Phoenix renewed: the survival and mutation of utopian thought in North American science fiction, 1965-1982

Hoda Moukhtar Zaki

Atlanta University

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.auctr.edu/dissertations

Part of the Political Science Commons

Recommended Citation


This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@Robert W. Woodruff Library, Atlanta University Center. It has been accepted for inclusion in ETD Collection for AUC Robert W. Woodruff Library by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@Robert W. Woodruff Library, Atlanta University Center. For more information, please contact cwiseman@auctr.edu.
PHOENIX RENEWED: THE SURVIVAL AND MUTATION OF UTOPIAN THOUGHT IN NORTH AMERICAN SCIENCE FICTION, 1965-1982

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF ATLANTA UNIVERSITY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

BY

HODA MOUKHTAR ZAKI

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

ATLANTA, GEORGIA

DECEMBER 1984
ABSTRACT

POLITICAL SCIENCE

ZAKI, HODA MOUKHTAR

B.A., American University in Cairo, 1971
M.A., Atlanta University, Atlanta, Georgia, 1974


Adviser: Dr. Alex Willingham

Thesis dated December, 1984

This dissertation is concerned with the status of utopian thought in modern times. As such it is concerned with a historic problem in political theory, i.e., how to visualize a perfect human community. Since the turn of the 20th century, we have seen a decline in utopian literature. A variety of commentators, including Mannheim and Mumford, noted and decried this trend. It seemed ironic to those observers that utopia's demise would occur when humanity was closest to realizing material abundance for all.

My research evaluates this irony. The primary data of my work are drawn from the genre of science fiction. The new locus for utopian thought seems natural enough. Science fiction is a speculative activity and, in its emphasis on science and technology, concerns itself with an area of human activity that has been intimately connected with the idea of progress since the European Enlightenment.
A number of scholars including Mumford, Sargent, Suvin, and Williams, have asserted that contemporary utopian thought could be found in science fiction. Their argument has been strengthened by some science fiction novels published since the 1960s. These novels visualized superior societies. My research further evaluates the link between utopian thought and science fiction.

I come to the conclusion that science fiction contains many utopian attributes. However, the genre differs from utopian thought in one critical respect: it depoliticizes the public domain. As such, science fiction fails to perform a historic role of utopian thought, namely: to provide a new understanding of politics. Utopian literature has undergone a mutation in its abandonment of the political. This denaturing of utopian thought has led to an anomaly in political philosophy—the emergence of an apolitical utopian literature within the confines of science fiction.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank my advisor Alex Willingham for his patience, consideration, and guidance. I would also like to express my appreciation to the rest of my committee: Milton Crook, Larry Noble, and Carl Spight. Carolyn Rhodes provided generous support. Additionally, the institutional support provided by Hampton University is greatly appreciated.

Finally, and most importantly, to my immediate and extended family and network of friends, I want to express my gratitude and love. Camille and Isai know the place they occupied in the scheme of things.
To

My Parents

Eva Saigh

and

Moukhtar A. Zaki
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. UTOPIAN THOUGHT</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. SCIENCE FICTION</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. THE NEBULA NOVELS</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. URSULA K. LE GUIN</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. CONCLUSION</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX I</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX II</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

This dissertation is concerned with the status of utopian thought in modern times. As such it is concerned with a historic problem in political theory, i.e., how to visualize a perfect human community. From the very beginning, utopian thought has been closely associated with the enterprise of political theory. Yet in recent times we have seen a decline of utopian literature. This has been apparent since the turn of the 20th century. A variety of commentators noted and decried this trend. They mourned the death of utopia at the very time that unprecedented advances were being made in natural science, technology, and political democracy. These advances were impressive enough to warrant serious speculation about the future where the quest for a just society would no longer be constrained by a "kingdom of necessity." It seemed ironic to those observers that utopia's demise would occur when humanity was closest to realizing material abundance for all.

My research is designed to evaluate this irony. I begin with the hypothesis concerning the decline in the amount of attention given to utopian thought by social theorists. This problem is discussed in Chapter I.

The primary data of my work are drawn from the flourishing utopianism in the area of science fiction novels. I give direct consideration to science fiction in Chapters II-IV. The new locus for utopian thought seems natural enough. Science fiction is a speculative
activity and, in its emphasis on science and technology, concerns itself with an area of human activity that has been intimately connected with the idea of progress since the European Enlightenment. A speculative approach to the human condition disciplined by modern science and technology would seem to satisfy the historic burdens of utopian thought while reinvigorating the search for the Good Life generally.

A few critics of science fiction have connected the genre to utopian literature. They point to a small number of science fiction novels which contain many utopian attributes. My research further evaluates the link between utopian thought and science fiction. I go beyond the current analyses by examining the utopianism of the genre as a whole from the vantage point of political theory.

As a genre, science fiction is a "popular" literature with a mass audience. The possibility exists then that, whatever its message, it will have appeal beyond the usual confines of traditional political theory. Political theorists will find it particularly urgent then to wonder whether the utopianism of science fiction fulfills the role of classic utopian thought. Whether our ultimate stance is affirmative or critical, systematic evaluation of this subject matter is required. The analysis presented herein is intended to be a contribution toward that end.

The contents of this study will evaluate contemporary utopian thought in the following manner: Chapter I examines the tradition of modern utopian thought and four of its attributes; the development of North American science fiction, its premises and its themes are described in Chapter II; an analysis of the primary data, science fiction novels,
is the focus of Chapters III and IV; while the final chapter evaluates
the new mode of utopian thought for elements of change and continuity.
CHAPTER I

UTOPIAN THOUGHT

Utopian literature is a small part of a greater utopian propensity in humankind. This "utopian longing"\(^1\) has been expressed in diverse cultural objects—myths, fairy tales, poems, and utopias.\(^2\) Utopias describe imaginary societies that embody an author's concepts of the Good Life and human felicity. The utopian tradition may be divided into


two periods: one, the classical and Christian utopias which were
designed for contemplative purposes; and two, modern utopias which
have been calls to action, describing the ideal society and galvanizing
its readers to achieve it. The father of modern utopian thought is
indisputably Sir Thomas More who in the 16th century coined the word
itself to intentionally mean a good place (eutopia) or no place
(outopia). With the publication of his Utopia in 1516, More established
the form of the genre for centuries to come.

The output of utopian literature has varied greatly from 1516 to
the present; the 17th and 19th centuries are distinguished as being

1Classical utopian works would include Plato's Republic, Judeo—
Christian myths of paradise and the millennium, St. Augustine's City
of God, and the medieval images of the land of Cokaygne. See Manuel
and Manuel, pp. 33-114.

2Three main interpretations of More's Utopia exist in the criti—
cal literature. The first sees More's attack on the land-owning aris—
tocracy as an attack on feudalism and a support of bourgeois democracy.
This is clear in Russell A. Ames, Citizen Thomas More and his Utopia
More as a medieval philosopher, defending the corporate life of the
Middle Ages. This point of view is expressed in More's classic biog—
The third, and most recent interpretation perceives More as a humanist
and a Renaissance moralist, concerned with honor, virtue, public
spirit, and a devotion to the public good. See, for example, Quentin
12 October 1979, pp. 57-60. For two conflicting psychological views
pp. 117-149; and Alistair Fox, Thomas More: History and Providence
(New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983) and G. R. Elton, "The Myth
especially significant and prolific.\(^1\) Key works in the 17th century include Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis* (1627), Tommaso Campanella's *City of the Sun* (1637), and James Harrington's *Oceana* (1656). It is the 19th century that is most prolific. Sargent reports that while 320 utopian works were written, one half of them were published between 1888 and the turn of the century.\(^2\) Major works in the 19th century include James Buckingham, *National Evils and Practical Remedies* (1848), Edward Bellamy, *Looking Backward* (1888), Etienne Cabet, *Voyage en Icarie* (1845), Charles Fourier, *Théories des quatre mouvements et des destinées générales* (1808), Theodor Herzka, *Freeland: A Social Anticipation* (1889), and William Morris, *News From Nowhere* (1890). Utopian writing in the 19th century was not only the most prolific ever, but it also led to the establishment of organizations and political movements which sought to realize the utopian blueprints.\(^3\)

\(^1\) Lyman Tower Sargent's "Themes in Utopian Fiction in English Before Wells," *Science—Fiction Studies* 10 (November 1976): 275—282 is a useful enumeration and summary of utopian works. A good bibliography of secondary works on the subject of utopianism which includes a commentary on the various themes found in the critical literature is Gordon Beauchamp's "Themes and Uses of Fictional Utopias: A Bibliography of Secondary Work in English," *Science—Fiction Studies* 4 (March 1977): 55—63. Beauchamp, however, stresses the fictional perspective, as he regards political theory a "tangential" area of utopianism. The most recent collection of bibliographies can be found in Part IV, "Bibliographic and Historical Survey," in *America as Utopia* edited by Kenneth Roemer (New York: Burt Franklin and Co., 1981). This section contains seven different bibliographies of both primary and secondary sources on various aspects of American utopias.

\(^2\) Sargent, pp. 278—279.

In addressing the concerns of this dissertation, I rely primarily on standard tools of textual analysis that will be familiar to the student of political philosophy. However, there are two conceptually significant factors that should be stressed at this point. One is my decision to establish the significance of utopianism in terms of the tradition of political discourse and the other is my stipulation that utopian thought has certain attributes according to which any surrogate can be measured.

The idea of political theory as a tradition of discourse is essentially an assertion about boundaries. The concept is associated with such people as Sheldon Wolin although the notion was the implicit organizing principle of standard "histories" of political theory, including George Sabine's immensely popular *A History of Political Theory*. Utopian thought is located within the boundaries of political philosophy and the tradition of political theory. This tradition is a complex activity, its boundaries have been shifting ones and its object of study

---


3 John G. Gunnell argues against the notion of the "tradition" of political theory in his *Political Theory: Tradition and Interpretation* (Cambridge, Mass.: Winthrop Publishers, Inc., 1979). He points out that there is no demonstrable historical tradition in political theory, only an analytical tradition used by the historians of political thought to interpret classical works. He argues that the analytical concept of a tradition in political theory has been gradually reified into the "myth of tradition."
has been directed towards understanding the created arena of politics.\textsuperscript{1} An appreciation of this political tradition is essential for understanding the contemporary political domain. The legacy of political theory includes debates about alternate political and social orders. It is within this tradition that utopianism has been conceived.\textsuperscript{2} How utopian thought functions within this tradition of discourse will be made clear as each of its attributes are discussed in turn.

"Attribute" is the term I use to distinguish modern utopian thought. There are four such attributes: one, the critique of the author's society; two, the speculation of an ideal social order; three, an anticipation of the future; and four, the attempt to construct a better society.

We shall see how each attribute has been designated by various scholars to be the most valuable essence of utopian thought. Their evaluations are a result of their perception of the role utopian thought fulfills in the social order.

The first attribute of utopian thought is its critical stance to extant society. This is accomplished by the juxtaposition of the "is" (the author's society) against the "what ought to be" (the ideal society). The opposition between the real and the ideal is accomplished by the metaphor of the traveller who moves from the familiar society to

\textsuperscript{1}Sheldon Wolin, Politics and Vision: Continuity and Innovation in Western Political Thought (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1960), pp. 1-13. See also Cunnell, Chapters 2 and 3.

explore utopia. For example, More's *Hythodaeus* explores utopia, Butler's Higgs discovers Erewhon, and Bellamy's *West* investigates Boston in the year 2000.

The role of utopian thought as a vehicle of social critique was initially appreciated by the first modern critics of utopian thought, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. Distinguishing between "utopian socialism" and "communism," Marx and Engels acknowledged that "utopian socialists" attacked "every principle of existing society"¹ and represented "the first instinctive yearnings of that class [the proletariat] for a general reconstruction of society."² But while Marx and Engels acknowledged the critical functions performed by the "utopian socialists," they nevertheless criticized them as merely "utopian." They considered it politically naive to urge the dissolution of class antagonisms at a time when that was the motive force by which to achieve utopia. They also considered it "utopian" because it arbitrarily urged a perfect social order derived from an a priori model. As Engels states:

The solution of the social problems, which as yet lay hidden in undeveloped economic conditions, the Utopians attempted to evolve out of the human brain. Society presented nothing but wrongs; to remove these was the task of reason. It was necessary, then, to discover a new and more perfect system of social order and to impose this upon society from without by propaganda, and wherever it was possible, by the example of model experiments. These new social systems were foredoomed as Utopian; the more completely they were worked out in detail, the more they could not avoid drifting off into pure phantasies.³

²Ibid.
Marx and Engels defined utopianism to be unrealistic, excessively rationalistic and, over time, reactionary. As they stated in The Communist Manifesto:

The significance of Critical-Utopian Socialism and Communism bears an inverse relation to historical development. In proportion as the modern class struggle develops and takes definite shape, this fantastic standing apart from the contest, these fantastic attacks on it, lose all practical value and all theoretical justification. Therefore, although the originators of these systems were, in many respects, revolutionary, their disciples have, in every case, formed more reactionary sects . . . in opposition to that progressive historical development of the proletariat.\(^1\)

Marx and Engels broke with utopian tradition in their own vision of utopia by specifically delineating the agent which would bring about its realization—the proletariat. They also refused to provide a blueprint of their ideal state, as they maintained that the specific conditions of a struggle would determine utopia's contours.\(^2\)

---

\(^1\) Marx and Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, p. 117.


Today a number of scholars contend that Marx and Engels fall fully within the tradition of utopianism. Goodheart for example, maintains that Marx is linked to this tradition in his belief in the benevolent movement of history which will allow the proletariat to successfully seize power and liberate humanity. Furthermore, Goodheart maintains, Marx believed in the concept of progress, itself a utopian ideal and a product of the Enlightenment. See Eugene Goodheart, *Culture and the Radical Conscience* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1973), pp. 121-123.
The idea of utopian thought as criticism received its fullest statement eight decades after the publication of The Communist Manifesto on the part of Karl Mannheim in Ideology and Utopia (1929).\(^1\) Political thought for Mannheim can be divided into two categories: the utopian or the ideological. These categories of thought were defined in opposition to one another. For Mannheim utopian thought was grounded in the material conditions of society and had far-ranging implications for social change. We will see how the element of criticism was integral in the distinction Mannheim makes between utopian and ideological thought.

For Mannheim, both utopia and ideology are mental constructs and highly developed modes of thought. Utopia is a "type of orientation which transcends reality and which at the same time breaks the bonds of the existing order. . . ."\(^2\) The utopian orientation belongs to the aspiring classes that wish to revolutionize the social order; ideology, on the other hand, is the orientation of the dominant classes which seek to maintain the status quo. Mannheim grounds the utopian and ideological orientation in conflicting classes.

The ruling classes will label ideas as "utopian," if these ideas oppose the present order. Ideas that support the status quo are identified and exposed as "ideology," or illusory ideas adapted to the present order, by the groups which aspire to change. Mannheim notes that

---


\(^2\)Mannheim, Ideology and Utopia, p. 192.
utopian and ideological elements often commingle in the same mentality.\textsuperscript{1}

The distinctiveness of utopian thought lies in its opposition to the established order. In Mannheim's words, utopia is

\ldots in opposition to the 'conservative' outlook which speaks for the established order, it prevents the existing order from becoming absolute, in that it envisages it as only one of the possible 'topias' from which will emanate those utopian elements which in their turn will undermine the existing order.\textsuperscript{2}

Utopias are dialectically related to the social order as they are ideals representing the unfulfilled tendencies of that age, expressed by aspiring classes. These ideals may herald a new order. As Mannheim states: "The existing order gives a birth to utopias which in turn break the bonds of the existing order, leaving it free to develop in the direction of the next order of existence."\textsuperscript{3} Utopias emerge from concrete conditions in a social order, and may herald the "'premature truths'" of a new social order.\textsuperscript{4}

Mannheim perceives a close bond between the development of an individual's utopian mind-set and the process of change. The utopian mind first existed in the primitive mythical mind which gradually evolved into an understanding of reality.\textsuperscript{5} Initially, in the primitive mind, utopia offered a symbolic escape from reality and satisfied socially

\textsuperscript{1}\textit{Ibid.}, pp. 203–204.
\textsuperscript{2}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 198.
\textsuperscript{3}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 199.
\textsuperscript{4}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 203.
\textsuperscript{5}Mannheim, "Utopia," p. 201.
frustrated impulses. However, the function of myths, states Mannheim, is
to project and collectivize those subjective ecstasies and symbolic equivalents for the wish fulfillment idea which survive in a particular society.\(^1\)

Myths are transformed by the ruling group into protective ideologies, and by the oppressed they are metamorphosed into reality-transcending ideas. Utopias then become forces, coalescing the oppressed into a collectivity and inciting them to action. Both collective activity (and the adaptations needed to sustain it,) and the coming into contact with actual concrete situations, are mechanisms which allow the masses to understand previously undisclosed reality, a process Mannheim calls the "rationalization of consciousness."\(^2\) "Utopian fiction" Mannheim states, constitutes an integral part of the spiritual and intellectual equipment of the different social groups, and by orienting their activities in terms of this reality transcending element these groups, each in its own way, discover social reality.\(^3\)

In summary, Mannheim viewed utopian thought as trenchant criticism of the social order. As a psychological process, a collectivizing force of change, and an epistemological instrument, utopian thought stood in opposition to the prevailing order.

Mannheim in 1929 was concerned that utopia no longer existed to fuel change in society. To live in complete accord with the realities of the world, without any transcendent element is "barren." Mannheim saw many examples of such "barrenness" in contemporary life.\(^4\) The need

---

\(^1\) Ibid., p. 202.
\(^2\) Ibid.
\(^3\) Ibid.
\(^4\) Mannheim, Ideology and Utopia, p. 250.
for reality-transcendence to "drive" mankind forward is imperative for Mannheim; its elimination would lead to the death of human will. It is essential for humans to be utopian and to constantly reach beyond the existing social order, which itself was once a utopian ideal.\footnote{Ibid., pp. 260-262.} As he puts it:

The disappearance of utopia brings about a static state of affairs in which man himself becomes no more than a thing. . . . just at the highest stage of awareness, when history is ceasing to be blind fate, and is becoming more and more man's creation, with the relinquishment of utopias, man would lose his will to shape history and therewith his ability to understand it.\footnote{Ibid., pp. 262-263.}

In focusing on the critical element of utopian thought, Marx, Engels, and Mannheim, were appreciative of its oppositional stance to the ruling classes and the status quo. Marx and Engels rebuked the utopian socialists for their \textit{a priori} descriptions of utopia, designating them as "utopian." Mannheim, also grounding utopian thought in the concrete conditions of society, defined utopian thought more kindly. As the prerogative of those groups who were in opposition to the status quo, Mannheims saw utopian thought as a fundamental criticism of the prevailing order.

Contemporary utopian scholars have enlarged our understanding of the critical role of utopian thought by focusing on its impact upon the reader. Darko Suvin, for example, regards utopian literature as a subset within the larger category of "estranging" literature. Estrangement, or defamiliarization, is a process whereby an individual perceives
a mundane occurrence in a new and unfamiliar way. Diametrically opposed to alienation, estrangement implies the transformation of social reality.¹ Utopia as estranged literature "endeavors to illuminate men's relationships to other men and to their surroundings by the basic device of a radically different location for the postulated novel human relations of its fable; ..."² Utopias, by shocking the reader's perception of the familiar social "topos" are "positive negations" dealienating the alienating world by standing it on its head.³ Thus, Thomas More depicted a utopian island where precious metals were held in contempt; pearls were given to children as play things and gold was used to make chamberpots. Both More and Campanella abolished private property; Fourier abolished the individual household; and Charlotte Perkins Gilman challenged conventional notions of gender in her all-female utopia Herland.⁴

In summary, utopian thought contains a critical component which relates the reader to the author's society. It has attacked existing


²Suvin, Metamorphoses. . ., p. 53.

³Ibid., p. 54. To maximize the reader's estrangement, utopian works developed a set of anti-closural devices designed to make readers carry over into their daily experiences the assumptions garnered in the text. See Gary Saul Morson, The Boundaries of Genre: Dostoevsky's Diary of a Writer and the Traditions of Literary Utopia (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), pp. 94-95. One example of an anti-closural device is an author's postscript, which argues for the seriousness and validity of the text's utopian ideals. Edward Bellamy, for example, entitled his postscript "The Rate of the World's Progress."

institutions and values, confronted the reigning ideology, estranged readers from their familiar environs, demonstrated the need for change, and served as a focal point for social change.

With regard to the second attribute of utopian thought—the speculation of an ideal community—we find that all utopias drew blueprints of a superior society. They are lengthy expositions of the cultural, economic, and political structures of a harmonious community. These expositions presented radically different views on society and politics. In content utopias have varied greatly. They have alternately depicted agrarian city-states, Christian communalism, industrial communalism, capitalist-imperialist societies, technocracies, socialism, and anarchy.¹ Nonetheless, utopian writers have been "idealistic" when constructing their works. Mumford found the following aspects of their idealism. One, that the land and natural resources should belong to the entire community; two, work is a shared and common function; three, the need for a conscious attempt to improve the human race applying knowledge to propagation; four, the importance of education; and five, the reconstruction of the environment by the integration of science into the daily fabric of life, and planning.² The attempt to detail a better society is a basic attribute of utopianism.

It is easy to disdain this second attribute as incompatible with current notions of freedom and of proper philosophical procedure.


Speculations about the ideal society have little place in modern political philosophy, a fact apparently recognized by theorists who, since the turn of the 20th century, barely speculate about the Good Life.¹ The decline in utopian thought in the early part of the 20th century may be seen as a harbinger for the perceived demise in the 1950s of all political theory, generally attributed to the rise of historicism and positivism.²

Critics of the utopian tradition repeatedly refer to the numerous attempts at implementing utopian blueprints as conclusive proof of the way "idealism" detracts from utopian thought. Fueled by the disillusionment in numerous revolutions such as the Soviet revolution, criticism has become directed not at a particular utopian ideal, or the methodology used to achieve the ideal, but against the very notion of idealized speculation as such. Anti-utopian critics no longer believe in the omnipotence of reason,³ and see utopianism as a rationalist construct that coercively reduces varied and diverse human activity and reality.⁴ There is also a recognition that the mediations between utopian thought and action are far more complex than the writers of

¹Only four noteworthy utopias have been published in this century: H. G. Wells' A Modern Utopia (1905), Gilman's Herland, B. F. Skinner's Walden Two (1948), and Aldous Huxley's Island (1962).


⁴Goodheart, pp. 121-123.
utopian thought had assumed. In any case we find that the second attribute of utopian thought is a detailed depiction of an ideal society, in which the political and economic foundations of the society are portrayed wishfully.

The third attribute of utopian thought is its anticipatory nature. Utopian writings have been indicators of what the future holds in two different ways. One, they have predicted many of the specific changes that have materialized at a later time. For example, Johann Valentin Andrea, a contemporary of Bacon and Campanella, in describing his utopia Christianopolis as an artisan democracy, predicted city zoning. Two, utopian thought has anticipated the more general contours of future societies. For example, Andrea along with Bacon anticipated the application of science to industrial processes. Utopian thought, in endorsing the utopian society, assumed a hopeful posture towards the future.

In the second decade of the 20th century these anticipations changed from positive to negative endorsements of what the future would bring. Fear replaced hope and instead of utopias we witnessed the rise of dystopias or kakotopias which depicted a malignant future society that utilized technological advances to assert its totalitarian control.

---


over its citizens. Critics have perceived an inversely proportional relationship between the decline of utopian and the rise of dystopian anticipation, the former being replaced by "inverted utopias." Dystopian literature has become the predominant mode for discussing the future; it rings truer in 20th century ears if only for the reason that many of its predictions have been fulfilled with uncanny precision.

Dystopias negate utopias, which were themselves negations of the present. Dystopias can be seen as negations of the negation which nonetheless contain implicit utopias. Dystopias are linked to utopias in two ways: one, by containing implicit utopias; and two, by functioning as harbingers of the future—the historic role of utopias.

This anticipatory role is discussed in Lewis Mumford's later writings. He asserts that all utopias anticipate the future. The utopian ideal of a perfect community, he states, was linked to the

---

1 Walsh, pp. 11, 14, 25.

2 Dystopian themes have protested Big Government; mechanization; the shrinkage of the private sphere; totalitarian, communist, and Stalinist movements; the diminution of the individual; and state planning. These themes were forcefully articulated in three dystopian novels that have become the classical antidotes of utopias: Aldous Huxley's Brave New World (1932), George Orwell's 1984 (1948), and Yevgeny Zamiatin's We (1923). All three novels expressed a distrust of instrumentalized unreason and championed human instincts as the final bulwark against totalitarian societies. See Walsh, pp. 74-114; Martin Schäfer, "The Rise and Fall of Antiutopia: Utopic, Gothic Romance, Dystopia," Science-Fiction Studies 19 (November 1979): 287-294; and Mark Hillegas, The Future as Nightmare: H. G. Wells and the Anti-utopians (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967).

3 Dystopias "post warnings," informing the reader of a malignant future society which will emerge from the present if a number of present trends are unchecked. Sheldon Wolin states that political theorists have traditionally "posted warnings" to their audiences, predicting undesirable consequences for their societies. His concept appears applicable to dystopian literature. See Wolin, p. 13.
development of the megamachine—"the emerging system of collective mechanical organization."¹ With few exceptions, utopias are "ideological blueprints" that deny the individual his autonomy, transferring it to the organized society.² "Beneath the medieval garments of More's perfect commonwealth," Mumford asserts, "an iron Robot has already begun to move his artificial limbs, plucking the fruits of life with iron claws."³ Mumford views utopias as unintentional sign posts that point to an ominous future. He sensed the way the anticipatory attribute of this thought spun off a self-corrective response—i.e., dystopias. What resulted, then, were self-conscious posting of warnings of a future fraught with danger. Whether the anticipations were consciously or unconsciously hopeful or dystopian, the third attribute of the utopian tradition anticipated the future.

The fourth attribute of utopian thought is practical activity to construct an alternative society. This has taken the form of political agitation, the founding of movements, and the actual establishment of communities. Thomas Müntzer, Tommasco Campanella and Gracchus Babeuf, died for their efforts. In the cases of Henri Saint-Simon, Charles Fourier, Etienne Cabet, and Wilhelm Weitling, either they themselves or their followers established utopian communities. Both Karl Marx and Mikhail Bakunin agitated for political revolution.⁴

²Ibid.
³Ibid., p. 211.
For those utopian writers and followers who attempted to establish ideal societies, their efforts were predicated upon a number of assumptions; first, that the new society could be created without revolutionary change if sufficient commitment existed on the part of the founders; second, that the venture would be successful because of the rational persuasiveness and inherent attractiveness of the proposed society; and three, that their plans were grounded on a scientific analysis of social laws and evolution.¹ Thus, the utopist's strategy was of peaceful change. This strategy, as we have seen, was first criticized by Marx and Engels as "class collaboration" and thus counter-revolutionary and self-defeating.

Contemporary criticism of attempts to realize utopia differs from Marx's and Engel's assessment in its conservatism. This can be seen in both Karl Popper's and Melvin Lasky's writings. Popper believes that utopianism is a "dangerous and pernicious theory"² which leads to violence. A rationalist, Popper believes that utopianism impedes the spread of reasonable discourse among individuals since the essence of utopianism is the belief in the superiority of a particular set of ideals. This belief, based as it is on faith, cannot be dislodged by reasonable, scientific discussion. Practically, then, the Utopianist must win over, or else crush, his Utopian competitors who do not share his own Utopian aims. . . . he has to be very thorough in eliminating and stamping out all the heretical competing views.³


²Popper, p. 358.

³Ibid., p. 360.
Popper maintains that utopianism attempts to revolutionize society, an attempt that inevitably leads to violence.

Melvin Lasky's study also connects utopian theory and practice to revolution. He characterizes utopias as authoritarian, rigid, and paternally perfectionist. When utopian ideals are applied, revolutions and terror are the result. Noble ideals are never realized. Lasky maintains that revolutions are unable to change human weaknesses since "human weaknesses always tend to reproduce social failure. . . ." Both Popper and Lasky are anti-utopians because they perceive utopian thought as an insurgent tradition, inextricably linked to revolution and authoritarianism, which they opposed.

Some criticize utopian activism for different reasons. This can be seen in the writings of Eugene Goodheart. He criticized the utopians for one, attempting to transform the political and social order rationally; and two, lack of awareness of the mediations between "idea and event, between intention and historical process." Other studies of modern

1 Lasky, p. 10.
2 Ibid., p. 73.
3 Goodheart, p. 103.
utopian experiments agree that utopian experiments have been generally short-lived and unsuccessful.¹

The fourth attribute of utopian thought has been the repeated attempts to actualize an ideal society. Although these early attempts were peaceful and avoided the radical overthrowing of existing society, utopians became identified with radicalism. This, combined with the knowledge that efforts to actualize ideal societies were short-lived and unsuccessful, led critics to dismiss utopianism as irrelevant or pernicious. A more liberal critique of utopian practice emphasized its reductionist and rationalist posture to complex historical processes.

In summary, modern utopian thought has four attributes: a stance critical of the author's society, which varies from oblique attacks on the social order estranging readers, to frontal verbal attacks on social institutions; a holistic depiction of an ideal society which discusses in detail the political and economic foundations of that order; the anticipations of the future which over time, changed from describing utopias to depicting dystopias; and lastly, the attempts to realize the utopian blueprints.

The 20th century poses a problem for utopian studies. Put simply, utopian literature is conspicuous in its absence. Additionally, the tradition itself has come under attack from both ends of the political spectrum, not just from the Right, as had previously been the case. Defenders of utopianism have sought to rehabilitate the tradition, however, their very efforts to resuscitate it are indicative of the seriousness of the decay. Utopian speculation seems strained, and even inappropriate for modern political science. The very assumptions of utopians—hope, perfection, directed change—seem foreign. When alternative societies are depicted in the 20th century, they tend to have their locus in the reader's imminent future, and to be dystopian.

Numerous observers have commented on the end of utopian writings. We have seen concern on the parts of Mannheim and Mumford. Some political theorists have noted the demise without regret. Judith Shklar is one such political theorist. Shklar maintains that utopian thought, incorporating as it did many elements of classical political theory which ended with the French Revolution, died a natural death in the modern era. Shklar maintains that continued adherence to classical categories serves only to retard contemporary political thought; the end of utopia should be seen as an expression of utopia's irrelevance and of minor philosophical significance to contemporary intellectual life. For


Shklar, the end of utopia should be placed within utopia's classical context, and seen as part of the demise of classical political theory.

In 1967, Herbert Marcuse also proclaimed the end of utopia.\(^1\) Marcuse, however, did not proclaim its end to lament or celebrate the paucity of utopian thought but to herald an end of utopia as it was traditionally understood and, by the same token, to proclaim its realizability. Historically, Marcuse states, utopias were impossible to achieve because the needed objective and subjective factors were absent. Thus, utopias have meant unattainable desires. In this sense, utopia is dead. Today, given technological and intellectual forces which are capable of transforming the concrete world to achieve any desired goal, we can realize a free society in which poverty, misery, alienated labor and surplus repression are abolished. Marcuse true to the Marxian dictum, proposes to use the word "utopian" to designate only those ideals which fly in the face of biological or physical laws, and which contradict the "real laws of nature,"\(^2\) although even these categories are also historical and subject to change. Thus Marcuse locates the "realm of freedom" within the "realm of necessity" rather than beyond it. He believes that a free society is possible today—-one which would signify an "end to history," a break and negation of all previous history.

In the time-honored utopist tradition, Marcuse speculates about man's nature in utopia. He holds that human needs are historically

---


\(^2\) Ibid., p. 63.
determined and mutable, and that within the development of the productive forces is where new needs will emerge.\textsuperscript{1} A new person will emerge with qualitatively new needs which will be experienced as biological necessity, such as needs for freedom, peace, beauty, and unearned happiness. Going beyond Marx, Marcuse incorporated within his utopia an aesthetic-erotic dimension, a notion which includes a convergence of technology and art, and work and play.\textsuperscript{2} Marcuse would thus combine the critical, the ideal, and the anticipatory attributes of utopian thought in his work.

A question which naturally comes to mind is whether the death of utopian thought has really occurred or is it possible that the utopian propensity has relocated to another and more congenial literary medium? Otherwise the death of utopian literature may signify the atrophy of a hitherto constant element in political discourse, and the disappearance of the "impulse" that gives rise to all political theory.\textsuperscript{3} Maybe, in the words of John Gunnell, the "vehicle and object of this impulse must be sought elsewhere."\textsuperscript{4}

The central thesis of my research is that utopian discourse is alive and flourishing in another medium, that of the science fiction novel. Political theorists tend not to be familiar with this because of the lurid beginnings of this genre and the critical contempt to which it has been subjected. The scholars who have noted the connections

\begin{enumerate}
\item Ibid., pp. 62-66.
\item Ibid., pp. 67-68.
\item Gunnell, p. 161.
\item Ibid.
\end{enumerate}
between science fiction and utopian literature have worked from a literary perspective. Thus, the adequacy of the new utopianism have not been considered with sufficient concern for political questions.

This research corrects this deficiency and will go beyond the surface similarities to explore whether there are political continuities or discontinuities that connect utopian thought to science fiction. Science fiction will be judged according to the same four attributes indigenous to utopian thought. The following chapter will examine the origin, history, and development of North American science fiction.

CHAPTER II

SCIENCE FICTION

By the third decade of the 20th century, utopian writing had acquired the features that would distinguish it in the modern era. There had been the virtual disappearance of utopian literature and an ascendance of the dystopian element. As we have seen, only eight of these are outstanding works of merit, counting both utopian and dystopian novels. There had been an unmistakable decline in this mode of political speculation. Yet as traditional utopian theory was declining, the fledgling field of science fiction seemed to emerge as a substitute, assuming the features of modern utopianism and becoming increasingly popular. This chapter will turn to an examination of what science fiction is, and the rise of modes of speculation that are compatible with the tradition of utopian thought. First, brief attention will be given to defining the genre and its historic concerns. Second, I will describe its history, and the forces that shaped its development. Third, I will discuss science fiction according to attributes identified above. I am concerned to see if the distinctive features of utopianism survive in science fiction.

My study will focus upon North American science fiction. In part this is because it is in the United States that science fiction has
found its largest single audience, produced its greatest number of authors, and wielded enormous influence upon science fiction written elsewhere in the world. The following history of the genre focuses on the major themes found in science fiction, and the forces which helped to shape its contents.

Science fiction emerged in the wake of the Industrial Revolution. The first science fiction novel was the now-classic *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley.\(^1\) By the time *Frankenstein* was published, science and technology had transformed production, changed demographic realities, dethroned religion by placing man at the center of the universe, and altered personal relationships. It appeared clear to observers in the 19th century that more change was yet to come, and that science and technology contained both a promise and a threat; a promise in that they could liberate humans from the perennial scourges of hunger, poverty, and disease; a threat in that they would alter the universe, become uncontrollable forces, or be used for the purposes of domination. This tension was of concern to both utopian and science fiction writers in the 19th century. The historic concern of science fiction then, has been to speculate about the impact of natural science and technology upon humans and society.

The history of North American science fiction can be dated from 1926, when Hugo Gernsback, a European immigrant, published the first

---

science fiction magazine, Amazing Stories. European science fiction, having begun in 1831, was nearly one hundred years old, and had nobler founders in the figures of Shelley, Verne and Wells. North American science fiction has never enjoyed the prestige of its European counterpart, partially because of its lurid beginnings in the "pulp" magazine world. North American science fiction has always been consigned to the "ghettoes" of literature by literary critics. They condemned science fiction as vulgar, lurid and infantile. Such neglect and scorn have created problems for science fiction writers, who by and large, found the avenues for publishing their works few and not lucrative. Thus, many science fiction writers adopted a defensive posture, sometimes, as in Kurt Vonnegut's case, going to the extent of a public dissociation from the genre. This defensive posture was also shared by the editors and the readers of the genre. One scholar of science fiction attributes the rise of the subculture around science fiction to society's hostility and indifference.

---

1 The term "pulp" describes the wood pulp paper which the magazines were printed on. Typically, each magazine was about 120 pages long and as a group could be divided into four categories—love, detective, western, and adventure. The 1920s and 1930s were the pulp's heyday, when about 20 million copies were sold each month. The pulps were not stable, changing names and editors frequently, and merging and dying rapidly. See Leon Stover, "Science Fiction, The Research Revolution, and John Campbell," Extrapolation 14 (May 1973): 130.


3 For the latest attack on science fiction, see Arnold Klein, "Destination: Void," Harper's, December 1982, pp. 64-67.


From its inception, North American science fiction has been shaped by the editors of science fiction pulp magazines. The two who have marked the genre are Gernsback and John Campbell, Jr. Gernsback published pieces that combined romance and technology and that today are known as "space operas." Gernsback defined "scientification" as he termed it, as

'...the Jules Verne, H. G. Wells, and Edgar Allan Poe type of story--a charming romance intermingled with scientific fact and prophetic vision.'

On the other hand, John Campbell, Jr., an engineer by training and a writer of science fiction himself, insisted on an accurate and thoughtful portrayal of science and technology. Such science fiction, which centers around the impact of scientific and technological trends is known as "hard" science fiction. Campbell was less interested in delivering amazement and astonishment to his readers; to him "science fiction is written by technically-minded people, about technically-minded people, for the satisfaction of technically-minded people." Campbell was convinced that science and scientists were beneficial forces, working in conjunction with the forces of the Universe. His heroes were often scientists, consciously portrayed as larger-than-life. They, he stated,


will appear from the viewpoint of someone who considers opinion the dominant force in reality—rigid, cold-blooded, emotionless, and authoritarian—dogmatic. He isn't; the Universe is, and he's acting simply as the messenger of the Universe. . . the true scientist is willing to acknowledge and work with that cold inexorable system of facts. . . [and is] capable of a degree of dedication that we more ordinary people can't quite grasp.¹

Campbell's loving, if domineering influence over the genre was unchallenged for two decades.² It ended when two new magazines emerged in 1949 and 1950 that did provide an alternative.³

The 1950s was a booming decade for the genre, with over fifty science fiction magazines in existence. The genre also evolved, gaining in aesthetic and thematic sophistication. Robotics, future histories (which chronicle, from a vantage point in the future, past events which

¹Campbell, "Science Fiction and the Opinion. . . ," pp. 10, 42.
³These were The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction and Galaxy.
have yet to occur in the reader's future), sex, evolution, and para-
psychology were broached. Of particular thematic interest are the
emergency of pessimism and social criticism in the genre. Writers like
Ray Bradbury in *Fahrenheit 451* and Nevil Shute in *On the Beach* expressed a pessimism concerning censorship, nuclear war, the McCarthy witch-
hunts, and Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The invention of the A-bomb had been
predicted by science fiction writers many years earlier, but had never
been treated with the same ambivalence and disillusionment. Thus,
Walter Miller's *A Canticle for Leibowitz* in 1959 chronicled a future
history of Earth devastated by nuclear war. There, only the monks are
able to preserve some remnants of knowledge. It is to no avail as the
bomb is reinvented and reused. Arthur C. Clarke in his significantly
titled *Childhood's End* describes an alien domination of Earth in the
best interests of the human species. It is during the 1950s, then, when

1. Writers such as Isaac Asimov, Alfred Bester, Arthur Clarke,
Robert Heinlein, Frederik Pohl, and Theodore Sturgeon are typical.
See Scholes and Rabkin, pp. 40-70.

2. Ray Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451* (New York: Ballantine Books,
1953).


4. See for example, Judith Merrill's "That Only a Mother," in
*Women of Wonder: Science Fiction Stories by Women about Women*,
ed. Pamela Sargent (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), which was originally
published in 1948. See Andrew Feenberg, "Science Fiction of the
Franklin describes the doomsday trend in recent science fiction as
reflections of a decaying capitalist order in "Chic Bleak in Fantasy

5. Walter Miller, *A Canticle for Leibowitz* (Philadelphia:

6. Arthur C. Clarke, *Childhood's End* (New York: Ballantine Books,
1953).
the genre enjoyed a spurt in growth, that we also witness the beginnings of social criticism in science fiction novels.

Two important events occurred during the 1960s and 1970s. First, there was a dramatic increase of women within the ranks of science fiction writers. Before the 1960s, there had been almost no women. The few who wrote did so under male pseudonyms.¹ From the mid-1960s, women have entered the field in such numbers till today they number almost fifty.² Almost to a woman, they wrote "soft" science fiction showing the deleterious effects of sexism in their extrapolations of the family and the relationships between the sexes. Women writers used the standard themes of the genre to extrapolate communities which, while often all-female or matriarchal, were organized along lines that were sexually egalitarian. These were extrapolations of alternate life styles, relationships between the sexes, and child-rearing practices that exposed


²The forty-five I have been able to identify are: Arnason, Pauline Ashwell, Bernot, Leigh Brackett, Marion Zimmer Bradley, Juleen Brantingham, Octavia Butler, Suzy Charnas, C. J. Cherryh, Juanita Coulson, Phyllis Eisenstein, Suzette Haden Elgin, Zena Henderson, Carol Emshwiller, Cynthia Felice, Cecilia Holland, Eileen Kernaghan, Lee Killough, Tanith Lee, Ursula LeGuin, Doris Lessing, Jacqueline Lichtenberg, Elizabeth Lyn, Julian May, Vonda MacIntyre, Katherine MacLean, Anne McCaffrey, Judith Merrill, C. L. Moore, Andre Norton, Barbara Paul, B. Pierce, Marge Piercy, Doris Piserchia, Marta Randall, Joanna Russ, Pameal Sargent, J. Saxton, Wilmar Shiras, Margaret St. Clair, James Tiptree, Jr., Tuttle, Joan Vinge, Kate Wilhelm, and C. Yarbro.
the depths of sexism and corresponding female anger and alienation.¹

Some feminist-writers chose to depict the other extreme: horrific and violent societies which carried sexism to its illogical extreme, where women were enslaved and brutalized.² Feminist science fiction writers found the genre congenial and increasingly receptive to their views. Their works today constitute a distinct subgroup within the genre.³ The implications of their work will be discussed below.

The second noteworthy event in these two decades was the debate between the "Old Wave" and "New Wave" science fiction writers. It split the ranks of science fiction writers down the middle. No hard or fast distinctions can be drawn between the sides of the debate, but its effect has been lasting. It centered around issues of


² A good example of this would be the writing of Suzy McKee Charnas. See her Walk to the End of the World (New York: Berkley, 1974), and Motherlines (New York: Berkley, 1978).

experimentation, form, style, language, and a vaguely defined "social awareness."\textsuperscript{1}

The New Wave movement began in England around the figure of Michael Moorcock, editor of the science fiction magazine \textit{New Worlds}. It was transported to the United States by Judith Merrill, one of the first feminist science fiction writers. The New Wave authors tended to be younger, sometimes more liberal politically, and skeptical about scientific and technological progress. There was a self-conscious attempt to integrate a social vision and explore new life styles. The debate between the two was appropriately dubbed as one between "Inner Space" as opposed to "Outer Space." Aesthetically, their works pushed the boundaries of the genre into new areas, emphasizing more character development and linguistic craftsmanship, and moved it closer to mainstream literature.\textsuperscript{2} What rescued the New Wave from becoming a mere fad was the sheer talent of the New Wave writers who are still writing today some of the most acclaimed science fiction.\textsuperscript{3} The New Wave movement, with its interest in alternate life styles, was another impetus that led to the discussion of social issues within science fiction.

We have seen how the genre has evolved from its pulp origins which concentrated in space operas and "hard" science fiction, to include an

\textsuperscript{1}See Scholes' and Rabkin's discussion of the New Wave, pp. 87-99.

\textsuperscript{2}See Michael Bishop, "Viewpoint: Light Years and Dark: Science Fiction Since 1960," \textit{Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine}, April 1984, pp. 46-64.

\textsuperscript{3}These writers include Samuel Delany, Thomas Disch, Harlan Ellison, Philip Jose Farmer, Joanna Russ, Norman Spinard, and Roger Zelazny.
increasing amount of "soft" extrapolation. It is now possible to discuss how science fiction treats its subject matter and speculates upon the human condition.

Science fiction as a literature about science, uses as its point of departure discoveries and inventions in astronomy, thermodynamics, biology and genetics, ecology, demography, and computers. Rarely does science fiction deal with scientific theories per se. Rather, it will discuss the applications of science as they would be experienced by society. Thus, technological aspects are found in either the foreground or background of the science fiction novel. In many cases, technology is symbolized by an artifact that is the major character of the plot.

Although various aspects of science and technology have been discussed by science fiction writers, it is possible to identify six consistent themes which reoccur in the genre and which stem from its central concern. These themes do not exhaust the gamut of issues found in science fiction, but are typical subject matter. They are:

---


1. Nuclear war and its impact on Earth
2. Alien life forms
3. Time and history plots centered on parallel universes, time travel and alternate time streams
4. The relationship between people and machines
5. Colonization of space
6. Interpersonal and familial relationships in the future

Any one of the six themes identify a work as science fiction.

In describing the impact of technology on individuals and society, science fiction portrays technology as an "impersonal" force, capable of transforming societies and social institutions. This "impersonal" force is often portrayed as an inevitable one, possessing a suprahuman dynamism all of its own. The dynamism, inevitability, and impersonality of technology is portrayed in most of science fiction. Technology in science fiction is thus sundered from questions of class domination.¹

Science fiction is a speculative literature. It speculates upon the human condition by creating imaginary societies located in the future. The imagined future is linked to the author's (and the reader's) present through a method known as extrapolation. This is a process by which an author extends a pattern from the past or present society into the future. These patterns may be economic, social, technological, political, or demographic. In the development of these extrapolations, the author has to respect the recognized canons of the natural

sciences. Even if a writer invents a new technology, or hypothesizes the evolution of a new species of beings, such poetic license is allowed since the genre as a body assumes that scientific inventions, discoveries, and evolution will continue to occur in the future. The extrapolative activity is a process that acknowledges the empirical world in the creative activity of imagining a future. As indicated earlier, science fiction contains both the extrapolations of "hard" as well as "soft" trends. The extrapolative process links science fiction to utopian thought. I will discuss the link below (see pages 41-42).

Science fiction is a distinctive literature. It remains to determine whether and how it relates to our claims about utopianism. We may broach this by relating science fiction to the four attributes indigenous to utopian thought. For the sake of introduction I will discuss the general relationships now and move to more detailed documentation in later chapters.

Social criticism—our first attribute—exists in science fiction. It may be either direct or oblique. It occurs in the juxtaposition of two societies—the imagined future in the text, and the author's own. This juxtaposition offers a fertile podium for critical writers. Additionally, the genre's themes, such as time travel, serve to facilitate

---

If not, the fiction is then considered fantasy, and not science fiction. Fantasy can be seen as the freest form of fiction, untram-melled by the constraints of the objective, empirical world. For example, the Tolkien trilogy which describes the Middle Earth inhabited by gnomes, dragons, and speaking animals, would be typical fantasy. The distinction between fantasy and science fiction is not hard and fast, of course.

comparisons. Science fiction writers have seized these opportunities to criticize a number of social values and practices. These values and practices include racism, sexism, automation, pollution, and war.

Kingsley Amis was the first science fiction scholar to state that the genre had a critical role in diagnosing social ills. More recently, Darko Suvin has also portrayed the role of science fiction as a critic of social ills. He views the genre as a literature of "cognitive estrangement." Above I described how he categorized utopian literature as estranging, containing a dynamic element wherein the approach to reality transforms the latter in the process of understanding it. Suvin holds that since science fiction itself is both cognitive and creative, the genre shares these epistemological characteristics too. Science fiction estranges the reader from her or his familiar topos. For Suvin, the ability of science fiction to generate estrangement in a reader constitutes the genre's radical potential. We thus find that science fiction exhibits the critical attribute, estranging its readers from the familiar.


2Suvin, "On the Poetics...", p. 377. Damon Knight, a science fiction writer and critic has advanced the idea that science fiction has enabled readers to experience a "sense of wonder." He states: "Some widening of the mind's horizons, no matter in what direction... any new sensory experience, impossible to the reader in his own person, is grist for the mill, and what the activity of science fiction is all about." See his book, In Search of Wonder: Essays on Modern Science Fiction, 2nd ed., rev. and enl. with a Foreword by Anthony Boucher (Chicago: Advent Publishers, 1956), pp. 12-13. Suvin, however, is arguing for something more than a vicarious sensory experience, which may not estrange the reader from her or his surroundings.
The second attribute of utopian thought is its idealism. We expect science fiction novels to describe imaginary societies. These societies are constructed by the author extrapolating trends from her or his experienced society. The reader is plunged into an imagined context, which constitutes a frame. The reader's own society, the larger frame, is the basis and foundation upon which the smaller frame is built. These societies are described with varying degrees of completeness and are centered around a scientific artifact and are intended to represent what could occur in the future. Depending upon the author's perspective, the future is depicted favorably or dismally. The imaginary societies depicted in science fiction's novels are alternate in the sense that they are somehow different from the author's. However, they are not alternate in the sense that they are always an endorsed alternative to the author's society. This is an important distinction between utopian thought and science fiction.

Science fiction also has a predictive and anticipatory nature. The futuristic thrust of the literature encompasses both specific predictions and more general anticipations. These are grounded in the extrapolative process mentioned earlier. Science fiction has predicted, any number of discoveries—hypersonic aircraft, automation, and electronic computers. The most dramatic of its predictions was the A-bomb. Since
then, many regard science fiction as a literature of prophecy.¹ Later science fiction also anticipates less specific events such as the shape and texture of future society. Many of these anticipations are pessimistic, depicting the destruction of Earth through a variety of mechanisms. Such anticipations are dystopian portrayals of the future. Both the anticipations and predictions indicate, as in utopian thought, potentialities that exist in the author's society. In science fiction, these anticipations and predictions are integrally related to the process of extrapolation.² In both literatures, these anticipations vary from the hopeful to the despairing.

The fourth attribute of utopian thought—the attempt to implement a utopian society—cannot be applied to science fiction. The genre has not moved its readers to establish movements or communities modeled along those depicted in science fiction novels. In part, this has not occurred

¹Campbell, "Science Fiction and the Opinion..." pp. 9, 10, 43. It is not surprising that science fiction writers have successfully predicted scientific and technological advances. Many were scientists themselves or had some scientific training. A cursory view reveals this fact: Fred Hoyle and R. S. Richardson, astronomers; Isaac Asimov, biochemist; Chandler Davis and Eric Temple Bell, mathematicians; Poul Anderson and Gregory Benford, physicists; David Brin, astrophysicist; David H. Keller and T. J. Bass, physicians; John R. Pierce, Ben Bova and Fred Saberhagen, electronic experts; J. F. Bone, veterinarian; L. J. Stecher and Keith Laumer, Captains in the U.S. Navy and Air Force respectively; Kurt Vonnegut majored in chemistry at Cornell; Arthur C. Clarke, B.Sc. from the University of London; Robert Heinlein, Walter M. Miller, Jr., Jerry Pournelle, and George O. Smith, engineers; L. Sprague de Camp, aeronautical engineer; Vonda McIntyre, geneticist; and Robert L. Forward, Senior Scientist at Hughes Research Laboratories.

²One intriguing and potentially fruitful linkage between utopian thought and science fiction is to treat extrapolation as an anticosmolar device, as well as part of science fiction's anticipatory designations of the future. In this way, extrapolation can be seen as a device that blurs for the reader the distinction between the text (art) and the empirical world. Under the guise of probable and plausible extrapolative trends, the reader will carry over into her or his world, the assumptions encountered in the text.
because the majority of the imaginary futuristic societies have not been portrayed as superior alternatives to the present social order. It must be added that science fiction novels generally portray change, i.e., the movement of the present to the future—as occurring because of the impersonal forces of history, such as the advances in the natural sciences and technology. The onus of change is thus removed from the arena of individual or group activity. Both these reasons may explain the absence of agitation for social reform on the part of science fiction readers. However, science fiction fans have been active in social organizations. They have initiated hundreds of apolitical organizations on local, state, national, and international levels. These activities distinguish science fiction fans from readers of other genres of fictions. Organized "fandom" constitutes a subculture in America, and exerts much influence on authors, editors, and readers.¹ However, fandom's efforts remain focused on science fictional issues and can be characterized as apolitical.

It is clear from the above that utopian thought and science fiction have some things in common. Therefore, it is not surprising that scholars of utopian thought and science fiction have remarked upon these similarities, and have reached a variety of conclusions concerning the relationship between the two bodies of literature. Here we will summarize five of these arguments beginning with Darko Suvin's.

In Chapter I, we saw that Suvin defined the utopian genre as an "estranging" literature. We have mentioned in this chapter that Suvin also views science fiction as an estranging literature. For Suvin, the concept of cognitive estrangement is what links the two literatures together. Interestingly, he locates utopia as a subgenre within science fiction. He states:

... 'cognitive estrangement' is the basis of the literary genre of SF. Strictly and precisely speaking, utopia is not a genre but the sociopolitical subgenre of science fiction... SF has expanded into its modern phase... not always [in] direct ways a continuation of classical and nineteenth century utopian literature. Thus, conversely, SF is at the same time wider than and at least collaterally descended from utopia... SF can finally be written only between the utopian and the anti-utopian horizons.\(^1\)

Raymond Williams sees a self-conscious renewal of utopian thinking occurring within science fiction, after a long dystopian interval. He points out that this return to utopian thought has incorporated two specifically science fictional elements: "the wary questioning of the

utopian impulse itself, even within its basic acceptance; the uneasy consciousness that the superfcies of utopia—affluence and abundance—can be achieved, at least for many, by non-utopian or even anti-utopian means."\(^1\) Williams places the utopian renewal in science fiction as part of a "general renewal of a form of utopian thinking"\(^2\) among Western intellectuals. This includes a rejection of affluence and an association with those excluded from society. This utopian thinking is "open," flexible, and dynamic.\(^3\)

Tom Moylan extends Williams' argument. This author also posits that the revival of utopian thought has occurred within science fiction. He finds that utopias in science fiction have been transformed into "critical utopias," which are different from their utopian ancestors in four ways:

. . . they approached utopia not as an isolated island of perfection but as a worldwide question; they concentrated more on the break with the non-utopian past, on the process of getting to utopia, as well as the persistence of imperfection in utopia; they focused more on the microstructures of human history than on the broad systems of a society, thus dealing more with the ambience and politics of everyday life; and finally, they broke with the literary form itself, creating new artistic space for the human articulation of hope, of what is not yet.\(^4\)

These critical utopias of the 1970s, Moylan contends, were written by minorities exploited under capitalism: "women, gays, blacks, dissenting

---

1 Raymond Williams, p. 213.
2 Ibid.
3 Ibid., p. 214.
intellectuals and artists, from those who experienced domination and who opposed the system.¹ This explains the critical and oppositional nature of contemporary utopian writing. He concludes: "Utopian dreaming goes on, but its literary form has changed. In the last half of the twentieth century, it became necessary to destroy utopia in order to save it."²

Even Lewis Mumford views science fiction as unequivocably the modern form of utopia. As mentioned in Chapter I, Mumford saw utopia as intimately linked to the development of the machine and the city (see above, pages 19-20). Initially, utopias equated the impact of the machine with progress. Utopian literature, states Mumford, has gradually shaded off into science fiction. Superficially, Mumford states, "Both elaborate fantasies that are largely extrapolated from known contemporary or historical realities; both picture a possible future; both entertain the possibility of new social arrangements and new inventions."³ On a more fundamental level, though, the similarity is based on science fiction continuing to do what utopian thought used to: "relate all ideal possibilities to technological innovations, . . . ."⁴ The significance of

¹Ibid., p. 248.
²Ibid.
³Mumford, "Progress as 'Science Fiction'," p. 220.
science fiction for Mumford is not that the genre safeguards the utopian tradition (that he once defended but now rejects as mirroring the centralization of power and communal regimentation); but that it "demonstrate[s], in advance, malign possibilities that we must take precautions to anticipate, in order to control, redirect, or forfend."¹

Science fiction's contribution to society, then, is to "post warnings."

Finally, Lyman Tower Sargent, who agrees with Suvin's view that the utopian novel "exists almost solely as a sub-type of science fiction,"² posits that these utopias are unintentional. Since imaginary societies are frequently described in science fiction in some detail, they fulfill the "purely formal characteristics" of utopian thought.³ Sargent feels that whenever imaginary and detailed societies are found in science fiction, they

are part of the utopian tradition since they do present fairly detailed descriptions of nonexistent social systems. Even though the utopian elements are rarely the primary focus of the work, they are often a secondary focus. . . . The science fiction writer is often not primarily concerned with the utopia he is presenting, but he does still present one.⁴

Sargent notes that unlike traditional utopian literature, many "utopias" found in science fiction cannot be characterized as either "eutopian" or "dystopian." They are simply "utopian," which he defines as a term

¹Mumford, "Progress as 'Science Fiction'," p. 221.
²Sargent, "Utopia--The Problem of Definition," p. 142. For a brief discussion of utopian and dystopian elements in science fiction by Sargent, see his "Utopia and Dystopia in Contemporary Science Fiction."
⁴Ibid., pp. 144-145.
that "means nowhere and implies nothing relevant to the quality of that nowhere. It could be good or bad."¹ Thus, Sargent's assessment of the imaginary societies found in science fiction is identical to our earlier assessment of the second attribute of utopianism in science fiction. Sargent, however, is undisturbed by the lack of endorsement of these societies by their writers and prefers to emphasize the continuity of utopian thought in science fiction based on "formal" similarities.

All the five critics describe the continuity of utopian thought in the genre of science fiction. Indeed, the areas in which utopian thought differs from science fiction do not appear to be substantial. Science fiction depicts imaginary societies without endorsing them as ideal, and it has not been an incubus for political agitation. The decline of utopian thought and the rise of science fiction's utopianism justifies a close examination of science fiction and its utopian claims. In the next chapter, I turn to a direct examination of certain science fiction novels that bear upon these problematics.

¹Ibid., p. 137. Italics supplied in the original.
CHAPTER III

THE NEBULA NOVELS

In this chapter I begin direct examination of the status of utopianism in science fiction. I give attention to sixteen science fiction works to examine the quality of their utopianism. I proceed by relating these novels to my first three attributes of utopian thought. As we have seen in Chapter II, the fourth attribute of utopian thought—the attempts to concretize ideal societies—is inapplicable to science fiction. Accordingly, I will ascertain which social practices are criticized, what imaginary societies are depicted, and what anticipations of the future are present in the literature.

The novels I have selected are each models of excellence in science fiction. They are Nebula award winning works, widely read and highly acclaimed.¹ Nineteen Nebulas have been awarded to date.

¹Standards of excellence in the field are established annually by two national organizations, which nominate and vote upon the best science fiction of the year. Beginning in 1953, science fiction fans awarded "Hugos" (named in honor of Hugo Gernsback) at their annual World Science Fiction Conventions. The Science Fiction Writers of America (SFWA), founded in 1965 by Damon Knight, also annually distributes a series of awards called the "Nebulas" for diverse categories of science fiction, including the Best Novel. For a description of "Nebula" and "Hugo" nominating and balloting procedures, see Donald Franson and Howard DeVore, eds., A History of the Hugo, Nebula, and International Fantasy Awards (n.p.: Misfit Press, 1981), pp. 3-9. There has been considerable overlap in the Hugo and Nebula novels over the years. (For a complete listing of Nebula and Hugo novels, see Appendices I and II).

The "Nebula" awards represent, in the estimation of the practitioners of the field, some of the best science fiction for that
In this chapter, sixteen of them will be examined. Of the remaining three, two have been set aside for the following chapter since they form a thematic and conceptual unit, and are the most overtly utopian in content. The third Nebula, The Claw of the Conciliator\(^1\) belongs to the genre of fantasy and will be omitted from this discussion. The sixteen novels will be analyzed in three separate discussions. They will be examined first for their critical content, second, for the imaginary societies and third, for their anticipations.

The sixteen Nebulas target seven social issues for criticism: environmental pollution, the paradigms and practices of science and scientists, racism, overpopulation, alienation, war, and sexism. We can divide these seven issues into two categories: power and alienation. Thus, the Nebulas that focus on man's domination of nature; the inability of the scientific paradigm to make moral judgments, or recognize the mythic element of human nature; the inhumanity of racism; the dangers of overpopulation; the senselessness of war; and the unfairness of sexual discrimination; are all critiques of current political practices. With regards to alienation, Nebulas describe individual estrangement due the

social repression of self; and dehumanization resulting from civiliza-
tion itself. These descriptions of alienation are criticisms of social
practices. Of the sixteen Nebulas examined here, we find the criticisms
mentioned above to be concentrated in eleven of the novels. The five
that contain no criticism all happen to be hard science fiction novels,
a fact of some significance that will be discussed later in the chapter.¹

The two Nebulas that focus on the environment are Frank Herbert's
Dune² and Gregory Benford's Timescape. Herbert attempts to sensitizethe reader to the interlocking relationships that exist within the eco-
system; Benford describes the end of the universe resulting from environ-
mental pollution. Each novel will be discussed in turn.

Frank Herbert's Dune describes a desert-ridden, water-starved
planet, Arrakis, whose native population, the Fremen, are a deeply mys-
tical and nomadic people. Set far into the future where Terra has long
been decimated by a nuclear holocaust, the Fremen and Arrakis play a
focal role in galactic politics. It is only on Arrakis that an essen-
tial spice, melange, can be mined. The spice is essential for inter-
planetary navigation and trade. The spice is in much demand as it also
induces prophetic visions, increases the consumer's life span, and is
habit-forming. Without melange the delicate intergalactic power

¹ These five are: Isaac Asimov, The Gods Themselves (Greenwich, Connecticut: Fawcett Publications, Inc., 1972); Arthur C. Clarke's two
novels, The Fountains of Paradise and Rendezvous with Roma (New York:
Ballantine Books, 1973); Larry Niven, Ringworld; and Frederik Pohl, Gate-

² Frank Herbert, Dune (New York: Berkeley Medallion Books, 1965). The
rest of the series are Dune Messiah (New York: Berkeley Medallion
Books, 1969), Children of Dune (New York: Berkeley Medallion
Books, 1976), and God Emperor Dune (New York: Berkley Books, 1982).
structure would collapse. Whoever controls the production and distribution of melange, then, wields enormous power.

The Fremen and the planet are exploited and dominated by rulers from other planets, who are sent to rule Arrakis by the Emperor. The novel begins by describing the problems of the Artreides family, who have recently been sent by the Emperor to rule Arrakis. The mortal enemies of the Artreides family are the Harkonnen, an opposing family. The Harkonnen engineer a coup on Arrakis, and kill the head of the Artreides family. The scion of the family, Paul Artreides, flees with his mother Jessica to the desert hinterlands of Arrakis. The Fremen are the only people who live in the hinterlands, and Paul seeks their help to fight the Harkonnen and recapture his birthright. He is quickly successful in obtaining their support since the Harkonnen, the new rulers of Arrakis, arouse Fremen hatred by their harsh rule.

The Fremen society is described in great detail by the author. Divided into tribes and enduring the rigors of desert life, the Fremen happen to be superb fighters and surprisingly well-developed technologically. Paul goes "native," adopting their ways and marrying one of their women. He becomes their leader and messiah. In a few years he unites the Fremen and uses them as shock troops to overthrow the Harkonnen and reestablish Artreides rule. Paul is a mutant, a product of genetic engineering of the Bene Gesserit, an intergalactic women's order whose goal is to breed a new type of ruler, but their plans have gone awry with him. He possesses super-human powers such as his ability to project his consciousness through time, and he becomes to the Fremen both a god and a ruler. In overthrowing Harkonnen rule, Paul successfully
challenges and topples other galactic centers of power by the spread of his politico-religious movement, which becomes to his fanatically loyal Fremen a holy war, and by his monopoly over the vital melange. He conquers the entire galaxy and establishes himself as the goç in a new religion. As the supreme godhead, his rule is autocratic. He heads an enormous empire and bureaucracy, and as dissident politics is seen to be both treasonous and sacrilegious, law and order are established for many centuries.

Paul fulfills the Fremen's goal of a verdant Arrakis. This vision was implanted in the Fremen by an ecologist sent to study the planet by the Emperor. The scientist and his son, Keyes, cleverly manipulate the Fremen's need for water, which to them symbolizes both life and wealth, by imbuing ecological data with religious mysticism. They promise the Fremen that changes in the ecosystem can occur to create a verdant Arrakis. The Fremen wholeheartedly embrace this proffered vision and Paul's leadership is initially accepted by them because he promises to actualize their vision of Eden. This ecological accomplishment, detailed in Dune's sequels, undermines traditional Fremen mores and values.

The novel affirms the existence of prescient awareness, foreknowledge, and mind-over-body control. In the text, Herbert presents theories which emphasize symbols, dreams, archetypes, gestalt theories of psychology, Freudian beliefs in the subconscious, predetermination, and a belief that the biological imperative to perpetuate the species explains much of human behavior, such as war.

When ecology is discussed in the text however, at no time are the premises different from those of a natural scientist. Here, there is no
alternative reality. The ecosystem is seen as a system that exists in a delicate balance; one that should be changed only after lengthy study and with extreme caution. As the scientist Keyes said:

'An ecosystem... is... a system. A system! A system maintains a certain fluid stability that can be destroyed by a misstep in just one niche. A system has order, a flowing from point to point. If something dams that flow, order collapses...'

Life forms struggle to survive. They have to adapt to a changed environment. Changes in the ecosystem follow certain laws which must be understood before the ecosystem is tampered with. Therefore, as Keyes warns, "growth itself can produce unfavorable conditions unless treated with extreme care."

Although the ecological points that Herbert emphasizes are those of a layperson's, Dune succeeds as an ecologically-sensitizing novel. The reader is made abundantly aware of the interlocking relationships that exist between the earth, atmosphere, flora, fauna, humans, and society.

In Timescape, Benford also dramatizes the issue of the environment. Set in 1998, the novel describes Earth's ecosystem as being rapidly destroyed by pollution. Much of civilization has been brought to a halt, and the end of all life is at hand. A number of scientists working against all odds to make a desperate attempt to send messages back in time to physicists in La Jolla, California in 1962. They hope to warn

---

1Herbert, Dune, p. 498.

2Ibid., p. 139.
the past with the knowledge of the future and avert the inevitable flow of time from developing into their future. The ending is a neat and significant one as the interference with the flow of time creates two separate futures, one in which the world survives, and another in which the world dies slowly. It is clear to the reader that although man creates pollution and by so doing, threatens his very existence; man can also solve the problem of pollution through the application of science. Thus both Herbert and Benford posit in their works that man's domination of nature is a two-edged weapon that can lead to a more abundant life or the destruction of Earth.

The second critique levied by three Nebula novels is directed at selected aspects of science. Two of the novels are by Samuel R. Delany, who won his first Nebula in 1966 for Babel-17. This novel combines both a critique of technology and a view of a future society which practices no discrimination against peoples of different races, cultures, or sexes. The plot is an adventure story set far into the future, and falls squarely in the tradition of science fiction space operas. In this future, interstellar travel is a fact of life and intelligent life forms have been discovered in other galaxies. The story hinges around a code/language that is used by the Invaders to inflict serious military setbacks upon their opponents, the Alliance. War has been going on between the galactic blocs for two decades, and heavy casualties have been inflicted by both sides. The war is never explained, and both sides are purposefully painted as being alike. Senseless and unreal, the war serves only as a necessary backdrop to the story. The Alliance's army enlists the help of a famous poet, Rydra Wong, the heroine, to decipher the Invader's code. She is a superb linguist with telepathic powers.
After a series of adventures Rydra meets a young man, Butcher, who cannot conceive of the concepts of "I" and "self," and who provides her with the key to the code. Rydra cracks the code, which turns out to be a language, and the war between the two super-galactic powers is terminated.

The future as portrayed by Delany does not differ from the present he lives in except in one important respect. War, torture, and murder continue to exist, armies fight each other, deadly weapons are manufactured and human nature has not been transformed by either its contact with alien species or by the increase in technological sophistication. Class divisions have also persisted. The one respect in which the future differs from the author's present is in its portrayal of a multiracial and nondiscriminatory society.

Although the plot is insubstantial, the author creates for himself the opportunity to make a number of observations concerning language and linguistics. An example of this world by Rydra's observation that "... when you learn another tongue, you learn the way people see the world, the universe." From an analysis of the author's observations on language, what appears to be merely a well-written story, a galactic lark, becomes a provocative attempt to criticize modern science and technology.

Delany points out early in the book that a language forces its user into certain mental constructs. The code/language of Babel-17 is based on the "ancient" computer languages of Fortran, Algol, and

---

1 Delany, Babel-17, p. 25.
Onoff. When Rydra thinks in Babel-17 it quickens and changes her perceptions, movements and thoughts, increases her predictive abilities, and makes her a master strategist of war. As Dr. T'mwarba, Rydra's teacher remarks, Babel-17 is an "analytically exact language. . . because everything is flexible, and ideas come in huge numbers of congruent sets, governed by the same words."\(^1\) When Rydra thinks in Babel-17 for the first time,

\[ \text{... she had felt it before with other languages, the opening, the widening, the mind forces to sudden growth. But this, this was like the sudden focusing of a lens blurry for years.} \]\(^2\)

Since Babel-17 is a computer language, it is analytically precise and "... almost assures you technical mastery of any situation..."\(^3\) Using the language is inherently dangerous though, for it does not contain the concept of self or "I." The concept of self cannot exist for a computer, and is therefore unprogrammable. Delany feels this has serious implications for the users of the language, since the nonexistence of the idea of self may lead to the mastery over technological phenomena, but makes moral distinctions impossible to make. This is made clear by the figure of Butcher, whose mind has been programmed to think in computer languages. Butcher has the ability to manipulate enormous amounts of data, but cannot conceive of his self, or make moral distinctions. As Rydra explains Butcher to her teacher:

\(^1\)Ibid., p. 238.
\(^2\)Ibid., p. 127.
\(^3\)Ibid., p. 243.
The lack of 'I' precludes any self-critical process. In fact it cuts out any awareness of the symbolic process at all—which is the way we distinguish between reality and our expression of reality.¹

The undesirability of the language is further emphasized by Delany by making it an exhausting one for humans to use. Rydra cannot think in Babel-17 except for brief periods of time.

Delany's work is a subtle critique of modern technology, objectified as a computer language. Computer languages, and by extension, computers and all modern technology, are depicted by Delany to have an enormous ability for the mastery over objects. However, such mastery is made possible and maintained only at the expense of the negation of the self which in turn leads to the inability to make moral judgments and ultimately, an incapacity for consciously-motivated, virtuous action.

Delany's second Nebula winning novel, The Einstein Intersection² is another critical assessment of the fundamental assumptions of science. Delany maintains that myths play an important role in human behavior. The paradigms of science make no allowance for myths and therefore are inadequate understandings of life. Delany also depicts a future society that is dynamic, multi-racial, and tolerant of diversity.

The Einstein Intersection is a modern, self-conscious variation of the myth of Orpheus, the legendary, spell-casting Greek poet and musician who embarked upon many adventures in an unsuccessful attempt to bring

¹Ibid., p. 242.
back to life his dead lover, Eurydice. The myth of Orpheus is only one of many in the book. The author explicitly refers to other ancient myths in addition to modern legends which have become myths in the far future. Since the text revolves and hinges upon myths, the following analysis will mention them as they occur in the plot before commenting upon their importance to Delany. The Einstein Intersection is set far into the future, many years after nuclear war has devastated much of Earth and all humans. The life forms that exist on Earth are semi-human in form only. Originally alien, their ancestors having come from another planet, these life forms have assumed the human shape and have to exhaust the human past before they can move into their own future.\(^1\) All the original flora and fauna on Earth have mutated as a result of nuclear radiation, including the aliens who have assumed human form. Distinctions are made between those "humans" who are functional and those who are not. Male functionals are given the title of "Lo," female functionals "La," and hermaphrodites the handle of "Le." The aliens have not only inherited the human form, but have found Earth full of human fantasies and myths. This has created dissonances for these beings, who have found their behavior influenced by these myths. As a computer acidly remarks to a Lo:

\[\text{I can remember back when there were humans. They made me. Then they all went away, leaving us alone down here. And now you've come to take their place. It must be rather difficult, walking through their hills, their jungles, battling mutated shadows of their flora and fauna, haunted by their million}\]

\(^1\)Ibid., pp. 11, 39, 62, and 86-87.
year old fantasies. . . . You're basically not equipped for it, . . . Mankind had style, baby! You may get it yet, but right now your charm is a very young thing.'

The hero, the Orpheus of the future, is a male functional villager, Lo Lobey. He is a telepathic musician who falls in love with a brown tele-kinesthetic mute, Friza. She is mysteriously killed and Lo Lobey is entrusted with the mission of seeking out and killing Friza's murderer who has also put an end to other functionals possessing special powers.

Friza's killer is evil Kid Death who has immense powers. Delany explicitly refers to Kid Death as representing the legend of Billy the Kid. Kid Death has committed patricide and is seeking to control all those who possess special powers. Lo Lobey embarks upon his quest, kills a huge, bear-like creature in a maze, and joins a group of cowboys who are herding hundreds of lizards to a major city to sell as meat. The leader of the group is Spider who represents Judas, and another cowboy, Greeneye, is Christ. As in the Christian myth Greeneye had no biological father, was born parthenogenetically, is chaste, and is finally crucified, his death authorized by Spider. Lo Lobey finds Kid Death, puts him under a musical spell which allows Spider to whip him to death. Lo Lobey is unable to resurrect Friza and sets off to other planets.

"The central subject of the book is myth" declares Delany in an author's note that is meant to be read as part of the text. For Delany,

1 Ibid., pp. 38-39.
2 Ibid., pp. 90-91 and 107.
3 Other legends in the book are Dove, a "woman" who is the living incarnation of the myth of Helen of Troy, Maria Montez, and especially Jean Harlow; the Beatles, especially Lo Ringo; and Elvis Presley.
4 Ibid., p. 78. Italics supplied in the original.
myths are intangible but real. They are materially based, and describe events that have occurred in the past. Similar events will occur again, although never under identical conditions. Humans always come into contact with myths because myths set laws and goals which humans can surpass, succeed, or fail in implementing, but which they cannot ignore.¹

Myths, as Spider tells Lo Lobey,

', . . come from something. It's [myths] going to something. Myths always lie in the most difficult places to ignore. They confound all family love and hate. You shy at them on entering and exiting any endeavor.²

Myths are not only real, but are irrational and true. They are another dimension of reality, one that Einstein and his Theory of Relativity did not take into account. To correct Einstein's deficiency, Delany creates a scientist named Goedel, a supposed contemporary of Einstein who was able to put into mathematical formulae a vaster realm than Einstein's. As Spider explains to Lo Lobey:

There are an infinite number of true things in the world with no way of ascertaining their truth. Einstein defined the extent of the rational. Goedel stuck a pin into the irrational and fixed it to the wall of the universe so that it held still long enough for people to know it was there. And the world and humanity began to change.³

Thus Delany levies his second criticism against science and technology. Its paradigm of reality does not include a recognition of the significance of the mythic, and is therefore lacking an essential ingredient. Delany anticipates a future where this is remedied. This future is

¹Ibid., p. 132.
²Ibid.
³Ibid., p. 128.
changing, multi-racial, diverse, and tolerant. Delany's optimism is clear in his open-ended posture to the future, a posture that is grounded in a critical appreciation and not an eschewal of the natural sciences and technologies.

Both of Delany's works are provocative critiques of science and technology. He suggests that they are inadequate for understanding the complexity of human life as they divorce themselves from the arena of moral decision-making; and deny the mythic, irrational aspect of life. In addition, Delany obliquely criticizes racism in his society by portraying in both books two futures which are multi-racial, and non-discriminatory.

Daniel Keyes shared the 1966 Nebula with Delany for his novel *Flowers for Algernon.* The novel is a powerful indictment of society's intolerance and cruelty to the mentally retarded. It is also a scathing critique of the scientists who study the mentally retarded. Keyes tells the story of retarded young Charlie Gordon who becomes the subject of a scientific experiment conducted by psychologists and neurosurgeons. They have developed a method to increase human intelligence, and envision creating a new race of supermen. They perform the operation on Charlie, who after the surgery absorbs knowledge so rapidly that he soon surpasses his doctors in their own fields of expertise. Charlie is a man-made genius who soon finds flaws in his creators' theories, and realizes that a rapid deterioration of his memory and motor skills is imminent. His

---

predictions prove correct and he regresses and is ultimately put away in a mental asylum.

Scientists are shown in the novel to manipulate their subjects. Doctors withhold information from Charlie, tape him without his permission, and use him as an instrument to achieve their scientific ends. This instrumentalist attitude is depicted in the text as denigrating the worth of the individual.

The second and third issues of critique, racism and overpopulation, are depicted together in the novel Rite of Passage by Alexei Panshin. Earth has been destroyed in 2041 by wars precipitated by overpopulation. Before this had occurred, a few starships had been built and 113 colonies were established on different planets. The novel takes place in the 22nd century, and much of the book describes the humdrum life on a starship, where science and technology have enabled humans to live longer. This in turn has led to the necessity of strict population control measures being taken since unrestricted birth is perceived as catastrophic for historic reasons.

The Ship's eugenist determines the number of procreative matings each individual can have as well as the procreating partner. The political apparatus of the Ship is simple, consisting of a Council and an Assembly, the former functioning as a steering committee, referring all important decisions to the Assembly which is made up of all the adults on the Ship. They debate issues brought to their attention, and their vote is binding. Education is conducted by the tutorial system,

---

2 Ibid., pp. 102, 242.
sexual equality exists, and although science has provided the means to live lavishly (money is not used as a medium of exchange), the tendency is to live simply. Job rotations are in effect and the author describes the economic system as "... the economic philosophy of communism which, in a sense, is what we live with in the Ship."\textsuperscript{1} The Ship is not self-sufficient as it needs fuels and raw materials from different planets, provided by the humans living on them.

Politely known as "Colons" and commonly referred to by many as "Mudeaters," the colonists do not possess advanced forms of science or technology. It is the Mudeaters who are the objects of ridicule and prejudice. They are denied knowledge that would allow them to progress by the starships as a precaution to make certain that the needed flow of raw materials would not be interrupted. In exchange for the raw materials, the starships exchange some finished goods and some knowledge. This parasitical relationship is justified by the sentiment expressed by a member of the Council: "We are a tiny precarious island in a hostile sea. We have worked out ways of living that observed exactly, allow us to survive and go on living."\textsuperscript{2} Thus, all attempts at changing the relationship between the Colons and the starships are thwarted by the survivalist attitude on the parts of the ships' majorities. Alternatives to the exploitative relationship are dismissed as life-threatening or as leading to a decrease and loss of valuable scientific knowledge.

The story centers around Mia Havaro who is preparing for her Trial, a process designed to keep the Ship's population strong and few.

\textsuperscript{1}Ibid., p. 148.

\textsuperscript{2}Ibid., p. 115.
in number. Many children do not survive the Trial, and those returning are considered adults. The Ship's rite of passage consists of surviving for thirty days, alone and on an alien planet. Mia and her group are dropped off on Tintera, a planet which has not been in contact with any ship for 150 years. They discover that the inhabitants have illegally become Free Birthers, procreating at will; they also enslave the native animals of Tintera which show many signs of intelligence. The Tinterans resent the children's presence on the planet, and many of Mia's group are killed. Mia and a few companions manage to live through the thirty days and are picked up by their Ship. Upon their return, the Ship's majority is angered by the accounts of Tintera. An Assembly is convened and Tintera's future is debated, which leads into an argument centered around the policies of the Ship towards all colonies. A vote is taken in which the majority vote in favor of continuing the present policies. This translates into a vote for the complete annihilation of Tintera by nuclear weapons, which is accomplished with dispatch.

The story charts the growth of Mia from an alert teenager who, along with others despised "Mudeaters" as subhuman, to a sensitive adult who does not vote along with the majority to destroy an entire planet with all its Mudeaters by nuclear weapons. She realizes that all humans have the right to life, including Mudeaters. The book ends on a faintly optimistic note, with Mia and her husband vowing to attempt to change the Ship's policies when they assume positions of responsibility in the Ship, along with the help of members of their generation. Rite of Passage makes a pitch to end individual and societal prejudice, which in the text, leads to genocide. Additionally, the novel portrays the
dangers of a technologically advanced society that manipulates less advanced societies by monopolizing information.

The fourth issue of criticism that emerges from the Nebulas is the issue of alienation. Two novels discuss alienation from different perspectives: Robert Silverberg's *A Time of Changes*¹ and Michael Bishop's *No Enemy But Time.*² Silverbert describes a human society on another planet that has repressed all references to self (such as words "I" and "myself") as obscene. This repression has caused self-hatred and alienation in every individual. The hero is young Prince Kinnal, who liberates himself from his repressions by the use of "self-baring" drugs and tries to convert his people to the self-knowledge and self-love. He is hunted down by the King and is killed for his obscene ideas. Alienation is here depicted as resulting from the lack of self-knowledge and self-expression imposed by a repressive society.

In *No Enemy But Time*, Michael Bishop juxtaposes two societies, the late 1980s and the Early Pleistocene Age, two million years ago. These two periods are linked in the central figure of Joshua, the son of a mute Spanish prostitute and an Afro-American GI whose dreams regularly transport him to the Pleistocene Age. Joshua's dreams are his "collective unconscious" which has established an attunement to a particular location at a particular time. He regularly visits the Pleistocene Age in Zarakal, an East African country, and becomes familiar with the flora and fauna of prehistoric Earth.

Joshua meets Alistair Blair, a noted hominid paleontologist who has advanced a controversial theory of human evolution. His theory has been ridiculed and in order to prove his argument, he recruits Joshua and with the help of physicist Kaplow (who designs the time machine) projects Joshua into East Africa 2,000,000 B.C. to collect the needed proof. Joshua manages to ingratiate himself into a small band of Homo Habilis hunters-gatherers and falls in love with "Helen," an independent, courageous, and beautiful habilíne. The riveting magic of everyday life in the Pleistocene Age asserts itself as an Edenic idyll and age of innocence mixed with hard labor and the eternal pursuit for food, unmarred by much of the nastiness that today passes for civilization. Commonplace contemporary alienation manifested in the disintegration of a family and suicide become strange experiences when reviewed from the Pleistocene Age. Gently, Bishop draws an early, integrated, and happier communal society that has disappeared with the passage of civilization. Alienation is thus portrayed as the result of civilization. Silverberg and Bishop differ in their assessments of alienation. The former attributes it to repressive social ideals; the latter perceives it as an inevitable result of civilization.

The fifth issue of criticism is war. War in the future is described by Joe Haldeman in *The Forever War*. He shows it to be senseless, and a result of a lack of communication between the opponents. The hero is Private William Mandella, who is drafted into the United Nations Exploratory Force to fight against the alien Taurans. Every trip to the

front involves interstellar jumps and faster-than-light-travel. Thus Mandella remains young while his contemporaries on Earth age and die. The war is fought on different fronts, and in different time zones, sometimes in the future. With each furlough, Earth has become increasingly bizarre to Mandella--half the world's population is on welfare, no private property is allowed, huge cities composed of one building have replaced the older cities, reprogramming children with anti-social traits take place, and government-enforced homosexuality to keep the population of the world under control makes Mandella an atavistic throwback. Returning from his third battle, he learns that the war has ended a few centuries ago and that all humans on Earth are clones. He and a few others retreat to another planet to live heterosexual, peaceful lives. The obsolescence of war in the future is a criticism of the same today.

Finally, the issue of sexism is obliquely criticized in Vonda McIntyre's _Dreamsnake_. Taking place in the far future, Earth is suffering from the after effects of a devastating nuclear war. Alien domination also exists. A number of different societies are evolving on Earth, and are depicted through the eyes of a female healer named Snake, who is travelling between communities to complete her practical training. She uses three snakes in her profession, and when one of them is accidentally killed, she is compelled to recover it by embarking on a long quest to find its replacement.

Snake is an independent, liberated, mobile, nurturing, freedom-loving, and respected woman. She fights oppressors and defends the weak. The societies she is most comfortable in are matriarchal, sexually egalitarian, and communal. Snake represents an ideal, which
when juxtaposed to the realities of the author's own society, exposes it for the sexist entity that it is, where women are dominated.

In summary, the Nebulas present pungent criticism of seven current phenomena that occur in the authors' societies. These issues range from pollution to sexism, and they describe relationships of power, and corresponding alienation. Thus, the domination of nature is shown to be a delicate matter, with potential for catastrophe; the domination of the material world by science to be lacking in significant respects; the domination of the technologically advanced as leading to genocide and racism; the institution of war as unnecessary and senseless; and sexual exploitation as injustice. Alienation is portrayed to be a result of repressive social practices, or an inevitable result of civilization.

In the foregoing I have discussed the ten Nebulas by providing the basic plot and storyline. I hope to have accomplished two things that political scientists will find useful: introduce a body of literature relevant to the argument of this dissertation; and link that literature to "live" controversies in modern political discourse. As we have seen the controversies range from pollution to sexism and describe the relationship of power and corresponding alienation. We have shown that science fiction contains a subset of writings that do engage politically important matters. I shall proceed now to questions of evaluation.

Much of the distinctiveness of classic utopian work rested on its use of the imaginary device. This attempted to persuade in ways that were more seductive than the typical exhortation in the familiar political tract. It is this imaginary methodology that is the most obvious link between utopia and science fiction. Accordingly I will use the
same works cited above to examine the imaginary societies. Then I will address more directly the political aspects of this research.

Imaginary societies—the second utopian attribute—in science fiction may be divided into four categories: one, repressive and controlled societies; two, communal, primitive, and happy societies; three, societies which do not differ from the present; and four, societies which are similar to the present but differ in some significant respects.

Repressive and controlled societies are clearly depicted in five Nebulas: Dune, Timescape, Gateway, The Forever War, and A Time of Changes. Typically, Earth is overpopulated or polluted, which leads to stringent measures being taken in population control and food distribution. A centralized world government emerges as the only organization which is capable of producing and distributing scarce resources. Regimen
tation guarantees the survival of the human race, however, life is portrayed as grim and unhappy.

The second imagined society is the communal one, found in three novels: Dreamscape, Dune, and No Enemy But Time. All are primitive technologically and endure scarcity. Two of them, the Fremen society in Dune and the prehistoric habiline community in No Enemy But Time have been destroyed and replaced by more complex social formations. Dream-
scape's primitive communalism is a result of Earth's devastation by nuclear war. These societies are small, often consisting of clans, where power is decentralized, informal, and sometimes matriarchal. All three communities produce integrated and happy individuals.

The third group of imagined societies are those that do not differ from the present their authors live in. Life in the future,
depicted as just more of the present, is found in five Nebulas: *Rite of Passage*, *Ringworld*, *Rendezvous with Rama*, *Fountains of Paradise* and *The Gods Themselves*. Differences, when they do occur, do not change the shape or form of human society. *The Gods Themselves* for example, describes an almost completely alien culture of three segmented organisms. This universe transfers energy to Earth and solves its energy problem. What is important to note here is that these five novels are hard science fiction. The significance of this fact will be discussed below.

Fourth are those societies which are seen as almost similar to the present but are different in some significant respect. Both of Delany's novels fall into this category as they depict future societies tolerant of diversity.

In summary, imaginary societies are depicted in every Nebula. It remains to ask then the extent to which the imaginary provocations of science fiction match those of which we are familiar with. Further, how well does it handle the political question? I should like to make two points. First, though these works do depict imaginary societies, they are reluctant to discuss the social, political, and economic bases of these societies in depth. Nebulas rarely endorse societies alternate to the reader's own. They usually present them as similar to or a regression from the present.

Second, the imaginary societies depicted in science fiction are all grounded in the author's present. They often carry over prejudicial assumptions without comment. This is true of even the most "alien" societies described in the genre. Again, *Dune* is an instructive example. As mentioned earlier, Herbert describes Fremen society in great depth.
His achievements were hailed as unparalleled by the critics,¹ and the *Dune* series has become a classic in the genre. The anthropological dimension of *Dune*, however, reveals some interesting anomalies, which are applicable to *Dune* and the creative enterprise of imagining alternate societies.

To readers familiar with Middle Eastern cultures and history, specifically the bedouin culture,² it is abundantly clear that Herbert has lifted, with a little adaptation, his ideas on Fremen culture from Arabian society. Indeed, the general outline of the plot traces, in a broad fashion, both the rise of the Prophet Mohammad and the spread of Islam in the 7th century A.D., and the recent rise of Arab power in the world due to its petroleum resources. The similarities between petroleum and melange are unmistakable. Another immediate parallel is the topography of both the Arabian peninsula and Arrakis. And as the camel is, for Arab bedouin culture, at the center of its economic and cultural social fabric, the sand worm, invented by Herbert in *Dune* is also a means of transportation, an economic necessity, a weapon and an integral part of Fremen culture and ritual.

Herbert does not only draw upon Arab history, ecology and topography for *Dune*’s skeletal structure, but incorporates many other features


of Arabian societies in order to flesh out Fremen culture. The most prominent carry-over from Arabian societies is evident when one examines Fremen language. A few examples will be sufficient to make this point clear. Fremen are deeply religious, believing in the Shari'a or religious ritual.¹ The word "Shari'a" is the Arabic word for religious law. The Fremen believe in the coming of a Mahdi,² an Arabic word meaning religious leader or messiah. Fremen also believe in evil spirits, the jinn,³ in jihad,⁴ the holy war, and in one's spiritual essence, the "ruh."⁵ Their Mahdi is named "Usul," which means pillar in Arabic⁶ and the shock troops formed to fight the jihad are called the "Fidaykin," an Arabic word meaning commandoes. All these are examples of authentic Arabic words and beliefs used by Herbert to describe Fremen language and culture. He also uses Arabic-sounding words, which are not authentic but are evocative of the Arabic language.⁷

In addition, Fremen society itself is closely modeled upon that of Arab bedouin societies. Fremen wear long, flowing robes,⁸ their

¹Herbert, Dune, p. 55.
²Ibid., p. 101.
³Ibid., p. 278.
⁴Ibid., p. 199.
⁵Ibid., p. 382.
⁶Ibid., p. 306.
⁷See, for example, his usage of "umam" and "amtal" on pp. 175 and 299 respectively.
⁸Ibid., p. 263.
complexion is swarthy,\textsuperscript{1} the men are circumcised,\textsuperscript{2} they practice polygamy and hold certain values dear: honor, trust, valor, bravery, loyalty, and the practice of vendetta. Fremen are divided into tribes, each tribe headed by a "naib," an Arabic word for leader, and their lives are primitive and simple, formed as a response to brutal environmental conditions under which they have to live. These described cultural traits are Arab in essence and used to exist in the past and to some extent can still be found in some Arabian societies today.

Herbert's adaptation of Arab society also unwittingly incorporates the popular cultural and ethnic stereotypes of Arab society held in the West today. This is found both in the author's perception of Fremen society and in the place he accords that society within the text itself. Thus, Fremen society is seen as simple, easily manipulated by off-worlders, and fanatical, perceptions which Westerners have held true about the Arab world since Lawrence of Arabia. Indeed, the combined figures of Paul and the two scientists on the one hand and Lawrence of Arabia on the other, perform identical functions with respect to the two "native" societies.\textsuperscript{3} It is the off-worlders who provide the vision, the spirit and the leadership for Fremen society as Lawrence did for the Arabs during World War I.

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{1}Ibid., p. 93.}  
\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{2}Ibid., p. 383.}  
What now becomes significant and telling is the place, within the text, that Herbert accords the Fremen. The major figures in *Dune* are Paul, his mother Jessica, his father the Duke, his sister Alia, and his wife Chani who is only half Fremen. Of the host of secondary characters, only two are Fremen, Hagar and Stilgar, and they both very early in the novel acquiesce to Paul's leadership. All major decisions in the book are made by Paul, although he does consult with other members of his family. By no means are Fremen in the center of the plot's stage; Fremen are the cannon fodder for the hero to manipulate as he sees fit.

Since the anthropological strength of the novel has been shown to be rooted in the material world of the writer, it is not surprising that the relationship between Paul and the Fremen is one of exercised power, reflecting the reality of Western hegemony in the author's world.

The conclusion that the real world provides referents for Herbert and all other writers of science fiction in their creation of imaginary societies comes as no surprise. What is of significance is that these referents unconsciously incorporate hierarchies of power and social stereotypes that flourish in the writer's society. The imaginary societies depicted in the Nebulas are not only superficially described; they also rarely endorse alternatives to the author's society.

The third utopian attribute that remains to be discussed in relation to the Nebulas is the anticipation of the future. These can be summarized into the following four main anticipations: domination by machines; domination and dependence upon aliens; the destruction of Earth and finally, the assumption that life will continue to exist
with no changes from the present. The overwhelming majority of the Nebulas are pessimistic in their anticipations. A total of eleven Nebulas describe the future in dystopian terms; only four portray the future as remaining unchanged from the present. Each anticipation will be described in turn.

The first anticipation, the domination of man by machine, is portrayed by Frederik Pohl in his novel *Man Plus*.¹ It describes a future where the Free World has shrunk to only the United States, Israel, Sweden, and a few other states. The rest of the world is dominated by socialist "collectivist dictatorships." World-wide tensions are escalating to the point where nuclear war and the destruction of the human race seems inevitable. In order to avert the impending disaster and to forge ahead in the power struggle against the socialist bloc, the United States decides to colonize Mars, a new "frontier" rich in minerals. The success of the project depends on astronaut Roger Torraway, who is transformed by a series of operations into a cyborg capable of living on Mars' surface. Most of the text is devoted to describing Roger's psychological trauma as he becomes less human. In the end, Roger is a superman, a "man plus," capable of feats no other human can perform, and his personality changes accordingly, hardening and exulting in his newfound strength. At the conclusion of the book, the reader is made aware that artificial intelligence, evolving in computers, have realized that the human race was endangering itself to the point of extinction.

They decide to manipulate human governments to colonize Mars. Since this would entail the placing of computers on Mars, the survival of the human race, and more importantly, artificial intelligence, is ensured. Human survival is assured at the expense of domination by machines.

The second anticipation is that more advanced aliens will dominate the human race. The domination is sometimes portrayed more as a dependence upon advanced alien artifacts, as in Frederik Pohl's second Nebula, Gateway. It describes a bleak feature. Overpopulated Earth subsists on food made from fungi growing on oil and cultivated in food mines. The only hope for the planet resides in the mysterious remnants left by an ancient alien race, the Heechees. The Heechees have left a way station, Gateway, full of automatically piloted spaceships and have departed the solar system. No one knows how to pilot these ships, but once in them, they may lead the passenger to unexplored planets. Since humans can exert no control over the ships, the risks of travelling in them are considerable. A passenger may become fabulously wealthy, but the chances are that he or she will return a corpse. Gateway is a gamble against very bad odds. The hero, proletarian Robirette Broadhead, works in a food mine on Earth, wins a lottery, and decides to risk his fortune by going to Gateway and travelling on a spaceship. The others who accompany him are equally desperate to escape life on Earth, and gamble their lives for wealth. Robinette goes out on three trips and strikes it lucky on the third and becomes a millionaire. He is able to survive his last trip, however, only by accidentally killing all the crew with him, including his lover. Much of Gateway is narrated in the
form of computer printouts, newspaper clippings, and dialogues between Robinette and his computer psychiatrist. Both the hero and Earth are gambling for survival at unfavorable odds, dependent upon the relics of a far superior and incomprehensible civilization. Man again is seen as dependent upon forces he cannot understand or control.

*Rendezvous with Rama* by Arthur C. Clarke is another variation on the theme of alien domination. The plot describes a huge UFO hurtling through Earth's solar system in the 22nd century. Christened Rama, it turns out to be an ancient, alien space vessel. The novel describes the exploration of Rama, a technological artifact of a clearly superior civilization. Although Rama contains no life, a number of lessons become clear towards the end of the book which alter some fundamental assumptions about reality. First, humans are not the only form of intelligent, tool-producing species in the galaxy. Second, the artifact Rama is only the initial contact between humans and the "Ramans," and third, this contact will be between two unequal races as the Ramans are manifestly superior technologically. Unless the Ramans are as morally developed as they are technologically, the human race will be at their complete mercy.

The third anticipation is the destruction of Earth, which takes place through a variety of mechanisms: nuclear war, overpopulation, or environmental pollution. Some Nebulas state Earth's destruction as a fait accompli as in *Dune*, *The Einstein Intersection*, *Rite of Passage*, *A Time of Changes*, and *Dreamsnake*. Four other Nebulas show Earth in the process of being destroyed: *The Forever War*, *Man Plus*, *Gateway*, and *Timescape*. 
Finally, four Nebulas depict future society as the continuation of an unchanged present. The few changes that have occurred do not change human nature or society in any significant way. These four Nebulas are *Ringworld*, *Rendezvous with Rama*, *The Fountains of Paradise*, and *No Enemy But Time*. One example will suffice to illustrate this anticipation. *Fountains of Paradise* is set in Ceylon, only slightly in the future. The hero is an engineer who designs a space elevator bridging Earth and a spaceport 50,000 kilometers in the sky. Clarke describes the problems that arise in its construction, the major one being that the only possible site for the Earth-end of the bridge is on a sacred religious shrine. The Buddhist monks are bested by the forces of progress, and the bridge is built, a triumphant monument to engineering ingenuity and perseverance.

With the exception of Bishop's work, these four Nebulas are all examples of hard science fiction. We have seen earlier in the chapter how these same four Nebulas did not criticize any social or political issue; and how these same four imagined societies in the future no different from the present. Finally, and not surprisingly, we have just indicated that their anticipations of the future predict no significant change from the present. The question that naturally arises is whether hard science fiction is devoid of all the utopian attributes.

The answer is a qualified "yes." Hard science fiction, as we recall from Chapter II, concentrates on extrapolating the scientific and technological trends into the future. As a category within the genre, hard science fiction tends to celebrate the advances of science and technology. It is usually written by authors who are trained in one
of the sciences, or who are at least conversant with the state of the art. Thus, most of the hard science fiction is found to be congruent with the reigning scientific paradigms, and the reigning ideology of the society. Given these factors, it is therefore not surprising to find that much of the hard science fiction is devoid of social criticism of the present, ideal alternatives to the status quo, or anticipations of a better and different future. We recall here Mannheim's division between ideological and utopian thought. Ideological mind-sets are by definition in accord with the status quo, and much of hard science fiction is no exception.

However, a number of qualifiers must be made at this point. The first is that some hard science fiction does present criticisms of social and political issues. One example would be the novel Timescape which critiqued pollution, and showed that scientists could save the day. Hard science fiction then, is not completely devoid of all utopian attributes. The second qualification is that it would be incorrect to assume that soft science fiction contains all the attributes that the hard variety lacks. All soft science fiction does not contain criticism, alternate societies and anticipations of the future. Much of the soft variety which extrapolates social as opposed to scientific trends, is equally comfortable with the reigning ideology.¹

In conclusion I have shown that the Nebulas criticize numerous social practices and beliefs which range from alienation to war. This

¹One example would be Cynthia Felice's Eclipses (New York: Pocket Books, 1983). She criticizes sexism in the novel. Her alternate vision, however, is one in which people contract out each household duty to be performed. Contracts notwithstanding, women still ended up performing all the household work, an irony the author was not conscious of.
is in keeping with the first attribute of utopian thought, which, as we have seen, attacked every principle in existing society. Secondly, I have pointed out that the Nebulas all depict imaginary societies. These imaginary societies are rarely superior to the present, and as such are not presented as alternatives to the present. A possible exception are Delany's two works. Additionally, these societies are not discussed holistically, but are presented as segments to the reader. This can be attributed to the fictional imperatives of literature, although it will be seen in the following chapter that these imperatives can be transcended. This is different from utopian thought which presents and debates a society in its entirety.

The reasons why science fiction does not endorse the imaginary societies it portrays is two-fold. One, much of the hard science fiction is in accord with the status quo, and is thus not compelled to envisage a better social order. Two, many of the Nebulas anticipate a dystopian future. We may recall that one consistent and significant theme is the dependence or subjugation of humankind by technologically advanced aliens. Only four novels, Ringworld, Rendezvous with Rama, The Fountains of Paradise, and The Gods Themselves show the future as normal, i.e., a continuation of the present. These negative anticipations are identical to the dystopian anticipations discussed in Chapter I, that post warnings to the reader. Alternating with these dystopian premonitions are fragmentary glimpses of alternate societies. These can be called utopian fragments, and are found in Herbert's depiction of early Fremen society, Delany's upbeat, multiracial and vigorous
futures, and Bishop's prehistoric Eden. Only Delany portrays his ideal in a technologically advanced setting.

In conclusion, we find that the Nebulas critique their society and anticipate the future as did utopian thought. However, their criticisms do not present an alternate view of politics, and they are seriously deficient in depicting imaginary societies that represent a superior alternative to the present. Science fiction's criticism of social trends and practices, and its apprehension of the future are tantalizing fragments in the utopian tradition. These fragments are gathered and given fuller utopian expression in the two remaining Nebula novels. These must be examined thoroughly before any conclusion can be reached about the utopian nature of science fiction, and will constitute the subject matter for the following chapter.
CHAPTER IV

URSULA K. LE GUIN

In this chapter I will examine the remaining two Nebulas, The Left Hand of Darkness and The Dispossessed. Each novel will be described and then evaluated by the same three criteria indigenous to utopian thought. I then proceed to compare these two works to other other Nebulas, and examine the location and significance of all eighteen within the tradition of utopian thought and political theory.

The Left Hand of Darkness and The Dispossessed are distinct from the body of Nebula novels. Both novels were authored by Ursula K. LeGuin, whose writings are representative of women's re-entry into the male-dominated field of science fiction writing in the 1960s. The two novels are similar to the other Nebulas in that they critique the present,

---

depict imaginary societies, and anticipate the future. Both novels, however, go further in their descriptions of imaginary societies. They do endorse societies which are superior to the author's own. These societies represent alternatives to the present. They are depicted holistically. Finally, both novels present clear linkages that connect the author's present to the desired social order. These two characteristics in LeGuin's works seem to transcend my reservations of the obvious limitations of the other Nebulas, and have made it desirable to evaluate her two works in a separate chapter.

The Left Hand of Darkness is the first work. It describes the diplomatic mission of Genly Ai on the planet Gethen. He is an emissary of the Ekumen, a confederation of three thousand nations of eighty-three planets. The Ekumen coordinates and facilitates the exchange of ideas, technologies, trade, and communication between its members. Ai's mission is to convince the rulers of Gethen to join the Ekumen. The outstanding characteristic of Gethen is its unrelenting sub-zero temperatures. Two important and competing nations exist on Gethen, Karhide and Orgoreyn. Ai first approaches the King of Karhide and attempts to persuade him to join the Ekumen, but is unsuccessful. The only person whom Ai can convince is Estraven, the Prime Minister. Estraven, who is a shrewd and principled politician, has immediately recognized with Ai's arrival that the hitherto unknown existence of the Ekumen has transformed the planet's real politik. Estraven's support of Ai leads to his denouncement as a traitor by his political enemies and he flees to Orgoreyn for protection.
Karhide and Orgoreyn are presented as two differing societies, moving into an inevitable confrontation with each other. Karhide is a decentralized nation whose basic social unit is the "hearth" composed of 200 to 800 persons. Hearths are communal and independent, with no great social or economic disparities existing between its members. A fairly high degree of technological development has been reached, but the rate of social change has been deliberately slowed to avoid social dislocations. The economic and political system is described in vague terms, with more emphasis being placed upon the psychological and physiological make-up of its inhabitants. The author herself describes Karhide's economy as decentralized and approximating communalistic or syndicalistic systems.1

Orgoreyn is slightly more "advanced" than Karhide as it is more unified and centralized.2 It is clearly portrayed as the less attractive of the two. Few economic activities are carried out communally, every individual is an employee of the state, and private property cannot be willed.3 The state is ruled by a committee known as the Commensal. The bureaucracy has extended itself into most areas of people's lives and a secret police is able to operate freely. The citizens of Orgoreyn are passive and have lost their ability for independent thought and action.4

1 See LeGuin's discussion of this in "Is Gender Necessary?" in The Language of the Night, pp. 154-155.
2 LeGuin, The Left Hand... , p. 103.
3 Ibid., pp. 120 and 117.
4 Ibid., pp. 112, 114, and 117.
Ai attempts to convince the Commensal to join the Ekumen, but is suspected of being an agent of Karhide. He is incarcerated in a detention camp, and is slowly dying when Estraven rescues him. Together they traverse almost nine hundred miles in artic-like weather to reach Karhide. During this voyage a friendship based on trust, affection, and ultimately love develops between Terran and Gethenian. Upon reaching Karhide Estraven is killed, Ai convinces the king to join the Ekumen, and other nations follow suit. The war between Karhide and Orgoreyn is averted.

The outstanding and memorable feature of the novel is the physiological make-up of the Gethenians. Although human, Gethenians are physically androgynous, a fact that has enormous impact upon their social institutions. Their sexual cycle extends from 26 to 28 days, and for 21 of those days, Gethenians are in a latent sexual stage known as "somem." On the eighteenth day hormonal changes occur and a Gethenian enters into a stage of "kemmer," or sexual potency. Kemmer is not initially a sexually active phase, and a Gethenian remains incapable of coitus. However, the sexual impulse is extremely strong and completely dominates the individual. When an individual finds a partner also in kemmer, each stimulates hormonal secretions in the other until one becomes a female and the other a male, with the appropriate shrinkage and engorgement of sexual organs. The kemmer stage then becomes active, lasting from two to five days, and the female Gethenian may become impregnated. It is important to note that no individual has any control over which sex he or she will become in kemmer. "No physiological habit is established, and the mother of several children may be the father of
several more." In summary then, what the author describes is a society whose individuals' sex drive is discontinuous, based on an estrous cycle, and who are also androgynous.

Gethenian physiology is the springboard the author uses to critique her own society; it is the foundation for an alternate and superior society; and it provides the basis for her anticipations of the future. Each of LeGuin's utopian attributes will be discussed in turn, beginning with her critique.

Using the ideal of androgyny, LeGuin levies a series of criticisms against her own society. Her criticisms are similar to those levied by other authors in the previously-discussed Nebulas, as she focuses not only on sexism but also upon its concomitant evils of war and alienation. LeGuin obliquely critiques her society in two ways: by inviting the readers to compare their society to Karhide; and by juxtaposing the two societies of Karhide and Orgoreyn in the novel.

Orgoreyn is a society wherein the ascendant and predominant male element has caused it to be both militaristic and authoritarian. Orgoreyn represents only one form of social aberration that may occur as a result of gender imbalance; the author's own sexist society being another example. Thus social aberrations such as sexism, militarism, aggression, and alienation are clearly the practices of a non-androgynous society.

Writing in 1969, LeGuin links sexism to alienation and war. In the heyday of the war in Vietnam, she explicitly states that nationalism

1Ibid., p. 91.
is a limiting emotion, which erects false boundaries between peoples. If carried to an extreme, nationalism can lead to war, and war for LeGuin is antithetical to civilization. She argues for relationships between nations that are open, free, and nonexploitative. This theme is expressed by Estraven in response to a question from Ai.

"How does one hate a country, or love one? . . . what is the sense of giving a boundary . . . a name and ceasing to love where the name ceases to apply? What is love of one's country; is it hate of one's uncountry? Then it's not a good thing. Is it simply self-love? That's a good thing, but one mustn't make a virtue of it, or a profession..."¹

Sexism, alienation, and war are the result of an unbalanced and distorted society, where androgyny is not developed in humans, nor allowed expression in social institutions.

Alien physiology is the foundation for LeGuin's alternate and superior society. She admits to setting up Karhide as a "heuristic device, a thought-experiment"² which she used to explore what, besides the purely physiological form and function, truly differentiates men and women . . . .

I eliminated gender, to find out what was left. Whatever was left would be, presumably, simply human. It would define the area that is shared by men and women alike.³

To eliminate gender, but not sexuality, LeGuin invented the Gethenian, an androgynous individual. The fullest social expression of such a unique sexuality is the androgynous society of Karhide. Karhide then, is an alternate society which incorporates within its social fabric an ideal held to be desirable by the author—-androgyny.

¹Ibid., pp. 211-212.
³Ibid.
LeGuin describes Karhidean society through the eyes of Ai, the foreigner, and the reports of a previous Ekumen emissary. The entire society is sketched out for the reader; its political institutions, and politics; its social institutions; its economy; and its culture. The brevity of these descriptions will be elaborated upon later in the chapter; what is important to note now is that the author attempts to depict Karhide holistically. Her description of Karhide is a dialectical one, as she portrays a society in which change is occurring, and which is vulnerable to external predatory forces. What then is the topography of an androgynous and sexually egalitarian society?

LeGuin describes such a society as incorporating the following characteristics: matrilineal descent; unions between individuals assuming many forms, usually in pairs but sometimes in groups; the activity of parenting cutting across sex lines; a different mode of thought that eschews dualistic categories, sexual stereotyping and objectification; a different mode of self-perception and interaction based not on gender but on character; and finally, an absence of rape and war. Although competition and aggression do exist in Karhide, such events occur singly or in very small numbers, never organized and orchestrated, or involving thousands of individuals.

LeGuin's ideal of androgyny incorporates a number of assumptions. The first assumption made is that there are female and male "principles" at work cross-culturally and pan-temporally. The differences are defined as follows:
[the female principle is] or at least historically has been, basically anarchic. It values order without constraint, rule by custom not by force. It has been the male who enforces order, who constructs power-structures, who makes, enforces, and breaks laws.¹

The female principle is also decentralizing, circular, patient, and flexible; the male principle is rigid and linear.²

A second assumption that LeGuin makes is that androgyny constitutes a balance and integration between the male and female principles. This balance and harmony should exist both within the individual and reflect itself in the social order. No one gender should dominate the other as this would lead to distortions and various forms of exploitation.

A third assumption LeGuin makes concerns the composition of human nature. LeGuin contends that all humans are essentially androgynous. The ideal of androgyny is thus grounded in the constitutive elements of human nature. As LeGuin states in the introduction to her novel, she is

. . . merely observing, in the peculiar, devious and thought-experimental manner proper to science fiction, that if you look at us in certain odd times of the day in certain weathers, we are [androgynous]. I am not predicting or prescribing. I am describing . . . certain aspects of psychological reality in the novelist's way, . . . .³

Finally, LeGuin assumes that ideally, a social order should reflect this view of human nature. A full blown androgynous society is desirable since it would eliminate exploitation of every kind. She states this belief clearly in a later commentary:

¹Ibid., p. 155.
²Ibid., pp. 156-157.
If we were socially ambisexual... then society would be a very different thing... we would [still] have... [problems] But... not... the one it is now: the problem of exploitation—exploitation of the woman, of the weak, of the earth. Our curse is alienation, the separation of yang from yin. Instead of a search for balance and integration, there is a struggle for dominance. Divisions are insisted upon... The dualism of value that destroys us, the dualism of superior/inferior, ruler/ruled, owner/owned... might give way... to a much healthier, sounder, more promising modality of integration and integrity.¹

Given LeGuin's assumptions and ideals, it is clear that Karhide is meant to be a utopian society, organized around the ideal of androgyny.²

LeGuin's novel reveals an optimistic anticipation of the future. This optimism is not made explicit. It rests on her belief that there exists an explicit linkage between her contemporary society and her utopia. The linkage is our androgynous beings. Thus the raw materials out of which her utopia can be fashioned already exist in her own society. The transformations that must occur before her utopia can become a reality are conditional only upon the desire to actualize that social order. In both her utopic and personal reality, the origin of the androgynous being lies in physiology. Utopia can be realized if humans desire to become what they already are. Utopia is for LeGuin a result of a process in which human nature is allowed to express its true androgynous essence.

¹LeGuin, "Is Gender Necessary?" p. 159.

²LeGuin disagrees with this analysis. She contends that Karhide is not a utopia because as she puts it, "it poses no practicable alternative to contemporary society since it is based on an imaginary, radical change in human anatomy. All it tries to do is to open up an alternative viewpoint, to widen the imagination, without making any definite suggestion as to what might be seen from that new viewpoint..." LeGuin, "Is Gender Necessary?" pp. 158-159. However, I contend that her ideal of an androgynous society is utopian for it expresses a desire for a restructured social order, elaborated in a detailed vision of an alternate society.
We may characterize such an anticipation as philosophically idealist, since the basis of the distortion is not perceived by LeGuin to be a result of the material environment. Similarly, the antidote to the distortion suggested by LeGuin is also idealistic. The locus and onus of change are not embedded in material conditions, but depend upon the will of individuals and society to rectify an aberration of human nature. The ideal of androgyny thus transcends both time and place. The true expression of human nature can exist no matter what level of social and economic development a society has attained. Kehrolde, if we remember, is a feudal order, and LeGuin proposes the same androgynous ideal for her own, far more complex society.

An evaluation of LeGuin's work from the perspective of political philosophy cannot ignore her feminist sensibilities, as they constitute an integral part of her proffered vision of utopia. One decade after the publication of her novel, she acknowledges that her ideas emanated from the impact of the woman's movement and her own need to understand and define the notion of sexuality and gender in her life and society. 1

As a "record of my consciousness, the process of my thinking," 2 LeGuin's novels mirrors with almost uncanny precision on trend of thought within the radical wing of the woman's movement in the late 1960s. 3

1LeGuin, "Is Gender Necessary?," p. 151.
2Ibid.
Radical feminists maintained that men were, by their very nature essentially different from women. Men's natures were dominating, oppressive and exploitative, and they acted out their corrupt, inborn impulses upon women and the world. This truth was held to be valid pan-historically and cross-culturally.\textsuperscript{1} Radical feminists, however, celebrated the gender-specific identity of the woman, often calling for all-female societies where no discord could exist (only love and harmony), or urging for the reshaping of the male body to allow it to be privy to women's biological experiences. Such characterization of the male nature can be seen as problematic since it judges humans by their given attributes, in this case, their gender. Also, such a binary categorization of human nature is simplistic and historically invalid. It accepts an epistemology that affirms a division between thought and feeling, which in turn ushers dangerous fascist undertones into its discourse. When radical feminists espouse a split between emotion and thought and urge the desirability of unifying, merging, and connecting in a society which would totally define the individual to the point where distinctions between the personal and political would be wiped away, they become ideologically compatible to fascist thought.\textsuperscript{2}

\textsuperscript{1}This view is expressed forcefully by Mary Daly, \textit{Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism} (Boston: Beacon Press, 1979).

\textsuperscript{2}Elshtain, pp. 222-223. Susan Sontag asserts that radical feminists, by accepting a split between reason and feeling based on gender, are ushering in anti-intellectualism, if not fascism. Sontag observes in a retort to Adrienne Rich that she disassociates herself from "... that wing of feminism that promotes that rancid and dangerous antithesis between mind ('intellectual exercise') and emotion ('felt reality'). For precisely this kind of banal disparagement of the normative virtues of the intellect... is also one of the tools of fascism..." See Susan Sontag, "Feminism and Fascism: An Exchange," \textit{The New York Review of Books}, 20 March 1975, p. 31.
However, to characterize LeGuin as a radical feminist would be incorrect; rather, it would be more accurate to locate her work along with other androgynists, in the boundaries of classical liberalism. LeGuin advocates a balance and hence an integration between genders, not the negation of one (male) for the survival of the other (female). She espouses androgyny, as portrayed, in the Gethenian involuntary gender-switching. However, androgyny presupposes the malleability of human nature, and accepts a mind-versus-body dichotomy. Furthermore, it is not a political concept. The ideal is an appealing one because it can be attained by persons rationally eschewing the unenlightened and sexist. But the ideal is innocuous. It does not engender debate about the public weal precisely because it does not engage political institutions. It is self-affirming and irrefutable and "proffers no ideal to which people may reasonably aspire." Ultimately, it is in league with the status quo (capitalism) in that its end is to homogenize humans. "Having first reduced the richness and mystery of the human body as a point of reference, a locus for action, a foundation for identity, and a way of knowing, androgynists point to their one-dimensional creation and go on to confuse real human beings with their impoverished vision." 

The political limitations of androgyny serve to explain a final observation about LeGuin's utopia mentioned in an earlier part of the discussion. Within Karhide, politics is peculiarly absent. Although


much of the novel focuses upon Karhidian court politics, the full meaning of political activity in Karhide is obscured by LeGuin's invention of a Gethenian cultural imperative of impassivity and secrecy called "shifgrethor,"¹ which renders Karhidian politics inscrutable to Ai, the foreigner and narrator. Additionally the Ekumen is never described,² and even the conflict between Karhide and Orgoreyn is never satisfactorily analyzed in spite of the fact that the discord is an important even within the text itself. Political events, political institutions, political relationships, and political activities, are never depicted with the same complexity and subtlety the author accords other kinds of (primarily personal) relationships. In fact, politics as an activity in Karhide does not differ qualitatively from Orgoreyn politics. From the novel it is clear that LeGuin holds that the political or public realm greatly impacts upon the private world of the individual; that the public realm is alienating and potentially destructive of the private world; and that problems in the public realm can be solved by individuals in their private worlds.³ Karhide, the social


²A minor paradox occurs in the plot which is not addressed by LeGuin. It is evident from Ai's narration that gender-based perception and male dominance exists on Terra and in the Ekumen. How is it then that the Ekumen has been able to develop in such a way as to treat the peoples of Gethen and other underdeveloped planets as gently and humanely as they deserve, without resorting to traditional patriarchal politics? Such an explanation would have been illuminating, but LeGuin ignores this contradiction.

³For a different analysis, see John Huntington, "Public and Private Imperatives in LeGuin's novels," Science-Fiction Studies 7 (November 1975): 237. Huntington sees LeGuin as sharpening her focus on the tension between the public and private spheres over the years, her most articulate exposition being contained in The Dispossessed. He states that in The Left Hand... LeGuin depicts a balance between the two spheres, and views the antagonisms in the private sphere as generating from the nature of power and politics, i.e., the public sphere.
embodiment of the androgynous ideal is far from perfect, but most importantly, its utopian dimension does not include a political dimension of any depth. Whether this characteristic can be attributed to androgyne, the central axiom in her utopia, or whether it is a characteristic true of all LeGuin's works is a question that can be answered only by examining her next novel, The Dispossessed, the most overtly utopian text of all Nebulas, and which is even subtitled "an ambiguous utopia."

The Dispossessed describes two planets, Annares and Urras, each the other's moon. On Urras three separate and different types of governments have developed. A-Io is capitalist, wealthy, and powerful, Thu is centralized and socialist, and lastly Benbili is a large, poor, and underdeveloped nation. Almost two hundred years ago a revolutionary anarchist movement was initiated in A-Io by a woman named Odo. Despite state persecution and incarceration, Odo developed a mass following from the ranks of the exploited and impoverished, who called themselves Odonians. The A-Ioian authorities, apprehensive of the continuing Odonian revolutionary ferment, offer to settle the Odonians on Annares, its harsh, desolate moon, rich only in minerals. One million anarchists accept the offer and are settled on Annares. Both sides agree to the Terms of Closure, which states that no immigration to or from either planet will ever be allowed. The only relations permitted are trade

---

1 LeGuin admits that the social structures she drew up for Karhide and Orgoreyn are fictive failures. She states the following: "I see now a failure to think things through, or to express them clearly. For example, I think I took the easy way in using such familiar governmental structures as a feudal monarchy and a modern-style bureaucracy for the two Gethenian countries. . . . I doubt that Gethenian governments, rising out of the cellular 'hearth', would resemble any of our own so closely." See LeGuin, "Is Gender Necessary?," p. 157.
relations, the Odonians mining valuable metals in exchange for needed products that they themselves are unable to manufacture. This trade relationship is an unequal one, and a constant thorn in the Odonian hide.

The novel opens 160 years after the settling of Annares. Each planet has developed separately and in isolation from the other. Odo, who died while still on A-Io, never saw the society she inspired. However, her books written while she was incarcerated, are the foundations of Odonian philosophy. Her anarchist philosophy, a product of a highly advanced capitalist society, unequivocally insists that no authority or power should exist superior to the individual. The state, the government, and the bureaucracy, cannot exist in an anarchist society for they are the embodiments of coercion, authority, and power. Thus, Odo urged the decentralization of all political and social institutions and the recognition of no authority external to the individual.

Anneresti society is appreciated through the experiences of Shevek, an Odonian whom we follow through a series of flashbacks from childhood to maturity. Shevek is a product of Odonian culture which has shaped his personality and molded his virtues. As a child he displayed unusual flashes of originality and introspectiveness. His genius lies in the area of physics, and he goes to the university to study and research. He soon outstrips his professors there and in the Physics Syndicate. Shevek is attempting to develop a General Theory of Time by unifying two contradicting theories in physics. If completed, his theory would enable the instantaneous transference of messages and matter across galaxies. Naturally the theory has political implications since its possessor would
wield hegemonic power over other galactic states. These political implications are ignored in Odonian society. Indeed, during Shevek's research, he encounters stiff opposition to his radical theories, stemming from envy and petty jealousy. His physics is perceived as having no immediate use-value, and his opponents label his work as non-functional and non-Odonian. His major opponent is a senior and entrenched physicist, Sabul, who has plagiarized Shevek's work and wielded power over him in a non-Odonian fashion, ousting Shevek from the Physics Syndicate. Sabul and a natural disaster that befalls the entire planet take Shevek away from physics and his family for a few years. Fighting alongside the rest of his community for survival, Shevek realizes the Odonian society is beginning to stagnate and prohibit true creativity. His initial strategy is to compromise with the informal power structure. He then rejects this tactic when he comes to the conclusion that as an Odonian, his duty to society demands his return to physics, creativity, and excellence. With a few like-minded friends, he starts a new syndicate to publish his theories and other items that have been censored in different syndicates. As this is an anarchist society, nobody can stop him from obtaining the needed materials to initiate his Syndicate of Initiative, which in a moneyless society, are free. However, Shevek is still unable to complete his General Theory of Time in the isolation of Annares; he needs to discuss his work with other physicists on A-Io who have been pursuing the same new areas in the field, and his own work, with great interest. Shevek decides to unilaterally abrogate the Terms of Closure and travel to A-Io to discuss his work with the A-Ioian scientific community. He also believes, however, that the primary motive for his move is to
bring his people out of isolation from the rest of the galaxy, an iso-
lation which he is convinced is inhibiting the growth of his society.
His suggestions are opposed by the majority and enormous community
pressure is levied upon Shevek and his family to conform. However, since
Annares is anarchist, no authority exists that can stop Shevek from
acting, and he travels to A-Io where he is honored by the A-Ioian govern-
ment. Shevek is ensconsed at the university and given every possible
amenity to help him further his research. The A-Ioian government has
a secret agenda. Unlike the Odonians, it has been aware of the politi-
cal implications of Shevek's work and intends to steal it from him as
soon as he formulates it, in order to redress its weak position in
galactic politics. Shevek is initially unaware of the subterranean
politics surrounding him and upon discovering the true intentions of
the A-Ioian government, flees to the slums of A-Io where he is welcomed
as a long lost son by an A-Ioian revolutionary movement. This group
is planning to stage a mass demonstration in support of a revolution in
Benbili, which the A-Ioian government is trying to abort by military
force. Shevek participates in the demonstration as the main speaker,
and is interrupted by the A-Ioian police, who brutally disperse the
demonstrators. Escaping with the help of his revolutionary friends,
Shevek flees to the Terran Embassy and requests asylum, which is granted.
While under Terran protection he completes his General Theory of Time.
An an anarchist who loathes private property, he uses the Terran radio
to broadcast his theory to all the known worlds simultaneously. By so
doing, Shevek allows the theory to become the property of all and
therefore the weapon of none. The novel ends with Shevek returning to
Annares, uncertain of his reception there. During his absence, his ideas have garnered more support, but many Anneresti who oppose their society emerging from isolation remain adamant, reluctant to risk archist, propertarian contamination. "To be whole is to be part," Odo stated in her works, "true voyage is return," but Shevek is returning to a different Annares. He has set into motion forces of change; whether these changes will save his society from entropy is left unanswered by the author.

LeGuin criticizes her own society in the text. She does so by vividly juxtaposing two different societies for the reader: A-Io, rich, powerful, and capitalist; and Annares, poor, struggling, and anarchic. In the mode of the classic utopian writers, LeGuin uses the mechanism of a traveller who is unacquainted with a new world to drive points home to the readers about their society. She uses it with a new twist as Shevek is not exploring utopia: he comes from one, and what he explores is a strange society similar to the reader's.

The things Shevek finds alienating and incomprehensible are what the readers would consider normal if not mundane: pawn houses, armies, police forces, poor houses, asylums, prisons, rent collectors, tenements, artificial scarcity, shopping malls, money, credit, and sexism, all have to be explained to Shevek. Through Shevek's experiences and reactions to A-Io, a critique is launched against the familiar class-stratified, unjust, and oppressive capitalist order the reader lives in.

---

1LeGuin, *The Dispossessed*, p. 68.
LeGuin consciously attempts, and succeeds, in making the utopian society a familiar world for the reader. At the same time she defamiliarizes and estranges the reader from her or his empirical world.

LeGuin thoroughly describes Odonian society, which is presented to the reader in its entirety. This society is clearly superior to her own social order. Her description is dialectical, since she depicts a changing society; and it is a critical description, as she portrays a society falling short of its ideals. All these characteristics of Odonian society: its completeness, lack of perfection, and dynamism, will become clear as we describe its contours and contents.

The utopian society the Odonians have fashioned has no recognized or official center of power and authority. It has no government, army, or police. The society is administered by the Production and Distribution Coordination (PDC), which coordinates all syndicates, federatives, and individual work efforts. Each economic activity has been voluntarily organized into separate syndicates and federatives. Sometimes these organizations are regional. Individuals may voice their dissenting opinions in criticism sessions in their syndicates. Extreme dissatisfaction or evolving situations may lead to the creation of new syndicates and federatives. Any individual can initiate a syndicate and obtain the needed materials for its establishment. The distinction between syndicates and federatives is never clearly defined; each sends representatives to both the local and central PDC.

Positions in the PDC are filled by individuals selected by lottery. Anyone can serve on the PDC for a maximum of four years. The PDC does not have the power to reprimand any individual or syndicate. The views
of the PDC represent the prevailing views of the entire society, which, as we shall see shortly, can exert considerable influence in the form of public opinion. The founders of Odonian society took every precaution to avoid the centralization of power in the PDC; however, these precautions over one and a half centuries were unsuccessful, as some individuals were able to obtain power and manipulate it behind the scenes.

Another administrative center is Divlab, the administration of the division of labor. Divlab uses advanced computers to bank information on each job in every community. Individuals volunteer for jobs they find congruent with their interests. They can request a change of employment, and accept or reject Divlab's offers. No individual is forced to work for the basic necessities of life, since Odonian society is moneyless. Food, shelter, education, and other necessities are equally available to every individual. Surprisingly few individuals avoid work: Odonians labor for diversity, challenge, pleasure, and because the social conscience of the community takes it for granted that each should contribute. Perpetual loafers feel the weight of public disapproval.

Odonian society is classless in the sense that there does not exist a permanent social hierarchy based upon occupation, wealth, or privilege. A considerable amount of voluntary job rotation exists. The dangerous and unpleasant tasks, like the mining of mercury, are rotated routinely to eliminate the possibility of one individual doing crippling work for extensive periods of time. This practice was instituted with the full knowledge that it was not an efficient method of labor distribution. The merely unpleasant but necessary jobs, such as
cleaning communal lavatories, are assigned by the Block Committees to all individuals on a rotating basis. Time in Annares is divided into ten-day periods, or decades, and on every tenth day each individual does whatever task the Block Committee has posted for her or him. Most individuals work five to seven hours a day, and at the end of every decade, has two to four days off. Many of these details are left to individuals to work out with their respective syndicates.

The language used by Odonians possesses a number of interesting inclusions and omissions which one would expect in an anarchic, classless society. The original Odonian settlers adopted Pravic, a computer-engineered language, in which there are no terms of rank or respectful address, no proprietary terms for the sexual act, and no possessive pronouns. For example, the words for "work" and "play" are synonymous; "forbidden" does not exist; and castigating terms for non-Odonian behavior are described as "egoizing," "profiteer," "propertarians," and "body profiteer."

An important segment of Odonian society described by the author in detail revolves around child-rearing and education. Anneresti children are raised communally. Once they are weaned, they are placed in dormitories and are not encouraged to stay with their parents. This is done not just to free women's labor potential but because Odonians believe that children experiencing the intensity of individual love will be exposed to much pain as well. Odonian children are exhorted to share from infancy: "Nothing is yours. It is to use. It is to share. If you will not share it, you cannot use it"¹ they are told. Education is

¹Ibid., p. 127.
conducted in learning centers and children are taught practical skills like carpentry and printing as well as painting and dancing. No child is physically punished, but troublesome youngsters are ostracized, a painful punishment in a society that equates solitude with disgrace. In the more advanced learning centers, students can initiate courses by a simple request. No examination, grades, or degrees are awarded. Students have to fulfill their obligations to the community every decad, and are sometimes called upon to perform more onerous tasks. Anti-social individuals are free to leave Odonian society and become "solitaries," living as hermits on the fringes of society. Children freely experiment with sex and with both sexes at an early age. Homosexuality is not frowned upon, and the only form of punishable sex is rape and child molestation, very rare "in a society where complete fulfillment was the norm from puberty on." The only limit society imposes on sexual activity is the pressure to conduct it in private.

The two central Odonian concepts that reveal much about Anneresti society are Odonian organicism and functionalism. According to Odonian philosophy the laws of evolution favor the strongest: the Odonians define the strongest as those who are most social and cooperative. The "organic" is a term used to describe the society; its opposite is "mechanical," which is unnatural. The society, for example, is an organic entity, analogous to a biological system, and the place the individual occupies in society is justified in biological terms as one's "cellular function." Odonian philosophy thus posits two levels in

\footnote{Ibid., p. 198. This is, of course, an extremely facile interpretation of perversion.}
society: the cellular, individual level, and the organic, societal level. An individual's cellular function designates both the individuality of the person and that person's creative potential. A progressive "healthy" society would allow an individual to contribute in the area she or he is most creative in, and the role of the society is to coordinate all the different individual functions: by so doing, it will "find [...] its adaptability and strength."\(^1\) The Odonian individual defines herself or himself as part of an organic community. The relationship between the individual and the community is a clear one, unmediated by any intervening social institution: it is one of "real mutuality and reciprocity."\(^2\) The society provides for the individual's "security and stability"\(^3\) and in return, the individual reciprocates by making moral choices which only the individual, and not society, can do. By so doing, the individual has the power to instigate and create change, which is supremely important since change is an essential ingredient, or "function," of life. Because societies tend towards stasis, the responsibility of the individual is to continue the "permanent revolution" which "begins in the thinking mind."\(^4\) The society might claim certain actions from individuals as its due, certain "sacrifices," but "never compromise"\(^5\) and Odonians with their "organic-societal consciences"\(^6\) should

\(^1\) Ibid., p. 267.
\(^2\) Ibid.
\(^3\) Ibid.
\(^4\) Ibid.
\(^5\) Ibid.
\(^6\) Ibid., pp. 90, 267.
know when to draw the line. For an Odonian the social imperative has become natural, and the social good well-defined and almost palpable.

The functional aspect of Odonian philosophy is an outgrowth of its organismism. Odonian philosophy constantly refers to the animal kingdom to determine what is "natural" and organic. The animal kingdom is also used to determine social values and goals. This inevitably leads to Odonian functionalism and ultimately a rank utilitarianism: what functions well becomes socially desirable. Although it is made clear in the text that functionalism and utilitarianism inhibit individual creativity and social change, the author does not clarify the relationship of Odonian functionalism to the central Odonian belief in organismism. This functionalism is heightened by conditions of great scarcity on Annares, and the harsh environment is further exacerbated by a severe drought that drains the society and gravely threatens its viability. Survival becomes of paramount importance and every decision is a life or death one. Finer political and personal decisions become a luxury that cannot be afforded. Thus Odo's principle of "organic economy" is reinforced: "Excess is excrement. Excrement retained in the body is a poison."¹

However, even before the drought, austerity and scarcity were apparent, and combined with a functionalist philosophy, affected the ethics and aesthetics of the community. Austerity means, understandably, that baths are communal, taps turn themselves off, and little of precious energy is expended on heating and cooling rooms. Functionalism also means, however, that an orange blanket can be defined as an "excremental

¹Ibid., p. 80.
color" since it does not serve a function "at either the cellular or the organic level, and certainly not at the hologanismic or most centrally ethical level, . . ." The same criticism is levelled at all forms of privacy except the sexual and "partnerships," bondings between individuals freely entered upon and terminated at any time. The Odonian philosophy of organicism and functionalism is augmented by the conditions of scarcity that Odonian society faces on a daily basis. This society is anarchic, cooperative, moneyless, and classless.

The two other characteristics of LeGuin's utopia that remain to be discussed are its lack of perfection and its dynamism. LeGuin's ideal society is far from perfect. The flaws in Anneresti society are encountered by Shevek and can be summarized into four major problems. One, isolationism bordering on xenophobia; two, a fledgling bureaucracy and a nascent power structure; three, the social imperative that necessitates conformity and restricts independent thought and action; and four, the contradictions between the private and public spheres, concretized by LeGuin in the issue of partnerships. Taken together, these drawbacks threaten the survival of Odonian society as they stymie a fundamental prerequisite of life: change. All these tensions are experienced by Shevek as he attempts as a sincere Odonian to contribute his best to society. He struggles against every one of the four shortcomings, and wins. Sometimes he acts alone, at other times he acts within a collectivity. As we shall see shortly, many of the flaws that LeGuin depicts

---

1Ibid., p. 131.
2Ibid., p. 132.
in Odonian society are drawn from debates that took place within political philosophy. It is important to recognize here that taken together, the shortcomings that Shevek battles against are clear indications that Odonian society, superior as it is to the author's own, is also an imperfect and struggling community.

The final characteristic of LeGuin's ideal society left to be discussed is its dynamism. LeGuin portrays her ideal society as evolving and changing. Social change for LeGuin is contingent upon the actions of extraordinary individuals. Change on Annares is embodied in the figure of Shevek, a formidable character who combines the characteristics of gentleness, charisma, genius, honesty, and social critic. He is a creator spirit and is capable of unique contributions to his society. He stands head and shoulders above the average Odonian. He fights against social stasis, social decay, and unfolding historical forces, and wins. He stands outside and opposed to history. Change and the tempo of change for LeGuin are therefore not embedded in material forces or classes, but depend on the individual's perception and voluntary decision to act. LeGuin believes that material conditions may be transcended by the sheer force of human consciousness and the desire for a better, moral order. It has been noted with regards to her first novel that such a concept of change is idealistic; it can also be said to be a romantic, intellectual vanguardism which is ultimately totalitarian, as change becomes the attempt of individuals to force and mold the world in their cognitive
Le Guin drives this point home by placing Anneresti society squarely in the realm of necessity. She further tests her society to almost breaking point by imposing a drought. Le Guin believes that the human will to create a morally superior civilization can be successful only under conditions of real scarcity. Her ideal society is described holistically and incorporates many elements: an anarchic eschewal of the centralization of any and all power, a reliance upon cooperation and the communal spirit, and equality. Le Guin's ideal society is depicted sympathetically but critically. It is an imperfect and an evolving community, its forces of change conflicting with individuals and a community that is inert, no long viewing change as desirable.

Le Guin's anticipation of the future is a hopeful one. Her optimistic posture to the future is grounded in her notions of change, which as we have seen, center around the extraordinary individual, who perceives a need for change and voluntarily acts to implement it.

Le Guin's concept of change is the link between her society and utopia. An ideal society can be actualized if individuals desire it, hence Le Guin's optimism vis-à-vis the future.

It has been noted that Le Guin has located her utopia in the realm of scarcity, or necessity. This fact is also indicative of her optimism, which incorporates her belief that the realm of freedom can exist in a

---

society that still suffers from scarcity. The realization of utopia for LeGuin, is therefore conditional not upon a transformation of the productive forces of society, but on a rearrangement of these same forces. LeGuin's optimistic anticipations are based upon her concept of change, and her belief that utopia must be achieved under conditions of scarcity.

It is clear that in writing The Dispossessed, the writer has self-consciously appropriated elements of the utopian tradition. She has done so in three ways: one, by utilizing the mechanism of a traveller whose experiences illuminate the reader; two, by her detailed description of an alternate and superior society; and three, by her drawing on debates that exist within the discipline of political theory. It is LeGuin's third appropriation that concerns us most directly.

LeGuin's integration of ideas and debates from political theory is manifested on two levels: one, in the general contours of her utopic society; and two, in her depiction of specific foci of tension and imperfection in Anarea. In the first instance, we find that Odonian society is composed of ideals derived from the radical tradition in political theory. Odonian society is a synthesis of ideas from diverse political theorists: Peter Kropotkin, who posited that communist anarchism should not demand labor in exchange for basic necessities; Mikhail Bakunin, who insisted on the indivisibility between ends and means; Emma Goldman, who believed in anarchism without drastic personal renunciation; Hubert Read's and Paul Goodman's views on education; and the exaltation of poverty found in Tolstoy's Christain anarchism.¹ It

is instructive here to quote LeGuin's words on her ambitions for her novel, and her acknowledgement to the radical tradition in political theory:

Odonianism in anarchism... as prefigured in early Taoist thought, and expounded by Shelley and Kropotkin, Goldman and Goodman. Anarchism's principal target is the authoritarian state (capitalist or socialist); its principal moral-practical theme is cooperation (solidarity, mutual aid). It is the most idealistic, and to me the most interesting of all political theories... To embody it in a novel, which had not been done before, was a long and hard job for me...

Odonian society is a synthesis of ideals and political theories, selected from the radical tradition in political theory.

LeGuin does not merely synthesize various ideals in the radical tradition of political theory, however. She seizes the debate between the radical tradition and its liberal counterpart, and dramatizes their conflict in her discussion of the flaws in Odonian society. Of the four flaws in Annares mentioned earlier, we will discuss only two: conformity to social pressure, and the tension between the public and private spheres of life.

LeGuin draws upon the debate between the two strands of philosophical thought when she points out that the social conscience can become as rigid as law, and that the line between cooperation and obedience is a thin one. Her fear of the stultifying impact of conformity upon any social order was first articulated by John Stuart Mill, who was sensitive to the tyranny a society—as opposed to

---

government--could exercise over an individual. Such a tyranny, Mill pointed out, stifled individual differences, individual creativity, and social development. 1 He was critical of classical liberalism's uninhibited advocacy of individual rights and its designation of government as the only predator of these rights; nonetheless Mill can be located firmly within the liberal tradition in his insistence that freedom in a social order can best be served by safeguarding the individual's freedom from both structured institutional, and unstructured social, intrusion.

The second strand of political discourse stands in opposition to Mill and his precursors and radically critiques the inadequate and nebulous formulation of the social good. LeGuin draws upon Jean-Jacques Rousseau's insistence on the primacy of a clearly articulated and tangible social good, a primacy that negates the liberal insistence upon the inviolate sanctity of the individual's "inalienable" rights. Rousseau and his successors have contended that the origin of individual rights is social and class-specific; have defined freedom as collective emancipation from socioeconomic fetters; and urged for the creation of a social order that would allow for the fullest development of human species capacities. 2

The tension between the public and private spheres that exists in LeGuin's utopia can be attributed to the same philosophical origin. Liberals have called for the separation between the two; while many

---


radicals, again beginning with Rousseau, have seen the personal sphere as contingent and dependent upon the public one. This tension is concretized in the text in the problem of partnerships. Couples intent on pair-bonding for a long period of time, i.e., who wish to recreate the private sphere, have to contend with the requirements of Divlab, which may request each partner to relocate to different regions. It is clear in the text that the recreation of the private is not allowed to stand in the way of the larger organic public sphere. It is also clear that LeGuin is unhappy and unconvinced that the public domain should so influence the private world. Both the issues of conformity and the tension between the public and private in Anneresti society debate questions long found in political philosophy, namely: the relationship between the individual and society, the nature of authority and freedom in a social order, and the moral telos of a community.

The novel tackles perennial political issues in political philosophy by purportedly offering an alternative mode of conducting the affairs of the public realm. Any political evaluation of The Dispossessed must include an analysis of LeGuin's concept and description of politics in utopia. LeGuin clearly eschews power politics. She relegates this type of politics to Urrasti society, where an elite controls the government and monopolizes the instruments of force for its own narrow

1Part of this tension is generated by LeGuin's own personal beliefs. She approves of monogamous, life-time partnerships, and cannot visualize a different and fulfilling bonding which is made imperative, given the Odonian economy and psychology. Her inability to visualize this different relationship and her refusal to attempt to do so is both a fictive failure and a philosophical one. See Samuel R. Delany, "To Read The Dispossessed," in Delany, the Jewel-Hinged Jaw: Notes on the Language of Science Fiction (Elizabethtown, New York: Dragon Press, 1977), p. 278.
purposes. Her concept of politics in an ideal society, however, is a peculiar one, and encompasses three characteristics. Firstly, LeGuin depicts politics as an activity that avoids conflict on a social scale. The absence of conflict includes an avoidance of revolution. This is made clear from the beginning, when Odo and her followers who agitate for change on Urras, agree to be relocated on Annares, thereby avoiding a full revolutionary transformation of their society. The abortion of a revolution on Urras means that the immigrants to Annares were not "new" men and women since they did not undergo the experiences that would lead to the creation of a new social order and a correspondingly new and revolutionary individual. On Annares, the issues of fundamental change brought to the fore by Shevek become issues of regeneration and rearrangement, and not of wrenching social transformation. Her descriptions of the agitation on the part of the lower classes on Urras one hundred and sixty years later is again indicative of this view. Urrasti politics are portrayed superficially; Urrasti scenes which depict political ferment are not given the same careful and unhurried treatment that LeGuin lavishes on other social aspects of that same society, even though Urras seems to be a society on the brink of a violent revolution. Her reluctance to resolve a context which she herself has engineered is an omission of some significance. It demonstrates a view of politics that eschews conflict and violence.

Secondly, LeGuin reduces politics to psychological conflicts and individual dilemmas. Politics is not seen as an activity that takes place in the public domain to resolve public issues. This is evident when we recall where LeGuin locates the origin of social change, and
her treatment of the tensions between the private and public spheres of life. In both instances, LeGuin emphasizes the individual and the private sphere over the collective and the public domain.

Finally, politics in utopia is depicted by LeGuin to be an issue of mere administration. The responsibilities of Divlab and the PDC, for example, which encompass the allocation, production, and distribution of goods and services in a society which suffers from acute scarcity, are described by LeGuin in apolitical terms. LeGuin's view of politics in utopia as a harmonious, moral, and administrative activity in which individuals, acting in the interests of the private concerns, solve public issues is in essence a view which negates the political. If we define the political as an activity that emerges from "the shared concern of human beings to take care of themselves and the part of their world that they claim as their lot,"¹ and if we understand the political as a "culture" that nurtures and cultivates humans and constitutes "a mode of experience rather than a comprehensive institution such as the state,"² then we can understand that the political does not eliminate the need for power, but depends upon it.³ LeGuin leaves no room for politics in her utopia, and when faced with its necessity, assigns its tasks to an individual and the realm of the private.

The reservation concerning LeGuin's underdeveloped political dimension, noted at the end of the discussion on The Left Hand of Darkness,

²Ibid., p. 18.
³Ibid., p. 17.
can now be fully addressed. In the final analysis LeGuin's utopias are apolitical. They are apolitical because the public domain is never portrayed as the arena through which desired change can be initiated and fulfilled. The political is neglected for the personal worlds and the social. LeGuin's relegation of the political into the private sphere voids a sphere of discrete activity. Her negation of power politics has emerged as a negation of politics that centers itself around the public good and that entails a collective mode of experience—collective cognition, debate, and action.

LeGuin's two novels when viewed as a unit share a number of utopian attributes. First, LeGuin criticizes a number of features in her society: sexism, war, and alienation.

Second, both novels present detailed pictures of alternative and superior societies. These utopias are located in the kingdom of necessity. LeGuin draws clear links between her own society and her utopias, holding that the superior society can be achieved in the present. The actualization of utopia does not depend upon the abolition of scarcity, but rather upon the transcendence of scarcity by the human will. The fact that utopia can occur in the realm of scarcity is ironic in light of the fact that in the author's own time, her society contains the technological and scientific wherewithal to conquer scarcity and provide abundance for all. Both utopias assign the onus of change to extraordinary individuals who act in concert with their personal desires. Thus, both utopias have been characterized here as apolitical.

Third, LeGuin's anticipations of the future are hopeful. Her optimism is based upon her notions of change and her belief that utopia can be achieved in an age of scarcity.
When LeGuin's works are examined in conjunction with the other Nebulas and political theory, a number of comments can be made. First, LeGuin's novels are identical to the other Nebulas in their criticisms of numerous social practices and beliefs, ranging from sexism and alienation to war. All the Nebulas then, can be said to be in accord with the first attribute of utopian thought, which as we have seen in Chapter I, attacked every principle in existing society.

Second, LeGuin's works, unlike the other Nebulas, depict not only imaginary societies, but endorse superior alternatives to the present social order. If we recall, the other Nebulas depicted imaginary societies in segments. This was seen to be a divergence from utopian thought, which presented superior and imaginary societies holistically. LeGuin's works can be seen as strengthening the Nebulas' similarities to utopian literature by presenting alternative and superior societies in a holistic manner.

Third, LeGuin's anticipations for the future augment an optimistic approach to the future, found in some Nebulas. As we have seen in Chapter III, most of the Nebulas depicted the future in dystopian terms. LeGuin's works then, serve to further the similarities between Nebulas and utopian thought in her optimistic portrayal of the future.

In addition to the three utopian attributes found in the Nebulas, we have found that LeGuin's works go beyond utopian works in two ways. First, her novels portray utopia dialectically and critically. Utopia is not a static picture of a flawless society, but is an imperfect and evolving community subject to change.
Second, LeGuin extrapolates her society to her utopia, suggesting that utopia can be achieved in the here-and-now. This differentiates her work from utopian thought, which, if we remember from Chapter I, was criticized by Marx and Engels as being merely "utopian" for not designating the material conditions which would move the present order to the utopian. This, Marx and Engels pointed out, made utopianism unrealistic and excessively rationalistic. LeGuin's works, then, seem to overcome Marx's and Engel's objections to utopian literature in her critical, dialectical portrayal of utopia and her designation of the links to achieving it.

However, when LeGuin's utopias are evaluated from the stance of political theory, it becomes clear that her utopian society eschews politics. Unlike utopian literature, which presented an alternate view of politics and the resolution of issues in the public domain, LeGuin's utopias negate politics. Her utopias are apolitical utopias. Thus the criticism that Marx and Engels levied upon utopian socialists can still be applied to LeGuin's works. As with the earlier utopian socialists, LeGuin's works are divorced from the material conditions that could actualize utopia. Her utopias are as idealistic as the body of utopian literature, but not as political in the sense that she presents no political alternative to the present.

Since LeGuin's two novels are the closest of the Nebulas to the utopian tradition, this conclusion holds true for her Nebulas as well as the corpus of Nebula novels. It is time now to assess the implications of these findings in light of the utopian tradition, the subject matter of the final chapter.
Utopian literature has existed for two millenia. Four of its distinguishing attributes were singled out for our study: the critique of the reader's society, wherein it attacked every aspect of that society; the description of an ideal community, which was presented holistically to the reader and endorsed as superior to the reader's own; the anticipations of the future; and lastly, the attempts to establish ideal societies. These four attributes located utopian literature within the province of political theory since it debated the ideal forms and contents of the public order and drew on the language of politics. It speculated upon the ingredients necessary for the ideal order to exist, and it criticized contemporary society where such ingredients were lacking. Utopian literature was thus political in the sense that it debated issues of common concern and arrived at conclusions in a public fashion. It was the custodian of hope.

The disappearance of utopian literature in the 20th century is surprising. There has been so much progress in the scientific and technological capabilities and democratic institutions of industrialized societies, all which clearly contained the potential for removing the historical,
objective constraints on human felicity. Furthermore, the virtual
disappearance of utopian literature has been accompanied by a dramatic
increase in dystopian literature, which portrayed the future in horrific
terms. Rather than engender hope, it posted warnings to the reader that
unless designated changes were to occur, the future would be bleak for
all humanity. It is dystopian literature where the advances of science
and technology were anticipated as instruments of domination, wielded
by elites who subjugated their citizens in ways hitherto unimaginable.

The problem of the decline in utopian literature, and indeed of
all normative political theory, is an issue with serious implications
for the entire body politic. Thus it was necessary to inquire whether
the function that utopian literature existed today in another area.
That was suggested by a number of thinkers who pointed to science fic-
tion, which since the 1970s, had produced a few novels that self-
consciously evoked the utopian tradition. Scholars of science fiction
were quick to see and investigate these similarities. Mumford Lewis,
Tom Hoylan, Lyman Sargent, Bülent Somay, Darko Suvin, and Raymond
Williams among others, proclaimed that utopian literature was alive in
science fiction. It was important to investigate and assess these claims
from the vantage point of political theory.

Modern science fiction began with the Industrial Revolution and has
historically centered itself around science and technology. It is a
literature that attempts to imagine the impact of science and technology
upon humans and society. This fiction has imagined future societies
through the use of extrapolation. Initially, the early years of the
genre witnessed the extrapolation of hard science fiction; in thirty years, however, science fiction in America had begun to extrapolate social trends as well. Soft science fiction can be attributed to a number of factors: the impact of British science fiction and the New Wave, the increasing numbers of women in the ranks of science fiction writers, and domestic and international events. It is in the 1950s that we witness the beginnings of social criticism in the genre that continues to exist today.

The evaluation of selected science fiction novels by the same four attributes of utopian thought revealed both differences and similarities between the two traditions. Since 1965, the Nebulas critically tackled seven social issues: environmental pollution, science, racism, overpopulation, alienation, war, and sexism. The critical dimension of Nebula science fiction was found to be compatible with the classic tendency of utopian thought to be oppositional or critical.

The Nebulas predicted specific occurrences and anticipated two kinds of futures: one unchanged; the other unpleasant. In the latter category, the Nebulas anticipated the destruction of Earth through a variety of mechanisms, and the domination of the human species by aliens or artificial intelligence. These dystopian anticipations were also compatible with dystopian political theory. The similarities between utopian thought and Nebula science fiction appeared to be even stronger since a continuity of both criticism and anticipation had been established.
The remaining two utopian attributes were the descriptions and speculations of alternate, superior societies, and the attempts to actualize the utopian blueprints. With regards to the latter, it was clear that science fiction never generated direct political action to establish a superior society envisioned in the genre. With regards to the former, we also found that the Nebulas deviated sharply from the utopian tradition. In the bulk of the Nebulas, four types of societies were envisioned; repressive; communal; those identical to the present; and those that varied from the present in only one or two elements. Science fiction was found to portray only fragments of imaginary societies instead of a detailed description of an entire society superior to the author's own. In most cases, the lack of criticism and speculation about the Good Life and the shape of the future was found to be most heavily concentrated in hard science fiction.

Two of the Nebulas, however, appeared to be different. They criticized their own society, endorsed descriptions of alternate and ideal societies, and anticipated the future optimistically. Both The Left Hand of Darkness and The Dispossessed had been hailed by the scholars of science fiction as signalling the rebirth of utopian literature within the parameters of a mass literature. Was it possible to proclaim the resuscitation of a tradition of political theory in the mass literature of science fiction?

Unfortunately, the answer is "no." In both novels I found the political dimension ignored. In The Left Hand of Darkness the very philosophic cornerstone of utopia, androgyny, was not a political ideal. In both novels we found the public sphere in antagonistic contradiction
to the private domain, and unable to solve public issues. It was action within the private sphere, taken by extraordinary individuals, that resolved public emergencies. A negation of power politics had become a negation of the political dimension in the public sphere, an activity that centers around the public good, and entails collective cognition, debate, initiative, and action. We are thus faced with an anomaly——apolitical utopian literature——the depiction of alternate, superior, utopian societies without the inclusion of the vital element of politics. Utopian literature has undergone a mutation in its abandonment of the political.

Any political evaluation of the utopian character of science fiction has to confront this fact. Utopian elements do exist within science fiction; specifically, its critical and anticipatory attributes. As such, science fiction does perform a distinctive role in the political arena. The genre exposes certain social ills, posts warnings, and anticipates a changed and sometimes happier future. As part of a popular literature, it does so on a mass level, which is also significant politically. However, as a literature that depoliticizes the public domain, the engagement of the reader lacks a full confrontation with the problems and issues raised in the texts. The premise of the discourse initiated between reader and text ignores a fundamentally important dimension of the reader: the political.

As such, the Nebulas can be said to fulfill only partially the role traditionally filled by utopian thought, which, if we remember, was also aimed at a new understanding of politics. The Nebulas in their dystopian anticipations and their criticisms of the status quo, therefore,
fulfill only an aspect of utopian thought's role in the tradition of political theory. What is missing is a new vision of politics.

It is possible to speculate about the denaturing of utopian thought. As indicated earlier, the ideals and new visions in utopian thought were grounded in a critical assessment of extant society. As Marx, Engels, and especially Mannheim pointed out, these ideals and visions were expressions on the part of classes in opposition to the domination of specific elites and a particular social order. The lack of a utopian literature that expresses a new vision of politics is a reflection not only of the hegemony of the bourgeoisie, but also of its success in eliminating all significant opposition to its rule. With the absence of emerging classes that herald the end of the present order and a new one in the making, the objective basis for an insurgent literature are nonexistant.

Thus, we observed the disappearance of utopian thought coinciding with the consolidation of power on the part of the bourgeoisie, and the effective elimination of any significant countervailing forces. It is also significant that the resurgence of utopian elements in science fiction peaked during a decade of turmoil and opposition to the established order. It would be unfair to evaluate the political contents of the many movements in the 1960s and early 1970s solely on the visions of the new order found in a "marginal" literature; however, the paucity and poverty of the political visions enunciated in science fiction is indicative of the caliber and nature of these same oppositional forces, and may even go towards explaining the ease with which it was possible to subsume and negate these same forces.
Class hegemony will continue to face challenges and opposition in the future. Therefore it would be safe to assume that the rise of new forms of utopianism will occur in the future if the material conditions are conducive to their growth. The resuscitation of utopian literature in science fiction, after seven decades of dormancy, however, was both limited and mutated.

Although the discussion of science fiction in this dissertation has been limited to the Nebulas, it is my belief, based upon an extensive reading of the genre, that the conclusions reached in this study are valid for the entire genre. The Nebulas are quintessential science fiction, chosen by the practitioners of the craft of writing science fiction, to represent the best science fiction of the year. Aesthetically, the Nebulas are superior to much of the corpus. Thematically, however, they are not much different. It is my contention that the Nebulas are an adequate and fair cross-section of the major themes and values existent in the genre as a whole.

My conclusions do not negate the need for further research in the area of science fiction studies. Political theorists have neglected this area. This should be remedied by systematic reflection, research, and analysis, since science fiction is of political significance as a vehicle of criticism contained in the popular culture.

A number of areas are suggestive sites for future research. The first is the distinct subgrouping of feminist science fiction, which since LeGuin's two prototypical novels, has blossomed into a distinct subgroup of science fiction. This literature contains many utopian and dystopian elements, and the more extremist texts have been simultaneously categorized as utopian, radical, and fascist. A second area
would be to ascertain the impact of science fiction upon its readers. Little empirical research has been accomplished here, and even the primary data (the numbers of science fiction readers, their class, geographical distribution, professional, political, and religious affiliations and backgrounds), are not available. It would be pertinent to find out who reads hard as opposed to soft science fiction, and if there is much cross-over between the two groups. A third interesting area of research is the other artistic forms that science fiction can take: short stories, cartoons, television serials, film, and the like. Do these forms manifest the same attributes as the science fiction novel? A fourth area that merits study is the phenomena of Western European, Latin American, Chinese, and Eastern European science fiction. A cross-cultural study would reveal interesting similarities and differences when juxtaposed to Anglo-American science fiction; as would a study of science fiction that emanates from industrialized countries versus the science fiction from developing countries.

A call for further research into science fiction is, in this context, an enjoiner to political theorists to assess science fiction and any other similar cultural form and tradition. For at least two decades the discipline of political theory has ignored a politico-cultural phenomenon which discussed issues of concern to the entire body politic, critiqued some of society's most cherished beliefs, and which, in a complex and mediated way, will impact upon the future. The boundaries of political philosophy must be stretched to include new arenas where traditional disciplinary concerns are debated. Otherwise the discipline will be preempted by other fields and citizens will find it increasingly difficult to understand problems of change.
Appendix I

Nebula-winning novels


---

1This list was culled from Franson and DeVore, *A History of the Hugo, Nebula and . . . ,* with the exception of the 1982 listing.
Appendix II

Hugo-winning novels

1954. No Hugos awarded.
1957. Hugos were only awarded to science fiction magazines.

---

1 This list was gathered from Franson and DeVore, *A History of the Hugo, Nebula and . . .*, with the exception of the 1983 listing.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books


**Journals**


"Writers of science fiction being hired as consultants by forward-looking firms." *The Houston Post*, 7 August 1978, p. 19 C.


**Unpublished Material**


