordellos were not teaching these crafts because of a proto-feminist initiative to educate women, by any means. Additionally, within the realm

of Yoshiwara, the literary and artistic genres of *sharebon* (humorous stories), *senryū* (human haiku), and *kibyōshi* (picture-books) flourished among the literati. These works were born from men in artistic circles drinking sake and amusing themselves with music and other forms of entertainment. None of these art forms were a direct result of courtesan involvement, although a large portion of Edo works would later feature the courtesans. When education is a byproduct rather than a goal, it becomes even more difficult to justify the plight of both parties.

PUBLIC CONSCIOUSNESS

Miss Emily's rationale to Kathy about the acquiescence of English society to this clone-slave system is that "however uncomfortable people were about your existence, their overwhelming concern was for their own children" (258). Thus, the clones do not have proper representation in English society because they have been pushed to the back of public consciousness. This sentiment also suggests an inverse relationship between compassion and proximity in terms of human empathy. Karl Shaddox argues that the empathy Kathy cultivates through her direct address to the reader is a state that must be achieved individually, and he goes on to suggest that such a reason is why the guardians' attempt to evoke public sympathy has failed (14). This claim applies to Madame's revulsion at the sight of the clones, and her concession to Kathy that "we're all afraid of you," (264). This confession indicates that despite her sympathetic, humanitarian actions, Madame views the clones collectively rather than resonating with them on an intimate, personal level. Moreover, Madame's discrimination, which is initially softened by her activism, also leads the reader to question her and Miss Emily's intentions. Since Kathy and Tommy only receive information through the filter of the guardians' supposed goodwill, perhaps Miss Emily and Madame were never interested in having the clones be treated as equal to English citizens but rather less harshly than in their current state.

If English society othered the clones in such a way, then what was the public's consciousness in regard to Yoshiwara? One mode is which to consider this question is the *ukiyo-e* (woodblock print), championed by renowned commercial artist Kitagawa Utamaro. The Yoshiwara was rife with directories providing advertisements of courtesans, which would include a woodblock print along with a description of each woman. These prints detailed each courtesan's skillset and also made the viewer

privy to a bit of her personality as well.

Although it would be exhaustive to detail each series of *bijinga* (pictures of beautiful women), Utamaro contributed heavily to the floating world heritage. A notable series that he created was *Five Shades of Ink in the Northern Quarter*, which includes women from the whole spectrum of the sex industry using clothing, hairstyle, and expression to denote their rank (Nelson 40). The women are stereotyped in form; the highest-ranking courtesan studies as a means to communicate her intelligence and refinement. Her eyes are intent, her hair flows down her back, and she is fully clothed (Fig. 2). In contrast, the lowest-ranking *teppō* (moatside) prostitute looks nonchalantly at the ground with her breasts exposed (Fig. 3). The *teppō* would have had at least a few clients a night in comparison to the tayu's one, and her services were much cheaper. Additionally, *teppō* were believed to be much more likely than *tayu* to harbor venereal diseases.

While the physiognomic representations might be considered reductive and misleading to the modern viewer, David Bell argues that "[w]hile Utamaro's representations of the women of the Yoshiwara seem idealized, and perhaps rather sanitized, they are consistent with what he would have encountered there" (277). Considering that Utamaro was among the literati, he benefited from the illusion of Yoshiwara. As a visitor, he was paying for the ritualized glamour of the bordellos. Consequently, neither he nor his fellow artists were obligated to rip any seams as courtesans were reduced to sex objects within the fabric of Edo culture.

CONCLUSION: DONATIONS TO THE RED-LIGHT DISTRICT

The literary and historical examples of romanticized slavery serve as a microcosm for how oppressive systems can be reinforced and perpetuated in the modern day. In *Never Let Me Go*, the privileged ones are English citizens, refusing to slack their grip on their advantage. This reluctance to alter the system then devolves into trying to justify the subjugation of other groups, as illustrated by how the Hailsham clones had a physically comfortable upbringing, and the courtesans in their cultural prestige had objectively nicer living quarters than that of the impoverished family that sold them. The cost of these perceived advantages, orchestrated lives, was of course much too high, but these factors do muddle the division between utopian and dystopian livelihoods. Similar to how the

the clones repress their dread over their impending doom through making art, the artists of the floating world found a respite from the mundanity and social conservatism of everyday life by obscuring the darkness of forced prostitution through alluring prints.

As demonstrated here, the relativity of privilege and freedom can inadvertently strengthen oppressive systems, such as the Hailsham graduates internalizing themselves as lucky for their upbringing, and former courtesans often becoming *yarite*. The use of incentives can be weaponized to quell public objection as well, as noted by the guardians' self-satisfaction with providing Hailsham students with an education, and the glorification of courtesan beauties in Edo works. The perceptions of each group's situation are also subsumed within a lattice of social and cultural norms, and in the case of the courtesans, politics and economics as well. All of those aforementioned factors, while serving to normalize the plight of each group, thus become pillars for the exploitative systems that entrap each party.

When considering that dystopianism is a continuous preoccupation for the advantaged and a reality for the disadvantaged, readers will find modern donors operating within the ideological systems that they contribute to, or worse, benefit from. Even in the wake of technological advancement, society will likely continue to harbor its feudalistic tendency to segregate and subjugate some groups for the benefit of others. The propensity for slavery to move fluidly between physical and psychological states, exacerbated by class divisions, makes it difficult to peel back its veneer of beauty and cultivation when such a form arises. In light of this, utopianism and dystopianism should not be viewed through dichotomous lenses, but rather as multidimensional entities working in tandem with one another through the lives of those they encompass past, present, and future.

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APPENDIX

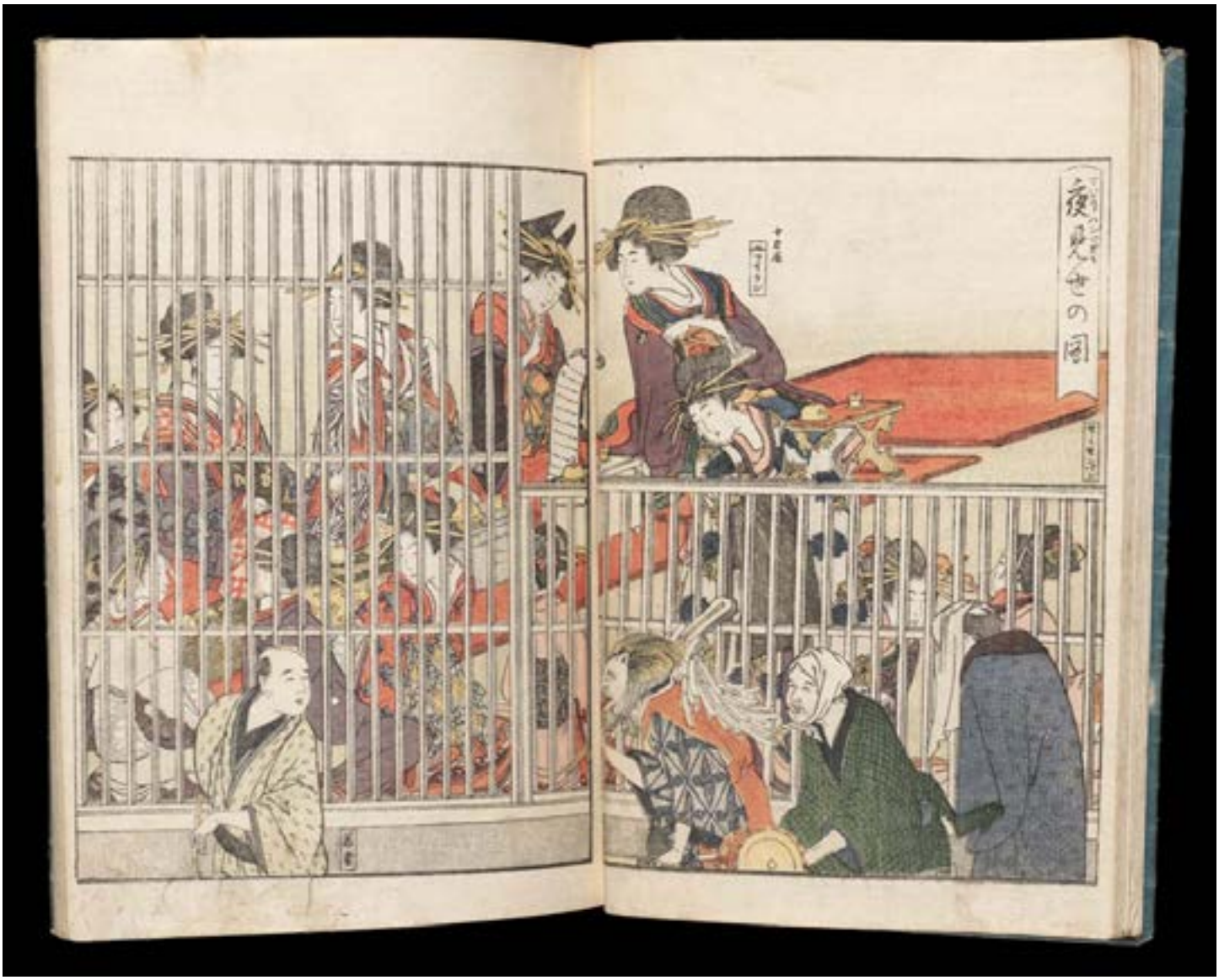

Fig. 1. Utamaro, Kitagawa. *Yoshiwara Picture Book: Annual Events. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston*, mfa.org/collections/object/seir%C3%B4-ehon-nenj%C3%BB-gy%C3%B4ji-yoshiwara-picture-book-annual-events-4989781800, Museo del Prado, Madrid.

Fig. 2. Utamaro, Kitagawa. *High-Ranked Courtesan, from the series Five Shades of Ink in the Northern Quarter (Hokkoku goshiki-zumi) (Oiran)1789–1800. Art Institute of Chicago*. artic.edu/artworks/89354/high-ranked-courtesan-from-the-series-five-shades-of-ink-in-the-northern-quarter-hokkoku-goshiki-zumi-oiran.

Fig. 3. Utamaro, Kitagawa. *A Low-Class Prostitute (Gun [teppo]), from the series "Five Shades of Ink in the Northern Quarter" ("Hokkoku goshiki-zumi").1789–1800. Art Institute of Chicago*. artic.edu/artworks/89356/a-low-class-prostitute-gun-teppo-from-the-series-five-shades-of-ink-in-the-northern-quarter-hokkoku-goshiki-zumi.

Pay-to-Play: The Utopia for Capitalists in *Black Mirror's* "Fifteen Million Merits"

By Jacob Garrett

ABSTRACT

This paper analyzes second episode of the popular dystopian sci-fi show Black Mirror*, "Fifteen Million Merits," as a utopia for the capitalists that are in charge of the commune in which the episode's characters live. Through comparisons to American company towns and an analysis of the psychology that these capitalists employ, I come to the conclusion that, while a dystopia for the citizens that the episode follows, this society is a utopia for those in charge. Furthermore, I posit that, even though the community we see is set far in the future and seems very removed from our own world, it may not be as far away as we may like to think.*

In 2018, a major controversy in the world of video games was that of microtransactions. In such popular games as *Fortnite* and *Star Wars Battlefront II*, users were able to use real-world currency to purchase items and advantages in-game. Some of those items were simply cosmetic in nature, such as camouflage for guns and unique outfits for characters, but others granted richer players an advantage over their competition, essentially boiling the stakes of these games down to whomever had the most money rather than whomever had the greatest amount of skill. The latter issue often came in the form of "loot boxes," slot machines in which players would stand a randomized chance of gaining everything from a few units of in-game currency to new weapons and abilities that would ordinarily take a long time to unlock. The problem of loot boxes became clear in games like *Star Wars Battlefront II* and *Call of Duty: Black Ops III*, in which some players who had very little experience and a great deal of money to spend were granted powerful advantages over people that had invested a great deal of time into trying to unlock weapons and abilities the old-fashioned way. Players aren't forced to purchase anything in the game, but they stand the chance of being left at a disadvantage if they don't. Even though there was a massive backlash against this practice from gamers in late 2017 and into 2018, it has not met much prolonged resistance beyond the cases that the media focused on: "Very few players like the microtransaction system but a large majority think its ok as long as the upgrades are just cosmetic" (Anderton). While some of the worst offenders in this controversy backtracked and removed microtransactions from their games (or just confined them to cosmetic items), for better or worse, microtransactions are here to stay.

Microtransactions don't currently affect anyone who doesn't play video games (or who doesn't have children that play them), but what would happen if this concept were applied to our lives in general? This idea of microtransactions becoming a part of daily life is taken to the extreme in "Fifteen Million Merits," the second episode of British writer Charlie Brooker's dystopian science fiction series *Black Mirror*. In this episode, the characters are trapped in some sort of commune in which they are constantly surrounded by screens built into the walls of their rooms and hallways. The residents of the commune are made to spend long hours at exercise bikes during the day, ostensibly to provide power to the commune (though the use of these bikes is never shown), earning a virtual currency called "merits" as they pedal. These merits are required for everything from purchasing food

in the commissary and skipping ads that pop up on the omnipresent screens to getting toothpaste to brush their teeth in the morning. There are only two ways for people to escape the bikes: they can either become a member of the commune's oft-mocked janitorial staff, or they can enter a talent contest known as *Hot Shot*, an *X Factor*-esque talent show in which the contestants could win the opportunity to host own programs (if they're well-received) or be cast in the commune's constantly advertised pornography channel, *WraithBabes*.

The society in which the characters of "Fifteen Million Merits" live is a monotonous hell plagued by constant stimulation, whether they want it or not: if they close their eyes during an advertisement that they didn't skip, the screens turn red and tell them to resume watching while emitting high-frequency whines that grow more painful the longer that the individual refrains from opening their eyes. While it may be a horrible existence for the residents of the commune, this society is a prime example of a capitalist utopia. Brooker, who co-wrote the episode with his wife, Konnie Huq, confirms this: "There was something that appealed to me about the idea of an incredibly reductive…version of capitalism, with the whole of society peddling desperately on… bikes for some coins to spend" (Brooker 32). Everything that takes place within the commune is based upon a system of labor and exchange of currency: those who feed their labor into the system by riding the exercise bikes are rewarded with merits, which they get to spend within the system for both necessities and luxuries. If anyone is not on the bikes, then they are set to work doing other tasks that benefit the commune's economy, either cleaning up the messes of the bikers or producing entertainment for the residents. This same entertainment creates even more spending within the commune's economy: the residents have to either pay for the programming itself or shell out merits to skip advertisements.

The setup of this community resembles the American "company towns" that emerged during the Industrial Revolution. Established by different companies across the United States as living spaces for their workers that would allow them to stay close to work and buy company products, these company towns would sometimes emerge as pleasant places to live, such as in Hershey, Pennsylvania, where workers were provided with "well-planned avenues that were lined with rows of shade trees," "homes with spacious lawns, surrounded with shrubbery and flowers," and working utilities,

telephone lines, and a post office (Coyle). Often, however, these towns would be quite unpleasant, if not downright awful. According to author and journalist Michele Hirsch,

> During the boom in textile, coal, steel and other industries, [workers] often earned what's called scrip instead of real money: a kind of credit they couldn't spend anywhere but the company store, where prices were often higher than elsewhere. Companies in these places often required that workers live in barebones company housing and send their kids to company-built schools, where the boss's perspective was king. (Hirsch)

One of the most famous examples of these substandard company towns was Pullman, Illinois, founded by the industrialist George Pullman in 1880. Pullman "attempted to create a model company town that focused not only on design and planning but the regulation of public behavior . . . Creating a model town that would protect the interests of capitalists and alleviate concerns of working class uprisings was likely one of the most powerful motivations for Pullman's visionary community" (Baxter 653-654). Even though there had been utopian experiments in the United States before, many of them had been unpalatable to middle- and upper-class Americans either because they were based upon socialist principles (like New Harmony, Indiana) or a religion other than Protestant Christianity (such as the Mormons' attempts at utopia in both the east and the west). Pullman's community specifically appealed to this demographic because while "most utopian communities were established with the goals of eliminating the social structures that informed an increasingly corporate, capitalist industrial system," Pullman's explicit goal was to perfect these structures (Baxter 654-655).

Pullman's utopia, which is now a neighborhood of Chicago, was originally fairly isolated from the rest of the world, the only major connection to Chicago being a passenger railway. There were myriad amenities in the city: markets, theaters, libraries, parks, banks, and a non-denominational church—which could be rented out by anyone—were available for all to use (Baxter 655-656). The catch, however, was that the skilled workers and executive personnel were given better homes and better locations, living much closer to all of these perks of the town and the eyes of visitors, while the unskilled workers were relegated to the fringes of the city (Baxter 656). The services that the town provided also came with the caveat that everything was regulated by Pullman and his company: liquor stores were illegal, the books in the library were chosen according to Pullman's discretion, and the

company was always the one to arrange which performances were allowed to take place in the theater (Baxter 656). To keep the town profitable, Pullman set very high rents to both compete with those of Chicago and to fold the town's costs into the workers' bills (Baxter 656). Everyone in the town was technically working for the good of the community, but at great personal cost to themselves. This system was tolerated for fourteen years, but the company eventually overstepped its bounds: "Pullman lowered wages in 1894 in the wake of an economic depression, but refused to lower rents and other charges at the same time. Workers rose up, leading to a strike and boycott that eventually involved as many as 250,000 workers in 27 states, resulting in up to 30 deaths, millions of dollars lost and months of disrupted rail traffic" (Hirsch). The government eventually sent troops in to break up the strike, effectively ending the capitalist experiment. Pullman's utopia failed because he refused to take into consideration the needs of his lower-class workers; he didn't realize that it wasn't a utopia for everyone and paid the price for his ignorance.

Despite being set over a century in the future, the world of "Fifteen Million Merits" is incredibly similar to communities like Pullman's. Just like the workers in company towns were only paid with scrip that was good at the local store, the merits that the people in *Black Mirror* are paid with are (as far as the viewer can tell) only good for purchasing items within the commune itself. Furthermore, everything is regulated and priced; even the smallest drop of toothpaste squeezed out of a dispenser or a pump of soap after going to the bathroom will cost you merits in this world. The products that they serve to the workers for merits are also marked up in cost, just like the items that would be for sale in company towns. While there are no outside prices to compare the merit totals to, when the main character, Bing Madsen, is getting lunch early in the episode, a woman who rides a bike near his helps him to get an apple out of the vending machine in the commissary. When she pulls it out of the machine, she says, "Almost the only real thing in there, and even that's grown in a petri dish" ("Fifteen Million Merits" 00:05:48-00:05:50). If that's the case—if the food that is being sold in the commissary really is grown from petri dishes—then that means that it was likely produced at very little cost to those that run the commune. For Bing, meanwhile, that apple and an energy drink cost 5,500 merits. By creating the products that they give the residents at such low costs and charging them exorbitant amounts of merits, the leaders of the commune in which Bing lives are able to reap

great rewards, if not in cash, then in the energy that is ostensibly being created by the bikes. Furthermore, the very fact that the merits are digital rather than physical makes it that much easier for these people to flagrantly spend their money. Since everything costs so much and everyone willingly buys into the system, the residents are forced to ride their bikes for long hours of the day if they hope to keep living in relative comfort.

Yet another way that the leaders of this community keep people sedate and compliant is by blurring the lines between "reality" and what is truly "real." While those terms may seem to mean the same thing, that is not the case for Bing and his coworkers. For them, "reality" is a constructed existence that takes place both within and in tandem with the computer systems installed throughout the building. When they use the computers for tangible rewards, they are given artificially grown food and opportunities to compete in contests that only codify the system further. All other rewards are digital; these people are obsessed with getting new accessories (similar to "skins" from video games) for their avatars, even though these digital characters aren't real and have no bearing on the daily functions of their lives. Even though the products they buy both in and out of the computers aren't really "real," they are part of the reality that the leaders of this commune have carefully built to sustain the illusion of self-determination and choice.

As if the exceedingly high prices and deliberate obfuscation of reality weren't enough, the people living in this community are constantly reminded of the merits that they spend. There is a small counter with everyone's current merit totals at the bottom of every screen, and whenever anyone buys something, the total immediately drops to account for the purchase. While this seems like a handy way to keep track of one's money, almost like an ever-present banking app, the merit counter is, in fact, reinforcing the economy as it stands. In an article in the *Harvard Business Review*, professors John T. Gourville and Dilip Soman provide an example of this phenomenon using gym memberships: if one person pays $600 up front for a year of membership, while a second person pays $50 a month for a year, the second person will, in fact, use the gym more. Even though they're paying the same cost for the membership, the first customer will see their "drive [to exercise] lessen as the pain of his $600 payment fades into the past. [The second customer], on the other hand, will be steadily reminded of the cost of her membership because she makes payments every month. She will

feel the need to get her money's worth throughout the year and will workout more regularly," and, because of this, "[The second customer] will be far more likely to renew her membership when the year is over" (Gourville and Soman). Just like the second customer, the people in "Fifteen Million Merits" are constantly "renewing their membership," so to speak; they spend money on food, toothpaste, television programs, and everything else, and each time they do this, their merit counts fall right before their eyes. These people, therefore, are induced to enjoy and use everything that they buy, giving them the idea that they are benefitting from this society and keeping them coming back for more.

Despite the lack of meaning and obsession with consumption that dictate the lives of the people living in the commune of "Fifteen Million Merits," these residents still believe that they are living in a utopia. Many of them are shown to be happy with the lives they are given, gleefully going along with the lewd and disgusting programming that is shown (programming based largely upon sexual harassment and fat-shaming) and spending their money on outfits for their virtual avatars or programs to hypnotize them into having pleasant dreams or eating healthier. They even compete to be the most productive in this system, with leaderboards keeping track of who has pedaled the most on a given day being used as "another way to reinforce the behavior…and it fosters that competitive spirit, makes [them] want to be the best," factoring into the capitalist ideal of being rewarded for greater contributions to society and the economy ("The Psychology of Black Mirror" 00:24:35-00:24:45). Aside from minor complaints from various characters, there are only two instances of public resistance to the amorphous regime in place. The first comes when Bing donates fifteen million merits, which he received from his deceased brother, to a woman he has a crush on, Abi. Bing gives her this money to get her a spot on *Hot Shot*, hoping that she may escape the mechanical drudgery of everyday life if she wins. Before she goes onstage, the crew gives her a mandatory juice box filled with a drink called "Cuppliance," and she immediately feels as though "everything just went wider apart" ("Fifteen Million Merits" 00:30:07-00:30:08). After she sings, the judges admit that she is a good singer, but say that she doesn't have what it takes to be a stand-out contestant and urge her to become an actress on *WraithBabes*. She initially resists, but the drug that she ingested before the performance makes her confused and more pliable to both the suggestions of the judges and the jeers

of the crowd watching behind them; as Bing realizes what's about to happen, he calls her name and starts to run onstage but is immediately seized by the crew and dragged away.

Here we see society being kept in line by themselves once again; however, the root cause this time is not capitalist principles, but mob mentality. During screenings of *Hot Shot*, the audience isn't actually at the show; rather, they are viewing it in their cells or on their televisions and their avatar becomes part of a virtual crowd behind the judges. This physical disconnect and anonymity allows the viewers to emotionally detach themselves from what they see onstage. Even if these people have worked with Abi in the bike rooms, she turns into just a character on the television. This makes it easier for a herd mentality to take over when the judges send people like Abi into the pornography industry; without an emotional connection to Abi anymore, these people are willing to follow the whims of the most authoritative figures on the show, those being the judges. In creating such a dynamic between the powerful members of this society and the everyday workers, the leaders of this commune have turned the residents into their own oppressors. As psychotherapist Michael Drane says, "Even though they're all part of the system, they're all just as screwed as she is. They are a necessary tool of influence" ("The Psychology of Black Mirror" 00:56:23-00:56:33).

When Abi agrees to become a porn star, the rage and remorse that Bing feels drives him to exhibit the second example of resistance to the regime in this episode. He saves up another fifteen million merits and goes on the show himself, smuggling in Abi's empty Cuppliance cup to trick the crew into letting him go on without having had a drink. He starts by performing a short dance routine before pulling out a large shard of glass and threatening to cut his throat unless they allow him to say what he wants to say. He goes on to eviscerate the judges, the system they stand for, and the way that all the citizens of the commune are living:

> All we know is fake fodder and buying shit! It's how we speak to each other. How we speak to each other, how we express ourselves, is buying shit. What, I have a dream? The peak of our dreams is a hat for our doppel. A hat doesn't exist! It's not even there! We buy shit that's not even there! Show us something real and free and beautiful, you couldn't. It'd break us. We're too numb for it. Our minds will wonder whatsoever, you dole it out in meager portions, and only then till its augmented and packaged and pumped through ten thousand pre-assigned

> filters, till it's nothing more than a meaningless series of lights, while we ride, day in, day out, going where? Powering what? All tiny cells and tiny screens, and bigger cells and bigger screens…
>
> ("Fifteen Million Merits" 00:52:56-00:53:42)

The crowd watching *Hot Shot* is silent until one of the judges praises Bing's tirade as "the most heartfelt thing [he's] seen on this stage since *Hot Shot* began and offers Bing a deal: he can get off the bikes if he live streams two such rants for a half hour every week for entertainment. After some hesitation, Bing takes the deal. The society in which they live even finds ways to make protests part of the machine: if they can't silence a dissenter, then they convince him to prostitute his rants for his own profit. Just as they do with everything else, the leaders of this society take anything that even approaches being real—such as Bing's tirade—and funnel it into the reality that they want their workers to believe in. Where George Pullman was ignorant of the desires of his workers and used force to keep them in check when his carefully regulated media didn't work, the leaders of the community in "Fifteen Million Merits" instead cater to what their residents desire and use underhanded means such as drugs and bribes to stop anyone who isn't lulled into a consumptive coma by the constant deluge of stimulation.

All of the capitalistic elements of this society aside, it also seems as though it could be a spin on a socialist utopia. Even though individuals are given the opportunity to stand out on *Hot Shot,* homogeneity is for the most part praised above all else. All of the rooms in the complex look almost exactly the same; the residents all wear the same blank, gray outfits; they are all expected to be updating their online counterparts to supposedly express their individuality, even though they're forsaking their independence from the rest of the commune in doing so; and those that do not conform to this society's ideal of the perfect worker (namely, those who are not fit enough to be constantly riding the bikes) are shamed for their "deficiency." Personal possessions are also not allowed for those that are not given special privilege by winning their own program on *Hot Shot*; Abi is fond of making origami animals out of waste paper before she is forced into pornography, but they always have to be thrown out at the end of the day. Furthermore, if the bikes are in fact powering the installation in which they live, then they are all implicitly working for the common good by riding

them all day long; without the power from those bikes, the entire community would cease to function correctly. Its barter economy shows that it can't be an all-out communist society, but it could easily be a socialist one where everyone is working together for the good of the group. As professor James Brennan writes in *Why Not Capitalism?*, however, "There is an essential asymmetry in the capitalist and socialist versions of utopia… Capitalists allow socialism, but socialists forbid capitalism….A capitalist utopia would allow people to form communes, but a socialist utopia would forbid [one] from owning a factory by [themself]" (Case). Applying this statement to "Fifteen Million Merits" shows that this society must be a capitalist utopia rather than a socialist one. There are qualities of both capitalism and socialism in the community, but since capitalism can allow socialism but socialism can't allow capitalism, that means that a capitalist utopia must be the correct designation for this establishment.

The society in which Bing and Abi live, while unsettling, may still seem quite out of reach. Even though many of the concepts used by Brooker are part of modern society, the extent to which this world has gone appears to be far beyond the realm of possibility. In daily life, however, we can see aspects of it creeping in. In games with microtransactions, the companies that produce them are able to rake in large profits with very little effort by creating the illusion that their system is unavoidable if one wants to compete with other players in both the actual gameplay and the visual appeal of the gaming experience. We also see this business model in luxury hotels: you have the base charge for the room, and you aren't required to pay for anything else; however, if you wish to enjoy the services of the pool, the snacks and drinks in the room, or even the convenience of a Wi-Fi password, you're forced to pay more. When this same idea is applied to somewhere in which residents are not able to leave by choice, such as in private, for-profit prisons, the owners of such complexes are able to make a fortune.

Beyond microtransactions, there are numerous other examples of how modern society is already showing characteristics of Brooker's dystopia. Streaming services offer constant entertainment for those willing to pay, and customers can pay even more to bypass ads in their programming, just like the citizens in "Fifteen Million Merits." Citizens are expected to go to their jobs and "contribute to society" every single day, whether they enjoy their jobs or not, and often have

to pay exorbitant prices at company cafeterias quite similar to that in which Bing eats. Increasing numbers of people, especially children, are perfectly willing to spend real-world currency on virtual perks and cosmetics, things which don't really exist and which don't enhance one's life in any way, like a new piece of armor for a character or the ability to perform a specific dance move or say a line of dialogue known as an "emote" to gloat after defeating an enemy. A study of 1,000 players of *Fortnite* showed that almost 70% of players had spent money on the game, and the average amount spent among those players was about $85 (Tassi). The game itself, at least in its beta form, is completely free.

Talent shows like The *X Factor* and *American Idol* are also dangled over our heads as ways to escape from day-to-day drudgery, and those that don't make the cut for a so-called "good" job (either because of a lack of experience or higher education or for another reason) are relegated to positions such as janitorial staff and looked down upon by those who work in the same building. Those that genuinely start out to criticize the institutions of modern society can end up becoming PR giants and becoming focused on their own popularity rather than the cause in which they may have initially believed. On both social media and online gaming platforms, people are exposed to constructed realities everyday, with amorphous algorithms determining what they are or are not exposed to at any given moment. These environments also create vicious instances of mob mentality, which in the worst cases have lead to suicides and accidental deaths, such as when gamers have emergency services to a location where they are not needed and have inadvertently caused people's deaths. The only things missing are the claustrophobic living quarters and ubiquitous wall screens, and those are both not out of the realm of possibility.

Just because a place is considered a utopia by some doesn't mean that it is indeed a perfect society. Just as the Soviet Union was intended to be a communist utopia but devolved into a socialist dictatorship, so can a capitalist utopia begun with either the best or worst of intentions become a center of exploitation that uses competition and isolation to drive its residents to fuel the machine that controls the community, be that machine an industrial-era company or an invisible leadership, as is the case in "Fifteen Million Merits." It may be a utopia for those in charge and for those that are willing to submit to a life that consists of only work and meaningless entertainment, but for people

like Abi and Bing, the system is an intolerable and unstoppable behemoth that quashes any resistance that by manipulating them into taking jobs in self-destructive programming to escape the daily slog of riding the bikes. Even though the ultra-confined society present in the second episode of *Black Mirror* may seem as though it is far from the current reality, a closer look seems to signal that it could arrive much sooner than one might think. In the blink of an eye, everyone may be scrambling to earn their fifteen million merits.

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Featured Artist: Allison Akers

We are thrilled to share 3 art pieces along with their rationale by talented artist Allison Akers.

EMBODIED UTOPIAS AND DYSTOPIAS

For my artwork, I wanted to focus on creatures that may not often be associated with utopia, but that I took to represent utopian and dystopian ideals both from the way I designed them and their representation in nature, literature, film.

Sting, 2018, Ink, 4x4 in.

"Sting"

Sting takes inspiration from the cover photo of the *DLR*. Jellyfish have always seemed otherworldly and beautiful to me, much like idea of utopia. However, many are also capable of stinging and inflicting pain, making them dangerous and deadly creatures. A single person's idea of utopia may be suppressive and harmful to other people, much like a jellyfish's tentacles do not hurt itself but will paralyze and ensnare the prey it needs to survive. One jellyfish, the Turritopsis dohrnii, is even immortal, which I related to utopian and dystopian concepts that have persisted for thousands of years. I used black ink to capture the jellyfish's slick appearance and to reflect the darker, less moral actions that are often associated with achieving a "utopia" on Earth.

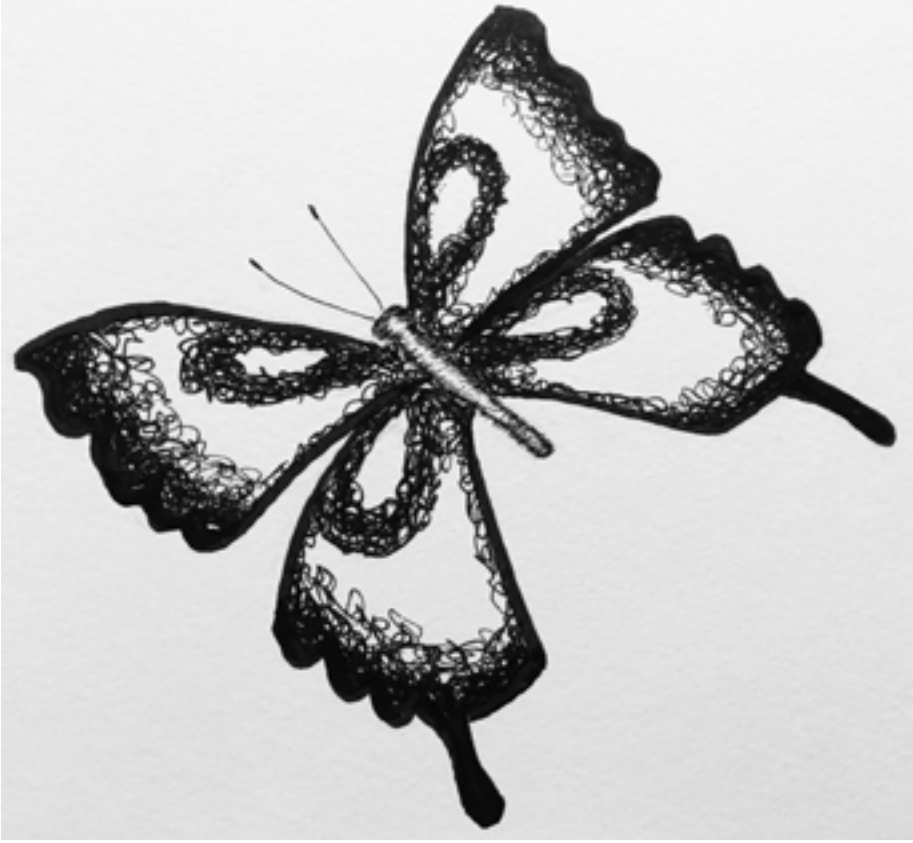
"Siren"

The Modern Siren also takes similar inspiration to the jellyfish's themes. In Greek mythology, sirens were bird-women who enchanted sailors with their songs and drove ships into rocks, but over time sirens were conflated with mermaids into their modern incarnations. I like to think of utopias as modern sirens. Utopia is alluring, and many characters in literature and film want/try to achieve it, but often utopias are warped by human flaws into monstrous, corrupt dystopias. It is easy to stare at the siren's beautiful face, listen to her enchanting voice, but her more sinister features should not be ignored. Utopia also means "no place," which I also related to my siren, since it is a creature that does not exist. Since green is often associated with life and safety, my siren has a pale green tail and markings coupled with black to represent death and danger. She also strikes a dynamic, confident pose, smiling directly at the viewer in an inviting way.

The Modern Siren, 2018, Ink, graphite, and marker, 9 in x 12 in.

"Artificial Beauty"

Unlike the other two pieces, Artificial Beauty embodies how mankind alters and mimics nature, shaping it to create utopia but often falling short of nature's perfection. In class last semester, we examined nature-centric utopias such as Of the Cannibals by Michel de Montaigne and The Tempest by William Shakespeare, which gave me the idea to submit this piece. The lack of color in the butterfly emphasizes the lifelessness of the butterfly, and the negative space in its wings, thorax, and abdomen allude to the idea of it being a hollow, manmade imitation of a real butterfly.



Artificial Beauty, 2017, Ink, 5 x 5 in.

CONTRIBUTORS

ALLISON AKERS is a junior creative writing major with minors in professional writing/emerging media and marketing at Ball State University. In addition to being a designer for the *Digital Literature Review*, she is lead fiction editor for *The Broken Plate*. Allison plans to pursue a career as an editor and author.

KATRINA BROWN is a third year senior graduating in July with degrees in English Literature and Sociology. As part of the editorial team, she helped choose and proofread submissions that were included in this edition of the *DLR*.

MIKAYLA DAVIS is graduating from Whitworth University with a Bachelor of Arts in English Literature and minors in Mathematics, Spanish, and English Language Arts. Mikayla has always seen herself in a teaching role and, as such, will attend the Master in Teaching graduate program at Whitworth shortly after graduating. A utopian day for Mikayla would look like a sunny day spent gardening, enjoying an audiobook, and sipping on a good ol' Italian cream soda.

JACOB GARRETT is a junior History and Literature double major at Ball State University with minors in Creative Writing and Political Science. He reads everything he can get his hands on, from Leo Tolstoy to Stephen King and from Emily Dickinson to Jenny Han, and has previously been published in the *Odyssey* at Ball State University. He plans to go into either teaching or publishing after graduating in May 2020.

GRACE GOZE is a sophomore Creative Writing major and History minor. She has previously had creative works published in the *Oakland Arts Review* and the Ball State Honors College's *Odyssey*. Grace is passionate about comedy and storytelling, both visual and written, the latter being the driving force behind the topic of her essay.

NATALIE KUSS is a senior graduating in May with a degree in English Studies. She will be continuing her studies at Ball State University for her Master's degree. She enjoys reading and the great outdoors.

MARLEE JACOCKS is a senior graduating in May with a degree in English Literature and minors in French, Political Science, and Philosophy. She will be attending IU Mckinney School of Law in the fall. She was one of the lead editors for the *DLR* blog and has enjoyed every moment working for the *DLR*.

KATIE PATYK graduated from Luther College in May 2018 with a double major in History and English. She has been a huge science fiction fan ever since the summer of her junior year, when she received a grant to study the papers of Theodore Sturgeon — a major science fiction author from the 1960s — housed at Kansas University. She is also an avid creative writer and has been published in Luther College's *Oneota Review* and Z Publishing House's anthology *Iowa's Best Emerging Poets*.

BEN SAPET is a rhetoric and writing major from the Chicago area. He is interested in the places where pop culture and art intersect. Ben spends most of his time reading, writing, and staring at screens--he hopes to make a career out of those three activities.

JULIE SANTINI is in her final year of Honours History at Concordia University in Montreal, Quebec. She is specializing in Medieval and Women's History, particularly in cases where women in society were undermined for having intellectual ambitions.

MARISA SLOAN is a writer and designer graduating in May with a degree in English and minors in art history and digital media. She is passionate about merging her marketing knowledge with her artistic background to help the arts and culture industry flourish. Her utopian day involves floating along in an art museum, reading a Kazuo Ishiguro novel, and drinking hibiscus tea.

KORY WISE graduated summa cum laude from Heidelberg University in May of 2018 with a BA in Religion and English. He is currently pursuing an MA in Catholic Studies from Mount St. Mary's Seminary of the West. George Orwell's *1984* inspired his love for dystopian literature back in high school, and it's still the dystopia he fears the most.