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A New Man: Feminist Utopias and the Representation of Alternative Masculinities

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A New Man: Feminist Utopias and the Representation of Alternative Masculinities

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Abstract

Challenges to traditional American gender scripts, initiated by feminist activists and theorists in the twentieth century, necessitate the reconceptualization of manhood. Central to contemporary feminist texts—both creative and theoretical—is the overt rejection of patriarchal femininities. In envisioning a non-separatist society in which such new ideals of femininity are welcomed, feminist authors simultaneously outline new masculinities suitable for such an egalitarian polity. Feminist works envisioning the improved society and its attending masculinities are therefore invaluable sources for scholars within masculinity studies searching popular culture for improved conceptions of manhood. Responding to the so-called crisis of masculinity, scholars within masculinity studies theorize the attributes of a new, feminist-oriented version of manliness that rejects traditional interests in power and control and, instead, values equality, community, and healing. Contemporary feminist utopias present societies and masculinities grounded in feminist thought and therefore make up an overlooked site for mining new concepts of manhood. During the years in which such novels moved from the margins to the mainstream, the early 1970s to the late 1980s, feminist utopias grew more complex, challenging essentialist conceptions of masculinity and female experience. In addition, they widened their scope to consider the ways patriarchal masculinities reinforce intersectional forces of oppression and how men function within a network of power that, while valuing their gender, distances them from power according to other identity elements such as race and sexuality. While these novels vary in their focus, they are united by an interest in transforming patriarchal masculinities and replacing them with an alternative informed by second wave and intersectional feminism. Contemporary American feminist utopias are, therefore, an overlooked and invaluable site for mining new masculinities that reject hierarchical perspectives and value equality, fraternity, and freedom.

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Dedication

To Alicia, for her tireless support, passion, and excitement throughout this endeavor. To my parents, who gave me my love of learning and teaching. To my grandmother, for countless conversations and wonderful stories. And to Cat Stevens, the most loving of feline companions.

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Introduction

This dissertation traces the ways masculinities are framed and valued in genre fiction, focusing on science fiction written by U.S. women from 1971 to 1989. Since gender and national identity are mutually constitutive concepts, products of popular culture such as science fiction novels act as rich sites for analyzing representations of gender reflective of the society in which such works are produced.[1] This project, therefore, continues the work of scholars mining "theatre, film (narrative and documentary), literature, music, advertising, internet content, television, photography, politics, and current events-to posit questions about the processes of gender creation," (Shaw and Watson 1) but applies such an approach specifically to American science fiction. This study adds to scholarship at the intersection of gender studies and contemporary American literature by analyzing these novels' portrayal of new radical ideals of manhood. In her landmark text, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990), Judith Butler sets out "to trace the way in which gender fables establish and circulate the misnomer of natural facts" (xxxiv). This dissertation examines the ways feminist speculative authors, reversing the process Butler highlights, utilize their fiction to challenge naturalized, patriarchal conceptions of gender privileging whiteness and heteronormativity.

By tracing the changes in the depiction of masculinities in feminist utopian novels, these chapters further illuminate the role of gender within this segment of American literary history. Feminist speculative fiction from 1971 to 1989 contains numerous instances of alternative masculinities that these authors present as crucial to the improvement of society. Presenting such

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[1] In *Masculinities in Theory: an Introduction* (2010), Todd Reeser notes the significance of analogies drawn between the nation and gender: "One might gender a nation by analogy with the gender of its leader, or a leader may act in a certain gendered manner in order to gender the nation by analogy. Conversely, if a leader's gender is seen as not ideal, the nation's gender may be a source of concern by extension" (173). Since, as Reeser further explains, the gender of a nation and its attending "cultural codings affect everyone in a nationally based context," national identity and gender shape and are in turn shaped by each other (171).

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altered ideals of manhood, these utopias signal shifts in how masculinity is depicted in

contemporary American science fiction. In describing American literary histories, Stacey Olster

explains that the task of literary critics is to push "what follows the 'since' in the subtitles of

earlier scholarship…further along chronologically so as to explore the changes and continuities,

additions and alterations, displayed by American fiction" (8). I examine the evolutionary

qualities of feminist speculative novels as they signal key changes in the representation of

masculinities.2 These works of earlier genre fiction offer valuable sources of new masculinities

in a cultural milieu marked by a resurgence of traditional, American ideals of manhood. Drawing

on masculinity studies, contemporary fiction, and speculative literature contributes to ongoing

discussions of manhood and the possibility of transforming patriarchal gender scripts. These

novels more specifically focus upon the conversion of traditionally masculine men by depicting

the radical disruption of normative masculinities.

Since the inception of masculinity studies as an organized subset of feminist theory in the

1990s, newly developed theories of manhood have been applied to diverse cultures. Originating

in the 1970s in opposition to the anti-feminist men's right movement, critical men's studies

initially focused predominantly upon normative scripts of manliness in the United States and

Europe. Such approaches were problematic in the way they overlooked important factors such as

race and sexuality and did not analyze the experiences of men marginalized according to these

and other non-normative identity elements. What followed in the 1990s was the introduction of

complexity and nuance to this burgeoning field. Notable texts such as Raewyn Connell's

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[2] In *The Warrior Image: Soldiers in American Culture from the Second World War to the Vietnam Era* (2008), historian Andrew Huebner is "concerned specifically with American cultural representations of *soldiers*, forming the architecture of what" he calls "the 'warrior image' from the 1940s to the late 1970s" (1-2). My analysis similarly approaches feminist contemporary fiction and mines cultural representations of alternative, feminist-oriented masculinities.

Masculinities (1995) and Michael Kimmel's *Manhood in America: A Cultural History* (1996),

for example, consider the connection of cultures and masculinity, tracing links between

performances of manhood and a greater system of power or gender order. According to these

scholars, analyses of manliness should consider both those masculinities idealized by a culture

and the alternative versions with which they compete (Kimmel 4).

Furthering this work, other scholars have identified the importance of factors such as

ethnicity, geography, race, sexuality, and economic positioning in influencing competing

masculinities. In *Hombres y Machos: Masculinity and Latino Culture* (1997), Alfredo Mirandé,

for example, challenges "the monolithic and all-encompassing view of machismo and male

dominance" by presenting "a more complex analyses that examines the origins, roots, and

manifestations of Latino masculinity and the diversity and variety of masculinities" (142). In *The

Meanings of Macho: Being a Man in Mexico City* (1996), Matthew Gutmann similarly considers

machismo and more broadly "the creative efforts of people coping with the gender relations they

have inherited from past generations while simultaneously striving to fashion new approaches as

best they can" (32). Herbert Sussman in *Masculine Identities: The History and Meaning of

Manliness* (2012) considers African American, Jewish American, and homosexual identities as

they relate to American masculinities. Other important works such as Victor M. Rios's *Punished*

(2011) and bell hooks's *We Real Cool: Black Men and Masculinity* (2003) focus upon the

intersection of race and masculinity in American culture. Building upon this scholarship, I apply

the sociological apparatus developed within masculinity studies to cultural products of the

contemporary United States and identify a trend among feminist utopias which, from 1971-1989,

develop to reflect the importance of race to masculinities.

In mining feminist utopian fiction for new ideals of manhood at a time in which traditional gender scripts are experiencing a resurgence, this research is invaluable to current discussions concerning 21st century American masculinities. Two events are considered central in this recent reemergence of traditional masculinities and their attending crisis: the attacks on and events surrounding September 11, 2001 and, more recently, the 2016 U.S. election of Donald Trump. Victor J. Seidler in *Transforming Masculinities: Men, Cultures, Bodies, Power, Sex and Love* (2005) identifies events following September 11, 2001—specifically the war in Iraq and the resulting protests across Europe—as exemplifying "a struggle that involved diverse global masculinities being locked into terrifying relationships with each other" (1). In an updated preface to *Angry White Men: American Masculinity at the End of an Era* (2017), Michael Kimmel highlights the importance of the Trump presidency to hegemonic masculinities: "Trump's election underscores" how "white men's anger comes from the potent fusion of two sentiments—entitlement and a sense of victimization" (x). In examining a fictional version of such traditionally masculine attitudes from a feminist perspective, this research locates new insights into the possibility of transforming manhood that are derived from the lived experiences of women.

Focusing on such portrayals of manliness in contemporary American speculative fiction fits within masculinity studies and the ongoing project of deconstructing cultural representations of manhood. This project builds directly upon the work of other scholars within masculinity studies who locate and analyze, for example, how various parts of popular culture (film, television, music, photography, theatre, and literature, to name a few) portray normative and marginalized ideals of manliness. These chapters specifically locate and analyze utopian masculinities in the works of influential American feminist science fiction writers. This

dissertation builds, therefore, upon the current interest within masculinity studies in "representation and its connection with wider questions of change and continuity in contemporary, and in some more historical, masculinities and identities" (Edwards 3). Analyzing these literary representations introduces questions about the role of feminist writers in presentations of manhood in American science fiction.

This dissertation examines an intersection often overlooked in scholarship: that of masculinity studies and contemporary American fiction. Following the development of masculinity studies, American literary scholars gradually applied these analytical tools to disparate writers and literary traditions. Keith Clark in *Black Manhood in James Baldwin, Ernest J. Gaines, and August Wilson* (2002) investigates, for example, how these African American writers present characters whose "notions of community, space, and healing-the lexicon of intimacy" stand in opposition to hegemonic conceptions of black masculinity (4). Other literary critics have examined the relationship of masculinities to sexuality and class among other topics. In *Aging Masculinity in the American Novel* (2016), Alex Hobbs considers the intersection of masculinities with gerontology while Josef Benson in *Hypermasculinities in the Contemporary Novel* (2014) examines the influence of American expansionist ideals upon contemporary American conceptions of manhood. Building upon such analyses of American fiction, my dissertation expands the application of masculinity theory to women science fiction writers.

This research contributes to ongoing discussions within masculinity studies of popular culture as a valuable site both for identifying radical, new conceptions of manhood and noting older, residual masculinities beneficial to patriarchy. *A New Man* exemplifies trends within masculinity studies and those at the intersection of masculinity studies and literary studies. Similar to David Buchbinder's analysis in *Studying Men and Masculinities* (2013), this

dissertation focuses upon the framing of traditional and alternative masculinities in products of popular culture. While Buchbinder surveys works as diverse as film, activism, and sociological texts to analyze the current crisis of masculinity, which he identifies as anxiety to cultural change, my analysis applies a similar approach to feminist science fiction. This analysis similarly builds upon the work of Peter Ferry and his interest in the utilization of character types to challenge patriarchal gender scripts. In *Masculinity in Contemporary New York Fiction* (2014), Ferry argues that the centering of the *flaneur* in contemporary American novels "is fundamental in their ability to produce narratives that ultimately promote the possibilities of counter-hegemonic performances of masculinity" (7). Building upon such a theoretical foundation informed both by literary studies and masculinity studies, my dissertation identifies as fundamental to these feminist speculative writers' portrayals of new performances of masculinity the presentation of utopian male characters exemplifying ideal performances of manhood. This analysis, therefore, joins conversations within masculinity studies and literary studies and seeks to highlight in such discussions the ways utopian feminist novels reveal new conceptions of manhood that reject interests in power and control.

These chapters further contribute to discussions surrounding changing gender scripts and specifically reveal the way these feminist writers address old and new conceptions of manhood. While Bryant, Le Guin, Piercy, and Butler positively portray traditional ideals of manhood such as honor, bravery, loyalty, and strength, they disconnect such attributes from male biology and instead frame them as ideal attributes of masculinity. In this way, the positive aspects of male characters such as the unnamed, transformed narrator in *The Kin of Ata Are Waiting for You*, Shevek in *The Dispossessed*, Jackrabbit in *Woman on the Edge of Time*, and Akin in *Adulthood Rites* illustrate aspects of these authors' representations of masculinity widely considered

traditional. These writers imagine that these same characters lack the traditionally masculine negative desires for power and control and possess instead interests in community and equality that are historically identified as feminine. Feminist writers, therefore, present in their works portraits of masculinity that possess traditional traits of manliness such as bravery, loyalty, and strength but diverge drastically from the negative aspects of these historic gender scripts such as desires for control and power over others. Though scholars have historically examined these novels' portrayals of female experience, *A New Man* moves from this focus to note how these feminist writers address and examine masculinities in their utopias and offer new, transformed conceptions of manhood.

These novels and their new conceptions of manhood coincide with some key shifts in American science fiction and utopian writing from 1971 to 1989. More specifically, the novels I discuss illustrate the importance of a new type of utopia, the critical utopia, for feminist writers seeking to critique masculinities in ways not made available to them by realistic fiction. In *Demand the Impossible: Science Fiction and the Utopian Imagination* (1986), Tom Moylan defines critical utopias as those that negate "the negation of utopia by the forces of twentieth century history" (10). As critical utopias, each of these feminist novels are aware of the "limitations of the utopian tradition" and, therefore, challenge it, imbuing it with revolutionary, feminist reframings of the good society (Moylan 10). They also "dwell on the conflict between the originary world and the utopian society opposed to it so that the process of social change is more directly articulated" (Moylan 10). Since, as previously mentioned, nationality and masculinity are mutually constitutive concepts, a central source of this friction between these imagined feminist and patriarchal polities is the transformation of masculinities. The critical

utopia is crucial to the feminist project of highlighting particularly important social changes—in this case, those to masculinity—necessary for the improved society to be realized.

This application of masculinity studies contributes to science fiction studies. Analyzing how feminist novelists utilize the speculative genre and the possibilities it allows for imagining new formations of gender, this analysis connects with and owes a great deal to the scholarship of Justine Larbalestier. In *The Battle of the Sexes in Science Fiction* (2002), Larbalestier examines speculative texts from 1926 onward "that are explicitly about the 'sex war' between men and women and which posit as a solution to this conflict that women accept their position as subordinate to men" (1). Informed by this analysis of anti-feminist science fiction texts preoccupied with such a conflict of the sexes, my dissertation notes a significant development beginning in the 1970s: the advent of new, feminist-oriented portrayals by female American writers of and solutions to such a battle. Such works written by women propose new, egalitarian conceptions of manliness as central to their solutions meant to dismantle white supremacist patriarchy. These novels present alternatives to conceptions of manhood that privilege, for example, whiteness and heteronormativity. This dissertation offers an overview of feminist engagement with masculinities, focusing on six American speculative novels produced in the second half of the twentieth century: Dorothy Bryant's *The Kin of Ata Are Waiting for You* (1971), Ursula K. Le Guin's *The Dispossessed: An Ambiguous Utopia* (1974), Marge Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time* (1976), and the novels making up Octavia E. Butler's *Lilith's Brood* trilogy: *Dawn* (1987), *Adulthood Rites* (1988), and *Imago* (1989).

Since this dissertation, like Larbalestier's work, focuses upon how these speculative novels "provide insight into the role of women in science fiction, literally and textually," it emphasizes the role of female writers in developing this wave of feminist utopias and

contributes, therefore, to the extratextual interests of science fiction studies (1). Authors such as Sally Miller Gearhart, Joanna Russ, Dorothy Bryant, Suzy McKee Charnas, Marge Piercy, and Ursula K. Le Guin, for example, produced feminist utopias that to varying degrees challenge traditional masculinity through the use of speculative fiction tropes and second wave feminist theoretical frameworks. It is no coincidence that these texts appear in "the period of the greatest optimism and inventiveness in the women's movement of the late twentieth century" (Magarey 326). Stirred by this activism, these writers signaled a paradigm shift in science fiction through both their success as female genre fiction writers and the inclusion in their novels of critiques concerning the condition and social position of women. They imagined new societies that are non-hierarchical, directly rejecting traditionally masculine interests in authoritative societal networks. As utopias directly opposing normative masculinities, they outline the changes masculinities must undergo for the better, feminist society to be realized and, while challenging essentialism and the overlooking of race and sexuality within feminist circles, generally reflect second-wave feminism. New masculinities within contemporary feminist utopias reveal significant shifts within the genre that reflect both radical and intersectional feminist paradigms. These novels illuminate, therefore, the trajectory of feminist writers from narrow, essentialist conceptions of gender toward broader, more encompassing understandings of gender and its interaction with race and other identity elements. This development is significant since, as these novels demonstrate, it facilitated a greater understanding of masculinities and the possibility of radically transforming them.

Positing that central to the strength of these feminist utopias is their exposure of patriarchal conceptions of manhood and their presentation of alternative masculinities, I examine the texts' uses of speculative generic conventions to correctly frame traditional and alternative

masculinities, demonstrate their malleability, and emphasize connections between traditional masculinity and other ideologies of oppression and between gender and the nation. These novels offer alternative and traditional conceptions of manhood at a time in which the public visibility of harmful, traditionally masculine qualities, framed as ideal, are prevalent. As Michael Kimmel explains, a significant factor in the anxiety and anger surrounding the so-called crisis of manhood "is that we still don't really know how to talk about masculinity in the United States" (2). This failure, Kimmel outlines, is due substantially to the misframing of positive and toxic masculinities in media and the blurring or mislabeling of these categories. Applying this approach to the realm of fiction, I consider how feminist utopias ideally frame masculinities, both patriarchal and egalitarian, through characters whose masculinities are demonstrated to have significantly positive or negative impacts upon others.

The chapters of this dissertation are organized chronologically and thematically. They demonstrate a general move by feminist utopias from the periphery to the mainstream as their popularity grew over time; they also illustrate a thematic trend in which feminist utopias moved away from the experiences of white male characters and toward those of characters marked by non-normative sexualities, racial identities, or genders. In these two decades, feminist speculative writers gradually gained a larger readership, relocating them from the obscure margins to mainstream acceptance, indicated in part by literary and other awards, and their continuing availability in print. Progressing from Dorothy's Bryant's *The Kin of Ata Are Waiting for You* to Octavia E. Butler's *Lilith's Brood* trilogy, this dissertation illustrates the growing recognition of feminist utopias as legitimate and valuable sources for reconceptualizing gender. While briefly mentioned in Bryant's novel, race and ethnicity, for example, are more prominent in Le Guin's text and are fundamental to the works of both Piercy and Butler. In addition to

chronology, these chapters are organized according to movements from the margins to the mainstream and illustrate developments within feminist activism as characters marked by different racial, gender, and sexual identities are gradually relocated to the center of these texts.

The first chapter of this dissertation focuses upon the earliest of these novels, Dorothy Bryant's *The Kin of Ata Are Waiting for You*, published as *The Comforter* in 1971. This text did not receive wide attention upon its release, though it has remained in print for more than forty years. Its publication history—initially published privately before being purchased and distributed by Random House—illustrates the growing popularity of feminist utopias during the 1970s. This utopia is the first discussed in this dissertation since it marks, as the earliest published and least widely distributed, the early position of feminist utopias as far from the mainstream or popular.

In addition, its focus on the unnamed patriarchal narrator and his oppression of others according to identity markers such as race in addition to sex signifies Bryant's early rejection of a trend within 1970s radical feminism: the privileging of white, straight women and their needs above those of women of other races and sexualities among other marginalized identity elements. Through her protagonist, Bryant, for example, illustrates how patriarchal masculinities connect to racism when, prior to raping, Augustine, a female inhabitant of the utopia, the novel's male protagonist reflects on how he had "had black women before, but they'd never lived up to my expectations of primitive passion" (53). Told from the perspective of this protagonist who, as the unnamed narrator of the novel, looks back at his earlier, patriarchal self with disgust, Bryant's novel aligns its audience against traditional masculinities and their symptomatic racism. Though Bryant consistently connects patriarchy with related forms of oppression in similar scenes throughout her novel, her presentations of intersectionality are not as extensive as those of later

feminist utopian writers such as Piercy and Butler. The novel, therefore, exemplifies the productive if limited ways in which early feminist utopias dealt with race and sexuality and serves as a reference point against which increased presentations of intersectionality in later feminist novels may be compared.

In her novel, Bryant also exposes the dangers of essentializing gender. As pointed out by scholars such as Audre Lorde, essentialism manifests in the radical feminist branch since such activists often view women as having innate and common attributes, interests, or traits producing universal sisterhood and uniting them in their struggle.[3] This conception of a uniform female experience ignores important differences across racial, sexual, and gendered lines and contributes, therefore, to the privileging of misogyny in discussions concerning social inequality. Bryant presents through her novel a political tract that, while often in agreement with the theories of radical feminism, challenges ideals attributed to this movement—such as essentialist conceptions of gender—in significant ways. She, for example, presents in her novel the interlocking social mechanisms that uniquely subjugate the aforementioned female Atan, Augustine, when she departs from the utopia. Rejecting simplistic, essentialist conceptions of female experience as uniform irrespective of race, Bryant emphasizes the distinct ways women are marginalized from power according to unique combinations of identity markers.

The core argument I present in chapter one is that such important challenges to essentialism, and especially those concerning manliness, make the novel a vital source for positing new ideals of manhood in the current so-called crisis of masculinity. A male conversion

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[3] Derived from comments given at the "Personal and the Political Panel" at the Second Sex Conference on September 29, 1979 in New York, Audre Lorde's widely-cited "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House" (1984), illuminates the tendency among white radical feminists to overlook or minimize the divergent experiences of women based upon their racial makeup. According to Lorde, "Difference is that raw and powerful connection from which our personal power is forged. As women, we have been taught either to ignore our differences, or to view them as causes for separation and suspicion rather than as forces for change" (112).

novel told from the perspective of an abhorrent patriarch, *The Kin of Ata Are Waiting for You* is invaluable to discussions of masculinity because it gives a voice to traditional masculinities themselves, represented by the unnamed narrator. As a successful writer—through whom Bryant comments on the toxicity of successful male American authors—, he acts as a symbol both of patriarchal and hegemonic conceptions of manhood. His initial perspective and gradual transformation, I assert, benefit ongoing conversations about how manliness may be positively altered for the betterment of society. In addition, his position as a profiting writer of misogynistic fiction adds considerable depth to discussions surrounding the intertwined nature of capitalism and patriarchy.

Bryant uniquely comments on masculinity through a radical assertion she embeds within the plot of the text. She argues in her novel that, through re-educating and socializing men in a transformed society based upon fundamental feminist principles, even the most violent patriarch may undergo meaningful change. This often-overlooked aspect of her novel marks her work as unique among feminist utopias. Unlike these other feminist utopias, it intensifies its revolutionary message by presenting the extreme end result of patriarchal masculinities. The protagonist, having gained the wealth and power made available to hegemonic men, continues consolidating further power over others until he ultimately resorts to extreme acts of violence to accumulate further control. Having repeatedly killed and raped, he undergoes a gradual, dramatic transformation as a resident of the feminist utopia that renders him a new, egalitarian man. By focusing on a toxic, criminal male protagonist and ultimately imagining how such a violent individual may transform, Bryant radically challenges her audience to consider the implications of non-essentialist theories of gender.

It is Bryant's social constructionist presentation of gender and, more specifically, the rejection in her novel of manliness as necessarily violent that makes *The Kin of Ata Are Waiting for You* a rich source for mining new masculinities. Depicting the most toxic products of patriarchy, violence including rape and murder, Bryant highlights for her audience the potential for changing traditional masculinities. Based on this understanding of gender, she compels her reader to consider if and how men performing heinous acts tied to their traditional gender roles may be converted. Her novel, therefore, presents pathways by which men may move towards feminist-informed conceptions of manhood. *The Kin of Ata Are Waiting for You* provokes key questions concerning gender and whether the most extreme, misogynistic men may be altered through feminist influence and is, for this reason, critical to ongoing conversations surrounding the possibility of recovering men from toxic masculinities.

The second chapter focuses on Ursula K. Le Guin's *The Dispossessed: An Ambiguous Utopia*, a text that illustrates the pattern of feminist speculative novels moving from the margins to the mainstream. Unlike *The Kin of Ata Are Waiting for You*, Le Guin's utopia received enthusiastic and positive attention upon its release. It was awarded the Nebula, Hugo, and Locus awards and received a nomination for the John W. Campbell Memorial Award. The enduring widespread interest in the novel is further illustrated by the 2017 publication of a special edition of Le Guin's complete *Hainish Cycle* (including *The Dispossessed)* by the Library of America. Its lasting importance and mainstream popularity make it an influential and valuable source for locating new masculinities standing against patriarchal ideals of manhood.

Published three years after Bryant's utopia, the novel shares some key elements with that earlier text. *The Dispossessed*, for example, similarly marks a limited departure from the radical feminist privileging of female oppression. The novel specifically portrays the marginalization of

others according to sexuality and class in a way that signals a growing recalibration of radical feminist authors in the 1970s to include the experiences of others similarly oppressed by patriarchal masculinities. *The Dispossessed*, for example, follows the experiences of Shevek, a male scientist of the anarchic and feminist-oriented nation of Anarres, as he visits Urras and spends a great deal of time within a capitalistic patriarchy on this planet, A-Io. The novel centers a queer male anarchic protagonist whose open attitude toward non-normative sexualities and opposition to capitalistic class oppression exemplifies new masculinities. Also, like Bryant's novel, *The Dispossessed* is interested in the transforming masculinities of its protagonist. Le Guin's novel stands as a significant, materialist presentation of patriarchal and utopian masculinities.

The Dispossessed* is vital to discussions concerning masculinity due to its presentation of gender as subject to transformation. This importance is increased by its commentary on the mutually constitutive relationship between masculinity and the nation and the need to transform the socioeconomic aspects of a society in order to produce significant changes in gender. Like *The Kin of Ata Are Waiting for You*, Le Guin's text concerns the experiences of a man whose masculinity is informed by his nationality. The novel follows the attempts of Shevek, a male scientist whose feminist masculinity is informed by his upbringing in an anarchic nation, to build upon a mathematical theory enabling communication across vast distances. Shevek resists the attempts of the capitalistic patriarchy he visits to control and exploit this information. Unlike Bryant's novel, the text does not end with the protagonist adopting a new concept of manliness in direct contrast to one held at the beginning of the text. Instead, Le Guin's protagonist temporarily adopts toxic masculine traits after being exposed to and seduced by capitalism and patriarchy, which are fundamental elements of the nation he visits. This adoption of traditional

masculinities produces in him a predatory view of others and especially women, which culminates in sexual assault. Le Guin, like Bryant before her, presents an ethically complex story focused upon the transformation of men. Instead of centering her utopia around the alteration of a hypermasculine misogynist, she is concerned with the continuous struggle of men possessing alternative masculinities to reject capitalism and patriarchy, their promises of power and control, and the brutality that results.

This interest in the precarious status of improved masculinities makes Le Guin's novel unique. In highlighting the dynamic nature of gender and, more specifically, ideals of manhood, her text resists a common pitfall of utopian writing: the presentation of imagined resolutions to social conflicts as conclusive and static. Avoiding such a tendency, Le Guin's text presents, as the subtitle suggests, a resolution to the crisis of masculinity that is, like the utopia of the novel, ambiguous. While the new masculinities Le Guin presents are ideal alternatives to traditional American masculinities, the introduction and normalization of them in a society requires, in addition to the removal of capitalism and patriarchy, the constant reassessment of social norms surrounding manhood. *The Dispossessed* is distinct in its centering of a male protagonist who initially subscribes to feminist-inspired masculinities but later succumbs to and eventually resists patriarchal masculinities. The novel distinctively outlines what is required for traditional American ideals of manliness to be deposed and, to a greater extent, the attentiveness required for their disempowerment to be maintained.

The novel is important to this analysis of new masculinities in contemporary feminist utopian novels for two reasons. *The Dispossessed* highlights an issue foundational to the current crisis of masculinity, the relationship of American patriarchy to capitalism. The text demonstrates, for example, an underlying complication for young American men seeking new

ideals of manhood: attempts to reject traditionally masculine desires to consolidate power and control over others are difficult in a nation whose economic system rewards these patriarchal values. In addition, by presenting a character who, instead of modeling perfectly a utopian performance of manhood, falters to a very significant degree, sexually assaulting a woman as a result, Le Guin illuminates the vigilance and constant self-reflection required of men adopting feminist-informed masculinities. By avoiding the tendency among utopian writers to simplify and make conclusive resolutions to sources of friction in their plots, Le Guin offers in *The Dispossessed* a rich, nuanced map of new, egalitarian conceptions of manliness.

Marge Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time*, upon which chapter three of this analysis focuses, illustrates the continuously growing popularity of feminist novels in the 1970s. While it did not receive the immense acclaim of *The Dispossessed*, it was a literary and commercial success, remaining in print since its initial debut. *Woman on the Edge of Time* received instant recognition in academic circles as an important text of feminist science fiction. Noted for belonging to a branch of literature that combines "traditional fictional devices with specific information" from academic fields such as anthropology and mixes "both the normal concerns of social realism and verisimilitude in the choice of details from daily life…with the moral fervor of utopian fiction and social reform," Piercy's novel was quickly and widely recognized among scholars and mainstream audiences alike as an important speculative work (Olderman 500). When compared to Bryant's earlier novel, *Woman on the Edge of Time* signals a vital development in popular culture: as the 1970s and second wave of feminism progressed, utopias grounded in the principles of feminist theory gained a larger audience.

Reflecting discussions within radical feminist circles during the 1970s, *Woman on the Edge of Time* is substantially informed by a Marxist analysis of sex and, more specifically, the

theoretical approach of Shulamith Firestone. Firestone's "materialist view of history based on sex" directly manifests in Piercy's novel, as is illustrated by the societal norms of the utopia and its use of technology to eliminate the sex distinction Firestone identifies as foundational to patriarchy (Firestone 5). As Susan Archer Mann outlines, there are multiple commonalities located in both Firestone's theory and Piercy's novel. The nuclear family, for example "is viewed as a major site of women's oppression" by Firestone and does not exist in the utopia of the novel (90). In addition, schools are abolished (allowing the complete integration of children and women into society), cultural diversity is valued and ubiquitous, and advanced technology is used in the novel to make "ex-utero reproduction possible and" enable "people to live comfortably in a communal lifestyle" that is ecologically conscious (Mann 91). Finally, the novel, like Firestone's theoretical apparatus, presents androgyny and pansexuality as crucial qualities of the feminist utopia. Piercy presents in her text a utopia grounded in radical feminism and, more specifically, the materialist feminism espoused by Firestone.

Chapter three argues that, though Piercy's utopia is built upon Firestone's theoretical foundation, it signals through its focus on intersectionality a development in feminist utopias. Her novel anticipates theories of intersectionality and focuses on how identity markers such as race and biological sex produce distinct experiences of oppression within patriarchy. The text—more than those of Bryant or Le Guin—specifically considers how American hegemonic masculinities are predicated upon ethnicity. While left unspoken, men classified in this network of power must necessarily, in addition to being straight, be or pass as white. Piercy's novel imagines how racism, like and in addition to misogyny, may be eradicated through the development of an improved, feminist society. Piercy makes as her protagonist a Mexican American woman subjugated according to both her racial makeup and biological sex. Outlining

the toxic qualities of patriarchal masculinities in the dystopian setting of the novel, the contemporary United States, Piercy exposes her audience to a range of male characters whose masculinities, like their social positioning in relation to power, are predicted upon their racial makeup. A significant aspect of her novel is its strong emphasis on race as an influencing factor in configurations of masculinity and power.

Piercy's utopia is unique narratively in that it centers the perspective and experiences not of a male character negotiating masculinities but of a woman of color historically found on the margins of American novels. While the utopias of Bryant and Le Guin follow the interactions of men possessing traditional and new conceptions of manhood, Piercy's utopia aligns the reader with a female character additionally marginalized according to her identity as a Mexican American. Giving power to those women such as Connie and Augustine in *The Kin of Ata Are Waiting for You* and Vea in *The Dispossessed* who are abused at the hands of patriarchal protagonists, the novel centers their experiences and illuminates for the reader the ways toxic masculinities harm women of color in unique, intersectional ways. Chapter three, therefore, posits that Piercy's novel marks a significant development in contemporary feminist utopias in its focus on the experiences of a woman of color.

Woman on the Edge of Time is therefore an important speculative text for ongoing discussions of masculinity since it asks its male readers to align themselves with a protagonist unlike them in two ways, race and sex, that have a profound effect upon her social positioning and experiences. By placing readers inside the mind of a woman of color, Piercy's novel asks them to experience vicariously the oppressive forces of patriarchy and racism that uniquely subjugate women of color in the contemporary United States. In positioning the reader alongside such a character traditionally at the margins of utopian texts, Piercy's novel calls attention to

how alternative and patriarchal conceptions of manliness positively and negatively impact the lives of such women, respectively. *Woman on the Edge of Time* is, therefore, an invaluable literary resource for masculinity studies in two distinct ways: it asks pivotal questions concerning the mutually constitutive relationship of racism and patriarchy and it offers for the reader's consideration new, feminist masculinities characterized by interests in community and opposition to control and power and presented as necessary for the development of an improved society. By emphasizing the ways women of color uniquely suffer as a result of patriarchy, her novel broadens and complicates considerations of manhood and illustrates the opportunities the utopian genre grants for feminist writers to imagine new, egalitarian masculinities.

Chapter four focuses upon the novels making up Octavia E. Butler's *Lilith's Brood* trilogy, *Dawn, Adulthood Rites*, and *Imago*. These novels and the author's career more generally illustrate the continually growing importance and popularity of feminist utopias in the 1980s. Achieving mainstream acclaim, each novel was nominated for the Locus Award for Best Science Fiction Novel. Signaling a newfound public interest in female speculative writers of color, the Hugo and Nebula awards were additionally bestowed upon Butler during her career. Butler's work demonstrated the cultural importance of speculative fiction when she was awarded the MacArthur Fellowship, making her the first science fiction writer to receive it.[4] Tracing developments across these decades from the marginal positioning of Dorothy Bryant, the success of Marge Piercy, and the widespread acclaim of both Ursula Le Guin and Octavia Butler demonstrates how feminist utopias and science fiction more generally grew significantly in mainstream popularity and academic interest.

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[4] Awarded annually, the MacArthur "Genius Grant" is bestowed upon individuals noted for their "extraordinary originality and dedication in their creative pursuits and a marked capacity for self-direction," ("About the MacArthur Fellows Program").

Besides this marked growth in public and academic valuations of speculative fiction, these novels also signal key shifts within feminism in the 1970s and 1980s. Specifically, Butler's texts mark a trend in feminist utopias away from radical feminism and toward intersectional theory and the broader consideration of intermingling identity categories. Butler's trilogy is the most radical representative of these developments. Her novels and this trilogy more specifically comment directly upon patriarchal social forces that distance subjects from power in ways unique to their combination of identity markers such as race, biological sex, gender, and sexuality among others. Though she stated, "I avoid all critical theory because I worry about it feeding into my work," her texts are informed by her experiences as a woman of color, a perspective brought further to the center of feminist thought during the 1980s by the development of intersectional theory (Potts 331).

Initiated in many ways by the Combahee River Collective's landmark "Black Feminist Statement," intersectional theory owes a great deal to that group's concept "horizontal oppressions," which refers to the differences dividing "women on the bases of gender, race, class and/or sexual orientation" (Mann 172). Starting in the 1980s, feminists marked by their non-normative races and sexualities among other factors felt themselves excluded from the centralized power of white women within mainstream feminism and developed this theory of differences. Critical race and feminist theorists such as Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw and Audre Lorde, for example, utilized intersectional theory to consider the unique experience of African American women. In key works such as Cherrie Moraga's *Loving in the War Years* (1983), Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987), and the landmark anthology they edited together, *This Bridge Called My Back* (1981), Chicana feminists continued this work, bringing from the margins to the center the unique voices of women representing

various races and sexualities. As a theoretical framework that recognizes the unique ways such disparate identity markers position individuals further from or closer to power, intersectional feminism added necessary complexity theretofore missing from feminist models. Regardless of Butler's level of interest in these developments in contemporary feminism at that time, her fiction reflects the lived, intersectional experiences of women of color and is therefore significant to both speculative fiction and feminist theory.

Her novels are uniquely groundbreaking in their centering of issues such as race, sexuality, and gender in relation to feminist theory and masculinities. Like Piercy's text, the first of these novels, *Dawn*, privileges the perspective of a woman of color, Lilith. She encounters and negotiates patriarchal masculinities linked with racism (presented as speciesism) in both a new society of aliens and among the survivors of a previous one, the contemporary United States. She, for example, is viewed by her alien captors, the Oankali, as easier to control due her biological sex and as irrational due to her species (race) and is therefore tasked with awakening her fellow human survivors and convincing them to join the alien species, a role that results in her human counterparts marginalizing her as a traitor. A significant portion of her fellow human survivors, on the other hand, uniquely disparage her due to her identity, refusing to follow the leadership of a woman, and view her as tainted racially by what they view as her miscegenation with the Oankali. Through Lilith, Butler presents firsthand encounters with problematic masculinities and the ways patriarchy uniquely disempowers women of marginalized racial groups.

There exists, however, a time gap between this text and *Woman on the Edge of Time* and this divide is bridged by Butler's earlier novel, *Wild Seed* (1980), upon which chapter four briefly focuses. Piercy's text, as L. Timmel Duchamp points out, shares a special kinship with

Butler's novels in that it similarly utilizes the perspective of a woman of color and the tropes of science fiction to subtly present revolutionary feminist ideals (83). Like *Dawn*, it utilizes a female narrator belonging to a marginalized racial group to illuminate for the reader the interlocking forces of oppression uniquely affecting such women in contemporary American society. What sets *Dawn* and *Wild Seed* apart from Piercy's earlier text are the ways Butler concludes her novels not with the radical destabilization of patriarchy but, instead, with the compromises and limited victories more closely reflecting the lived experiences of women of color.

  Wild Seed focuses upon the conflict between a female protagonist, Anyanwu, a centuries-old African shapeshifter, and her male adversary, Doro, an African vampiric being who, due to the inability of those mortal bodies he possesses to sustain him for long, has for millennia bred, murdered, and inhabited the bodies of "his people." In this capacity, Doro acts as an extreme representation of patriarchal masculinity. It is significant that Butler ends her novel not with the destruction of Doro and, therefore, patriarchy but instead with a compromise that finds Anyanwu living with her subjugator as a person of special status. This departure from earlier feminist utopian narrative styles illustrates how, for Butler, "the feminist story isn't an all-or-nothing struggle; it isn't simply about overthrowing patriarchy. It's about understanding how oppression works in all its complexity and finding ways to negotiate with what can't in the particular situation be changed" (Duchamp 94). *Wild Seed* and *Dawn*, therefore, bridge the gap existing between Piercy's earlier novel, which focuses on the perspective of a woman of color who is able to significantly destabilize patriarchy, and the final novels of Butler's *Lilith's Brood* trilogy, *Adulthood Rites* and *Imago*, which center a host of diverse perspectives and further consider the commonality of compromise within the lives of people marginalized by the patriarchal economy.

The connections Butler highlights between patriarchal masculinities and the will to subordinate others is widened in the second novel of the series, *Adulthood Rites*. This novel is revolutionary in that it centers characters who, like women of color, are marginalized according to unique combinations of non-normative genders, races, and sexualities. Centering a male protagonist (as Bryant and Le Guin do), Butler complicates this narrative approach by differentiating him by both gender, sexuality, and racial makeup. The first hybrid offspring of the human species of the novel and their alien counterparts, the Oankali, this son of Lilith, Akin, is uniquely positioned outside both societies and the masculinities they normalize. This possession of a hybrid racial identity that affords him unique experiences in both Oankali and human separatist polities compels him to rethink each nation and the masculinities each favors. By aligning her audience with a male character who experiences intersectionality due to his gender and race, Butler compels her readers to recognize the complex ways patriarchy works alongside racism to relocate non-normative subjects—including men—to the societal margins. In addition, it marks her trilogy as a key text for materialist analyses of masculinity that recognize gender as socially situated and, therefore, susceptible to transformation. Her utilization of intersectional theory and challenges to essentialist ideals of radical feminism therefore add considerable strength to her criticism of contemporary American masculinities and those alternatives she posits as necessary for a feminist-informed utopia.

Utilizing the tools of science fiction to further explore race, gender, and their relationship to masculinities, Butler centers in her final novel of the series, *Imago*, another hybrid child of Lilith, Jodahs, who does not fit within the traditional gender binary. A member of the third Oankali gender, ooloi, it possesses both feminine and masculine traits. It, for example, performs traditional femininity in seeking to heal and connect with its human partners. It also proves

susceptible to the temptations of patriarchal masculinities, consolidating power and control over others before ultimately rejecting these interests. Jodahs, representative of non-conforming gender identities, is the only hybrid ooloi and faces significant discrimination but is also capable of oppressing others. By presenting to her audience characters whose unique combinations of identity elements place them at distinct distances from societal power, Butler compels her readers to rethink masculinity as it relates to, in addition to misogyny, the oppression of others due to their genders, races, and sexualities.

In addition to her inclusion of topics related to the intersectional oppression of such subjects, she builds upon the non-essentialist themes of the earlier feminist writers included in this analysis. Through her male human and Oankali, male human-Oankali hybrid, and ooloi human-Oankali hybrid characters who all struggle to varying degrees in rejecting patriarchal masculinities, she presents a radically materialist account of gender and, more specifically, masculinity. Her extensive portrayals of patriarchal conceptions of manhood as socially situated and having a differentiated impact upon individuals according to their complex identities make *Lilith's Brood* a unique, significant work of contemporary feminist fiction.

The central argument chapter four presents, therefore, is that Butler's trilogy of novels, with their focus on the lived experiences of the marginalized, fantastical imagining of problematic masculinities across genders and societies, and interest in the intersectionality produced by patriarchy, significantly widen the scope of current discussions concerning manhood. They reflect intersectional feminist discussions in the 1980s in that they contain both "a critique of feminist essentialism" and "an analysis of multiple and simultaneous oppressions and their mutually constitutive features" (Mann 205). This foundation in intersectionality theory, therefore, enables more fruitful discussions about masculinity. *Lilith's Brood* highlights the

broad impact traditional ideals of manliness have upon those marked *other* and the way these conceptions of gender work in concert with other oppressive ideologies such as racism and homophobia. By doing this, Butler presents to the reader myriad questions concerning the possibility of both developing and maintaining healthier masculinities. As an invaluable literary site for correctly framing toxic masculinities and mining new ideals of manliness grounded in feminist thought, it is vital to analyses of masculinity in speculative fiction.

Focused upon feminist utopias of the 1970s and 1980s as rich sources for developing alternative conceptions of manhood, this analysis traces key changes within contemporary American science fiction. As it demonstrates, there was a significant repositioning of these authors from the periphery to the mainstream as speculative fiction gained newfound recognition within literary scholarship. Coinciding with this development was the proliferation of feminist utopian novels that both reflected and challenged radical feminism and brought new ideals of masculinity eventually to widespread audiences. Central to these challenges to radical feminism are their materialist presentations of masculinity and increasing interest in extending this non-essentialist attitude toward those like women of color whose subjugation by patriarchal masculinities is differentiated according to their identities. These novels therefore reveal both the harmful effects of patriarchal masculinities and the pathways by which men may realize and adopt better scripts of manliness. Such novels, in their presentation of the ideal feminist society, are increasingly important to discussions surrounding the so-called crisis of twenty-first century American masculinities.

Chapter 1: Recovering Men in Dorothy Bryant's *The Kin of Ata Are Waiting for You*

The centering of male experience unites the first two novels upon which this dissertation focuses, Dorothy Bryant's *The Kin of Ata Are Waiting for You* and Ursula K. Le Guin's *The Dispossessed*. *The Kin of Ata Are Waiting for You* is unique, however, in that it follows the gradual, positive transformation of a vile male protagonist who is both a murderer and rapist. In this utopia, Bryant, therefore, presents the evils of traditional masculinities by centering a hyperviolent narrator and imagining the possibility of him adopting a feminist-informed conception of manliness. Bryant's novel acts as the starting point for this analysis because, while it is traditional in its centering of a male protagonist, it radically explores the underpinnings of social constructionist theories of gender by presenting the conversion to feminist values of a repellent traditionally-masculine character to whom audiences are utterly unsympathetic.

A significant source of power for *The Kin of Ata Are Waiting for You* and its commentary on masculinity is its use of the utopian genre. In utilizing the conventions of utopian writing such as the journey to an isolated, ideal society as a backdrop to this radical male conversion narrative, Bryant contrasts twentieth-century American masculinities and their alternatives. Since messengers from utopia such as the protagonist are charged with presenting to the outside world the benefits of non-patriarchal performances of manhood, the novel predicates the proliferation of new gender conceptions upon the acts of transformed men. Bryant, therefore, escapes what is often identified as a failure of utopian writing, its adoption of ahistorical, static qualities.[5] The unique power of this feminist novel is derived from its presentation, through this framing of the

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[5] As Sam McBean outlines, feminist utopian novels such as Marge Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time* (1976) contrast with "over-arching theories of utopia as a distant or perfect world" since they utilize the genre as a sight for positing historically situated alternatives to current socioeconomic norms (42). Bryant's novel, like that of Piercy, which will be discussed in chapter three, is dynamic in its connecting of the utopian polity to its dystopian alternative and the importance of dystopian citizens' actions to the development of the better society.

utopia as a powerful dream experienced by citizens of the patriarchal dystopia, of the better society as possible and dependent upon the actions of men in the present and, more specifically, their adoption of feminist-oriented masculinities.

These new conceptions of manhood Bryant depicts oppose earlier, traditional masculinities, the *supermen* of earlier speculative fiction. These earlier character types are hierarchical, individualistic, exploitative, selfish, and uninterested in community-building and the utopias imagined by these earlier writers reflect these patriarchal ideals. The utopias imagined by feminist writers such as Bryant, therefore, make up an egalitarian response to these problematic, misogynistic, earlier imagined polities. As Brian Attebery outlines in *Decoding Gender in Science Fiction* (2002), contemporary feminist utopias act as intaglio versions of these patriarchal predecessors, meaning that "the relationship between" them is "not one of simple contradiction but of reversing values while retaining the basic configuration" (116). Attebery demonstrates this phenomenon by contrasting an earlier patriarchal utopia, Robert Heinlein's *Space Cadet* (1948), with Suzy McKee Charnas's *Walk to the End of the World and Motherlines* (1974), a feminist dystopia published three years after Bryant's novel. While the polities of these texts are similarly "ritualized, hierarchical, homosocial, legalistic" and "misogynistic," the nation of Heinlein's text is presented as a utopia while that of Charnas's novel is portrayed as a nightmarish dystopia (Attebery 121). Such an intaglio effect similarly exists in the relationship between the male characters inhabiting feminist utopias and those depicted in earlier, patriarchal speculative texts. The alternative masculinities Bryant imagines in her novel represent a significant departure from the traditional gender ideologies of earlier speculative fiction and this radical reconceptualization of manhood is fundamental to her feminist utopia.

Part of Bryant's success in subverting traditional assumptions of gender is due to her drawing upon another subgenre of science fiction: the lost world narrative. Specifically, she utilizes the form of these earlier texts but supplants their patriarchal values. Since such novels, for example, valorize imperialistic, patriarchal men who triumph over the other identified by marginalized identity markers such as race and sex, Bryant radicalizes the lost world tradition by presenting a similar character, her unnamed protagonist, but causing him to undergo a conversion process away from patriarchy. Male characters in earlier novels such as what is often considered the first of this subgenre, H. Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* (1885), are traditionally masculine, exploiting forgotten lands and their native people for socioeconomic gain. The protagonist of Haggard's novel, Allan Quatermain, and his fellow adventurers, for example, triumph over the indigenous female-worshipping population in this forgotten land and return home at the conclusion of the text with a substantial fortune. Though he initially has similar goals, Bryant's narrator, on the other hand, returns from Ata without any fortune; instead, he gains a sense of wholeness made possible by the adoption of those masculinities favored in the utopia. This alteration of the lost world hero archetype signals, therefore, a departure from the norms of capitalistic patriarchy, which values success within the free market through self-reliance and disconnection from society. In defiance of this gender script, Bryant's protagonist learns to serve his fellow subjects, to build a community not predicated upon hierarchy and the exploitation of others, and, through writing a book about his experiences, to advocate for feminist-oriented masculinities. It is this role of the protagonist as a once murderous rapist and a current proselytizer for alternative ideals of manhood that distinguishes *The Kin of Ata Are Waiting for You* from other contemporary feminist utopias.

Bryant presents her unnamed male narrator's role as an activist through the incorporation of a framing device. More specifically, *The Kin of Ata Are Waiting for You* is presented as a didactic, non-fiction text written by the protagonist. In this way, it acts as a warning crafted by a recovering patriarch for misogynistic men and guidelines for how they may escape the toxicity of traditional masculinities. Though addressing all readers regardless of their sex, race, etc., the writer, in looking back at his violent and misogynistic past, tacitly acknowledges how this work will significantly impact likeminded men: "think that if I, a murderer whose murders were the least of his crimes, if a man like me could find himself in Ata and could re-learn the dream, and further, could glimpse for a moment the reality behind the dream…then how much easier it might be for you" (220). Previously a well-paid and famous author of sexist fiction now convicted of murder, the narrator utilizes his literary skills, along with both his former social influence and current notoriety, to spread a message condemning patriarchy and its masculinities. In this way, writing is central to Bryant's utopian novel and the finished product, the didactic text the protagonist hopes to distribute, acts as a rejection and replacement of his earlier, misogynistic publications.

The protagonist's project of educating men through his writing aligns with Lorde's solution to how the master's house—in this case, patriarchy—may be disassembled (112). Importantly, Lorde, in her comments made at the Second Sex Conference in 1979, condemns attempts to achieve equality for women that ignore the unique experiences and identities differentiating them. She accuses radical feminists of reproducing the faults of the patriarchy and being therefore ill-equipped to attack it. She notes, for example, a tendency among white radical feminists to expect women of different races, sexualities, etc. to teach them about their experiences and needs. Lorde draws a parallel between this practice of expecting "women of

Color to educate white women—in the face of tremendous resistance—as to our existence, our differences, our relative roles in our joint survival" and that of men placing the responsibility upon women "to stretch across the gap of male ignorance and to educate" them (113). Bryant's narrator uses writing to combat his own previous misogynistic fiction and to educate other patriarchal men about the need for transformation. By presenting a manifesto of a misogynist's conversion, Bryant offers a model of a way to ask men to assume the responsibility for presenting alternative masculinities.

The protagonist writes this account of his experiences to compel his male readers to, among other things, decrease their estimation of language as the optimal tool for recording reality and to consider other, traditionally feminine sources of knowledge such as intuition. As a result of his visit to Ata, he learns to no longer emphasize language as a tool capable of accurately and conclusively symbolizing reality and to accept knowledge gained via seemingly contradictory information. Desiring, for example, to draft a record of dreams commonly recited by the Atans, the protagonist illustrates this trait of hegemonic men and struggles against his utopian counterparts, rejecting their acceptance of such dreams as contradictory and mutable. Clinging to his patriarchal belief that language may accurately decipher and record truth, he divides dreams into categories such as "Great Dreams" and "Sabbath Dreams" but soon recognizes the shortcomings of his approach. Such a recording, he discovers from studying a similarly ill-fated past attempt, are liable to cause disputes concerning which are "the best versions of the dreams, and as to whether the mark," or series of linguistic symbols he has developed, gives the correct meaning" (201). This previous approach disallowed change to transform these cultural artifacts: "'even more serious was the effect that writing had upon the words of the story. It froze them. People began to mistake the word for the unknown behind it.

Instead of expressing the unknown, the carved world became a thing between the people and the unknown which it should symbolize.' 'All was'" ill-fitted for dreaming, it was "'donagdeo'" (201). In this way, Bryant illuminates the inadequacy of patriarchal language, which controls and dominates, and presents as an alternative dreams, which are fluid and flexible. A central message of *The Kin of Ata Are Waiting for You*, therefore, is that traditional approaches to manhood and their commitment to language and communication as tools for symbolizing reality are problematic in their desire to control and stabilize such experienced phenomena.

This patriarchal use of language also does not allow for intuitive knowledge gained via seemingly contradictory recitations. As pointed out in the novel by one of the residents of the utopia, Augustine, such dreams "are all true" (168). Linguistic methods of recording such intuitive truths, on the other hand, "are all untrue, as words are always untrue'" (168). Such a conception of language directly opposes its valuation by hegemonic masculinities. As a writer, the narrator is a patriarchal male whose socioeconomic success is tied to his presentation of traditional gender ideologies as fact in his novels. In this encounter with utopian masculinities, he demonstrates the tendency of the traditional man to seek power through language by rejecting recognitions of it as faulty and problematic. The reliance upon the written word as a means of accurately controlling and fully understanding reality both causes and reinforces the evils of traditional masculinities. The narrator's eventual understanding of the limitations of language is revealed in the conclusion of the novel when he comments on the text he has produced: "I have had to leave out many things, and even those that I have told may be misunderstood, told, as they are, in the faulty medium of words, and frozen on paper" (220). Adopting an alternative, feminist-informed conception of manhood, he rejects patriarchal emphases on language as a comprehensive tool for fully symbolizing and therefore controlling reality. While recognizing

these limitations of writing, he utilizes it and composes a manifesto that functions as a bridge, offering his experience to the unenlightened, locked into traditional gender roles.

In producing this instructive text, Bryant's protagonist locates helpful tools that, though imperfect, may indeed assist in the dismantling of patriarchy through the spreading of a new masculine consciousness. Donna Fancourt identifies within feminist utopias the need for altered states of consciousness in order to achieve utopia. Fancourt contends that such "altered states, which include dreams, trances, meditation and hallucinations, are intrinsically related to the texts' visions of feminist utopianism as rooted in creating a new spiritual and political consciousness" (94). Her analysis demonstrates the need for new conceptions of manhood in these utopias since "the necessary shift in consciousness that is intrinsic to" these works is represented by a "movement away from an emphasis on sexual difference, and towards a society that promotes connection with others," a value not traditionally identified as masculine (109). Recognizing the limitations of language and the written word, Bryant's narrator progresses with the hope that his message may resonate and bring about such a reassessment of masculinities among men occupying the contemporary American patriarchy. In this way, a source of power propelling *The Kin of Ata Are Waiting for You* is its focus on a male conversion story through which a former hegemonic man critiques traditional masculinities and offers to his readers improved, feminist alternatives.

Bryant's decision to create a male character who has committed violent, vile actions enhances the message of her novel concerning the possibility of transforming masculinity. A grotesque misogynist who, while fleeing his home after murdering his partner, Connie, transports to Ata, the narrator is utilized by Bryant to illustrate how even the most destructive forms of masculinity may be challenged and destabilized. The conversion of the protagonist begins in the

utopia when he, mistaking his own visions during one of the Atan ceremonies as real treasures, threatens the utopian people with exposure to the outside world if they do not allow him to depart with what he perceives as their valuables. During an argument concerning the existence of this treasure, the narrator causes an elderly utopian citizen, Tran, to lose his balance and subsequently die. It is this second murderous act that precipitates the narrator toward a transformation that in total lasts almost twenty years (a more accurate approximation is not available since the narrator gradually loses track of time in the non-linear, anti-patriarchal utopia).

Fleeing to an isolated hilltop due to his fear of retribution for this murder, he undergoes a psychological change that begins with his physical body, lacking food and water: "I spent three days this way. By the third day I was feverish and coughing, trembling constantly" (87). His physical state impacts his psychological condition, producing visions of those people such as Tran whom he has harmed as a result of his subscription to patriarchal masculinities. In conversation with an Atan woman, Augustine, he recognizes his toxic, traditionally masculine qualities: "'I killed the old one. Before that I killed a woman. But these murders are the least of my crimes. I have never done anything good. I am an empty man. Not a real person. I gave away what was real in me long ago. I sold it. For nothing. I am nothing. I am not fit to live'" (89). This confession signals the transformation central to the novel: the gradual conversion of the narrator from traditional destructive masculinities to their feminist-oriented alternatives.

This incremental adoption of new masculinities is completed at the novel's conclusion. Faced with the opportunity to avoid atoning for his actions via legal means, he ignores his lawyer's advice, rejects the temptation to levy his privileged position as a hegemonic male to escape punishment, and confesses to murdering Connie. Able to treat Ata and the masculinities it

espouses as merely a dream, he ultimately maintains his belief in both Ata and its conceptions of gender and utilizes his position as a famous male writer and murderer to spread awareness of new perspectives on gender and society. Bryant's novel, as a testament of the murderous narrator to his audience about the utopian polity and its masculinities, is addressed to an audience he hopes are open to the possibility of such gender reconfigurations:

> Do not judge these words by the man who writes them. Listen, not to my words, but to the echo they evoke in you, and obey that echo. And think that if I, a murderer whose murders were the least of his crimes, if a man like me could find myself in Ata and could re-learn the dream, and further, could glimpse for a moment the reality behind the dream…then how much easier it might be for you. You have only to want It, to believe in It, and tonight, when you close your eyes, you can begin your journey. The kin of Ata are waiting for you. Nagdeo. (220)

In its ending, the novel therefore charges its audience of contemporary American readers with the responsibility of re-learning a dream of a complete rejection of traditional patriarchy. Through the positioning of the novel as the supposedly real testament of a hegemonic masculine male to the American public, Bryant connects her utopia to the real world of 20th century patriarchy.

Such a connection is furthered by Bryant's delineating of toxic qualities of 20th century American masculinities. These qualities, which the male narrator exhibits, include, besides the aforementioned reliance upon language as a stable epistemic tool: support of societal networks of power based upon sexuality, race, gender, class, and biological sex; and negative valuations of male emotional health care through dream analysis, mystical experiences, and other approaches similarly labeled non-masculine. By imagining the positive alteration of these traits possessed

initially by the traditionally masculine protagonist, Bryant presents to her audience a road map for challenging and replacing contemporary American ideals of manhood. Importantly, *The Kin of Ata Are Waiting for You* notes the limitations of such a path toward healthier masculinities. More specifically, Bryant illuminates for her readers the relationship of masculinity to the nation and the necessity to transform the socioeconomic systems of a polity for its gender ideologies to truly be improved.

Since its publication, *The Kin of Ata Are Waiting for You* has been analyzed by critics as in part a tract for political and social change. Utopias such as Bryant's novel necessitate such scholarly approaches since any work of this genre "must at least apply to, if not directly concern itself with, the institutions of persons" and the process of imagining "utopia…is from the outset to reconstruct human culture" (Barr 1). Many scholars, for example, recognize in feminist utopias calls for remodeling society that deal with key topics including: separate spheres of life and work based upon gender, the abolishment of the nuclear family, methods for negotiating problematic citizens, the validity of embodied knowledge, and new forms of political order.[6] Lyman Tower Sargent, for example, situates Bryant within a group of feminist writers such as Ursula K. Le Guin and Marge Piercy who imagine collectivist anarchies that remodel societies so they are both non-hierarchical and communal. As Joanna Russ delineates, Bryant's novel and those of her contemporaries such as Russ herself are "explicit about economics and politics, sexually permissive, demystifying about biology, emphatic about the necessity for female

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[6] Carol Pearson, for example, identifies as a trend within contemporary feminist utopias interests in "the low status and pay for 'women's work'" (63). In addition, she recognizes attempts to unite "the inhumane and marketplace and the humane hearth," efforts to envision new types of families, the absence of coercion within polities, a lack of reliance upon abstract and objective ideals, interests in empathic and intuitive understanding, and the valuing of women's lived experiences as central aspects of these utopian novels and the pragmatic political efforts espoused by their authors (64). Lucy Freibert, on the other hand, locates trends such as the absence of private property, the offering of "food, clothing, education, medical care, travel, and recreation at common expense," and the presence of organicist societies that advocate "the union of reason and nature, rather than the domination of nature practiced by the current male-oriented culture" among these feminist works (68, 69).

bonding, concerned with children…non-urban, classless, communal, relatively peaceful while allowing room for female range and female self-defense, and serious about the emotional and physical consequences of violence" (15). In an analysis of contemporary feminist utopias including *The Kin of Ata Are Waiting for You*, Lyman Tower Sargent notes that it "may not be quite impossible, but men in particular are going to have to change dramatically if a healthy society is to be possible" (Sargent 30). Bryant's materialist portrayal of gender suggests the need to transform both masculinities and the nation influencing them. A crucial step in this transformative plan Bryant imagines is, in addition to the adoption of new masculinities, the challenging of the patriarchal economy.

As a capitalistic patriarchy, the contemporary United States depends upon a hierarchy or *patriarchal order* "organized by sex, race, etc." (Buchbinder 69). This system of power "generates and distributes the flows of power within both social and institutional organizations," a process identified as the *patriarchal economy* (Buchbinder 69). The contemporary American patriarchal order is delineated by Bryant in the novel with the protagonist situated among its higher echelons. A central source of his power, besides his race and biological sex, is his loyalty to this phallocentric society's ideologies of sexuality. A purveyor of novels of "obscene urbanity" focused upon "ruthless, indestructible" male spies and with "equal parts of sex and violence," he acts as a cultural influence, reinforcing heterosexual, misogynistic ideologies that view sex as a site of power and control (25). To return to Todd Reeser's theorization of the *gendered nation* outlined in the introduction to my analysis, "cultural codings affect everyone in a nationally based context" (171). As a producer through his fiction of problematic, patriarchal cultural codings concerning the masculine and feminine, the protagonist works at the intersection of the nation and gender and is rewarded for his representations of gender through increased

power within the patriarchal order. Importantly, Bryant further illuminates these connections between the nation, gender, and writing in the contemporary United States by highlighting very real examples of American male writers who, like her protagonist, benefit immensely from their production of traditional cultural codings of gender.

Bryant, for example, draws key parallels between the fiction produced by her narrator and Norman Mailer's *An American Dream* (1965). As Carol Pearson points out, Bryant's "protagonist is a successful man of his time. Like the hero of Mailer's novel, he is a wealthy, famous writer, a chauvinist, and a murderer" (264-265). The protagonist of Mailer's text, like the heroes populating the works of Bryant's protagonist, is violent and dominates those women with whom he comes into contact. Having murdered his wife, Stephen Rojack enjoys sex with several women, including a maid and nightclub singer, as he dodges the police and eventually makes a small fortune gambling in Las Vegas and escapes the country. Mailer presents in Rojack a hegemonic, masculine male hero who, like those characters populating the fiction of Bryant's protagonist, appeals to a patriarchal readership. The anti-feminist content of *An American Dream* reflects Mailer's attitudes toward women and his violent treatment of them during his life. By imagining a protagonist who initially possesses patriarchal views similar to those of Mailer but who encounters and is transformed by feminist masculinities, Bryant condemns male writers such as Mailer while positing that even they may be transformed by new ideals of manhood.

A significant similarity Bryant draws between her unnamed narrator and male writers such as Mailer is the way they profit from the patriarchal economy. The achievements of Bryant's narrator, for example, reveal his attitude toward sex as a social function by which men in power may be rewarded: "When the book hit the top of the best seller lists, I left my wife. I turned out four more of them, released them one a year, signed film contracts, and at thirty was

rich and famous" (26). In this way, he exemplifies Michael Kimmel's *self-made man* by measuring his worth by his "accumulated wealth and status" (137). Like other male writers such as William S. Burroughs, John Updike, and Norman Mailer, the narrator consolidates social influence and economic power through his reproduction and proliferation of misogynistic ideals in his writing. As outlined by Bryant, sex functions alongside wealth and popularity as a reward for the self-made men of this patriarchal, capitalistic polity and is utilized to dominate others situated further from power, namely women.

A significant portion of the narrator's tract, detailing his lengthy conversion process, is his gradual rejection of capitalistic, traditionally masculine interests in accumulated power and wealth. Outlining again the connection between the nation and gender, Bryant, through her protagonist, presents the incremental change of a man formerly living within a capitalistic patriarchy. Before his conversion to Ata's anti-capitalist values, the narrator demonstrates his interest in gaining further social power in two ways: seeking to colonize and exploit the utopia through contact with the outside world and attempting to rob the utopia of precious stones he notices in their ceremonies. He describes this first effort, typical of the traditionally masculine man, remarking how "it was easy to talk about bringing the blessings of so-called civilization to Ata. Ata would probably gain a jet-strip, a gambling casino and a set of slums from which these people could go out each day to serve the tourists" (75). Bryant, in this way, again connects normative American conceptions of masculinity, as presented in the narrator, to capitalism and economic exploitation. Beyond this strategy for colonizing Ata, the protagonist seeks to regain his position in the capitalistic patriarchy, albeit under an alias, via the appropriation of jewels he believes are used in their spiritual rituals. "My real plan was to get possession of the precious stones and metals they used in their rituals and return to the world with a new name, a new

identity and plenty to live on for the rest of my life" (75). He values individualism, his own welfare and profits over others, and the possibility of upward socioeconomic mobility due to his identity makeup and assets he intends to accumulate through the exploitation of others. Over time, however, he recognizes the value of serving others and living without the drive for power and control. Through his conversion narrative, he presents to his audience the evils of patriarchal capitalism and the need to transform both the socioeconomic system and masculinities of the contemporary United States.

An important aspect of this conversion, as the protagonist emphasizes for his audience, is his realization that the same patriarchal economy providing him power due to his identity distances others from power in unique ways based upon their own complex identities. During his initial interactions with Augustine, the narrator, still subscribing to traditional masculinities, views her as subhuman. Augustine possesses "Nordic features and blue eyes," she is "black, not just brown but almost a true black" and this bodily difference from normalized racial markers is utilized by the traditionally masculine man, the narrator, to dehumanize her (19, 12). His transformation is later noted by his understanding of how the patriarchal economy produces oppression according to the same logic he once followed. When, more than a decade later, Augustine is chosen to leave Ata to minister to those who have forgotten their utopian origin, her fellow Atans mourn the marginalization and domination she is likely to experience. The narrator, having by this time adopted the egalitarian masculinities of Ata, recognizes more overtly the nature and logic of the subordination she is destined to experience: "I thought of Augustine-black, female, in that world run by men like me" (187). Augustine does experience marginalization, isolated from social and economic power during her travels around "the world on her knees, scrubbing floors of the powerful" and "succoring the oppressed" (193). Augustine,

the protagonist understands, experiences intersectional oppression and this is due to both her biological sex and race. As elaborated upon by Sally Robinson, subjectivity is "inevitably grounded in the relations of power that structure a given society" and such "relations of power are embodied in persons whose differential relationships to normativity are registered, in large part, by the evidence of visible, bodily difference" (3). Alternative masculinities are posited by Bryant and her narrator as necessary for transforming both traditionally masculine men such as the narrator and those racist, intersectional societies from which he originates.

As the unnamed narrator outlines for the readers he hopes to convert, the patriarchal economy must also be dismantled since it grants the hegemonic man special opportunities to regain his socioeconomic standing should he lose it. Upon returning from Ata and being treated in a hospital for his wounds while a future trial date looms, the protagonist is confronted by his lawyer with the possibility of using his patriarchal power to avoid punishment. Recognizing the importance of public opinion, his lawyer, Spanger, reviews newspaper publications covering the case and happily informs the protagonist that his injuries have caused temporary public sympathy. Surveying these newspapers himself, the narrator notes an "underlying flavor of envy and admiration," revealing the violent, phallocentric climate of the nation (213). In addition, he notes the intersection of capitalism and patriarchy, commenting on how newspaper opinions of his case must continue to diversify in order to maintain profit: "to sell newspapers, it was expedient to be somewhat more sympathetic to me now" (214). Such outside aid, likely unavailable to subjects further distanced from power in the patriarchal economy, increases the likelihood that he may further reap the benefits of his socioeconomic position if declared innocent: "But I knew that after I got through the hearing, if there were not enough evidence to try me, there would be dozens of 'friends' and scores of women, just as there had been

before…only a few weeks before. And I would be more famous than ever. And there would be more money. And any trash I wrote would sell, for at least the next three years, until a new sensation was found" (215). In ultimately rejecting the option of blaming Connie's murder on an unknown intruder and possibly escaping punishment, he foregoes the socioeconomic rewards allocated to hegemonic men within the capitalistic patriarchy. Through the narrator's experiences, which he presents to his readers as a warning, Bryant identifies a key threat to feminist activism: the ability of men to utilize their social power, using money and culture, to reinforce the patriarchal order.

Focusing upon this gender order, the novel initially outlines the mutually constitutive relationship between traditional masculinities and the capitalistic patriarchy before contrasting it with the alternative ideals of manhood found within the collectivist anarchy of Ata. Influencing and, in turn, influenced by the utopia's radical conceptions of manhood, this societal network of power, unlike the patriarchal economy, cultivates equality regardless of biological sex, gender, and race among other factors. According to Lyman Tower Sargent, Bryant's utopia, like those of Le Guin and Piercy, presents "a new anarchism more concerned with affective than economic relationships or, to use slightly different terminology, with reproductive or nurturant rather than productive relationships" (8). These feminist utopias, he points out, "emphasize that freedom and equality go together; they are not separate or separable" (30). *The Kin of Ata Are Waiting for You* presents equality as central to the feminist utopia and absent from its capitalistic, patriarchal alternative. The novel illuminates how these divergent polities shape masculinities that reflect these contrasting attitudes toward equality. Through his male conversion story, the protagonist offers clear objectives for transforming the masculinities and socioeconomic systems of the United States in order to introduce egalitarianism to them.

The importance of these goals is emphasized by Bryant's narrator through his in-depth recounting of his former role as a violent and subjugating man of power. At the opening of the text, the protagonist delineates the manner by which he, equipped with his former, traditionally masculine views on sexuality, destroyed the lives of his female partners before his conversion. Unable to provide any details about the reason for the altercation between himself and his partner, Connie, he reflects instead upon those details related to her appearance upon which his mind was focused, reducing her to the status of a faulty commodity: "She went on screaming at me. I sat on the edge of the bed and watched her. Her breasts were full, but they hung loose, like bags over a torso on which I could count every rib. The pubic hair told the true color of her bleached head: mousy brown. Her skin, breaking through her smeared make-up, was blotchy" (1). When he at last takes note of what she is communicating, the reader is made to understand that Connie recognizes this denial of her humanity: "'I exist!' she was screaming. 'I'm a person!'" (1). Desiring only to control and maintain power over her by reducing her again to a commodity, the protagonist rejects this claim of personhood: "I yawned and looked at the clock. Four a.m. 'No,' I told her. 'I invented you, or you tried to invent yourself, right out of my latest book'" (1). His role as a self-made man empowered and made rich by his writing of exploitative novels informs his view of Connie as a mere sexual object. His horrendous acts including the murder of Connie reflect the fantasies he harbored of male domination, which are present also in the fiction he produces. Prior to his transformation, he, for example, views his partner as a mere production of the male imagination with features—"long legs, small waist, full breasts half covered by tossed blonde hair"—typical of the characters from his books (1). This dehumanizing comment enhances the violent pitch of the altercation and the narrator ultimately chokes Connie to death. Bryant, therefore, presents in her protagonist a changed man reflecting upon his former

hegemonic self and noting for his readers the ways his past acts of extreme violence including murder represented a means of control within sexual relationships and are directly linked to the patriarchal masculinities he once promulgated in his writing.

In recounting this scene, the narrator, and Bryant through him, highlights the ways capitalism and patriarchy reinforce each other. Specifically, Bryant's opening scene reveals how women are commodified and dehumanized in a capitalistic patriarchy. Through this comparison of Connie to fictional characters and the narrator's quick use of violence to silence her, the reader is made to understand how intrinsic to patriarchy is the desire to subjugate others. To him, their personhood is as valid as that of the fictional, female characters he develops in the misogynistic stories he composes for profit. This desire to overpower and control women is a key aspect of dystopian masculinities that the protagonist urges his audience to condemn.

The narrator adds to this plea by recounting to his readers his relationship to an Atan female, Augustine, that was crucial to his transformation. Through the unnamed narrator's recollection, Bryant emphasizes the toxicity of American rape culture. As described by sociologists Julia Schwendinger and Herman Schwendinger and feminist theorist Susan Brownmiller in their analyses of rape myths in the 1970s, "the cultural mythology surrounding rape" at the time served "to perpetuate male sexual aggression against women. This was thought to be achieved by simultaneously blaming the victim, absolving the perpetrator, and minimizing or justifying the aggression" (Payne, Lonsway, and Fitzgerald 28). As Bryant's narrator reflects, his reaction directly after assaulting Augustine was to minimize his attack and absolve himself of responsibility by asserting falsely she likely enjoyed the encounter. Specifically, when Augustine communicates a disinterest in his advances, he responds, "Probably she liked it a little rough, I thought, as I pushed her down to the ground and yanked up her tunic. There were stretch marks

on her belly. 'You're not exactly a virgin,' I mumbled. I pulled the tunic up beyond her breasts. It covered her face, and she lay still" (54). As is made clear by this passage, he attempts to sanitize the nature of this attack in two ways: by justifying his actions on the false premise that Augustine "liked it a little rough" and asserting that, since there are signs that she has given birth in the past, this rape is somehow relatively inconsequential (54). Placing on the periphery of this scene Atans shocked and silent and centering Augustine, described as lying "quite still, her face still covered by her tunic, her body quivering," Bryant clarifies the disgust with which the reader should contemplate the narrator's actions (54). In this way, Bryant presents to her audience the voice of a narrator who, once vile and hypermasculine, subscribes to rape myths prevalent in the contemporary United States.

In these passages, Bryant also presents through her didactic protagonist a warning concerning the toxic tendency of traditional masculinities to commit such brutalizing acts to seek revenge against those who destabilize masculinity. During the aforementioned scene of assault, the protagonist is suddenly made aware that they are surrounded by Atans who, instead of preventing this rape, stand by observing his brutality. In response, the narrator ceases his assault and is made to feel "a wave of shame" but is only able to respond in a way common to the traditionally masculine male, with "anger, sickening anger" (55). This shame challenges the valorization of control and power typical of traditional masculinities since it originates in the overwhelming, negative response of a better, feminist society to the patriarchal actions of the narrator. In response, the narrator recommits himself to his conventional gender role. Accordingly, he opts to view the silence of these onlookers as a form of mockery and decides to seek revenge, tellingly not on these bystanders but on Augustine: "I wanted revenge. I went out to the fields. I followed and I watched until she went off by herself, to one of the fallow fields. I

waited while she dug a small hole, crouched over it, then filled the hole with dirt. Then I grabbed

her, threw her down and rammed myself into her. I came, like a sneeze without pleasure or relief.

And I felt I had lost something again" (56). Attempting unsuccessfully to re-stabilize his

masculine identity through revenge, he finds a growing emptiness that, as Bryant's novel

demonstrates, is endemic to traditional masculinities. His recognition of this emptiness, caused

by patriarchal masculinities and exposed through the silent rebuke of the Atan people, propels

the changes he undergoes through the recognition of the instability of patriarchal masculinities

and the adoption of new ideals of manhood that eventually produce healing.

 Bryant also highlights through the narrator's relationship to Augustine connections

existing between 20th century American capitalism and the masculinities it normalizes.

Following a gender script echoing the capitalistic patriarchy of which he is a subject, the

contemporary United States, the protagonist sees Augustine—similar to his estimation of

Connie—as a commodity that may provide relief through its consumption: "I knew who I

wanted, and if things were so free and easy here, I could at least enjoy her, and probably think a

lot straighter afterward" (52). Through this protagonist, "Bryant directly links the concept of

property with sexism" (Roberts 80). The narrator's capitalistic, patriarchal perspective leads to

and justifies his intention to dominate and control his sexual partners whom he views as mere

objects similar to the products sold on the free market. She demonstrates this connection through

the narrator's treatment of Augustine as a sexual object he "could at least enjoy" and not as a

person with whom he could experience mutual pleasure (52). In addition, his comment that

"things were so free and easy" in Ata reveals not merely the openness of the culture regarding

sexuality but the freedom of using those commodities in which the protagonist is most interested,

women (52). Bryant, through her radically transformed narrator, exposes the damaging

intersection of capitalism and patriarchy and the cost to women of such brutalizing conceptions of manhood produced by these hierarchical ideologies.

As the narrator recounts to his audience, his new conception of masculinity involves an egalitarian approach to sex that replaces the earlier, violent attitude of the narrator endemic to hegemonic masculinities. He describes the impact of his new conceptions of manhood upon his views of sex via a memory with Augustine: "Our love-making was a kind of ceremony, like a stamp or a seal upon something. I entered her almost immediately, and as I felt myself coming, I heard a low crooning sigh from her that told me she was with me. Then we lay together on our side, her arms and legs enveloping me, our eyes looking straight into one another's. This was a ritual to cancel out the rape, a purified re-enactment" (107). This positive, empathetic attitude toward sexual partners initially causes discomfort for the protagonist due to the ways it destabilizes traditional conceptions of manhood: "She was not an adversary, nor was she simply a body to be aroused by prescribed techniques to prescribed responses. I was not fucking her. And I was afraid" (110). Afraid of his newfound vulnerability but choosing to continue his adoption of these new ideals of manhood, the protagonist opts for deeper levels of intimacy. As a result, he benefits from a meaningful connection to another human being. Through her protagonist, Bryant therefore portrays the transformation of the most violent type of patriarchal man whose previous approach to sex was one of abject violence and domination. Instead, this new man values the connection he feels with his partner, focuses upon the mutual pleasure and enjoyment of each person involved, and calls for a new attitude among men concerning sex and sexual partners. He—a once murderous rapist—represents the possibility Bryant imagines of transformed men challenging their fellow men to reject patriarchy and the exploitation of women.

Such a rebuke between men necessitates the recognition that the nation must also be transformed for new masculinities to flourish. An important quality of Ata the narrator advocates for in the United States, for example, is the societal equality of women. In his tract, the protagonist outlines such a need for change by presenting the egalitarian aspects of Ata related to the sexes. Instead of placing the responsibility of food preparation upon women, for example, the men of Ata exemplify a polity that values service over individualism and selfishness by sharing these responsibilities. Prior to his transformation, the narrator recognizes this societal norm when he selfishly seeks to take as much food offered to him as possible: "I could not resist reaching into the pot and feeding myself five or six handfuls. No one stopped me, but I was immediately surrounded by people with pots, offering me bits from their fingers. I was being indulged, like a greedy child" (100). Understanding that such an approach to food preparation and distribution is labeled immature by his utopian counterparts, he learns to serve food to his fellow citizens through his incremental adoption of the new masculinities of Ata.

Shaped by the feminist polity, these new masculinities reflect the standards Cheris Kramarae and Jana Kramer identify as common to the feminist utopias of Sally Miller Gearhart's *The Wanderground* (1979), Marge Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time* (1976), and *The Kin of Ata are Waiting for You*. According to Kramarae and Kramer, there are three "values in which these societies are firmly rooted: mutual respect, personal responsibility, and trust in others" (37). These qualities describe the new masculinities Bryant and other contemporary feminist authors present as necessary "to produce a culture without power differences" (Kramarae and Kramer 37). The narrator initially, for example, estimates incorrectly that, due to his position as a white male, he must be a prized person from whom food may be received: "I supposed that they considered it a special honor to be fed by me, until I noticed that they made the same gesture

when a small child stopped feeding himself and held out food toward others" (32). What he finds is that the utopia is shaped in part by the favoring of masculinities that serve others and do not develop hierarchies of power and subjugation according to, among other identity elements, biological sex. Central to his conversion is the adoption of these values held by the feminist society and its alternative masculinities.

In his presentation of the ideal nation as it relates to sex, the narrator highlights for his audience how such a lack of a patriarchal order manifests in the society's handling of childbirth and parenting. As a collectivist anarchy characterized by "people cooperating to help each other," this feminist social system breaks down any separation of labor by sex (Sargent 8). As the protagonist witnesses, these citizens attempt to share the pain of the final experience the mother must undergo predominantly alone before sharing the responsibility of raising the child with society, childbirth: "'We try to take some of the pain on ourselves, to share it. We try to give some of our strength for the hard work. We try to make the girl feel happy that, once she has done this, she need no longer carry the burden of the child alone'" (149). The centrality of these utopian masculinities is made clear also in this ceremony by the presence of multiple men, the potential fathers of the child, who assist the mother without need to officially determine or recognize paternal lines. Free of patriarchal masculinities, she, instead, is "constantly attended by the fathers of the child," a social norm that clearly delineates the need for new masculinities to deconstruct the gender order of patriarchy (150-151). The social norms of parenting and childbirth in the feminist utopia reflect and are shaped by the nation's lack of hierarchies organized according to, among other identity elements, biological sex.

This absence of the patriarchal order produces widespread effects throughout the feminist society. As outlined by Lucy Freibert, the feminist utopias of which Ata is an exemplary model

are egalitarian across a spectrum of aspects: they "dispense with private property but provide rooms of their own for everyone. They also furnish food, clothing, education, medical care, travel, and recreation at common expense" and offer dining and child-care facilities that "extend parenting responsibilities to all community members" (68). As the narrator outlines for his audience, the economy of Ata therefore represents the feminist ideal nation and this polity requires the adoption of masculinities favoring the abolishment of power networks based upon sex.

In addition to such calls to dismantle institutionalized misogyny, the narrator presents to his readership the necessity of opposing the gender binary and, like the Atan culture for which he advocates, presents an ideal alternative: androgyny. During his stay in Ata, the protagonist notes a significant aspect of the transformed men and women of this utopia, their possession of traits and performance of social roles traditionally viewed as both masculine and feminine. The fully androgynous nature of Ata and, more specifically, the possession of feminine traits and roles by the utopian males are noted by Bryant's unnamed narrator when he records his early experiences among these people: "the men waited on me as often as the women did, and on each other. The tent was cleaned out every few days, the fern branches shaken out, the floor tamped and brushed, but everyone helped with the work. I saw no difference of function, except the women obviously nursed the infants; but the men carried and cared for the small ones as much as the women did" (19). This lack of distinction in social function is reflected in the Atans' clothing and appearances: "Since all wore their hair long and all wore the same shapeless, kneelength tunic, only beards and body contour were definite signs. Up to the age of sexual maturity the children were naked and long-haired and unless I made a special point of looking for a little penis, they were sexless to me" (19). Bryant's novel presents a utopia closely aligned with the third type of

androgynous society Pamela Annas identifies within speculative fiction: a vision of a world "in which male and female functions and roles simply are not sharply differentiated" (146). The new masculinities for which Bryant's narrator advocates, therefore, appear and take on social roles traditionally deemed both masculine and feminine.

This simple lack of differentiation by gender enables Bryant to avoid issues raised about other feminist, androgynous utopias such as Ursula K. Le Guin's *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1969). As Natalie Myra Rosinsky noted soon after its publication, "the context critical to understanding the significance of *The Kin of Ata*" is "the controversy about feminist ideology and literary practice in" Le Guin's novel (31). Bryant avoids the problematic tendency observable in *The Left Hand of Darkness* to portray androgyny as the simple adoption of masculine qualities by female characters and not the coinciding presentation of feminine traits among male characters. Her success, therefore, is due to her centering of a character who laboriously and incrementally learns to appreciate feminine views and qualities over time. A significant source of power for Bryant's novel are the deeply androgynous qualities of the utopian nation it persuades the traditional male narrator to appreciate and recommend to his readers.

As the protagonist explains in his instructional text, such an absence of networks of power based upon sex or gender is greatly enabled by the abolishment of the nuclear family. Rejecting hierarchies within every aspect of society, the new masculinities the narrator recommends complement the feminist utopia Bryant imagines through their opposition to the patriarchal order and this central, familial network of power (Buchbinder 69). As formulated by Raewyn Connell, there are four dimensions of gender relation that produce this hierarchical family unit. Each of these dimensions—power, division of labor, cathexis, and the symbolic

level—illustrates the need to replace hegemonic masculinities and the nuclear family units they bolster. The traditional male, Connell demonstrates, enjoys favorable positions of power in public and private spaces, benefits from a division of labor that grants him better access to economic opportunities, enjoys the cathexis and emotional support of women without returning that care, and is recognized symbolically as the leader of the family.

The new man for which Bryant and her protagonist advocate, in stark contrast to the patriarchal head of the nuclear family, seeks to abolish these gender dimensions: he does not value or maintain a position of power in public and private spaces, benefit from a division of labor that grants him better access to economic opportunities, enjoy the emotional support of women without returning that care, and does not desire to be the symbolic leader of the family. Since traditional marriage and the nuclear family do not exist in Ata, the protagonist must, for example, learn in becoming the new man to not desire control of Augustine or their child. As outlined by Anjana Mebane-Cruz and Margaret Wiener, this adoption of new masculinities is complicated by his traditional perspective on the family. When Augustine informs him that she will "be woman" to him, he falls back into earlier, patriarchal practices (107). In response, he attempts "to replicate the racist and gendered relationship patterns familiar to him" (Mebane-Cruz and Wiener 315). He eventually gives "up his old conceptions about couples and families" and alters "his definition of and ability to love" since Augustine "remains both loving and nonattached" (Mebane-Cruz and Wiener 315). Rejecting the patriarchal family unit's commitment to male control, he adopts the alternative masculinities of the feminist utopia, ideals of manhood that welcome new, egalitarian social groupings, and recommends them to his audience.

The new conceptions of manhood this former patriarch offers value the community and reject the isolating qualities of the nuclear family. In adopting Atan conceptions of maleness, he learns to recognize the importance of the community to the lives of adults and the nourishment of children. He initially learns of the importance of community in a discussion with Augustine concerning his decision to remain in Ata: "'What made you decide to stay?' asked Augustine. 'I don't know. Maybe it was you.' I had meant to please her, but she only frowned. 'I hope not. One person is not enough'" (136). Bryant, therefore, presents masculinities that are revolutionary in their commitment to communities. Instead of small, patriarchal hierarchies, they are "families of equals, families which are not claustrophobic and nuclear. Rather, they are relatively large extended groups who freely choose to live together" and are not separated by gender roles (Pearson 67). This freedom necessitates that children are free to associate with members of the community and are not restricted to the control of their biological parents. They are instead raised by the society at large. As previously described, the Atan people share each aspect of child upbringing outside of birth. Ata provides "community dining facilities and child-care centers," parenting responsibilities" are shared by "all community members," and "family names" are eliminated "to avoid the implication that children are property" (Freibert 68). The narrator reflects this attitude toward children when he considers his daughter: "She was truly, from the beginning, not our baby" (155). Instead of being the property of her parents, this young female Atan behaves "as if every adult were her parent and every child her brother or sister" and this social connection illustrates the communal qualities required of the new man for the utopian polity to succeed (179). By replacing the traditionally masculine interest in a nuclear, patriarchal family, Bryant, therefore, proposes through her narrator that new ideals of manhood valuing community are required for the development of a better, feminist society.

In addition to the protagonist's advocacy for equality across sex and gender is his proposal, through his descriptions of Atan culture, of an egalitarian, non-racist polity. As outlined by Edward Chan, Bryant imagines this utopian treatment of race by disrupting the traditional racial semiotic in her novel through both counter-signification and non-signification. This first method "actively calls into question the way race has traditionally signified" through "agglomeration in which the extremities of the physical markings of one race (blond hair) have not been erased, but instead remain, juxtaposed with markers that would 'normally' be associated with another race (oriental eyes)" (472). A young male Atan the protagonist meets, Chil-sing, for example, possesses such a combination of contrasting racial markers: "I looked into the face of a boy, a broad fair face with the slight down of a blonde beard. His hair was thick and long, curling down to his shoulders. His face was broad, with high cheek bones, and his eyes were wide and slanted with an oriental fold" (10). The second method Bryant utilizes "is a synthesis of phenotypical attributes such that the blend represents some arithmetical mean of various racial appearances" (Chan 471-472). As observed by the narrator, "most of the people" populating Ata are "of a racial blend I could not quite identify" since "their features formed a medium composite" of races (18).

The problem Chan identifies in Bryant's approach to race and utopia is that her "disruption of the traditional racial semiotic suggests that identity is not in any intimate or significant way involved with how one exists as a social subject (i.e., how the subject is marked and consequently read as an object)" (478). Yet, as the observations of the narrator illustrate, Bryant's utopia is made up of people possessing unique bodily markers; the absence of violence according to these markers is due significantly to the new masculinities of this society. Noticing the amalgamated features of a subset of the Atan population, the protagonist marvels that he

"saw no sign that these extreme types were in any way noticed or thought of as different by the others" (19). Through the presentation of a polity formed by and continuously forming healthy masculinities opposed to the subjugation of others according to markers such as race, Bryant offers to her audience, through her formerly misogynistic narrator, new ideals of manhood she identifies as fundamental to the development of a better, feminist society.

Central also to Ata's feminist utopia and the masculinities the narrator proposes is a lack of taboos on sex and sexuality. Upon touring Ata, the protagonist recognizes this openness to sexual practice, noting specifically the freedom of children to experiment: "Along the paths or in the fields, the naked children engaged in sex play the way animals do, touching and sniffing at one another, ignored by the adults" (51). The lack of taboos extends to sexualities; observing how "quite a lot of the sex play" among these children "was homosexual," the narrator recognizes that queerness is not maligned in Ata as it is in the American patriarchy by traditional masculinities (51). The new performances of manhood Bryant presents in her novel as necessary for the improvement of society, therefore, reject sex as a social tool for distributing and curtailing power through control and subordination. In the traditionally masculine dystopia of the novel, the contemporary American capitalistic patriarchy, sex functions alongside popularity and wealth as rewards for the dominating self-made man. Bryant's utopia, on the other hand, favors a view of sex that removes from it traditionally masculine ideals of coercion, subordination, and power consolidation. Bryant presents new, utopian masculinities that view sex as an open, unrestricted instrument for connection and intimacy that, when correctly utilized, celebrates difference and equality over power and control. In this way, the utopian polity and its masculinities are mutually constitutive and produce, in contrast to the patriarchal economy, equality across sexes, gender, and races among other identity elements. As Bryant's narrator

emphasizes, feminist-grounded masculinities are necessary for such socioeconomic improvements.

Moving from such commentary on socioeconomic alterations necessary at the intersection of masculinities and the nation, Bryant's narrator utilizes his position as a former patriarchal male to comment on the importance of emotional health to the project of transforming masculinities. As the protagonist explains, emotional self-care, enabled by the intuitive search for knowledge via dream analysis, mystical experience, and the development of a new consciousness, is a crucial step in adopting and maintaining alternative ideals of manhood.

As the narrator's transformation attests, alternatives to patriarchal conceptions of manhood must repair the emotional fracturing caused by its traditional counterpart. In *The Kin of Ata are Waiting for You*, patriarchal subjects are damaged by hegemonic masculinities and this trauma is revealed in their dreams. The repercussions of murdering Connie, for example, manifest in those of the narrator as he is terrorized by unknown figures: "My eyes are shut. I am surrounded by shadowy shapes. They close in. I must fight them off. But I must not look at them. How can I fight if I can't see them? I must run, but they are all around me. I might run into the grasp of one. Don't look at them. They are closer. I feel their breath on me. I throw out my arms to hold them off. But they will swallow my hands" (5). In the text, the toxic effects of patriarchal masculinities manifest in the dreams of their adherents and, as exemplars of transformed, healthier masculinities, the Atan men populating the novel cherish their dreams as tools by which they may improve their emotional health. These utopian masculinities, therefore, embrace the emotional wellbeing of men, in contradiction of traditional scripts of manliness.

The tool utilized most effectively by these new men to better improve their emotional welfare is a type of dream hermeneutics in which subjects, moving beyond the mere analysis of

dreams as signifiers of emotional health, interpret their dreams as sets of instruction that concern every aspect of life. In this polity, their language, consisting of few words, reflects the positioning of such a dream hermeneutics as the activity most prized by this community. Perhaps the most frequently used words of their lexicon are "a single pair of concepts" related to these dreams and how they organize "social life: nagdeo and donagdeo. Nagdeo is anything that fosters dreaming, especially important dreaming; donagdeo is anything that hinders it" (Mebane-Cruz and Wiener 309). In the pursuit of transcendent knowledge provided via dreams, these utopian subjects carefully consider methods of improving their dreams, focusing on their diets, workloads, relationships, and general and specific actions within the community.

As is demonstrated in the original perspective of the narrator, this focus on dreams is antithetical to hegemonic masculinities. Prior to his transformation, the protagonist expresses a traditionally rational position when discussing the use of dreams to make decisions with a male Atan, Sbgai: "'But what if a dream is followed and leads to trouble or hurt?' 'Why, then we see we misunderstood the message of the dream. Common sense! Reason.' 'You admit that common sense and reason are useful.' 'Indispensible! But they follow the dream.' 'In the world, we put them first'" (161). His initial opposition is grounded in hegemonic masculinities' valuation of reasoning above other methods for obtaining emotional and physical healing. During his incremental transformation that, as previously outlined, begins with his second homicidal act, the murder of Tran, and is completed with his trial confession at the conclusion of the novel, he learns to value and interpret dreams since "reality comes clothed in coverings we can recognize and describe" (168). His adoption of new, utopian masculinities, therefore, requires that he learn methods for interpreting his dreams and, through these strategies, become attuned to his state of

emotional health. The narrator, therefore, calls for other men to practice self-care as an important tool of new masculinities.

Among the other methods Bryant's narrator presents as important to the transformation of men such as chanting, numerology, mythmaking, and dancing, isolation therapy provides a unique opportunity for him to engage with the contents of his dreams. In this novel, new masculinities require an openness to mystical methods of acquiring transcendent knowledge and a rejection of patriarchal masculinities' interest in strictly rational approaches to learning. As Lyman Tower Sargent outlines, this spiritual concern is one of "transcendence, a rejection…of the material" and an interest in "something beyond the rational" (32). The novel presents alternative masculinities that seek healing via new ways of knowing such as emotional experience, intuition, and the unconscious, all central to the narrator's experiences during isolation therapy. Utilizing the Atan isolation chambers, hol-kas, he experiences visions and confronts those shadow figures of his dreams representing the toxic qualities of his patriarchal self:

> Without the strength or will to fight, I let go. I let go of something indefinable—my life, I suppose. Then I opened my eyes to look at the shadow which moved in closest to me. It was me, of course. They were all me, in one rotten form after another. There were twelve of me and we did the dance of the numbers, in the empty la-ka which echoed with our yells and screams and stomps. (128)

These dark shadow selves he faces represent those "rotten" aspects of his character directly traceable to hegemonic masculinities. Isolation therapy, therefore, is significant in the novel since it enables him to better understand his own emotional state and routes for healing.

Such healing comes from a final confrontation of two selves, one female and another male, and the defeat of long-held patriarchal ideals of manhood. His experience among these shadow selves continues until "after eons there were two of me left, facing each other across the fire pit. One of me was a woman, a hundred women, all the women, hurt, enraged and furious, that I had ever known. One of me was a man, myself, every rotten, opportunistic, cruel, avaricious and vain self I had ever been" (129). Since there is a "relationship between the repression of parts of the self and the oppression of other people," the traditional man must liberate the feminine qualities of his identity to discontinue the subordination of others outside himself (Pearson 68). These parts of his identity, male and female, confront each other in a combat of dance in which the victor becomes the leader of the ritual. After multiple failed attempts to destroy his female self, the narrator grows tired and ultimately follows her graceful movements, which replace his own aggressive approach. In this way, he finds healing through the acceptance of the feminine aspects of his own identity. As this passage demonstrates, the feminist goal of the novel—"the full and free attainment of the self"—positively impacts the men populating this new nation since they are able to accept both their feminine and masculine qualities (Pearson 68). This focus on emotional wellbeing and nontraditional methods of healing signifies the adoption of healthier ideals of masculinity Bryant and her narrator present as necessary for the betterment of society.

As the text delineates, a significant problem plaguing the emotional well-being of patriarchal individuals such as the narrator is their "primitive, linear mode of consciousness, marked by internal repression and external oppression," which lacks any "integration of thought and feeling, ratiocination and intuition, conscious and unconscious minds" (Pearson 85). Carol Pearson in "Coming Home: Four Feminist Utopias and Patriarchal Experience" identifies how

this ignoring of emotional health among traditionally masculine males strengthens patriarchy since there is a "relationship between the repression of parts of the self and the oppression of other people" (68). As Pearson outlines, though the narrator "is an extremely successful man in a patriarchal society, he is an alienated unhappy misogynist. When this man stops repressing the metaphorical women within himself, he is free from his need to dominate and conquer people in the outside world" (68). The protagonist and patriarchal males in general must, therefore, recognize the validity of their emotions and unconscious selves in order to heal emotionally and contribute to the development of a better society not predicated upon the oppression of others. As the narrator illuminates, the continual adherence to traditional masculinities and their neglect of their emotional statuses results in such nightmares becoming to a degree "the only real thing" they experience (26). Central to the protagonist's tract on masculinity is the message that new conceptions of manhood are necessary that charge men with the responsibility of improving their emotional health.

While Bryant's novel possesses traditional traits such as its centering of heteronormative male experience, it is this framing of it as the non-fiction tract of a once hyperviolent patriarch that makes it a uniquely powerful work. Unlike other contemporary feminist utopias, *The Kin of Ata Are Waiting for You* is the conversion story of a murderer and rapist and Bryant, in crafting such a story, compels her audience to consider the most extreme implications of social constructionist gender theories. Bryant's novel, therefore, signifies a break from the essentialist gender ideologies common to radical feminism in the 1970s. In letting a former patriarch speak as it were, Bryant's utopia distinctly imagines the transformed, new man suitable for an ideal, egalitarian society and powerfully comments upon the difficulty with which traditional men may adopt alternative conceptions of manhood. Such a focus upon the malleability of masculinities

and the centering of a male protagonist in *The Kin of Ata Are Waiting for You* illustrates a trend

within early feminist utopian fiction that encompasses the novel upon which chapter two focuses,

Ursula K. Le Guin's *The Dispossessed*.

Chapter 2: Precarious Masculinities in Ursula K. Le Guin's *The Dispossessed*

The transformability of masculinities and the perspectives of male characters unite the focus of chapter one, *The Kin of Ata Are Waiting for You*, and the novel this chapter concerns, Ursula K. Le Guin's *The Dispossessed*. There are, however, key distinctions between these feminist utopias. *The Kin of Ata Are Waiting for You* follows the gradual, positive transformation of a vile male protagonist who is both a murderer and rapist. *The Dispossessed*, on the other hand, uniquely focuses upon the dynamic nature of masculinity through the experiences of a utopian, feminist-oriented male character. In contrast to *The Kin of Ata Are Waiting for You*, which presents the evils of traditional masculinities through its hyperviolent narrator and the possibility of him adopting a feminist-informed conception of manliness, *The Dispossessed* details through Le Guin's protagonist the precarious nature of alternative masculinities and the risk to women and society of men succumbing to patriarchal ideals of manhood.

Le Guin's representation of patriarchal and alternative masculinities is often overlooked; scholarship emphasizes her role as a writer who champions the feminine. Upon her death, obituaries hailed Le Guin as an "ambassador of the genres of the fantastic" who pushed for the recognition of science fiction as legitimate literature (Clute). Among her often-noted achievements is her inclusion of themes less prominent in science fiction prior to the 1970s such as gender fluidity, sexualities, and feminism. *The Washington Post* notes that Le Guin crafted "novels that grappled with issues of gender inequality, racism, and environmental destruction" (Smith). Among her achievements, Le Guin is predominantly noted for the feminist content of her fiction and, more specifically, her inclusion of complex female characters. In her "Feminist Critique of Science Fiction," Mary Kenny Badami outlines the absence of women in science fiction prior to the 1970s. Specifically, she presents "three theses about the non-role of women in

science fiction: Women have *not* been important as characters in SF; Women have *not* been

important as fans of SF; Women have *not* been important as writers of SF" (6). Badami surmises,

"female sex roles in SF," historically unvalued, "generally add up to the Invisible Woman" (6).

Other critics, such as Lisa Yaszek in *Galactic Suburbia: Recovering Women's Science Fiction*

(2008), have complicated this issue, demonstrating the centrality of feminist issues and

perspectives in many works of this period. In her reading of seemingly non-political postwar

science fiction texts by women, Yaszek demonstrates their contributions to feminist genre

fiction, specifically, their inclusion of themes such as female power and social engagement. Still,

problematic depictions of women abound in much of science fiction published before the 1970s.

Such depictions notably led Joanna Russ to observe, "there are plenty of images of women in

science fiction. There are hardly any women" (Russ 217). Alongside other feminist writers such

as Bryant and Russ, Le Guin combatted the absence of the feminine in science fiction by creating

strong female characters that disrupted traditional gender scripts.

This inclusion of complex female characters coincided with her realistic, nuanced

portrayals of masculinity that likewise challenged patriarchal ideologies. Alongside writers such

as James Tiptree, Jr., Zenna Henderson, Joanna Russ, Lee Killough, Pamela Sargent, and

Octavia Butler, Le Guin "brought speculation about the future of sex roles to science fiction"

(Smith viii-ix). Yet, the manner by which Le Guin utilized her writing to destabilize traditional

masculinities is widely overlooked. Among the many tributes published after her death, only

Gerald Jonas's article in *The New York Times* mentions her work in proposing alternative, non-

toxic concepts of maleness. Her male protagonists, he only briefly notes, "avoid the macho

posturing of so many science fiction and fantasy heroes" (B 15). While it is widely accepted that

Le Guin spearheaded a new era of science fiction that introduced revolutionary topics

surrounding sexuality and gender roles, her unique, revolutionary treatments of traditional and non-normative masculinities deserve greater critical attention.

The application of masculinities studies to a key novel of Le Guin's *Hainish Cycle*, *The Dispossessed*, allows us to see both masculinities studies and Le Guin's work in a new light. While Le Guin's novel, like *The Kin of Ata Are Waiting for You*, concerns the experiences of a male protagonist, its focus differs: *The Dispossessed* features a feminist-oriented man who must negotiate the temptations of the capitalistic patriarchy. This shift from conversion to backsliding necessitates a theoretical approach more significantly focused upon social formations of gender. Theoretical frameworks concerning ideologies of the nation and gender, for example, are particularly important in that they theorize how texts support or condemn masculinities through their imagined societies. David Buchbinder's *Studying Men and Masculinities* (2012) posits that gender is an instance of interpellation by which subjects and ideologies are constructed and reinforced. In this way, he posits that "the subject comes into existence through ideology" and "ideology is brought into being through the subject" (36). This relationship between the subject and ideology hints upon the relationship between the subject's gender and society. Todd Reeser's aforementioned concept of the gendered nation emphasizes this relationship of the essence of a nation and its masculinities. In *Masculinities in Theory: An Introduction* (2010), he outlines the ways nationality and masculinity are elemental to and shape subjectivities. As Buchbinder and Reeser emphasize, masculinities involve the mutual construction of subjects and ideologies and such gender identities shape and are shaped by the essence of a nation. These theoretical conceptions of gender are relevant to *The Dispossessed* since Le Guin presents to her audience a male protagonist whose masculinities are dynamic and are shaped by the polities within which he lives and travels and the ideologies they espouse.

By illuminating this connection between masculinities and the nation, Le Guin links these traditional conceptions of manhood with, among other ideologies, nationalism. In a recent issue of *Extrapolation*, Jeanne Hamming, in "Nationalism, Masculinity, and the Politics of Climate Change in the Novels of Kim Stanley Robinson and Michael Crichton," traces the interplay between traditional American masculinities, environmentalism, and nationalism. Analyzing how Crichton and Robinson link "environmental crisis to national identity, and even more notably, to a national masculinity that has been threatened and exposed, made vulnerable by the events of 9/11," Hamming asserts that climate change has a profound effect upon nationalism and American masculinities (22). The danger is that it "will provoke a deeper reentrenchment in gender, racial, and ethnic hierarchies where environmental crisis, like 'the war on terror,' will come to be seen as a looming threat, not against mankind, but against manhood" (43).

Building upon Hamming's foundation, I contend that Le Guin's work represents an earlier warning concerning the conflation of nationalism and masculinities. Hamming asserts that Crichton and Robinson present ecology "as the link between the personal and the political insofar as nature itself becomes the basis for a micro-politics of masculinity in the midst of the macro-politics of American nationalism, and, construed more broadly, multinational capitalism" (40). In contrast to these masculinist writers, Le Guin identifies in her work hierarchical social patterns—power consolidation, control, aggression, and domination—linking individual masculine performances to the macro-politics of the capitalistic patriarchy. Prefiguring Hamming's focus on the interplay of gender, the nation, and environmentalism, Le Guin's novel emphasizes connections between traditional masculinities that favor power and control and nationalistic policies manifesting these values on an international level.

Capitalism's impact on American masculinities is foundational to critiques of imagined societies in speculative fiction, including Le Guin's work. In addition to Michael Kimmel's conception of the *self-made man*, introduced in chapter one, I utilize Raewyn Connell's theorization of mechanisms or *patterns of masculinity* by which such societies reward or punish subjects according to masculinities. These four patterns in the contemporary Western gender order, hegemony, subordination, complicity, and marginalization, function so that traditional performances of manhood are granted power while alternative masculinities are subjugated or sent to the social margins. Applying these theoretical tools of masculinities scholars to speculative texts shows how authors such as Le Guin posit new, egalitarian performances of maleness in opposition to traditionally masculine characters.

Illustrating a significant trend among 1970s feminist utopian writers, Le Guin presents complex portrayals of masculinity in genre fiction. Le Guin creates protagonists compelled to negotiate masculine performances and the relationship of gender to social power. Her critiques of traditional masculinities therefore mark a significant departure from mainstream, male-dominated science fiction. Novels by noted authors such as the "Big Three," Robert Heinlein, Isaac Asimov, and Arthur C. Clarke, champion images of manhood characterized by heroic deeds, assertiveness, independence, strength, and power. Rico and his comrades in Heinlein's *Starship Troopers* (1959), for example, demonstrate a masculinity that is "something intensely physical, based on animal power, instinct, and aggression" and is "all body, so to speak, and no brain" (Hantke 498). Other male protagonists in Asimov and Clarke's works practice a masculinity that is hard science-oriented, wary of femininity as a threat to technological and social progress, and typically lacking any emotional complexity. These characters' positions as idealized figures of manhood are invariably portrayed as white, middle or upper class, and

heterosexual. Writers such as Le Guin, in contrast, present invaluable portraits of masculinity qualified by varying sexualities, masculinities, races, and class positions heretofore absent from the genre.

Such non-normative representations of manhood are notable since they replace the older, conservative masculinities of earlier speculative fiction. If women are traditionally portrayed in science fiction literature as complacent, passive objects of male desire lacking depth or complexity, men are depicted as ideally masculine, virile, and dominating—the super men outlined in chapter one. These idealized characters represent an impossible conception of masculinity, which male fans and writers may admire but fail to become. In contrast to this unrealistic, stereotypical image of manhood, Le Guin's novels, like *The Kin of Ata Are Waiting for You*, present characters performing non-traditional masculinities that, while ignored during the golden age of science fiction, are often central to feminist science fiction texts.

The Dispossessed is emblematic of this paradigm shift and centers the experiences of an alternatively masculine character, Shevek, as he experiences for the first time a capitalistic, patriarchal society. Like Le Guin's earlier work, *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1969), *The Dispossessed* involves interactions between an alien visitor and a host civilization whose gender order causes the protagonist and reader to rethink naturalized and marginalized conceptions of gender and sexuality. Importantly, while *The Left Hand of Darkness* focuses upon the exploration of two ungendered, ambisexual, physiologically fluid societies, *The Dispossessed* involves the exploration of a society not foreign to the reader but, instead, one that closely resembles that of the United States. Like Bryant, Le Guin presents contemporary American society, but in a defamiliarized way, meaning that she alters a conceptual form (contemporary American culture) while the nature of this concept (a patriarchal gender order) remains stable

(Shklovsky 13). In this way, A-Io signifies the 20th century United States in the text and Le Guin, by centering non-hegemonic masculinities, engages her reader in a dialectic concerning manhood in contemporary America.

Historically, critics have focused on the text's philosophical themes with only limited emphasis being given to its commentary on subjectivities and gender. Carl Freedman, for instance, identifies at the center of the novel "the problem of reconciling synchrony and diachrony, of formulating a theory capable of describing existing structures in all their determinant force while also accounting for the process of historical change" (111). In Freedman's critique, the answer for this problem is found via the rejection of positivist certainties and the embracing of a new, dialectical epistemology (112). Other critical trends concern the political philosophies undergirding the novel. The first collection of original essays on the novel, *The New Utopian Politics of Ursula K. Le Guin's* The Dispossessed (2005)*,* illustrates this imbalance. More than half of the text's sixteen pieces focus on the political implications of the novel with the remaining essays concerning topics such as temporality, autonomy, community, and ethics. Continuing this focus on political philosophy and the novel, Tony Burns' *Political Theory, Science Fiction, and Utopian Literature: Ursula K. Le Guin and* The Dispossessed (2008) contends that the text, while not utopian, concerns utopianism as it functions within politics. Scholarship surrounding the novel has been preoccupied with its philosophical themes and implications, making analyses concerning the role of subjectivity and gender (specifically masculinities) notably absent.

Central to the text's de-marginalization of alternative performances of manhood is its delineation of traditional masculinities. Three salient qualities specifically separate Le Guin's protagonist, Shevek, from his traditionally American masculine counterparts of the capitalist

patriarchy he visits, A-Io: a disinterest in power and control, an absence of aggression, and an aversion to the domination of others. These qualities rejected by Shevek characterize capitalistic masculinities. The masculine script of the *self-made man*, for example, predicates a subject's value upon the accumulation of economic power and control via aggression and the domination of others. Deriving his self-worth not from financial or socioeconomic power but, instead, from community and connection, Shevek rejects these central tenets of contemporary American masculinities. Through these interactions of a feminist-oriented male protagonist with a patriarchal polity, Le Guin emphasizes those elements of traditional masculinities that should be rejected.

The novel presents these traits as descriptive of both A-Io and, more specifically, five of its powerful citizens with whom Shevek comes in contact: Kimoe, Saio Pae, Chifoilisk, Oiie, and Atro. These characters resemble protagonists typical of golden age novels and are, therefore, the antagonists to the new masculinities to which Shevek subscribes. They are the self-made men of A-Io, concerned with the accumulation and maintenance of power. They are assertive, independent, and patriarchal, and possess immense social power, which they wield aggressively to subjugate and control others. In turn, this domination enables the refortification of their positions within the gender order. These physicists seek to gain political power over their global and interplanetary rivals through the development of temporal technologies for warfare and economic stability. This ambition leads to their unlikely partnership with Shevek, whom they desire to manipulate and control. Strategically, Le Guin places them on the periphery as problematic alternatives to the newly centered, egalitarian masculinity of Shevek. Throughout the novel, Le Guin places the protagonist in contrast with A-Io and these specific characters,

inducing reconsiderations of traditional American masculinities in both her characters and audience.

Central to this destabilizing of normative masculinities is the way Le Guin, through these characters and Shevek, criticizes ideals of manhood found throughout science fiction predating *The Dispossessed*. Challenging historic trends of speculative fiction, Le Guin uncouples, through Shevek, traditional masculinities from the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics that are widely portrayed by earlier writers as the domains of patriarchal men. Through Shevek, Le Guin presents a new man who, while participating in the scientific process, lacks the problematic characteristics of protagonists found in the fiction of Clarke and Asimov. Grounded in feminist conceptions of manhood, Shevek is not opposed to femininity and possesses an emotional complexity and acceptance of diversity and difference absent from earlier characters of speculative fiction. Though granted access to power due to his proficiency in scientific fields of research, he ultimately—after temporarily succumbing to the temptations of capitalism and the patriarchy—re-adopts his feminist conceptions of manhood and, as a result, works to make his technological breakthroughs universally available. Through Shevek, Le Guin disconnects masculinity from the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics and offers an alternative both to traditional masculinities and those early speculative works supporting them.

The juxtaposition of masculinities Le Guin presents through Shevek and these patriarchal characters mirrors a contrast in the nations of which they are subjects. Le Guin utilizes these parallels in her novel to illuminate the relationship between national identity and masculinities. Specifically, the qualities of the traditional masculinities are linked in the novel to the capitalistic polity of A-Io while those of feminist-oriented masculinities are tied to the anarchic society of

Anarres. The nation of A-Io and its extratextual counterpart, the contemporary United States, produce and influence and are influenced by traditional masculinities. Le Guin highlights the need to transform both these gender scripts and the capitalistic economies and ideologies of exploitation that legitimize them. As Susan Storing Benfield points out in "The Interplanetary Dialectic: Freedom and Equality in Ursula Le Guin's The Dispossessed" (2006), Le Guin postulates an anarchic alternative to the capitalistic patriarchy that is "based on voluntary cooperation" instead of "competition and coercion" (134). Informed by the teachings of the anarchist, Odo, these foundational principles of mutual agreement replace the traditionally masculine concepts of competition and intimidation, demonstrating the interconnected relationship of national socioeconomic systems and gender. Central to Le Guin's interplanetary dialectic are the alternative masculinities Shevek performs, which are necessary for the new, better social system she envisions. While she balks at labeling it a perfect, utopian system, she presents it as an ideal alternative to the capitalistic patriarchies of A-Io and the 20th century United States. Similarly, she presents non-exploitative masculinities as positive alternatives that reject the traditional masculine goals of accumulating power and control.

Le Guin introduces this contrast of subjectivities and their attending conceptions of nationality and gender at the onset of the novel. As a child in a history course, Shevek receives a visual lesson concerning A-Io, which introduces him to the intersecting forces of capitalism, masculinities, and heteronormativity and their relationship to power and control. Images such as "the corpses of children, hairy like themselves, stacked up like scrap metal, stiff and rusty, on a beach, and men pouring oil over the children and lighting it" reveal the brutal, traditionally masculine response of those in power to control and destroy those situated near the bottom of the socioeconomic hierarchy and, therefore, forced into starvation (41). These lessons about the rival

nation confuse and intrigue the young student who is unfamiliar with such concepts. This relationship of the empowered to the exploited, he learns, is predicated upon their position as self-made men privileged by their traditional masculinity, heterosexuality, and class position among other factors.

This lesson introduces the impact of traditional masculinities and their connection to power and control upon sexuality. The commodification of heterosexual intimacy and the female body is symbolized in the image of jeweled navels belonging to "women kept for the sexual use" of these "male members of the propertied class" (42). These women sit idly "in the sand all day until dinner is served to them by people of the unpropertied class" (42). This passage outlines the patriarchal order of A-Io, beginning with the top echelon of propertied, heterosexual, traditionally masculine men and concluding with the nondescript servants populating the lowest socioeconomic stratum. In between these tiers are positioned "body profiteers" as Shevek's partner, Takver, calls women who use "their sexuality as a weapon in a power struggle with men" (213). These women are isolated from power and knowledge but valued and, therefore, compensated for their bodies, sexual favors, and performances of femininity, which, in turn, reinforce the masculinity of the propertied male. The oppressive nature of this gender order is outlined in grotesque detail as the visual lesson throws the privilege of these women in sharp relief against a backdrop of the starved and disenfranchised: "a close-up of dinnertime: soft mouths champing and smiling, smooth hands reaching out for delicacies wetly mounded in silver bowls. Then a switch back to the blind, blunt face of a dead child, mouth open, empty, black, dry. 'Side by side,' the quiet voice had said" (42). The socioeconomic position of these self-made men can never be secure and this, in turn, leads to the continued exploitation of others and the reinforcing of the capitalist-informed gender order (147). The traditional masculinities of A-

Io and the contemporary United States create the "masculine subjectivity" of their citizens in a battle against femininity and fluidity (177). Representing an alternative, egalitarian masculinity relocated from the social margins, Shevek rejects the traditional American masculinities of the Urrasti with whom he comes in contact and also challenges their systems of power and control regarding sexuality.

The temptations of such patriarchal systems do temporarily sway Shevek, however, and Le Guin, in imagining her character's momentary but disastrous adoption of misogynistic attitudes toward women, emphasizes the precarious position of men performing alternative masculinities. In a scene on Urras at a party held by Shevek's acquaintance, Vea, the protagonist, drunk and aroused, assaults his host, stopping only after he has ejaculated on her clothing. In his influential analysis of the novel, "To Read *The Dispossessed*," Samuel Delany finds fault with Le Guin's occasional essentialist presentations of conceptions of sexual attractiveness. He locates such instances of essentialism, for example, in this passage. The central problem he identifies is Shevek's reaction to the initial flirtatious behavior exhibited by Vea. According to Delany, since "men must learn to respond to" such performances "as erotic" and Shevek, a man completely divorced from the local culture and norms, recognizes the intentions of Vea, this section of the text essentializes sexual attractiveness (Delany 117). Notwithstanding this criticism, the scene highlights Le Guin's interest in the dynamic and, therefore, vulnerable state of utopian masculinities. In emphasizing the instability of masculinity, she illuminates the constant threat of feminist-oriented men succumbing to the temptations of patriarchy. Recognizing the dangers of misogyny, Shevek re-adopts a feminist-informed masculinity and thereafter monitors himself, remaining steadfast against the influence of traditional gender ideologies.

The alternative masculinity to which he recommits does not associate sexuality with power and control but, instead, with the mutual offering of the self between two partners. As one Anarresti describes it to Shevek, "'Having's wrong; sharing's right. What more can you share than your whole self, your whole life, all the nights and all the days?'" (50). The extensive social freedoms allowed in Anarres result in Shevek only learning this lesson after many sexual experiences that, while not founded on power and control, view participants, like the body profiteers, as mere conduits for gratification: "He copulated with a number of girls, but copulation was not the joy it ought to be. It was a mere relief of need, like evacuating, and he felt ashamed of it afterward because it involved another person as object" (157). This passage illustrates his similarities to Bryant's narrator, who, while reflecting upon his assault of Augustine, describes his ejaculation "like a sneeze without pleasure or relief" that caused him to feel he "had lost something again" (56). In stark contrast with those traditional ideals of manhood initially held by Bryant's protagonist and temporarily subscribed to by Shevek, the alternative masculinity to which he returns is qualified by the recognition of the subjectivity of sexual partners and the rejection of attempts to refigure sexual experience as an avenue for domination and the accumulation of social power.

This dissociation of sexuality from power and control is reflected not only in Anarresti subjectivities but also in the essence of the nation itself. Anarres, in opposition to A-Io, is a society in which gender and sexual fluidity are allowed to flourish. This societal norm, in turn, results in stark linguistic and cultural contrasts from its rival nation. The absence of patriarchal masculinities in Anarres, like Ata, results in sexuality and, in turn, language concerning it lacking themes of subjugation and coercion. Their language, for example, lacks "any proprietary idioms for the sexual act. In Pravic it made no sense for a man to say that he had 'had' a woman.

The word which came closest in meaning to 'fuck,' and had a similar secondary usage as a curse, was specific: it meant rape" (53). As a result, "the usual verb, taking only a plural subject, can be translated only by a neutral word like copulate. It meant something two people did, not something one person did, or had" (53). As Shevek later states, "it is hard to swear when sex is not dirty and blasphemy does not exist" (258). Other sexualities, in addition, are not marginalized since patriarchal preoccupations with the gender order and its relationship to non-normative sexual acts are absent. Shevek "like all children of Anarres…had had sexual experience freely with both boys and girls" and importantly this fact does not affect his social standing (51). In the absence of traditional masculinities, power and control are dissociated from sexual experience and fluidity is welcomed as a normative, pleasurable subjective aspect.

Through his negative experiences on A-Io, Shevek also recognizes the negative impact of traditional masculinities and their emphases on power and control upon education. In conversations with the Urrasti scientists, the shoring up of knowledge is demonstrated to be key to the consolidation of power and control within a capitalistic market. When Shevek asks, for example, if all scientists in A-Io are men, Pae responds, "Scientists. Oh yes, certainly, they're all men. There are some female teachers in the girls' school, of course. But they never get past Certificate level" (73). Such a disparity among the sexes in the realm of education is considered a byproduct of biological differences among men and women. To blur the proposed intellectual border separating the sexes risks biological abnormalities: "'Of course, there's always a few exceptions, God-awful brainy women with vaginal atrophy'" (73). Women are considered intellectually stunted members of society valued only in their use to reinforce the traditional masculinity of those self-made men whom they serve. In this way, Le Guin interrogates the archetypal scientists common to the novels of hard science fiction and their seemingly natural

place at the pinnacles of power and knowledge. In highlighting the myriad women made invisible throughout the genre's history, Le Guin not only calls for new, complex portrayals of women but also nuanced explorations of masculinities invisible in much of science fiction.

Through these portrayals of the scientists of A-Io and Shevek and their contrasting views concerning biological sex and education, Le Guin illustrates the centrality of power and control to hegemonic masculine educational ideologies. Specifically, she depicts the tension and anxiety that result from interactions between alternative and traditional masculinities in academia. Continuing their discussion concerning sex and power, Shevek answers a question concerning the possibility of women being "capable of original intellectual work" by listing female scientists who taught and mentored him (73). Recognizing one of these scholars, Gvarab, as a scientist with particularly significant influence, Oiie responds with offense, incredulity, and the reluctant recognition that his alternative, Shevek, has identified an error in Urrasti gender ideologies: "'Can't tell from your names, of course… You make a point, I suppose of drawing no distinction between the sexes'" (74).

Anxiety persists among these performers of traditional masculinities and they remain dubious of the merits of female education and academic achievements regardless of the demonstrated logic supporting Shevek's position. This apprehension illustrates the power of marginalized masculinities to disrupt hegemony and the fear such challenges produce among subscribers to traditional conceptions of manhood. In another interaction in which Shevek outlines the benefits of sexual equality on education, the concerned reaction of his interlocutors hints at anxieties concerning the possible diminishing of power and control: "'But the loss of—of everything feminine—of delicacy—and the loss of masculine self-respect—You can't pretend, surely, in your work, that women are your equals? In physics, in mathematics, in the intellect?

You can't pretend to lower yourself constantly to their level?'" (17). These views, expressed by Kimoe, illustrate the nature of hegemonic masculine anxiety as fearful of gender order alterations. These apprehensions are presented as symptomatic of contemporary American masculinities and the anxieties they engender to maintain, at times violently, patriarchal hierarchies.

Such anxieties are produced in part by males who reject traditional masculinities and the gender order they seek to protect. The questioning of patriarchy by a male practicing an alternative, non-exploitative masculinity reveals the insecure position of the self-made man, seeking to maintain an unnatural social hierarchy. "Shevek saw that he had touched in these men an impersonal animosity that went very deep. Apparently they, like the tables on the ship, contained a woman, a suppressed, silenced, bestialized woman, a fury in a cage. He had no right to tease them. They knew no relation but possession" (74). Like the unnamed narrator of *The Kin of Ata Are Waiting for You* prior to his conversion, these men harm themselves through the suppression of their own feminine qualities. They deny their own complex identities in favor of a gender binary, which compels them to adopt traditional performances of manhood so they may maintain socioeconomic power and control. In Shevek, the reader witnesses a new masculinity characterized by its rejection of these central aspects of its hegemonic counterpart.

Through this protagonist, Le Guin centers in the novel an alternative masculinity opposed to oppressive, hierarchical influences within education. Anarresti academics, reflective of the anarchic teachings of Odo upon which the nation was founded, must function as "a permanent revolution" whose origin is "a thinking mind" and, therefore, oppose traditional, hierarchical systems of education (10). The organizing Odonian principle "that the dominant lifestyle is not permanently set but permits, indeed demands, personal choices to meet inevitable social and

environmental changes" necessitates individualism and independence within education (Bierman 249). In performing a masculinity that does not value power and control, Shevek identifies developing hierarchies within Anarresti education and vies for their removal.

Specifically, Shevek attacks figures within Anarresti education who accumulate power and control by minimizing the autonomy of students and scholars. "'We don't educate for freedom. Education, the most important activity of the social organism, has become rigid, moralistic, authoritarian'" (168). According to Shevek, instead of following the individualism of Odonian teachings, "'kids learn to parrot Odo's words as if they were laws—the ultimate blasphemy!'" (168). In direct opposition to the protagonist's egalitarian, pluralist stance is his mentor, Sabul, who uses educational hierarchies to commodify and, therefore, gain power from the appropriated intellectual work of others. As outlined by Takver, Sabul works tirelessly to subjugate Shevek and annex his advances in physics: "'How could you go talk to him, even? After all the slander he's spread about you, and the lies about the Principles being stolen from him, and not telling you that the Urrasti gave you that prize, and then just last year, when he got those kids who organized the lecture series broken up and sent away because of your 'crypto-authoritarian influence'…?'" (364). As a representative of traditional masculinities, Sabul labors to consolidate power and control within the Anarresti academy through the subjugation of others. Signifying a new, non-hierarchical masculine alternative, Shevek resists the allure of influence and authority made available to him as a result of his academic accomplishments and rejects traditional masculinities' emphases on power and control in education.

This attack upon coercive elements of education is part of Shevek's larger efforts to oppose the importation of traditionally masculine consolidations of power and control into Anarres. While this utopia, as Le Guin points out in the novel's subtitle, is ambiguous, it is

rooted in positive alternative masculinities, resulting in its position as a constructive alternative to the polities of A-Io and the contemporary United States. In Anarres and A-Io, these elements, masculinities and nationality, shape each other and the nation. Like the national essence and traditional masculinities normalized in A-Io, the nationality and alternative concepts of maleness produced in Anarres are not permanent. Shevek's attacks upon developing hierarchical patterns reveal key characteristics of the gender-nation relationship unique to Anarres that cause it to be a positive alternative to that of A-Io, and, by extrapolation, to that of the U.S.

Anarres is demonstrated to possess an improved gender-nation relationship through its encouragement of personal freedoms and individual activism. Shevek, for example, does not depart from Anarresti concepts of nation and gender through his rebellion but, instead, becomes an exemplary member of the Odonian society through his anarchic actions. In this way, Anarresti subjectivities—specifically their nationality and gender—function in opposition to the traditional masculinities and nationalism of A-Io. A-Io, like contemporary American culture, produces hierarchies as a result of the dialogue between its capitalistic and patriarchal national and gender ideologies. Anarres, on the other hand, produces a distinctly different dialogue between its anarchic nationality and fluid genders. The result is a nation that, though at times influenced by outside oppressive ideologies, rejects consolidations of power and control. Shevek's attacks are made against subjugating, coercive masculinities taking hold in varying parts of Anarresti society.

Essential to Shevek's opposition to invasive, subjugating masculinities is the recognition that consolidations of control occur through myriad social institutions that, like education, buttress traditional masculinities. Through her dialectic of gendered nations, Le Guin identifies necessary ties between socio-economic, governmental, and private institutions of a nation and its

normalized masculinities. The social institutions of A-Io, for example, support traditional

masculinities and this results in unequal distributions of power and efforts to control and

disenfranchise within these societal bodies. Presenting her protagonist with signifiers of

traditional masculinities' drive for power and control, Le Guin draws in Shevek's confusion a

stark contrast in masculinities: "He had never seen a rat, or an army barracks, or an insane

asylum, or a poorhouse, or a pawnshop, or an execution, or a thief, or a tenement, or a rent

collector, or a man who wanted to work and could not find work to do, or a dead baby in a ditch"

(283). These seemingly unrelated elements of A-Io society signify inequalities innate to

traditional masculinities and supported by the institutions they produce. These oppressive

realities of traditional masculine social networks are recognized by the protagonist as "the human

suffering in which the ideals of his society were rooted, the ground from which they sprang"

(283). Central to the ideals of Odonian society are new, non-traditional masculinities and the

elimination of their attending oppressive social institutions.

Of the institutions considered in the novel, jail is critical to both the development of

alternative, Odonian masculinities and the maturation of the protagonist. Two key texts of

Odonian philosophy, *The Prison Letters* and *The Analogy*, were composed while Odo was

imprisoned after an insurrection (87). During her nine years of captivity in a fort in Drio, the

anarchic leader outlined her position against capitalistic, patriarchal polities and the coercive

institutions they produce. Her radical theorizations of an anarchic society and non-subjugating

masculinities form the philosophical foundation of Anarres and are in part the result of her

experiences in A-Io and the prisons it utilizes to marginalize and silence.

Like Odo, Shevek is galvanized by his understanding of jail as an oppressive social

establishment. As a young child, he leads his friends in an imaginative enactment of jail, leaning

upon what they have learned in the classroom. Acting as guards, Shevek and Tirin lock their friend, Kadagv, under the west wing of the learning center they attend (35). While the experiment begins as an innocent exercise, the participants soon adopt their roles as oppressors and prisoner. Pushing Kadagv into his makeshift cell with considerable force, the boys quickly adopt their roles as members of a capitalistic patriarchy. They stand guard quietly, demonstrating no pity as their friend whimpers and nurses a scrape received in the altercation: "Shevek and Tirin did not speak. They stood motionless, their faces without expression, in their role as guards" (37). Importantly, the boys find they are adopting these traditionally masculine ideals within a short period of time: "they were not playing the new role now, it was playing them" (37-8).

Le Guin connects this game with traditional masculinities and, more specifically, the precarious position of men performing alternative masculinities who must withstand the temptations of the capitalistic patriarchy. She chronicles, more specifically, the boys' expedient adoption of hierarchical masculinities and the trauma resulting from this temporary departure from egalitarian, alternative conceptions of manhood. As the young Anarresti boys begin their jail play-acting, they immediately adopt patriarchal attitudes towards women without being actively aware of their newly adopted sexism. Girls are automatically "eliminated from their company" in this game and "they could not have said why" this tendency to marginalize has taken root in their minds (35). While this conflict between masculinities and their treatments of women causes cognitive dissonance, the effects of their game on each member become profound during the imprisonment of their friend, Kadagv.

This overnight mock-incarceration grants to each boy newfound control over their comrade. Shevek feels this power when not disclosing the whereabouts of the boy. Yet, upon

witnessing Tirin's more daring, exceedingly hierarchical action of lying to adult leaders in order to prevent the liberation of their confined friend, Shevek's "sense of secret power suddenly made him uncomfortable" (39). Ultimately deciding to release his friend before the planned length of two days, Shevek suffers a traumatic response to the subjugation of Kadagv: "After getting him to the baths to clean up, Shevek went off at a run to the latrine. There he leaned over a bowl and vomited. The spasms did not leave him for a quarter of an hour. He was shaky and exhausted when they passed. He went to the dormitory common room, read some physics, and went to bed early" (40). Traumatized by his experience with traditional, masculine social institutions, the protagonist ceases to find such play-acting an interesting exercise. Recognizing the impact of such an experiment upon their identities and performances of gender, the boys shrink away from the enactment of patriarchal masculinities and "none of the five boys ever" go "back to the prison under the learning center" (40). Le Guin, therefore, illustrates in this passage both the connections between the social institutions and masculinities of the contemporary United States and the constant temptations the capitalistic patriarchy presents to alternative, feminist-oriented men.

Shevek's understanding of traditional masculinities' buttressing of social institutions ventures beyond jail to other organizations, including the military and the free market. He, for example, in understanding "why the army was organized as it was," identifies the influence of traditional masculinities upon the armed forces and questions this conception of manhood (304). Such a system of power and control, he recognizes "was indeed quite necessary. No rational form of organization would serve the purpose. He simply had not understood that the purpose was to enable men with machine guns to kill unarmed men and women easily and in great quantities when told to do so. Only he still could not see where courage, or manliness, or fitness

entered in" (304). As an Odonian, he performs a masculinity that values freedom and rejects the subjugating trends of masculinities normalized in A-Io and, therefore, the contemporary United States.

Shevek traces connections between such trends and the capitalistic free market. Although "he could not force himself to understand how banks functioned and so forth, because all the operations of capitalism were as meaningless to him as the rites of a primitive religion, as barbaric, as elaborate, and as unnecessary," he recognizes capitalistic markets as exploitative (130). The gendered nation produces an economic hierarchy similar to and influenced by its gender order. Those occupying the lower economic echelons are marginalized by those in power to the point of invisibility. Identifying and condemning capitalistic institutions that exploit and marginalize, Shevek asks, "…where were the hands, the people who made? Out of sight, somewhere else. Behind walls. All the people in all the shops were either buyers or sellers. They had no relation to the things but that of possession" (132). In this way, the nation's economic system echoes its gender order, possessing at its core principles of consumption and ownership. The radical masculinity Shevek presents destabilizes consumerist behaviors. "'Here in A-Io they fear me less because they have forgotten the revolution. They don't believe in it anymore. They think if people can possess enough things they will be content to live in prison'" (138). His revolution seeks to overturn traditional masculinities and the institutions they produce.

This work of undermining traditional masculinities and their attending institutions is necessary not only in A-Io but also the ambiguous utopia of Anarres. Given the aforementioned mutually constitutive relationship between gender and the nation and the previously outlined danger that men performing alternative masculinities may adopt traditional gender scripts, there exists also the danger that a feminist-oriented society may be infiltrated by patriarchal ideologies

and transformed. Portraying the anarchic nation as a positive but imperfect alternative to its patriarchal, capitalistic rival, Le Guin explores how the mutability of the two aforementioned concepts of subjectivity, nationality and gender, reveal the dynamic nature of the nation and, more specifically, its institutions. As such organizations grow, they provide greater opportunities for power and control to be possessed by a few subjects and may cultivate, therefore, patriarchal atmospheres: "'every emergency, every labor draft even, tends to leave behind it an increment of bureaucratic machinery within PDC, and a kind of rigidity…'" (328). Shevek's opposition to traditional masculinities involves the recognition of such gender ideologies as invasive and capable of, in addition to altering his own gender, infiltrating egalitarian societies.

This infiltration by traditional masculinities involves the introduction of hierarchical attitudes valuing power and control to Anarresti socioeconomic institutions. Importantly, this infiltration does not require the overt restructuring of social institutions but, instead, the subtle control of public opinion. Members of the "social organism," as the protagonist describes Anarres, are coerced by prevailing moral notions, meaning that "the social conscience completely dominates the individual conscience, instead of striking a balance with it" (329). Institutions pressure the individual to conform. Subjects deemed morally upright and invaluable members of these organizations may consolidate power and insure the complicity of others through the implied threat of social marginalization.

As this demonstrates, what endangers this feminist nation is the introduction of masculine consolidations of power via the control of public opinion, a method best exemplified by the aforementioned control of Shevek by Sabul early in the novel. As previously demonstrated, Sabul coerces Shevek and his student only later recognizes the subjugation and complicity that transpired: "it seemed right. It seemed like setting the work before the workman, pride before

vanity, community before ego, all that. But it wasn't really that at all, was it? It was a capitulation. A surrender to Sabul's authoritarianism'" (330). This complicity is significantly produced by Anarresti fears of public opinion. An individual's fears of "being outcast, being called lazy, dysfunctional, egoizing" may be manipulated by those wishing to accumulate power and control (329). Bedap explains to Shevek that Sabul receives his power not "'from vested authority, there isn't any. Not from intellectual excellence, he hasn't any. He gets it from the innate cowardice of the average human mind. Public opinion! That's the power structure he's part of, and knows how to use. The unadmitted, inadmissible government that rules the Odonian society by stifling the individual mind'" (165). What threatens this feminist society is the introduction of traditional, masculine quests for power and control made possible by manipulations of and complicity to public opinion.

Le Guin provides in the character, Tirin, the clearest example of the danger of Anarresti society. A childhood friend who later pursues a career as a playwright, Tirin is described as "'a born artist. Not a craftsman—a creator. An inventor-destroyer, the kind who's got to turn everything upside down and inside out. A satirist, a man who praises through rage'" (327). Socially marginalized in reaction to a play he wrote interpreted as departing from Anarresti ideals, Tirin eventually suffers a mental breakdown. When hearing that he has been institutionalized, Shevek reasons that "'you don't get sent to the Asylum at all. You request posting to it'" (170). In reaction, Bedap explains, "'He never asked to be sent there! They drove him crazy and then sent him there'" (170). The pressure to comply to desires of the social organism, as Shevek labels the nation, leads to mental anguish: "'We fear our neighbor's opinion more than we respect our own freedom of choice. You don't believe me, Tak, but try, just try stepping over the line, just in imagination, and see how you feel'" (329). As Le Guin illustrates

in this passage, public opinion can lead to the introduction of traditional, masculine hierarchies. "'We have created crime, just as the propertarians did. We force a man outside the sphere of our approval, and then condemn him for it. We've made laws, laws of conventional behavior, built walls all around ourselves, and we can't see them, because they're part of our thinking'" (329). It is for this reason that Tirin suffers a mental breakdown. He refuses to comply within a system of power and control and suffers for this rebellion. "'He never did it, he never could build walls. He was a natural rebel. He was a natural Odonian—a real one! He was a free man, and the rest of us, his brothers, drove him insane in punishment for his first free act'" (329). Shevek must fight against these traditional masculine systems of power and control so Anarres and the Odonion alternative masculinities it produces may survive. Le Guin suggests that tendencies to abuse or dominate are not purely the results of capitalism but are symptomatic also of the traditional American masculinities supporting this economic system. The Anarresti must, therefore, safeguard against the importation of exploitative A-Io economic and gender hierarchies.

Shevek's opposition to governmental foreign policies favoring aggression and domination points to these features as destructive. These qualities of traditional masculinities are demonstrated in the novel to be key to the international policies of A-Io and antithetical to those of Anarres. Like the hegemonic, masculine traits of power and control, aggressive and dominating attitudes toward others reflect ideologies of manhood within A-Io society and pose a similar risk of importation to the Anarresti people. Such aggression and domination are the negative manifestations of traditional masculinities on a macro, international level as a result of the interactions between these differently gendered nations. Specifically, the traditionally masculine desire to aggressively dominate others is manifested in two key elements of American and A-Io foreign policy: nationalism and cultural hegemony. Representative of an alternative

masculinity, Shevek destabilizes nationalistic and imperialistic policies of aggression and domination and the gender ideologies informing them.

Nationalism is a predominant characteristic of A-Io foreign policy. As a tool for stabilizing internal power structures, it enables the capitalistic patriarchy to attack and dominate other polities with limited domestic criticism. This tendency toward internal unification is a result of the fear nationalism induces in its subscribers toward other nations and people groups. "'A few rabble-rousers in Nio and the mill towns make a big noise between wars, but it's grand to see how the people close ranks when the flag's in danger'" (285). Importantly, such fearful allegiance is a product of the traditionally masculine gendered nation. Atro explains this relationship between nationalism, aggression, domination, and national masculinities to Shevek, stating, "'The trouble with Odonianism, you know, my dear fellow, is that it's womanish. It simply doesn't include the virile side of life. 'Blood and steel, battle's brightness,' as the old poet says. It doesn't understand courage—love of the flag'" (285). The flag signifies the masculinized nation and those citizens performing normalized masculinities predicated upon aggression and domination enjoy privileged social positions as a result of their nationalism. A performer of Anarresti masculinities, Shevek rejects such aggressive, dominating attitudes toward others and the nationalistic policies they promote.

Shevek's aforementioned opposition to the importing of traditional masculinities into Anarres means that he works also to destabilize developing nationalism within the anarchic nation. In a conversation with a friend, Kvetur, for example, he criticizes the growing belief among Anarresti that they should "'detest Urras, hate Urras, fear Urras'" (44). Instead, he suggests that they reject such nationalistic tendencies to place Anarres in opposition to the nations of Urras. These attempts, though, are not successful and Shevek's reminder that the

Urrasti are in part responsible for the development of their nation is met with derision: "'They gave us their Moon, didn't they?' 'Yes, to keep us from wrecking their profiteering states and setting up the just society there. And as soon as they got rid of us, I'll bet they started building up governments and armies faster than ever, because nobody was left to stop them'" (44). Shevek actively opposes nationalistic ideals with which he comes into contact in his daily life and highlights the threat of traditional masculinities' dominating policies to Anarres.

Recognizing the connection between gender and the nation, he rejects the ethical validity of the founders of Anarres who, due to nationalistic ideals, isolated themselves and their invaluable social successes from the nations of Urras: "The Odonians who left Urras had been wrong, wrong in their desperate courage, to deny their history, to forgo the possibility of return. The explorer who will not come back or send back his ships to tell his tale is not an explorer, only an adventurer, and his sons are born in exile" (89). Identifying isolationist policies as ill-disguised manifestations of nationalism and the will to possess advantages and power over other nations, Shevek labors to bridge the neighboring planets through communication. "The Settlers had taken one step away. He had taken two. He stood by himself, because he had taken the metaphysical risk. And he had been fool enough to think that he might serve to bring together two worlds to which he did not belong" (89). Such attempts illustrate his understanding that the importation of traditional masculinities entails the introduction of nationalism to Anarresti foreign policy.

These criticisms of Anarresti culture demonstrate the protagonist's commitment to alternative masculinities and his recognition that such gender scripts, like the nation, are permeable and, therefore, unstable. Standing in dramatic contrast to those problematic masculine characters of both A-Io and Anarres, Shevek is presented to the reader as an imperfect but

positive alternative to traditional conceptions of manhood who learns to monitor himself after succumbing to the temptations of the capitalistic patriarchy. Opposing nationalistic policies of aggression and domination, he interacts with the people of A-Io in a productive, egalitarian manner. Recognizing the people of both Anarres and A-Io as equal regardless of nationality, gender, sexuality, or class position, for example, he refuses the titles of respect placed upon him by the Urrasti such as Saio Pae: "'Listen, I am not a doctor. We do not use titles. I am called Shevek.' 'I know, I'm sorry, sir. In our terms, you see, it seems disrespectful. It just doesn't seem right.' He apologized winningly, expecting forgiveness. 'Can you not recognize me as an equal?' Shevek asked…" (80). The citizens of A-Io who, like Saio Pae, believe in a natural hierarchy based upon identity markers such as gender and nationality, are unable to accept the egalitarian views espoused by the protagonist. Only those Urrasti citizens isolated from power and subjugated by their own gendered nations are willing to accept new, alternative masculinities not predicated upon nationalism and opposed to aggression and domination.

The willingness of the marginalized subjects of A-Io to revolt against the capitalist patriarchy leads those in power to prevent communication between Shevek and these rebel groups. In this way, they attempt to limit the effectiveness of a new, non-aggressive foreign policy produced by the anarchic nation and its masculinities that value open communication between citizens of all nations. Realizing only after significant time has passed that he has allowed the self-made men of A-Io to isolate him, Shevek repents of his inaction and seeks to join the rebellion. He is initially made aware of these revolutionaries through an unsigned letter he receives: "'If you are an Anarchist why do you work with the power system betraying your World and the Odonian Hope or are you here to bring us that Hope. Suffering from injustice and repression we look to the Sister World the light of freedom in the dark night. Join with us your

brothers!'" (192). This correspondence galvanizes within him a desire to free the people of A-Io: "It shook Shevek both morally and intellectually, jolted him, not with surprise but with a kind of panic. He knew they were here: but where? He had not met one, not seen one, he had not met a poor man yet. He had let a wall be built around him and had never noticed" (192). His acceptance of Urrasti hospitality, he realizes, demonstrates the seductive dangers of propertarian philosophy. "He had been co-opted—just as Chifoilisk had said" (192). Recognizing his shortcomings, Shevek again recommits himself to the egalitarian, non-nationalistic policy of meeting and seeking to aid the subjects of other nations, regardless of their social position.

Such a non-exploitative approach to foreign policy contrasts starkly with that of A-Io, which adopts imperialistic attitudes toward international relations. As a distorted portrayal of the United States, A-Io engages in a proxy war against Thu, a nation acting as a defamiliarized representative of the Soviet Union. Taking place in the less powerful nation of Benbili, the conflict echoes the Vietnam War and illustrates the imperialistic, dominating, and aggressive foreign policies of both a totalitarian socialist regime and a capitalistic republic. The Benbili revolution and imperialistic intervention of A-Io, like the nation's domestic policies of subjugation, cause an initially reluctant Shevek to reconsider his inaction: "The subject of the Benbili revolution had sharpened certain problems for Shevek also: particularly the problem of his own silence" (204). As an ambassador of an anarchic nation favoring non-traditional masculinities, he recognizes his responsibility to take part in revolutionary Urrasti efforts to actively oppose aggressive, dominating attacks upon other polities. He opposes the military of A-Io, which enables "men with machine guns to kill unarmed men and women easily and in great quantities when told to do so" (304). The military industry represents the salient effects of traditional masculinities upon the nation: it consolidates power and control through its

subjugation of enlisted men and women and wins the support of the citizenry through nationalistic policies of aggressively dominating other nations.

Presenting such connections between masculinities and social institutions such as the military, Le Guin emphasizes the mutually constitutive relationship of gender and the nation. She reveals in her novel the necessary ties between socio-economic, military, and governmental structures constituting a society and its hegemonic masculinity. A-Io seeks not only to control its subjects but also to continuously broaden the borders of its power and this is what Shevek identifies as the cause of "the human suffering in which the ideals of his society were rooted, the ground from which they sprang" (283). Anarres, as a gendered, feminist nation, originates in rebellion toward A-Io and, therefore, rejects the interconnected hegemonic masculinity, socioeconomic systems, and private structures making up the capitalistic patriarchy. As outlined by the protagonist, this rebellion produces some key differences between the two nations: "'We are poor, we lack. You have, we do not have. Everything is beautiful here. Only not the faces. On Anarres nothing is beautiful, nothing but the faces'" (229). Symbolizing the peace and tranquility brought about through the anarchic, alternatively masculine nation, these faces belong to those who contentedly lack property and value diverse sexualities, races, and genders among other identity elements. This acceptance of non-toxic, alternative masculinities brings about true freedom and its signifier, the eyes, replaces the old symbol of the commodified sexuality of Urrasti women, the jeweled navel: "Here you see the jewels, there you see the eyes. And in the eyes you see the splendor, the splendor of the human spirit. Because our men and women are free —'" (229). Challenges to patriarchal efforts to consolidate power and control domestically and aggressively dominate internationally produce freedom to perform varying masculinities

opposing hegemony. Importantly, the challenge Shevek mounts frees access to information in order to prevent the aggressive domination of other nations by patriarchies such as A-Io.

Shevek releases information because he understands Odonian anarchism and its attending masculinities to be representative of "a permanent revolution" that" begins in the thinking mind," (333). Believing that his scientific work may be responsible for greater communication and understanding among nations, Shevek continues it "in defiance of the expectations of his society" and opposes A-Io efforts to gain exclusive information about his developing tool for intergalactic communication (271). These actions illustrate his opposition to domestic consolidations of power and control and foreign policies supporting the aggression and domination of other nations. Accordingly, he and Takver decide they must "'go to Abbenay… and start a syndicate, a printing syndicate. Print the Principles, uncut. And whatever else we like. Bedap's Sketch of Open Education in Science, that the PDC wouldn't circulate. And Tirin's play. I owe him that'" (331). In doing so, he risks "the self for the sake of" Anarres, Urras, and other nations and is marginalized by those in growing power and others complacent to this developing masculine hierarchy (271). He and Takver are labeled traitors and Sadik, their child, is branded an egoizer, an Anarresti term for a hierarchal, myopic individual. Odonian rhetoric is deployed to manipulate he and his partner, individualists truly following the teachings of Odo. Shevek labors in the novel to defend the ambiguously utopian, impermanent but positive nationality and masculinities of Anarres. He does this by disrupting emerging traditional masculinities and their attending hierarchies of power and control.

The unsettling of traditional masculinities by the protagonist represents a significant moment within speculative fiction. Like Bryant, Le Guin centers in her novel the experiences of a male character negotiating patriarchal and alternative masculinities. Unlike *The Kin of Ata Are*

Waiting for You, which focuses upon the recovery and conversion of a patriarch, *The Dispossessed* traces the struggles of an alternative, feminist-oriented man to withstand the temptations of capitalism and misogyny. Le Guin presents in her novel a male character who, after succumbing to traditional ideals of manhood, subscribes ultimately to a masculine script not predicated upon "animal power, instinct, and aggression" but, instead, opposing consolidations of power and control over others (Hantke 498). Speaking to the rebels gathered on the streets of A-Io, he calls for a new brotherhood among men rejecting traditional masculinities of subjugation, violence, and the consolidation of power: "'We know that there is no help for us but from one another, that no hand will save us if we do not reach out our hand. And the hand that you reach out is empty, as mine is. You have nothing. You possess nothing. You own nothing. You are free. All you have is what you are, and what you give'" (29). The new masculinity Shevek proposes, like the one adopted by Bryant's unnamed protagonist, rejects capitalistic, patriarchal gender orders and favors non-hierarchical social systems opposing control, aggression, and domination. Unlike Bryant's narrator, who values dreams as a source of transcendent knowledge and utilizes writing as a method for disseminating information concerning alternative masculinities, Shevek is inspired directly by the feminist and anarchic political theory of Odo. Similarly interested in the spreading of invaluable information, he opts not to compose a tract but, instead, to make available the data related to his new communication invention. His actions at least temporarily prevent the consolidation of power by nations hording such important breakthroughs and are therefore grounded in his alternative masculinity.

Shevek represents a new type of male character that, like Bryant's unnamed narrator, values feminist principles and rejects the desires for power and subordination endemic to the capitalistic patriarchy. Through this character and his experiences in A-Io, a defamiliarized

portrait of American society, Le Guin is able to engage her audience in a dialectic concerning

manhood in the contemporary United States. Applying masculinities studies' theoretical tools to

science fiction, therefore, allows for a better understanding of how writers such as Le Guin

circumvent or directly challenge normalized conceptions of manhood. Moving beyond Bryant's

interest in the possibility of transforming patriarchal men, Le Guin considers the feminist-

oriented, new man and illuminates the unstable qualities of such new masculinities and the

nations cultivating them. Choosing not to present an idealized, protected utopia, Le Guin, by

emphasizing like Bryant the instability of gender roles, adds considerable complexity to

discussions concerning the better society and its corresponding masculinities. Such interests in

the precarious nature of the feminist utopia and its alternative masculinities are further developed

in Marge Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time*, the focus of chapter three. By focusing on male

protagonists as they encounter feminist-oriented nations and masculinities and their patriarchal

counterparts, Le Guin, like Bryant, illuminates how ideals of manhood are constructed and the

methods by which improved alternative masculinities may be developed.

Chapter 3: Complicating Manhood in Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time*

Marge Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time*, and the subject of chapter four, Octavia Butler's *Lilith's Brood* trilogy, share an interest in widening and complicating the sociopolitical focuses of the feminist utopian genre. While representing a shift in feminist speculative fiction toward centralizing traditionally marginalized characters such as women of color, these novels are customarily analyzed for their portrayals of women. Scholars of *Woman on the Edge of Time* have considered its vital role in introducing to science fiction new, complex female characters and feminist societies, and its centering of characters traditionally placed on the margins due to their race and gender. Such analyses emphasize Piercy's presentation of feminist approaches to knowledge and states of consciousness that are both central to the realization of the imagined utopia.[7] The novel is significant in its depiction of the experiences of a woman of color. Characters like Connie from *The Kin of Ata* move from the margin of the narrative to its center. Focused upon the experiences of a Latinx Mexican-American female whose name, Consuelo or Connie, harkens back to this early character in Bryant's novel, *Woman on the Edge of Time* considers how misogynist and utopian male characters impact her. Though men exist as complementary characters, their influence and the impact of their masculinities upon the experiences of the protagonist and the possibility of a feminist utopia are significant. Piercy's novel uses its male characters in ways similar to earlier feminist texts such as *The Kin of Ata Are Waiting for You* and *The Dispossessed.* This analysis traces Piercy's emphases upon complex,

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[7] Vara Neverow, for example, focuses on Piercy's inclusion of a "cultural feminist epistemology focused on the politics of personal agency and communal responsibility" (17). The strength she identifies in the novel is the feminist epistemology it presents, one "closely allied to…women's ways of knowing" such as the achievement of understanding through intimacy and a relationship of equality between the subject and object of learning (18). Donna Fancourt, on the other hand, emphasizes the centrality of a new spiritual and political consciousness to the functioning of this society. Her analysis of Piercy's novel highlights the ways in which it prods the reader to positively affect society through the adoption of a feminist utopian outlook: "the process of activating utopia through altered states explicitly foregrounds the 'paradigm shift' the reader must necessarily undergo, both to engage with the utopian text, and also, perhaps to activate utopia themselves" (110).

intersectional identities, the functioning of masculine and feminist societies, and the necessity of reshaping society in order for improved masculinities to be realized.

Often cited alongside Joanna Russ, Ursula K. Le Guin, James Tiptree, Jr., and others as a central voice in 1970s feminist science fiction, Marge Piercy is a feminist poet, novelist, and recipient of the Arthur C. Clarke Award for science fiction. Her critiques of traditional masculinities and femininities exemplify Brian Attebery's description of a radical change in science fiction, making it "virtually impossible for an SF writer to take gender for granted any more" (Attebery 6). Piercy's novels such as *Woman on the Edge of Time* (1976) and *He, She and It* (1991) highlight the socially constructed and subjugating natures of gender roles, making them essential works at the intersection of masculinity studies and contemporary American science fiction. Her characters rebel against intersecting systems of oppression and, as a result, disrupt normative ideologies, especially those concerning gender. *Woman on the Edge of Time*, therefore, literally embodies "every ideal of the counterculture/Movement: ecological wisdom, community, androgyny, ritual, respect for madness, propertylessness, etc." ("Woman on the Edge of Time"). Among these revolutionary ideals is Piercy's presentation of new, egalitarian conceptions of masculinity. What she contributes to conversations at the intersection of gender and society, therefore, is a new conception of manhood based upon connection, vulnerability, and equality that, as she illustrates, is germane to the utopian project and the betterment of contemporary American society.

Piercy creates in her novels women's utopias, places "where what women do not have can exist--i.e., a sense of community, since many women are isolated while raising their children. A place where women are not punished for their sexuality, a place where raising children is communal or quasi-communal, a place where in old age people are respected and

taken care of" (Furlanetto 421). Piercy imagines a society in *Woman on the Edge of Time* in which women are afforded power and opportunities denied them by patriarchal social systems. Since patriarchal societies are predicated upon the conscription of men into traditional conceptions of manhood, the feminist environment Piercy develops allows alternative masculinities to flourish. Unlike their traditionally masculine counterparts, the new men populating Piercy's utopia value their feminine qualities and seek to eliminate the patriarchal order. *Woman on the Edge of Time* presents male and female characters who are characterized by and perform social functions traditionally deemed both masculine and feminine and are, therefore, androgynous. This aspect of the novel places it in contrast with Ursula K. Le Guin's *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1969), which, as previously discussed, is criticized for its presentation of biologically androgynous characters marked as men linguistically through the use of masculine pronouns and socially via their "roles which we are culturally conditioned to perceive as 'male'" (Anna 151). Piercy's male characters break from traditional gender scripts, offering alternative performances of manhood. In place of traditionally masculine desires for power and control, Piercy presents male characters focused on community, healing, connection, and fraternity.

Such new conceptions of manhood are positioned against those aforementioned traditional masculinities of genre fiction: the so-called *supermen*. Ubiquitous in midcentury American speculative fiction, this character type, exemplified by characters such as Jommy Cross in A.E. van Vogt's *Slan* (1946) and John Pollard in Edward Hamilton's "The Man Who Evolved" (1931), is detached from societal concerns and, instead, focuses upon his own evolution and the possibility of consolidating power. Opposing the utopian project, he sees no value in "schools, governments, families, political groups, media," and other such communal

organizations (Attebery 67). In contrast to the superman who "evolves apart from, or even in opposition to, his society," the men populating the 1970s feminist utopias seek to nurture strong communal bonds and reject all hierarchical systems of power including racism, homophobia, and capitalistic patriarchy (Attebery 67). Catharine Stimpson implies as central to the novel these new male characters replacing the supermen of earlier speculative fiction when she states that the feminist utopia "has implored women and men alike, of all classes and races, to envision a social order" that takes as its ethical foundation "the profound liberty and freedom of each individual; the equality of individuals and groups; and the necessity of a balance between freedom and responsibilities, the autonomous self and the communal citizen, declarations of independence and interdependence" (3). Similarly, Donna Fancourt's identification of a "movement away from an emphasis on sexual difference, and towards a society that promotes connection with others" as central to feminist utopias hints at the necessity for men to undergo a paradigm shift in consciousness—a new masculinity—for society to be improved (109). Such a change in consciousness rejects the values of the traditional supermen of science fiction. Piercy, like Dorothy Bryant and Ursula K. Le Guin,[8] rejects the traditional masculinities of earlier speculative fiction and replaces them with male characters performing new, utopian interpretations of manhood.

Such a presentation of new masculinities as central to the utopian project unite *Woman on the Edge of Time*, Piercy's first speculative work, *Dance the Eagle to Sleep* (1970), and her later novel, *He, She and It*. A precursor to works such as *Woman on the Edge of Time* and *He, She and It* that likewise explores dystopian and utopian possibilities, *Dance the Eagle to Sleep* concerns

[8] Though Le Guin's presentation of the androgyne in *The Left Hand of Darkness* is problematic, as previously outlined, her later work *The Dispossessed* (1974) successfully imagines new masculinities possessing qualities traditionally labeled both feminine and masculine. It is this later novel, the focus of my analysis in chapter 2, that serves as an example of Le Guin's depiction of new, transformed masculinities.

the attempts of four teenagers to build a visionary society in opposition to the capitalistic, patriarchal system of the United States. Piercy identifies in this early work a connection further elaborated upon in *Woman on the Edge of Time*: a better society requires improved, feminist-informed masculinities. Building on the alternative vision in *Dance the Eagle to Sleep, Woman on the Edge of Time* comments critically on contemporary American society and contains "a conglomeration of the various utopian aspirations of the '60s and '70s" in that "it strives to bring together the concepts of racial, cultural and sexual liberation in a vision predicated on economic transformation, particularly in regard to property and production" (Somay and R.M.P. 30).

Such connections similarly bind *Woman on the Edge of Time* to *He, She and It.* Both novels, for example, focus on the possibility of reconceptualizing masculinity through, among other tools, the utilization of new technologies. In *Woman on the Edge of Time*, the reproductive division of labor is blurred through the use of technologies enabling men to breast feed. The cyborg, Yod, in *He, She and It* likewise learns to perform new, nurturing masculinities, leading him to be "in some respects…more 'human' than other human beings, notably the masculine figures who are inhumanly mechanical, unemotional, unloving" (Deery 39). Each of these novels includes positive, alternative masculinities as central to utopian societies and traditional masculinities as normalized within their patriarchal counterparts. These utopias reveal Piercy's consistent interest in the better society and its attending masculinities. In this endeavor to present the improved, feminist polity, Piercy proved groundbreaking in her presentation of complex male characters and societies that enable the flourishing of new, positive masculinities.

Crucial to Piercy's depiction of these alternative masculinities and non-normative gender scripts more broadly is the way she imagines in each of her characters—both male and female—a combination of traits traditionally identified as feminine and masculine. In this way, she breaks

from the trend among male writers to present visions of the androgyne in which a "masculine personality" is "fulfilled and completed by the feminine" (Annas 147). Pamela Annas groups "together loosely under the concept of androgyny" a range of examples "from visions of worlds which have entirely eliminated men and therefore sexual polarization, through visions of worlds which are biologically androgynous, to visions of worlds in which male and female functions and roles simply are not sharply differentiated" (146). Central to *Woman on the Edge of Time* is a vision of androgyny encapsulating these last two examples; in Piercy's novel, social and biological roles do not belong strictly to the categories of traditional masculinity or femininity. Instead, male characters balance traditionally masculine goals such as military service with their desires to raise and nurture a child. Female characters meanwhile occupy positions of social power and these roles showcase personality qualities traditionally labeled as masculine. Critics of androgyny as a tool in speculative fiction such as Jean Elshtain posit that "the full achievement of an androgynous world is possible only with the total elimination of sex roles" and the elimination of connections between biological sex and procreation (7). Piercy's presentation of androgyny and its attending genderqueer, alternative ideals of manhood is made possible through the utilization of technologies, such as the brooder and those developments allowing men to breastfeed, to differentiate reproductive roles. Piercy's vision of alternative masculinities, with its emphasis on technology and a more complex gender dynamic, is, therefore, radical among feminist utopias.

The structure of Piercy's novel adds considerable strength to this utopian message. Like *The Kin of Ata Are Waiting for You* and *The Dispossessed*, *Woman on the Edge of Time* follows a protagonist who travels between utopian and dystopian societies. Unlike these texts, which follow male citizens of dystopia and utopia, respectively, Piercy's novel centers the experiences

of a disempowered female citizen of dystopia—the contemporary United States—as she experiences life within a drastically improved, feminist polity. Confined to a mental institution early in the narrative, Consuelo Ramos discovers she can communicate with people of the future and even travel mentally across space and time to explore their utopian community. The novel, like the novels of Bryant and Le Guin, interweaves utopian and dystopian passages in order to dramatically demarcate the differences separating patriarchal and feminist societies and the masculinities each nation normalizes. Central to this functioning of the novel and its presentation of contrasting utopian and dystopian performances of manhood is Piercy's use of time travel as a powerful literary device. Able to travel across time and therefore visit a future feminist utopia and patriarchal dystopia, the novel's protagonist, Connie, and the reader through her are prompted to compare three possible societies. The connections Piercy draws between the contemporary American dystopia and these two possible futures, a feminist utopia and a nightmarish patriarchal alternative, illustrate the binary struggle between two societies with antithetical feminine and masculine gender scripts.

The dystopian societies of the text, the United States in the present and a future version of the society in which the ideals of capitalistic patriarchy are taken to their extreme, are presented in tandem with those passages located in the future utopia. Piercy compels her reader to note the differences separating these polities by alternating, through the protagonist's ability to time travel, the setting of her novel from the dystopian to the utopian nation and vice versa. The qualities of this utopia, a future, collectivist anarchical community located in present-day Mattapoisett, Massachusetts, are, therefore, contrasted strikingly with those of these patriarchal alternatives. In this way, the structure of the novel and its intermingling of utopian and dystopian passages add considerable power to Piercy's gender analysis. This juxtaposition of nations

parallels a contrast in traditional and new conceptions of manhood that produces the dialectic of masculinities central to Piercy's novel. Building upon "Mikhail Bakhtin's emphasis on the importance of generic heterogeneity as a source of dialogic" power, Keith Booker identifies as "an important source of energy for" *Woman on the Edge of Time* "the resultant dialogue between" these imagined utopian and dystopian nations visited by Connie (340). Just as the novel's contrast between these dystopian and utopian visions increases its power, its inclusion of traditional and alternative masculinities in opposition to one another intensifies the dialectic of the utopian text concerning gender.

The feminist qualities of this utopia reveal the significance of masculinities to Mattapoisett. Requiring of its citizens a balanced focus on community, interdependence, responsibilities, and an interest in equality, this idealized society compels attitudes absent from traditional masculinities and implies, therefore, a need for alternative conceptions of manhood. Karen Stein's claim that in the novel "it is necessary 'to make men over' as more sensitive and nurturing people so that they fit into the communal society" reiterates this common understanding of the way the text connects to issues of masculinity (129).[9] As Stein outlines, "the people of this future have worked to create such consciousness" through, among other methods, education (130). In this polity, "young people are trained in meditation, and forms of mind control" and "their educational system strives to imbue all community members with values of caring and nurturance" (Stein 129). As Stein's analysis reveals, it is through these methods that masculinities are re-made.

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[9] Erin McKenna locates a similar message in the novel, positing that "*Woman on the Edge of Time* not only presents a vision of an anarchistic society of the future, but…also focuses on the dangers of and need to get beyond violence, especially male violence" (69).

Piercy's presentation of disruptive, future masculinities is unique in its "emphasis upon purposeful human action in bringing about utopia" (Somay 30). In the text, the direct tracing of the impact of present actions upon the future is made possible by Connie's time-traveling abilities. When the future is altered and Connie arrives not in Mattapoisett but instead in a patriarchal, dystopian New York, she and her utopian allies recognize a causative event in her own time: the development of a cognitive biotechnology enabling control of the mind and emotions. A wrongfully confined patient of the mental institution at which this tool is developed, Connie resolves to halt the research project. Concluding with Connie fatally poisoning the doctors spearheading this work, the novel offers to the reader as apparent the assurance that the utopian future is at least temporarily protected and that actions today will lead either to alternative masculinities and utopia or dystopia. Piercy presents her utopia as vulnerable to present actions and the influence of capitalism and the patriarchy and her novel, therefore, shares similarities with *The Kin of Ata Are Waiting for You* and *The Dispossessed*. Bryant's unnamed narrator, for example, writes a didactic tract concerning traditional masculinities and Le Guin's protagonist opposes capitalistic patriarchal attempts to control technology and information. In *Woman on the Edge of Time*, however, this connection between present actions and the future development of patriarchal or feminist polities is more strikingly emphasized through Piercy's use of time travel.

This depiction of both future utopian and dystopian polities and their dependence upon events and characters in the present enables the novel to escape what is often considered a fatal flaw of utopian writing, its tendency toward the ahistorical and static.[10] In the novel, Connie

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[10]Alice Waters locates this dynamic aspect in both *Woman on the Edge of Time* and Moore's "Greater Than Gods" (1939). *Woman on the Edge of Time*, therefore, is situated within a tradition of feminist speculative writing in which utopian and dystopian narrative elements are utilized to express anxieties surrounding current, traditionally

must choose between two possible futures, a feminist utopia and patriarchal dystopia. Prodding the reader to consider possible configurations of gendered societies and the possibility of influencing the development of such a future society in the present, Piercy radically re-envisions the utopian genre. Avoiding the tendency among traditional utopian writers to favor "over-arching theories of utopia as a distant or perfect world" and to thus fail to present "historically specific and situated alternatives" to socioeconomic ideologies, she presents a dynamic utopia connected to the historical setting of its audience (McBean 42). The power of the text is derived significantly from its inclusion of time travel as a means of critiquing masculinities and considering future dystopian and utopian societies alongside the society in which Connie resides, the contemporary United States.

Central to this presentation of the 20th century United States is its tracing of the impact of intersectionality upon marginalized subjects such as Connie. In this way, the novel outlines those gendered networks of power that must be disrupted for new masculinities to be normalized. Through Connie's experiences, we see how interconnecting systems of sexism and racism work to marginalize and disempower the protagonist and others. The men with whom Connie comes into contact are either medical professionals or part of her social network. The men are positioned at varying distances from power and their contrasts reveal connections existing between intersectionality and masculinities. The doctors populating the novel in the 20th century time frame, Redding, Morgan, and Acker, maintain powerful social and economic positions as educated, white, heterosexual performers of traditional masculinity. The men with whom Connie

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masculine, patriarchal networks of power and the possibility in the present of developing egalitarian gender ideologies and socioeconomic systems.

comes in contact outside the medical institution, mostly working-class men of color, on the other hand, wield less masculine authority due to their race and class positions.

The traditional masculinities of these men marginalized by class and race are informed by the concept of *machismo*. As demonstrated by Alfredo Mirande in *Hombres y Machos: Masculinity and Latino Culture* (1997), the understanding of this term and its performance is heavily influenced not "by region but by socioeconomic status" and therefore varies according to the social and economic positioning of its subscriber (77). As Piercy illustrates in the novel, a man such as Geraldo, Dolly's pimp, who possesses little socioeconomic power, conceives of machismo "as exaggerated masculinity predicated on male dominance and authoritarianism, violence, aggressiveness, drunkenness, dumb, irresponsibleness, selfishness, stubbornness, and the unwillingness to back down for even the most trivial matter" (Mirande 77). In contrast, other men of color, such as Connie's brother Luis, who possess socioeconomic power and seek to pass as white in order to increase this amount of control, limit their public demonstrations of machismo since the application of this term "to Mexicans or Latino" by white men is "imbued with such negative attributes as male dominance, patriarchy, authoritarianism, and spousal abuse" (66). Machismo, therefore, is a type of hypermasculinity demonstrated by those men of color with whom Connie comes into contact in her personal life that, like its white masculine counterpart, exploits those marginalized further from power according to the logic of sexism, racism, and homophobia.

While prevented from fully accessing the power granted his white counterparts due to his ethnicity, Luis, for example, exercises complete control over those women in his life such as Connie. He experiences intersectionality as a financially-successful, heterosexual man hindered by discrimination according to his race. He wields the power he has by subjugating those situated

further from power. While "his anger and unruly pride" are "channeled into a desire to get ahead, to grab money, to succeed like an Anglo," he also directs this resentment toward those few people whom he is able to control, his family (397). Preoccupied, for example, with the appearances of his children and wife, Luis orders his son, Mark, to eat more in order to develop a masculine physique and baselessly accuses the women of the family, his daughter, Dolly, and wife, Adele, of being overweight. Besides these harsh, demeaning criticisms, the interactions between Luis and his family are controlled by him as a means of exercising that power denied him in contemporary American society: "He spoke quickly and he talked a lot and he didn't like interruptions" (383). Luis dominates his family, releasing upon them the anger he accumulates from his experiences in a systemically racist society.

This brutality is utilized by Piercy to reveal connections between traditional gender roles and intersectionality. Able to have his sister freed or confined indefinitely, Luis leverages this power, demanding that Connie perform traditionally feminine roles during a visit home he authorizes. Specifically, he demands that she perform domestic duties and refrain from offering her own opinion on matters during her stay. In this way, Luis takes advantage of a system that disenfranchises women and provides men power over them. Within patriarchy, male subjects who are not able to maintain the privileged hegemonic position are compelled to remain complicit to patriarchy, thereby benefiting "from the patriarchal dividend, the advantage men in general gain from the overall subordination of women" (Connell 79). Interlocking systems of oppression such as racism, sexism, and homophobia, therefore, affect both Connie and those men such as Luis whose identity markers distance them from hegemony but grant them power for their complicity to patriarchy.

The traditional masculinities of these marginalized men are characterized by desires to consolidate power and control over others and are informed by capitalistic, patriarchal socioeconomic systems and a sexist paradigm of consciousness. Shulamith Firestone's materialist critique of inequality among the sexes further illuminates the ways Piercy presents class, race, and gender as connected systems of oppression. Writing during the height of second wave feminism, Firestone provided in *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution* (1970) an influential map for bridging Marxist and Psychoanalytic theories of inequality. The importance of this theory of sex and class in developing the utopian society is outlined in the novel by Bolivar, a male inhabitant of Mattapoisett: "'I guess I see the original division of labor, that first dichotomy, as enabling later divvies into haves and have-nots, powerful and powerless, enjoyers and workers, rapists and victims. The patriarchal mind/body split turned the body to machine and the rest of the universe into booty on which the will could run rampant, using, discarding, destroying'" (229).

The male characters populating the contemporary United States of the text illustrate these connections and act as representatives of traditional masculinity, focused upon exercising power over others and attaining higher positions within socioeconomic hierarchies. The role of economic gains in validating the masculine identities of these characters is illustrated in Connie's recounting of the murder of her lover, Martín: "she had stood over him in the morgue, shaking with rage—yes, rage—because he was dead without reason. Because everybody was poor and the summer was hot and tempers flared and men without jobs proved they were still men on the bodies of other men, on the bodies of women" (232-233). As this passage reveals, capitalism and patriarchy work in concert to reinforce exploitative networks of power. Violence such as the knife fight that results in the death of Martín results from a need among economically

disadvantaged men to have their masculinity recognized through other means. The desire of traditionally masculine characters to consolidate power and control over *the other*, identified by markers such as race, sexuality, and gender, are symptomatic of capitalistic, patriarchal masculinities and are trenchantly exposed in the novel.

The patriarchal, capitalistic men with whom Connie comes into contact throughout her personal life desire to have power and control over her, telling her "that what she" feels is "unreal and" doesn't "matter" (308). These traditionally masculine men meet the criteria for what Connie describes to the citizens of Mattapoisett as a *real* man: He "is supposed to be… strong, hold his liquor, attractive to women, able to beat out other men, lucky, hard, tough, macho we call it, muy hombre… not to be a fool… not to get too involved… to look out for number one… to make good money… You knuckle under to the big guys and you walk over the people underneath …'" (127). As Piercy notes in this passage, a man is identified by his ability to dominate and subjugate others according to the logic of capitalism, sexism, racism, and homophobia.

These marginalized men seek through complicity to consolidate control over women as a means of validating their manhood, which is threatened by the racist ideologies of white patriarchal hegemony. The manner in which Connie is registered as a patient reveals, for example, the collaboration of a complicit, traditionally masculine character, Dolly's pimp, referred to in the novel as Geraldo, and a similar male doctor powerfully positioned due to his class and race. In his approach to gain power through an alliance with a hegemonic male, the doctor, Geraldo communicates respect for the position of his hegemonic counterpart and compliance to patriarchal networks of power: "Geraldo was almost demure. He had a good manner with authority, as any proper pimp should, respectful but confident" (14). As a result,

Geraldo gains access to greater power and control over Connie, demonstrated by the silencing of the protagonist as "man to man, pimp and doctor discussed her condition" (14). Ultimately, through his recognition of and cooperation with masculine social patterns, Geraldo succeeds in isolating Connie who, under temporary observation, becomes from the perspectives of the doctor and medical staff "a body checked into the morgue; meat registered for the scales" (14). This collaboration between complicit and hegemonic masculinities is later reiterated by Piercy when Luis requests that Connie be committed instead of temporarily observed: "The iron maiden was carrying her to Rockover again. Luis had signed her in. A bargain had been struck. Some truce had been negotiated between the two men over the bodies of their women" (28). The manner by which Connie is systemically dominated and controlled is the product of men marginalized according to race and class who gain power through their complicity to patriarchal networks of power.

Through Dolly's pimps Geraldo and Vic, Piercy highlights how the efforts of complicit men to consolidate power and control affect two generations of women. Each violently dominates Dolly and gains social power and economic profit from her subjugation. Connie outlines this exploitation, identifying Geraldo as "the man who had pimped her favorite niece, her baby, the pimp who had beaten Dolly and sold her to pigs to empty themselves in. Who robbed Dolly and slapped her daughter Nita and took away the money squeezed out of the pollution of Dolly's flesh to buy lizard boots and cocaine and other women" (9). Commodifying Dolly's body and sexuality and forcing her to have an abortion in order to continue her work as a prostitute, Geraldo partakes in the capitalistic patriarchy, accumulating profit through the domination of *the other*, marginalized due to her class position, biological sex, and race. Commenting on the continual, cross-generational nature of this exploitative trend among men

complicit to patriarchy, Connie identifies her niece's pimp as one of countless men who seek to control her: "Geraldo was her father, who had beaten her every week of her childhood. Her second husband, who had sent her into emergency with blood running down her legs. He was El Muro, who had raped her and then beaten her because she would not lie and say she had enjoyed it" (9). As this passage illustrates, Geraldo, through his traditional performance of manhood, represents a larger, toxic trend among men of color to remain complicit to patriarchy through the domination of others. Piercy presents as central to her utopian vision the challenging of patriarchal concepts of manhood and the complicity of men marginalized according to racist ideologies.

The relationship of class and ethnicity to traditional masculinities is further delineated by Piercy in the early experiences of Connie with a white man, Chuck. Prior to the events of the novel, Connie attempts to gain power through education. She attends a community college in Chicago to become a teacher but, due to a lack of funds, is obliged to type papers for a fellow student, a young white man named Chuck, in order to gain access to his typewriter for her own work. Piercy provides few details concerning their relationship, but it is disclosed that they date until, as a result of her eventual pregnancy, Connie is deserted by Chuck. As a result, Connie finds herself "at the end of her schooling, her pride, her hope" (264). In reflecting upon the events that followed in which she was further disempowered as a result of not performing ideal femininity, Connie identifies the intersectional nature of her subjugation: "She felt hollow with shame after her Anglo boyfriend Chuck had deserted her. After she had had to leave school, after her family had thrown her out, after she had spent all she had on a six-hundred-dollar abortion done without anesthetic. Neither baby nor husband, neither diploma nor home. No name. Nobody. Woman spoiled. Chingada" (264). The traditionally American masculine value of

walking "over the people underneath" is, therefore, exemplified both by Chuck and the varying

socioeconomic systems—the nuclear family, capitalistic healthcare, and gender ideologies—that

distance Connie further from power (127). Piercy specifically presents the nuclear family as a

microcosm of socioeconomic inequality; the mother, she demonstrates through Connie, is

exploited and subordinated while the father, as exemplified by Chuck, is able to ignore his

responsibilities to her and the child. In this way, Chuck exemplifies the complicit pattern of

masculinity and, through his exploitation and abandonment of Connie, shirks responsibilities that

would restrict his capacity for upward socioeconomic movement.

The relationship of the traditionally masculine exploitation of *the other* to race and the

commodification of the female body is further highlighted by Piercy through the relationship of

Dolly and her second pimp and boyfriend, Vic. A white male possessing significant power, Vic

pressures Dolly to pass as white in order to attract wealthier clients and to maintain an unhealthy

weight for this same purpose. During a visit with Connie, Dolly explains, "I got to stay skinny,

carita. The money is with the Anglos and they like you skinny and American-looking. It pays

more if you look Anglo, you know. Sometimes I say I'm of Spanish mother and an Irish father,

and that's why I have the beautiful red hair. Even the hair on my thing, I dyed it red—Connie,

you wouldn't believe it'" (236-237). Seeking greater socioeconomic power, Vic consolidates

control over Dolly, whom he considers a valuable object for economic exploitation. He compels

Dolly to alter her appearance through cosmetics so she may appear white and to take speed in

order to maintain an unhealthy weight level. Through Vic, Piercy emphasizes how the

contemporary United States compels women to present themselves in a way favoring

traditionally masculine valuations of whiteness and misogynistic beauty standards.

Piercy further outlines the ways the capitalistic patriarchy pressures men of color to pass as white in order of gain socioeconomic power through the actions of another complicit, traditionally masculine character, Luis. A Mexican-American businessman who owns and manages a successful plant nursery, Luis epitomizes the *self-made man* theorized by Michael Kimmel, though he is hindered from fully realizing this identity due to his race. As previously outlined, this masculine model involves the deriving of a man's identity from his "activities in the public sphere, measured by accumulated wealth and status, by geographic and social mobility" (Kimmel 137). Since his status is dependent upon the market and his own socioeconomic successes and failures, the self-made man is "mobile, competitive, aggressive in business…temperamentally restless, chronically insecure, and desperate to achieve a solid grounding for a masculine identity" (Kimmel 137). Luis, as a Mexican-American, is offered limited opportunities for upward mobility. In response, he remains complicit to traditional patterns of masculinity and seeks to pass as white in order to accumulate further socioeconomic power.

As Piercy demonstrates, race, ethnicity, and complicity to patriarchy are linked and Luis seeks to alleviate his own intersectional disadvantage by appearing to be a hegemonic, white male. Connie recognizes this desire on the part of her brother when she recounts his return from military service prior to the events of the novel: "When he had come back, he had contempt for the rest of them. His anger and unruly pride had been channeled into a desire to get ahead, to grab money, to succeed like an Anglo…Jesús had been scared he would go bad, they would lose him to the streets. None of them had guessed they would lose him to the Anglos, entirely" (397). Desiring to pass as a hegemonic male—white, upper class, straight—he dominates those around him who are identified as *other,* prefers the Americanized pronunciation of his name, and

conforms to the dressing norms of middle-class white America. Authorizing the confinement of

Connie to Bellevue Hospital, he demonstrates a dominating attitude toward such "unruly"

women, only allowing her to visit after she pledges to "cook…do the dishes" and "make the

house shine" (381). As evidenced by notes attributed to the New York Neuro-Psychiatric

Institute included at the end of the text, Luis at least partially succeeds in these efforts to pass

and this success grants him considerable power over his sister: "…Mr. Camacho is a well-

dressed man (gray business suit) who appears to be in his 40s. He operates a wholesale-retail

nursery and has a confident, expansive manner. I would consider him to be a reliable informant

who expresses genuine concern for his sister…" (416). Signaling through his middle-class attire

a complicity to capitalistic, patriarchal networks of power, Luis consolidates control over women

such as Connie through this loyalty to current socioeconomic systems. Through the personal

relationships of Connie to Luis as well as Vic and Geraldo, Piercy charts the negative impact of

traditional masculinities upon a Mexican-American woman and the centrality of race as a factor

of complicity and subordination. Tracing intersectionality and the specific ways traditional

masculinities connect with the logic of racism to marginalize others, Piercy illustrates the

dystopian qualities of patriarchy in the contemporary United States and the importance of class

and ethnicity in the shaping of patriarchal ideals of manhood.

These dystopian patriarchal qualities permeate the institutions of the gendered nation and,

more specifically, the medical establishment. In the novel, the nature of diagnosis and "how

mental illness gets constructed—frequently based on stereotypical readings of surface

characteristics such as behavior, age, poverty, body odors, or ethnicity—and is used as a form of

social control" are implicated as forces of intersectionality (Martinson 53). The text illustrates,

therefore, how traditional masculinities possess a mutually constitutive relationship not only with

the nation but those institutions contained within its networks of power. As a result of prior experiences with hospitals, including the hysterectomy to which she was subjected, Connie recognizes this relationship between patriarchy and healthcare. She now "is much clearer about the connections between race, class, gender and the ease with which she is hospitalized as well as the justifications for the degree of control manifested in her treatment plan" (Martinson 62). The presence of intersectionality within contemporary American healthcare is most clearly illuminated by Piercy in her depiction of the rules governing the behavior of Connie and her fellow patients in these institutions and the treatments to which she is subjected.

Through the guidelines and treatments to which Connie is compelled to submit within these hospitals, Piercy outlines the toxic influence of traditional masculinities in health care. Female patients, for example, are expected to perform traditional femininities and are "punished for unladylike behavior" (156). While the use of explicit language is a punishable offence, "volunteering for every task defined as women's work, cleaning, sweeping, helping with the other patients, picking up clothes, fetching and carrying for the nurses" is rewarded with the allowance of greater personal liberties (369). Central to the treatment plans developed by these male doctors is the adoption by female patients of traditional gender roles and those unwilling to adopt these feminine roles are subjected to further domination and control. The increased severity of these treatments and their relationship to patriarchy are exemplified by the use of shock therapy: "A little brain damage to jolt you into behaving right. Sometimes it worked. Sometimes a woman forgot what had scared her, what she had been worrying about. Sometimes a woman was finally more scared of being burned in the head again, and she went home to her family and did the dishes and cleaned the house" (83). As Connie states, these shock treatments are repeated each time a female patient departs from the gender role assigned to her by the

ideologies of traditional masculinity. Repeat offenders, or "shock zombies" as Connie calls them, are relocated to the back wards where they "lay, their brains so scarred they remembered nothing, giggling like the old lobotomized patients" (83). In this way, medicine as a traditionally male-dominated arena acts as a form of gender control and subjugation reinforcing patriarchy and centralizing control among traditionally masculine males.

Traditional masculinities seek to reinforce heteronormativity, exemplified in the hospitals' homophobic policies that harm queer patients. Connie's fellow patient and friend, Skip, for example, is identified as pathological due to his identification as a gay man. As Skip outlines, the harmful treatments imposed on these patients are the products of patriarchal desires to enforce heteronormativity: "'They don't like us, you know. We're lepers… You know what the last experiment was they pulled on me? They stuck electrodes on my prick and showed me dirty pictures, and when I got a hard-on about men, they shocked me'" (177). Subjected to a newly developed brain implant through which his desires and actions are manipulated, Skip eventually commits suicide in order to escape the control of this dystopian mental health institution. The patients Piercy presents are, therefore, imprisoned and subjugated in order to force upon them the logic of patriarchy and traditional conceptions of manhood.

A new neuroscientific and cognitive treatment plan makes possible the complete consolidation of power and control by these physicians over the minds and bodies of their patients. By implanting a new technological device in the brains of patients, these doctors are able to control their actions and emotional states, thereby imposing upon the minds and bodies of patients their own wills. These men seek to control and subjugate marginalized subjects such as Connie, desiring ultimately "to place in her something that would rule her feelings like a thermostat" via which they may dominate her will (310). In contrast to the technologies of

Mattapoisett in which "mental resources incorporate a revalorization of embodiment, emotions and other subjugated knowledges-including dreams and even madness," this device empowers traditionally masculine men in places of power to control female bodies, restrict emotional experiences, and enforce the sanitized rationality they sanction as superior to the knowledges derived from embodied experience (Martinson 52). As outlined by Connie, they "believed feeling itself a disease, something to be cut out like a rotten appendix. Cold, calculating, ambitious, believing themselves rational and superior, they chased the crouching female animal through the brain with a scalpel" (308). As Connie recognizes, these men develop a tool enabling them to have complete control over the minds of women and to, therefore, enforce patriarchal values such as the distrust of disembodied knowledge upon them.

When she is eventually subjected to this treatment, Connie transforms into an image of traditional, hyperfeminine qualities, "an object. She went where placed and stayed there" (329). Piercy reveals in such a treatment plan how the interests of patriarchal masculinities are served by major institutions within the gendered nation, the contemporary United States. Pushed to the margins of power due to her sex, race, and class position, Connie faces the prospect of losing her very mind and body to those subscribing to traditional masculinities. Piercy, therefore, highlights in the novel those toxic elements of patriarchal visions of manhood that must be confronted for a new, egalitarian future to be possible. As she demonstrates, such a possibility is predicated upon the present. Failure to realize this ideal polity through activism in the present increases the likelihood of another, dystopian future characterized by traditional masculinities.

As Piercy reveals through Connie's visit to a hypermasculine, dystopian New York of a possible future, the toxic elements of the contemporary American capitalistic patriarchy lead to greater inequalities along the lines of class and sex among other identity elements. The

hypermasculine nation Connie visits represents a possible future for societies increasingly predicated upon the domination and control of women. An unbridled patriarchy, the nation is a hyper-capitalistic society stratified according to race, class, and biological sex and controlled by an upper class living in isolation from the devastated and polluted ecologies of the Earth. As a dystopian possibility, it refracts those aspects Peter Fitting identifies as central to the utopian society of Mattapoisett: "(1) the basic living units developed as alternatives to the nuclear family; (2) the question of gender and the division of labor; (3) sexuality itself, both as an index to human fulfillment and in opposition to heterosexism and/or attempts to limit it to procreation" (165). In presenting a dystopian future that, in contrast, allows for familial and communal bonding only for the elite class, divides labor according to strict gender and class lines, and exploits working class women for their sexualities and reproductive functions within a heterosexist paradigm, Piercy intensifies the dialectic of masculinities central to this feminist utopia. The performances of manhood presented in this dystopian setting, therefore, are positioned in direct opposition to those alternative masculinities of Mattapoisett and this contrast induces in the reader a reconsideration of traditional gender ideologies.

These dystopian masculinities reject embodied knowledge and seek to consolidate power and control over the other. The two male characters described during Connie's visit, Cash and an unnamed guard, demonstrate such desires informed by patriarchal and capitalistic ideologies. Cash is the boyfriend and client of Gildina, a "contract girl" paid on retainer for sex. A type of substitute for the nuclear family, their relationship involves the contractual exploitation of Gildina. The dystopian performance of masculinity to which Cash subscribes is predicated upon the treatment of Gildina as a product to be purchased typically for the length of a month, consumed at his leisure, and discarded when these sexual experiences grow stale, at which point,

she must locate a new partner at the risk of being identified as no longer desirable and, as a result, harvested for organs. While Gildina may sue if he breaks his contract, Cash and other men of his class position exercise almost complete control over such contracted women, placing them in isolation and under constant monitoring. Perhaps most conspicuously, this level of patriarchal control is reflected in the bodily alterations and appearances of these women. As Connie reflects, Gildina has "a tiny waist, enormous sharp breasts that stuck out like brassieres Connie herself had worn in the fifties--but the woman was not wearing a brassiere. Her stomach was flat but her hips and buttocks were oversized and audaciously curved. She looked as if she could hardly walk for the extravagance of her breasts and buttocks, her thighs that collided as she shuffled a few steps" (313). This role as a disempowered and enslaved sex worker and the other position available to women of Gildina's socioeconomic position, that of a mother who, as she explains, are designed or "cored to make babies all the time," reflect the centrality of traditional masculinities in feminist dystopias (316). Besides this focus on controlling and subjugating women, such conceptions of manhood are predicated upon the elimination of emotions and the rejection of embodied knowledge.

The performative nature of masculinities results in the necessity for these men to silence emotional responses that could prevent them from fully adopting their hypermasculine social role. Gildina explains how Cash, whose name hints at the connection binding capitalism and patriarchy, underwent surgical alterations for this purpose: "'He's had SC, did you suppose on that?' 'What's escee?' 'Sharpened control, reallike. He's been through mind control. He turns off fear and pain and fatigue and sleep, like he's got a switch. He's like a Cybo, almost! He can control the fibers in his spinal cord, control his body temperature. He's a fighting machine, like they say'" (324). As Vara Neverow outlines, *embodiment* "honors the unique subjectivity,

physicality and agency of the individual in community" and is "linked to personal identity, to responsibility, to emotional health, to sensuality, to choice," (22). *Incorporation*, on the other hand, "is linked to the annihilation of the individual, to the hierarchical subordination of the subject to a conglomerate, to the obliteration of uniqueness, to the tyranny of uniformity" (Neverow 22). In this dystopian future, the traditionally masculine project of incorporation results in the annihilation of individuals complicit to it such as Cash. Able to submit the body to the control of the mind and eliminate embodied experience, Cash signifies toxic masculinity and is therefore positioned by Piercy against the utopian performances of manhood found in Mattapoisett. While the new masculinities of the utopian polity value communal self-reflection and "worming" as a method for analyzing subconscious biases, these dystopian conceptions of manhood value the cutting off of such reflections as the irrational, emotive products of the body over which the mind must triumph.

Through her sympathetic portrayal of a protagonist who seeks to disrupt the progress of mind-control experiments in the present to protect a future utopian society, Piercy emphasizes the importance of current actions to insure an ideal, feminist future. In highlighting the significance of traditional masculinities in both the dystopian future and present, she more specifically identifies the necessity of embracing alternative conceptions of manhood to impact the future. Foundational to Piercy's novel is the assumption "that the imagining of alternatives has a part to play in" the "profound social transformation" required to liberate humankind from "sexual oppression in our society" (Fitting 162). The outlining of these new ideals of manliness is central, therefore, to the project of imagining a new, egalitarian nation.

A central message of Piercy's novel is that such improved polities are characterized by alternative performances of manhood that reject ideologies of power and control. In the preface

to the 2016 edition of the novel, Piercy identifies utopia as "born of the hunger for something better" and relying "on hope as the engine for imagining such a future" (xi). The utopian image of manhood she provides offers hope that such transformations of society and gender are possible. This new image of masculinity is inseparable from the utopian nation in which it is situated and, therefore, bears qualities that parallel this society, "an ideal 22nd-century utopia based on tolerance, nurturing, communality, ecological responsibility, and the complete effacement of conventional gender differences" (Booker 339).

Piercy presents in her male utopian characters new masculinities that, like the feminist utopia, value community and embodied knowledge. Bolivar, a utopian male, departs from traditional masculinities by seeking connection in order to heal emotionally. When his close friend, Jackrabbit, dies in battle, he initially suppresses his emotions in a typically traditional masculine style. Yet, during the funeral, he participates in a ritualistic dance with the healer, Erzulia, that releases his grief:

> Erzulia possessed willfully by the memory of Jackrabbit led Bolivar round and round. He danced more feverishly, responding, his body became fluid and elegant as he had danced that night of the feast with Jackrabbit…The music ended and Bolivar embraced Erzulia. They stood a moment clasped and then Erzulia's body relaxed. Bolivar jumped back. 'But I felt per!' he cried out. 'You remembering,' Erzulia lilted gently, wiping her forehead. Bolivar crumpled to the ground in a spasm of weeping so sudden that for a moment no one moved to support him. Then Bee and Crazy Horse gently held him, murmuring. 'Good. At last your grief come down.' (345)

This scene presents aspects of new masculinities, specifically their interest in community and rituals of grieving and their acceptance of embodied knowledge, that contrast dramatically with

the traditional ideals of manhood possessed by the male characters of the present and future dystopias. Cash, for example, represents later stages of patriarchal masculinities that seek increasingly more extreme methods, enabled by technology, for divorcing the mind from the body and the male from community. Similarly, men in the 20th century United States such as Luis separate themselves from others and neglect social connections in order to avoid vulnerability and increase feelings of control and power. In contrast to these negative, traditionally masculine perceptions of embodied knowledge and community, the new men Piercy presents recognize the importance of such experiences and seek to cultivate meaningful connections with others.

These new gender conceptions replace isolation and the suppression of emotions with social connection and the expression of feelings. Central to this disruption of normative masculinities is community and vulnerability as tools for mourning and healing from a loss. Unlike the traditionally masculine desire to seek out isolation during times of grief, Bolivar and other utopian male subjects connect with others and strengthen community. Their openness to embodied knowledge and a new, community-oriented consciousness enables them to properly face their grief and express deeply felt emotions rejected by traditional masculinities. In this way, they contrast strikingly with the masculinities of the 20th United States, which are characterized by a need among men to suppress emotion and seek separation from others during traumatic experiences. The new masculinities Piercy presents in Mattapoisett are marked by such interests in embodied knowledge and communal connection as well as the rejection of traditional desires to consolidate power and control.

A society seeking to eliminate hierarchical networks of power, Mattapoisett develops alternative masculinities. Contradicting the sociopolitical logic of the dystopian capitalistic

patriarchies presented in the novel, the United States in both the present and possible future, it rejects capitalism and other interconnected rationales of subjugation such as sexism, homophobia, and racism. The new masculinities Piercy presents in Mattapoisett are posited as ideal yet imperfect performances of manhood that embrace a new paradigm of consciousness in which embodied knowledge and communal connection are valued while traditional desires to consolidate power and control are rejected.

The new masculinities of Mattapoisett are presented via those male characters with whom Connie comes into contact—Bee, Jackrabbit, Barbarossa, and Bolivar. Each of these characters demonstrates an openness to gender roles and sexualities absent from traditional masculinities. Barbarossa and Bee, for example, illustrate the influence of such new conceptions of manhood upon parenting. Bee is a "com" or co-mother to Innocente and shares these responsibilities with two partners, Otter and Luxembourg. A caring and involved parent, Bee shocks Connie with his open expression of emotions, crying during the opening "naming" ritual in which children are recognized as adults and choose new names for themselves after proving their ability to survive in the wild. The very name he chooses, "Innocente," illustrates his hope that in the future power structures valuing control and domination will be completely removed: "I'd been traveling for a year in Latin America. It made me brood about those centuries of the rape of the earth, the riches stolen, the brutalizing and starving of generations… toward that day when all trace of that pillaging will be healed… That's how you got named" (121). By allowing alternatively masculine interests in the elimination of power and control to influence the name he initially chose for the child and later recognizing that same child as an adult free to adopt a new name, Bee is disinterested in familial control and is representative of the new masculinities Piercy presents as central to the feminist utopia.

Barbarossa, who attends the "brooder" via which babies are born without the need for biological parents, is similarly positioned as an alternative to traditional masculinities. During their first encounter, Connie is disturbed by the technological advancements that have enabled men such as Barbarossa to take on one of the most significant roles of motherhood, nursing: "He had breasts. Not large ones. Small breasts, like a flat-chested woman temporarily swollen with milk. Then with his red beard, his face of a sunburnt forty-five-year-old man, stern-visaged, long-nosed, thin-lipped, he began to nurse" (142). Focused upon the sustenance of these children and the "serene enjoyment" of such an intimate form of nurturing, Barbarossa, like Bee, illustrates the enriching capabilities of new masculinities (142).

An openness to diverse sexualities is another core principle of these alternative performances of manhood. Jackrabbit, a nineteen-year-old artist, illustrates this acceptance of and interest in alternative sexualities. Described by Luciente as one who "'wants to couple with everybody,'" he is a queer character who performs a new masculinity in which other sexualities are accepted and respected (134). Involved with Luciente and Bolivar, he enjoys multiple relationships simultaneously and a range of sexual experiences. While Skip, a fellow patient of Connie's committed by his family because he is homosexual, is hospitalized, experimented upon, and eventually driven to suicide by his marginalization within a heteronormative patriarchy, Jackrabbit stands as an example of how such queer men may flourish within a new society in which alternative masculinities are valued.

Another fundamental alteration to masculinities focuses on community and how communal connections allow for healing. The work of incorporating into masculinities a new, communal consciousness is outlined by Jackrabbit when he states, "we tried to learn from cultures that deal well with handling conflict, promoting cooperation, coming-of-age, growing a

sense of community, getting sick, aging, going mad, dying" (132). From these observations, Mattapoisett has over time moved "towards a society that promotes connection with others," signaling "the necessary shift in consciousness that is intrinsic to" the feminist utopia (Fancourt 109). The power of this new, community-oriented consciousness is specifically presented by Piercy in Bolivar and his openness to communal forms of therapy. Such an openness is demonstrated when the community seeks to end a rivalry between Bolivar and Luciente over Jackrabbit. A small group is initially formed to "worm" or identify through meditation, contemplation, and discussion those drives or issues preventing harmony between them. These communal efforts and Bolivar's willingness to connect with others in order to solve relational problems mark a significant departure from traditional masculinities.

As an anarchist society, Mattapoisett's aim is of "integrating people back into the natural world and eliminating power relationships" (Piercy ix). Such feminist interests are evidenced by its approach to medicine, education, agriculture, and government. In place of a medical establishment that exploits patients according to the logic of capitalism, patriarchy, and attending ideologies of subjugation, Mattapoisett possesses healers who practice naturalistic treatment approaches. Such healers do not resort to the removing of bodily organs but, instead, utilize their knowledge of the natural as well as technologies to treat the patient: "'We don't do much taking out. When we do, we regrow. We program the local cells. Slow healing but better after'" (170). In addition, they do not seek above all to extend life but teach instead to be accepting of death. As Susan Matarese points out, "Piercy seems to be suggesting…that a greater willingness to face up to our mortality and to recognize our shared vulnerability may be the basis for a dramatic transformation of human values and outlook" (107). Informed by the beliefs of "'societies that people used to call primitive" but were "socially sophisticated,'" they reject traditionally

patriarchal and coldly rational ideals in which life is prolonged and, instead, seek to comfort and enrich the experiences of each patient (132). This alteration is another product of the feminist paradigm shift in consciousness Piercy imagines. In presenting a "glimpse of the possibilities for social consciousness and community life" as the product of "a willingness to look at death more openly," Piercy includes as central to this social progress the advent of new, heathier masculinities opposed to patriarchal networks of power (Matarese 109).

The mental health institutions of Mattapoisett, in contrast to their dystopian counterparts of the present and future United States, value the autonomy and individuality of the patient and this also signals a departure from patriarchal societies marked by traditional masculinities. These institutions are described by Luciente as "'open to the air and pleasant'" (65). They "'are places where people retreat when they want to go down into themselves—to collapse, carry on, see visions, hear voices of prophecy, bang on the walls, relive infancy—getting in touch with the buried self and the inner mind'" (67). In the utopia, subjects such as Jackrabbit, who seeks such mental healing and sanctuary often, are not stigmatized for their needs and do so according to their own free will. In this way, the mental health institutions Piercy imagines in this utopia lack those interconnecting forces of subjugation typical of such organizations in the contemporary United States.

The absence of hierarchical perspectives in these alternative masculinities results in significant departures from the educational and governmental practices of the contemporary United States. Specifically, these institutions do not reinforce networks of power through the awarding of degrees or the granting of significant governing powers. Influenced significantly by a paradigm of masculinities not predicated upon domination and control, these institutions imprint upon the student and civil servant the meaningfulness of learning and community.

Students, for example, are educated in their village prior to their naming ceremony. After this point, as Luciente explains, "we go wherever we must to learn, although only up to the number a teacher can handle. I waited two years for Rose to take me. Where you go depends on what you want to study. For instance, if I were drawn to ocean farming I'd have gone to Gardiners Island or Woods Hole. Although I live near the sea, I'm a land-plant person'" (53). Informed significantly by new, egalitarian masculinities, this utopian educational system replaces patriarchal approaches to learning—focused upon profit, social mobility, and competition—with one focused exclusively upon community, education, and the natural world.

Such alternative masculinities influence the governmental practices of Mattapoisett, which lack those capitalistic, patriarchal aspects of civil service common to the United States. The planning council for this township is made up of citizens chosen not by election but by lot, thereby preventing the development of a political class. In addition, the temporary nature of these positions, typically one year in length, and the absence of any social or economic promotion as a product of this role eliminate the possibility of hierarchical systems of power developing. In the next level of government, regional planning, "reps chosen by lot from township level go to the regional to discuss gross decisions. The needs go up and the possibilities come down. If people are chilled by a decision, they go and argue. Or they barter directly with places needing the same resources, and compromise'" (162-163). Central to the governing practices of Mattapoisett is the voice of each citizen. The manner in which this polity removes socioeconomic influences protects it from the corrupting elements of capitalistic patriarchies. In place of such ideologies foundational to systems of power and control, Piercy imagines a utopian anarchy whose egalitarian system of government, predicated upon the elimination of power consolidation and subjugation, reflects those alternative masculinities central to this society.

Such new male gender scripts are reflected in the utopian community's nonexploitative approach to the environment. Demonstrating a non-patriarchal, dominating relationship to nature, Mattapoisett possesses several key qualities of an ecofeminist society: "nonhierarchical forms of organization, recycling of wastes, simpler living styles involving less-polluting 'soft' technologies, and labor-intensive rather than capital-intensive economic methods" (Merchant 295). In contrast to this feminist utopia are both the capitalistic patriarchy of Connie's present, the contemporary United States, and the dystopian vision of a future New York in which "multis" or multinational corporations have consolidated such power that the Earth has been stripped of its resources and is no longer inhabitable for life. By limiting the use of technologies to those dangerous or mundane tasks requiring completion, centering as the primary purpose of labor the enrichment of human lives in relationship both to each other and nature, and removing from agricultural industries the possibility to accumulate capital and market power, the citizens of Mattapoisett work to maintain a nation whose treatment of nature reflects its nonhierarchical conceptions of masculinity.

The key social organizations of Mattapoisett including its medical, educational, agricultural, and governmental institutions highlight the influence of masculinities upon national identity and the mutually constitutive relationship existing between *gender* and *nation*. The connections Piercy locates "among issues of racism, classism, sexism, and environmental abuse" strengthen both her critiques of contemporary American culture and the possibility she posits of moving toward a better society through the elimination of hierarchical perspectives central to traditional masculinities (Stratton 306). Presenting to her reader individual characters performing new, egalitarian masculinities, Piercy illustrates the methods by which men may work toward a better future through the introduction of new forms of manhood in the present.

The dialectic of masculinities Piercy provides and the manner in which the text prompts readers to consider the benefit of alternative ideals of manliness demonstrate Piercy's concern "with the liberatory dimension of the choices which people make in the present" (King 77). Explaining the necessity for contacting Connie, Luciente states, "'We must fight to come to exist, to remain in existence, to be the future that happens. That's why we reached you'" (213). In this feminist utopian novel, Piercy similarly outlines for her audience the necessity to adopt new masculinities qualified by a feminist paradigm of consciousness and a rejection of traditional desires to dominate and control. By presenting the possibility of such utopian masculinities as predicated upon the outcome of present discussions concerning gender and manhood, she calls for her male readers to recognize the urgent need to depart from traditional, patriarchal ideologies of masculinity.

Woman on the Edge of Time represents a key development in the feminist utopian genre in that it signals a widening focus among such writers to incorporate and center the experiences of women of color and illuminate how traditional masculinities subjugate such subjects through racism and classism. *The Kin of Ata Are Waiting for You* is significant in its framing as the retrospective analysis of misogynistic masculinities by a converted patriarch. *The Dispossessed* further complicates narratives surrounding gender by presenting the failures and successes of an initially feminist-oriented male protagonist. Departing from these focuses upon male characters negotiating masculinities, *Woman on the Edge of Time* relocates patriarchal and utopian men to the narrative margins. By replacing such characters with a woman of color who must navigate patriarchal dystopias to ensure the future development of a feminist society, Piercy illuminates the impact of masculinities upon such marginalized women. In its focus on the importance of

ethnicity and intersectionality, *Woman on the Edge of Time* foreshadows the works of other

feminist writers such as Octavia Butler, discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 4: Masculinity Crossing Borders in Octavia Butler's *Lilith's Brood*

The fiction of Octavia Butler, especially her *Lilith's Brood* trilogy, act as successors to the feminist speculative novels discussed in previous chapters. Like Bryant's *The Kin of Ata Are Waiting for You* and Le Guin's *The Dispossessed*, *Lilith's Brood* emphasizes the possibility of transforming patriarchal masculinities and highlights the need to eliminate current hierarchical socioeconomic systems for alternative ideals of manhood to flourish. The first novel of Butler's trilogy, *Dawn*, centers the experiences of a woman of color negotiating societal systems of power that uniquely marginalize her based upon her identity. The protagonists of *Adulthood Rites* and *Imago*, the second and third novels in Butler's trilogy, are subjugated due to their non-normative racial, gender, and sexual identities. The alternative masculinities Butler posits as necessary for eliminating the oppression of such subjects are not unique to or unattainable by individuals belonging to particular biological sexes, genders, or races (represented by species in her trilogy). Utilizing the speculative genre to imagine the crossing of both gender and biological barriers, Butler presents a human population as it joins and procreates with an alien species but does not assert that humankind must become something else to adopt feminist-oriented masculinities. She presents "porosity in apparently commonsensical and unbridgeable biological barriers" and the gender scripts associated with them and both her alien and human characters prove capable of adopting patriarchal and alternative masculinities (Kilgore and Samantrai 357). In developing a feminist utopia predicated upon the transformation of traditional masculinities and emphasizing the socially constructed nature of these gender scripts, Butler dramatically illustrates the power of science fiction in discussing the future of masculinity.

Butler's radical materialist presentation of masculinity is an overlooked element of her fiction, which is predominantly valued for its use of the speculative genre to center the experiences of women and people of color in contemporary American culture. In the years since her death, Butler has received considerable attention for her work at the intersection of speculative fiction, race, and feminism. Her fiction is often noted as invaluable due its inclusion of revolutionary topics within science fiction literature, typified by its pushing of "the genre to speak to our deepest, culturally burdened horrors as well as to our transcendent hopes" (Kilgore and Samantrai 355). Viewing herself as responsible to three central constituencies, "the science-fiction audience, the black audience and the feminist audience," Butler rejected the character types and themes common to genre fiction in favor of complexity that spoke to diverse experiences (Potts 336). Her works mark a significant recalibration in feminist science fiction in that they center characters historically marginalized due to their races, sexualities, and genders and illuminate the ways traditional masculinities are socially constructed and may therefore be adopted across these identity markers.

This focus on traditionally marginalized characters, fundamental to *Lilith's Brood*, appears in the time period between *Woman on the Edge of Time* in 1976 and the publication of *Dawn* in 1987 in Butler's short story "Bloodchild" (1984) and novel *Wild Seed* (1980). The Nebula and Hugo Award-winning short story "Bloodchild" is told from the traditional perspective of a male character who experiences the feminine by being impregnated by an alien. The story follows the experiences of Gan, a male human who is coerced into acting as a host for the eggs of T'Gatoi, a female member of the alien Tlic species. Through these experiences, Gan better understands and accepts his own fluidity regarding his physiological makeup and masculinity. In this way, the experiences of male humans such as Gan mirror those of women

whose reproductive functions are monitored and controlled by others in power. In chronicling Gan's move toward adaptation and viewing his body as not essentially, traditionally masculine, "Bloodchild" illuminates the socially constructed nature of gender. Moving beyond this positive vision of deconstructed masculinity, however, Butler subverts utopian conceptions of gender in "Bloodchild" through the possession among the Tlic species of masculine traits. Since Tlic males are violent and live for a limited amount of time, the Tlic characters present in the novel are female and their possession of traits traditionally classified as masculine complicates utopian conceptions of alternative masculinities. Dependent upon humans to host their eggs for reproduction to occur, the Tlic females consolidate power and control over their human counterparts to insure the continuation of their species. The story acts as an early signifier of Butler's interests in centering the experiences of formally marginalized characters (in this case, women, but imposed onto a male character) and complicating utopian conceptions of transformed masculinities. It bridges the gap separating earlier works such as *The Kin of Ata Are Waiting for You* that focus on traditional men encountering new societies and masculinities and later texts such as *Dawn* that decenter male experience and problematize the utopian resolutions of these earlier feminist novels.

Wild Seed* more clearly bridges the gap between *Woman on the Edge of Time* and the first entry in Butler's trilogy, *Dawn.* Specifically, *Wild Seed* brings from the margins characters marked as other according to their identities and focuses upon the compromises they must consider within a decidedly non-utopian world. Focused upon the experiences of Anyanwu, an African woman of color gifted with supernatural healing powers and the ability to transform herself into any animal or human, Butler's novel is driven by Anyanwu's conflict with a hypermasculine adversary, Doro, an ancient African male. Like Anyanwu, Doro is immortal, but

his immortality is dependent upon the complete consolidation of power and control over others. Killing others in order to subsume their physical bodies, he is a dominating, traditionally masculine entity desiring above all else to breed a nation of superhumans through which he may enhance his power. The novel offers a revolutionary focus upon a character whose experiences are shaped by both her race and biological sex. It is also significant, however, in that it signals a move within feminist speculative fiction toward complex stories reflecting the lived experiences of women of color.

This complexity manifests most trenchantly in the resolution of conflict between two societies Butler presents near the end of *Wild Seed*, one led by Anyanwu and another by Doro. After the accidental death of Doro's son, Isaac, compels Anyanwu to flee from Doro's seed village, Doro searches for Anyanwu for a century, finally locating her in Louisiana where she has developed her own colony. In stark contrast to Doro's seed villages in which he maintains complete control of the occupants' reproductive practices, Anyanwu's colony, informed by feminist ideals, allows for reproductive freedom. Presenting Doro's villages as the logical product of his hypermasculinity and Anyanwu's community as reflective of her aversion to such patriarchal conceptions of manhood, Butler tacitly comments on the connections existing between the nation and gender. It is this issue of control and power over reproductive rights that Butler presents as central to the conflict between Doro and Anyanwu.

Taking control over Anyanwu's Louisiana community, Doro introduces his breeding program to its inhabitants, stipulating sexual partners and monitoring procreation. As a result of the violence and subjugation that results, Anyanwu chooses to commit suicide but is stopped by Doro, who offers a compromise to prevent her death. This agreement stipulates that Doro may no longer kill carelessly and his victims may not be members of the community. In return, Anyanwu

must act as an ally to Doro, assisting him in his project of locating promising, powerful individuals. By concluding *Wild Seed* not with the victory of Anyanwu over Doro but with this problematic compromise, Butler centers the experiences of women of color and the complex choices they must negotiate in a decidedly non-utopian world. *Wild Seed* links earlier feminist novels such as *Woman on the Edge of Time* to *Dawn* in that it, like Piercy's novel, relocates female characters of color from the textual margins to its center and it, like the first novel of *Lilith's Brood*, introduces complexity and compromise to imagined utopian and dystopian polities.

Though Butler, through this final conflict between Doro and Anyanwu, comments in *Wild Seed* on the mutually constitutive relationship of the nation and gender, it is in *Lilith's Brood* that she most clearly draws connections between power structures and masculinities and presents utopian and dystopian visions of manhood as the necessary products of competing nations. *Lilith's Brood* presents Butler's most trenchant critique of gender, the possibility she imagines of men adopting healthier gender roles and supplanting traditional, heteronormative masculinities, and the positive impact the adoption of such alternative masculinities has in combating intersectional forces of oppression. Through its inclusion of protagonists differentiated by race, sexuality, and gender and its interest in the compromises necessary for a better nation to be realized, this trilogy culminates key changes within contemporary feminist utopian fiction.

Butler's critique of masculinities can be best understood in the context of research located at the intersection of speculative fiction and gender and its tracing of the influence of earlier portrayals of gender within genre fiction upon its contemporary successors. In *A New Species: Gender and Science in Science Fiction* (1993), Robin Roberts traces the influence of

pulp science fiction and its portraits of gender upon later feminist writers including Butler. Such feminist writers' reconfigurations "of misogynist sources and the reclamation of their images of women" demonstrate both the nature of pulp science fiction as protofeminist and as "one of the 'stones available in the house' of patriarchy" through which writers such as Butler may challenge the gender norms presented in earlier works of speculative fiction (Roberts 47). A decade later, Brian Attebery in *Decoding Gender in Science Fiction* (2002), identifies two "cultural systems that allow us to generate forms of expression and assign meanings to them"—gender and science fiction—through analyses of mid-nineteenth to late twentieth century speculative works (2). His fourth chapter focuses specifically upon masculinities and how two disparate forces—Darwin's theory of evolution and significant science fiction editor John Campbell—influenced the development of a heteronormative, white male archetype in speculative fiction. More recent works such as the edited collections *Queer Universes: Sexualities in Science Fiction* (2008) and *Gender Identity and Sexuality in Current Fantasy and Science Fiction* (2017) continue this process of decoding and deconstructing gender identities as well as sexualities within historical and, to a greater degree, contemporary works of science fiction. This chapter extends this work by identifying the ways feminist science fiction writers such as Butler imagine new, healthier ideals of manliness to supplant traditional masculinities. Specifically, my analysis concerns how Butler, in developing texts with substantial utopian elements concerning femininity and society, also produces images of masculinity with new, egalitarian characteristics.

Since Butler's death in 2006, critiques of her works have assembled at the intersection of speculative fiction, race, gender, sociobiology, and identity with a noted absence of analyses concerning her critiques of manhood. The common thread in her works, as identified by De Witt Douglas Kilgore and Ranu Samantrai in "A Memorial to Octavia Butler," is "her persistent

demonstration that the genre's fantastic investment in science enables critiques of the meaning of biological difference in the organization of human life and destiny" (353). Her texts' nuanced presentations of race, gender, identity, and sexuality among other categories traditionally considered bordered and stable have invited myriad analyses of these concepts and their relationship to science.

Eric White, for example, demonstrates how Butler's *Lilith's Brood* trilogy represents an evolutionist narrative that, while avoiding overt utopianism, arrives at an "'erotics of becoming' that does not simply dismiss identity in favor of desiring metamorphosis but, instead, proposes the self-similar mutations of a subject-in-process as a way to reconcile the need for psychological structure with the possibility of embracing the flux of matter in motion" (407). Sherryl Vint, on the other hand, investigates in "Becoming Other: Animals, Kinship, and Butler's *Clay's Ark*" how Butler critiques the relationships linking anthropocentrism, racism, science, and human subjectivity. According to Vint, Butler blurs the line proposed to divide humanity from animals, "aware of how this boundary has been historically deployed against some homo sapiens, and she provides a new kind of hybrid human subjectivity as a vision of how we might begin to rethink our ethical and political structures in this age of biopolitics, suggesting a new model not constructed via the separation of human and animal" (282). Connecting the works of Butler to scientific research, Laurel Bollinger in "Symbiogenesis, Selfhood, and Science Fiction" outlines how authors such as Butler have incorporated Lynn Margulis's theory "that cellular evolution occurs through symbiotic incorporation of bacterial communities, suggesting that cooperation, not competition, provides the fundamental engine of biological change" (34). Butler's incorporation of symbiogenesis in works such as *Clay's Ark* (1984), Bollinger asserts, adds considerable strength to her critique of gender norms. This scholarship and its focus upon the

ideologies connecting anthropocentrism and hierarchical intraspecies human behaviors and the possibilities for new conceptions of masculinity favoring cooperation as a means of sociobiological progress is foundational to my analysis of *Lilith's Brood* and the new masculinities Butler proposes.

This chapter traces the connections Butler locates in this trilogy between traditional masculinities and the will to dominate and subjugate others according to contrasting sexualities, genders, and races. The novels making up this trilogy, *Dawn*, *Adulthood Rites*, and *Imago*, portray a continuing conflict between the human survivors of a nuclear war that nearly destroyed the Earth and the Oankali, an alien species that, while rescuing these humans and restoring the ecologies of the planet, demonstrate a similar, traditionally masculine will to subjugate and control. Butler introduces the conflict in *Dawn*, as the human survivors negotiate the Oankali requirement that they reproduce with the aliens, which will bring about the end of humanity as a distinct species. Set decades after the events of *Dawn, Adulthood Rites* focuses on Akin, the first human-born Oankali-human male construct, who recognizes the problematic hierarchical behaviors of both the Oankali society and the human separatists' communities seeking a return to patriarchal capitalistic rule. At the conclusion of this second text, Akin successfully negotiates the creation of a human separatist colony on Mars for those desiring an autonomous human society. This second novel in the trilogy concludes without a complete resolution to the conflict. *Imago*, the final entry in the series, follows Jodahs, the first human-born ooloi construct, who, as a member of this third Oankali gender, campaigns for and ultimately is granted the ability to develop a new Oankali-human town that rejects the traditionally masculine hierarchies of both the human separatist and Oankali polities. Across this trilogy, Butler charts the conflicts arising between traditional masculinities and imagines their ending as the result of new, egalitarian

ideals of manhood that reject desires to dominate and control those considered *other* according to their race, gender, and sexuality. Butler's trilogy explores the elements of these masculinities that are central to the creation of a society that, while imperfect, possesses key utopian features.

Todd Reeser's theorization of masculinity as an ideology necessarily connected to hegemony provides context for Butler's exploration of masculinity. According to Reeser, images, myths, discourses, and practices produced by public and private entities and individuals construct and reinforce patriarchal conceptions of manhood (21). Entertainment platforms such as television, for example, are capable of constructing new masculinities while also revealing current forms widely accepted in a society and involve public and private organizations. My analysis of *Lilith's Brood*, like those of previous chapters concerning *The Kin of Ata Are Waiting for You*, *The Dispossessed*, and *Woman on the Edge of Time*, reveals this interpellation of normative masculinities to be specific to the nation within which it occurs.

Applying further theoretical tools of masculinity studies to *Lilith's Brood* reveals key connections Butler emphasizes between patriarchy and other oppressive ideologies such as racism. This approach, for example, illustrates the importance of race to the American conceptions of manhood Butler presents in this trilogy. If, as Kimmel observes, "American men try to *control themselves*" and as a result "project their fears onto *others*" before escaping as a last resort in dealing with difference, the *others* onto which they project their fears are marked significantly by their race (6). In seeking to perform an impossible conception of masculinity requiring self-sufficiency through the accumulation of power and control and the subjugation of others, these adherents to traditional masculinities dominate others identified as outside favored racial categories. In these texts, Butler presents this connection between traditional masculinities and racism both among her human characters according to traditional racial categories and, to a

greater extent, in encounters between her Oankali and human characters in which *species* acts as a distortion of *race*. In addition, she highlights the way in which these hierarchical views of race, informed by traditional masculinities, are empowered by the master narratives valued by the gendered nation.

The specific metanarrative Butler identifies as central to the ideologies of the human separatists, for example, is the Biblical creation myth and, more specifically, the account of Lilith, the first woman. While the cyborg, as described by Donna Haraway, is powerful in its disconnection from traditional Western ideologies and, therefore, "would not recognize the Garden of Eden," the human separatists in Butler's novels identify this paradisiacal location of Biblical origins as a site of great power in justifying racial and gender ideologies (151). Their hatred for Lilith, for example, is informed by a patriarchal will to subjugate women illustrated in the Biblical story of Lilith, the first wife of Adam, who was removed from Eden "because she refused to submit to his rule (in particular, would not lie beneath him in sex)" (Peppers 49). Accepting this narrative as universally true and illustrative of the ideal, unequal relationship between the sexes, these men rationalize traditional masculinities' efforts to dominate as natural. The punishment of the Biblical Lilith for challenging such patriarchal rule "was to couple with 'demons' and give birth to a monstrous brood of children" (Peppers 49). The development of Oankali-human construct children is seen by these separatists through this Biblical lens and they reject such miscegenation as unholy.

These separatists likewise rely upon the Biblical account of creation to justify their traditionally masculine attitudes towards race. Drawing from a Western religious iconography that portrays "the black woman…as Lilith," whose evil acts are "responsible for sin" entering the world, these human men valuing patriarchal masculinities return to the origin myths

unrecognized by the cyborg in order to naturalize their desires to subjugate those considered

other according to their gender and race among other factors (O'Neale 142). They utilize the

Biblical origin myth to condemn those rejecting their traditionally masculine appeals to

patriarchal and racist rule. Drawing from master narratives in stark contrast to this Western myth,

the Oankali likewise justify their hierarchical behavior according to cultural narratives used to

naturalize the subjugation of others. Relying upon a master narrative of progress and

evolutionary change, they subjugate humans according to both their sexualities, genders and

racial differences. As organic beings with a history that, while demonstrably more egalitarian

than their human counterparts, remains problematic, the Oankali introduce their own traditional

ideologies concerning family, distributions of power, sexualities, and gender to the human

survivors. Butler's trilogy reveals parallels existing between the ideologies of the humans and

Oankali regarding social systems of power and specifically masculinities.

In opposition to such hierarchical perspectives, *Lilith's Brood* presents new masculinities

that, while imperfect, are significantly more egalitarian than their patriarchal alternatives. While

Butler denied the presence of utopian themes within her own works, there are glimpses of such

alternatives to toxic masculinity in her texts, most notably among the aliens and human-alien

hybrids. She rejected the possibility that "imperfect humans can form a perfect society" and her

presentation of the ideal polity as not solely human informed her belief that she was not a

utopian writer (Beal 14). I contend, though, that *Lilith's Brood* contains dystopian and utopian

elements working in concert to present new, ideal masculinities and social orders. Though her

Oankali-human hybrid characters perform the most positive alternative masculinities in these

texts, she imagines in both her Oankali and human characters positive alternatives to hegemonic

masculinities. In this fashion, the *Lilith's Brood* series continues the work of the aforementioned

feminist fiction predating it and may be accurately described—like Le Guin's *The Dispossessed*—as ambiguously utopian.

The positive effects of the trilogy's undermining of heteronormativity may seemingly belie Butler's views concerning human nature and masculinity. Throughout her novels, Butler appears to present essentialist views of gender and, more specifically, masculinity. According to Hoda M. Zaki, Butler does not adopt a materialist form of feminism, which considers the social and historical construction of gender and subjectivity in analyses of patriarchy (240). In Zaki's analysis, Butler is essentialist, asserting a natural connection between the genetic makeup of men and the aggressive will to dominate characterizing traditional conceptions of manhood. This will to dominate—paired with intelligence—is dubbed the "human contradiction" by the Oankali species in *Lilith's Brood* and men accordingly possess more of this contradiction than women. If the logic of her novels is understood to be that, "abandoning the human body is a necessary prerequisite for real human alteration," the efficacy of prodding her readers to critique traditional conceptions of maleness may seem futile (Zaki 242).

A materialist analysis of Butler's works, however, reveals positive changes among her characters' performances of maleness, providing at least the hope of some alteration in toxic masculinity. This critique contends that Butler's characters, both Oankali and human, prove capable of adopting healthy conceptions of manhood and developing social orders or, to return to Reeser, *gendered nations* reflective of these views. The utopian elements Zaki identifies in these texts illustrate this point. The ability of "individuals occasionally to escape the grip of instinct and genetic structure on human behavior" and the presentation of "alien societies" that "stand in the sort of political comparison to existing human social arrangements" illustrate how Butler identifies a key relationship between the nation and its normalized genders and, therefore, the

possibility for change (243). Specifically, normative masculine qualities such as the desire for power and control via aggression and domination are possessed by both human and alien characters to varying degrees and are informed by their specific societies. In addition, these Oankali and human characters demonstrate an ability to adopt new, egalitarian masculinities and social orders in direct opposition to these negative, traditional traits and patterns.

Butler critiques traditional American masculinities as represented by her human characters and their Oankali counterparts, the latter of which act as defamiliarized representatives of these masculinities. As previously outlined, to *defamiliarize*, according to Victor Shklovsky, means to alter conceptual forms while the nature of such concepts remains stable (13). This distortion of forms brings attention to the natural qualities of the concept and requires the observer to consider it outside its usual cultural environment. Such a theorization may be applied to studies of gender since traditional masculinities, for example, may be defamiliarized through their performance by an unfamiliar, or, in the case of these novels, inhuman, subject. In this way, their unaltered, problematic nature is thrown into sharp relief. Challenging "the automatism or perception" of the reader, Butler creates "a vision which results from" an engaged or "deautomized perception" (Shklovksy 22). In making the familiar strange, Butler calls for her audience to consider this vision, which involves the rethinking of gender norms and the rejection of hegemonic masculinities. With this theoretical tool in tow, we may consider Butler's presentation of power and control, aggression, and domination as products of normalized American masculinities. A materialist analysis of these texts, therefore, reveals the possibilities for these human, alien, and hybrid characters to both adopt and reject the traditionally masculine desire to consolidate power and control through aggression and domination.

The radical masculinities imagined by Butler and other feminist science fiction writers such as Le Guin, Piercy, and Russ is necessarily tied to that of their pulp speculative fiction forbearers. These writers—like a select few of their pulp predecessors—"retain the depiction of female strength and reject the patriarchal and "pessimistic ending of" the typical pulp texts that often find the female "put back into her place, subordinate to the male characters" (Roberts 64). An attending result of this more egalitarian presentation of femininity, I argue, is the production of new male characters whose admirable qualities such as strength, honor, and loyalty remain intact while their traditional, patriarchal attitudes towards women are replaced by a new masculinity that values equality. If fantasy, as Delaney asserts, considers what is impossible while science fiction concerns itself with what has not happened, speculative fiction is fertile ground for new conceptions of femininity and masculinity that may influence future configurations of gender (61).

The inclusion of new, egalitarian masculinities found in the works of these authors echoes Le Guin's call for new visions in speculative fiction, namely the replacement of Victorian, imperialist fantasies with "such deeply radical, futuristic concepts as Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity" (210). According to Le Guin, male elitism in science fiction is importantly a "symptom of a whole which is authoritarian, power-worshiping, and intensely parochial" (208). Challenging sexism in genre fiction necessarily entails opposition to larger aggressive and dominating attitudes towards *the other*. A central aspect of the aforementioned superman of golden age science fiction, for example, is his race. The patriarchal ideologies informing the superman influence both his racial makeup—he is always white—and his subjugating, racist attitude toward those identified as other according to this category of identity. Sexism must be understood, therefore, as connected to other related forms of aggression directed

at a host of others categorized as such by their class position, race, language, and sexuality among other elements. The new man of science fiction is the product of feminist speculative writers such as Bryant, Le Guin, Piercy, and Butler who imagine new worlds in which both sexes benefit from the desire to promote liberty, equality, and fraternity instead of the aggressive values found in the majority of the pulp texts.

This new man, like the revolutionary, complex female characters presented in feminist science fiction, replaces older conceptions of gender informed by "present-day, white, middle-class suburbia" (Russ 206). While the technological tools and settings of these texts are typically distinct from those of the 20th century United States, the conservative social values of contemporary American culture remain intact. Joanna Russ, for example, locates several key traditional values in science fiction and specifically the space opera subgenre; such stories, she observes, often include "a feudal economic and social structure" in which "women are important as prizes or motives," "active or ambitious women are evil," "women are supernaturally beautiful," "women are weak and/or kept off stage," "women's powers are passive and involuntary," and "the real focus of interest is not on women at all" but on the traditionally masculine protagonists populating these works (208-209). Such traditional images of women and men are necessarily tied to each other; the undermining of patriarchal images of women in science fiction, therefore, produces healthier, alternative portrayals of men in opposition to heteronormative, middle-class gender scripts.

These new portraits of masculinity by feminist science fiction writers specifically challenge earlier depictions of men as violent dominators seeking to subjugate others. Russ characterizes the white male hero of pulp, space opera, and other subsets of science fiction during its so-called golden age as the "Master of the Universe." He "is invulnerable. He has no

weaknesses. Sexually he is super-potent. He does exactly what he pleases, everywhere and at all times. He is absolutely self-sufficient. He depends on nobody, for this would be a weakness. Toward women he is possessive, protective, and patronizing; to me he gives orders. He is never frightened…he is never indecisive and he always wins" (Russ 210). In short, the masculinities of earlier science fiction oppose liberty, equality, and fraternity and espouse instead the accumulation of power and control through aggressive acts and domination. Feminist science fiction writers such as Butler critique traditional gender scripts supporting the traditional hero, reject essentialist conceptions of problematic masculinities, and present traditional performances of manhood in a new, negative light within their fiction.

Butler destabilizes the legitimizing powers of essentialist gender theories by presenting conflicts between masculinities and aligning her audience not with performers of problematic scripts of manhood but, instead, her female protagonist. Set two hundred and fifty years after the conclusion of a nuclear war that devastated most of the Earth's surface and ozone layer, the novel chronicles the experiences of Lilith Iyapo, a black human female enlisted by her alien captors to act as a leader of her fellow human survivors. During her first experiences with the alien colonizers aboard their ship, Lilith witnesses a divergence among the Oankali concerning the desire for power and control in her assigned ooloi, Nikanj and its parent, Kahguyaht. Nikanj, an adolescent novice learning the art of genetic alterations, explains to her the nature of her subjugation and its own complicity to the wishes of its parent ooloi, Kahguyaht. This parent, referred to by Nikanj by the familial title "Ooan," requires that Nikanj make prescribed genetic alterations to Lilith, whether through consensual or violent means: "'Ooan wanted me to act and say nothing … to … surprise you. I won't do that'" (75). Elaborating further, the young ooloi outlines its need to complete this task as a sign of maturation and that, as an adolescent, it will

not yet be able to provide the pleasure usually produced in such intimate encounters: "'I would like to wait, do it when I'm mature. I could make it pleasurable for you then. It should be pleasurable. But Ooan … I understand what it feels. It says I have to change you now'" (75). The options presented to Lilith are to succumb to the pressures impressed upon her by Nikanj to allow it to penetrate and alter her mind or to be altered by force at the hands of Kahguyaht. This ultimatum illustrates both the problematic masculinities common to the Oankali and their human counterparts and the choices available to both species to challenge or submit to the hegemonic gender order. Aligning the reader with Lilith, Butler calls for her audience to consider the value of new, utopian masculinities based on fraternity, equality, and liberty.

Butler's call for new masculinities—supported by a materialist conception of gender—involves the distorted presentation of the aforementioned four patterns of masculinity identified by Connell. These patterns—hegemony, complicity, subordination, and marginalization—represent the narrow options available to male subjects within the patriarchal gender order. Of these patterns, Nikanj chooses to remain complicit to the hegemonic, traditionally masculine desires for power and control possessed by Kahguyaht. Ultimately, Lilith is coerced into a mind-altering form of assault at the behest of Kahguyaht and the complicity of Nikanj. Her dissent is clearly outlined: "'What's frightening is the idea of being tampered with.' She drew a deep breath. 'Listen, no part of me is more definitive of who I am than my brain. I don't want —'" (76). Such pleas highlight the nature of this assault; this act represents the violent penetration and subjugation of Lilith's mind and body. Having intoxicated Lilith into a sleep-like state through the use of substances produced by its body, Nikanj enters her via its node-like appendages and alters her mind so she may retrieve heretofore inaccessible memories. The description Butler provides of Lilith's emotional state upon awakening from this induced sleep echoes accounts of

sexual assault: "When she awoke, at ease and only mildly confused, she found herself fully clothed and alone. She lay still, wondering what Nikanj had done to her" (80). A materialist reading of this section reveals the connections Butler identifies between national attitudes toward *the other* and masculinities. Both Nikanj and Kahguyaht demonstrate an ability to adopt or reject masculinities, though they risk subordination and marginalization. This possibility of adopting alternative, egalitarian masculinities defines Butler's inclusion of new performances of manhood as central to a comparatively utopian society. Her adoption of a materialist conception of gender and her call for new, healthier masculinities within both science fiction and society can be seen more clearly through the examination of these male characters.

The social constructionist attributes of the masculinity to which Nikanj subscribes are revealed, for example, by a key ethical dilemma it experiences. Though Nikanj remains complicit, it recognizes the unethical qualities of its actions and the system of power and subjugation these actions serve; this in turn reveals Butler's presentation of traditional masculinities as not essentially human. In its conversation with Lilith, Nikanj recognizes the unethical qualities of its parent's actions: "'Ooan says humans—any new trade partner species— can't be treated the way we must treat each other. It's right up to a point. I just think it goes too far. We were bred to work with you'" (81). This passage reveals Nikanj's acceptance of human subordination to the Oankali to an unspecified degree, its disagreement with its parent concerning the degree of subordination acceptable, and its unwillingness to challenge Kahguyaht, fearing marginalization, a key pattern of masculinity. Still, its desire to negotiate peacefully with humans illustrates its support for alternative masculinities opposed to power and control: "'We should be able to find ways through most of our differences'" (81). As a subject complicit to hegemonic masculinity but in disagreement with it, Nikanj represents the possibility

for positive change and the adoption of new performances of masculinity. While Nikanj hardly represents an ideal alternative to traditional masculinities, its approach to this situation reveals a divide within Oankali culture that echoes human disputes over gender. Through such disagreements, Butler illustrates the materialist qualities of masculinity and, specifically, the ability for participants to question normalized desires to consolidate power and gain control over others. Butler presents in *Dawn* problematic ideals of manhood possessed by Oankali characters that will later be challenged by Oankali, human, and hybrid revolutionaries in *Adulthood Rites* and *Imago*. Her work represents in this way a non-essentialist critique of traditional masculinities and the proposal of ambiguously utopian alternatives to these gender scripts.

Butler's critique of masculinities involves the inclusion of human characters whose phallocentric attitudes illustrate the connections Le Guin locates between imperialist fantasies of the subjugation of *the other* and patriarchy. The human males populating these works violently react in opposition to the other, in this case, the Oankali colonizers. In her position as leader, Lilith must convince her fellow human beings to adopt the Oankali way of life and mate with them in order to create a stronger hybrid species. This task proves dangerous as those humans she awakens from hypersleep maintain the traditionally masculine conception of the other as a dangerous entity to be combatted and subjugated. This friction eventually erupts into armed conflict. Lilith's human partner, Joseph, a Chinese-Canadian survivor, is murdered and the group of survivors is sent to Earth without their leader. In *Adulthood Rites*, separatist camps are formed by those human survivors favoring patriarchal systems of power and conceptions of masculinity reminiscent of Earth before the war and Oankali colonization. These attempts to reintroduce human normative masculinities involve the deployment of traditional tools of gender conscription—hegemony, subordination, complicity, and marginalization—and the resurrection

of capitalist conceptions of maleness. In this way, the separatists seek to create a new gendered nation based largely upon traditional American masculinities of the twentieth century. Their ultimate failure to achieve this goal is due to the absence of the nation and economy in which such traditional American masculinities flourished, the United States during the second half of the 20th century. As Michael Kimmel points out, the self-made man representative of American traditional masculinities requires a capitalistic, patriarchal system in order to flourish (147). Butler illustrates through the human separatists of her series, therefore, a historically-situated, materialist understanding of masculinities.

By revealing the central reasons for these separatists' opposition to Oankali socioeconomic systems, Butler emphasizes connections between industry, social systems of power, and gender. The concept of the gendered society "is an important aspect of gender studies since those cultural codings affect everyone in a nationally based context" (Reeser 171). Male power, "a subjectivity linked to power," "can be thought of both as created by institutions and as creating them" (Reeser 20). In this way, "the process of the construction of masculinity" is "a constant back-and-forth movement between masculinity and institutions" (Reeser 20). Discontent with the prospects of an agrarian life, a system espoused by the Oankali, the separatists seek to reconstruct their pre-colonial systems of commerce and industry, networks that facilitate constructions of traditional American gender scripts. In working towards this goal, they fight to re-gender their civilization, so it conforms to traditional American conceptions of masculinity in opposition to normative Oankali genders. This gendering of the nation often involves its leader, as her or his gender, for better or worse, is taken as analogous of the society. Lacking advanced order or leadership hierarchies, the separatists of this trilogy seek to gender

their nascent civilization by drawing such an analogy between it and a more nebulous ideological figure, the aforementioned self-made man.

The societies Butler imagines are not able, however, to provide a social or economic environment necessary for the self-made man to flourish. The absence of those societal systems that once allowed men to divorce themselves from physical labor and ground their senses of manhood in economic gain produces a heightened anxiety among those subscribing to traditional American conceptions of manhood. The self-made man acts as an absent, illusive idea influencing male resistors in these novels. Though they subscribe to traditional masculinities, their new material conditions do not allow for such a reawakening of contemporary American gender norms. Butler imagines a future in which the historical context for current American masculinities no longer exists and human males must adapt to a new gender order or challenge such hierarchies altogether. While it remains ambiguous, there are important utopian themes at play concerning new images of manhood in the series.

The new images of maleness Butler produces are linked to the rejection of the accumulation of power and control through aggression. Importantly, the characters most exemplifying these radical, egalitarian masculinities are neither human nor Oankali; they are the hybrid descendants of Lilith and her mates, both human and *other*. In this way, Butler illustrates the nature of traditional masculinities as not essential to humanity but, instead, situated within specific societies whose distributions of power favor authoritarian ideals of manhood and subjugate those labeled *other* according to their gender, race, sexuality, ability, and nationality among other factors. The new, ideal masculinities Butler proposes in the remaining installments of this trilogy incorporate diversity and the three elements Le Guin calls for: liberty, equality, and fraternity.

In developing human male characters and Oankali-human hybrids who oppose aggression, subjugation, and domination and, instead, support liberty, equality, and fraternity, Butler challenges the masculinities of the supermen populating the so-called golden age of science fiction. Like Haraway's cyborg that rejects Western origin myths and their "dream of community on the model of the organic family," Butler's characters—specifically her hybrid children, Akin and Jodahs—reject the social Darwinian metanarratives justifying the masculinities of the supermen and replace them with new, egalitarian conceptions of manhood (151). Informed significantly by their experiences as racial hybrids, these characters reject both racist ideologies and the traditional masculinities supporting oppositions to the other according to race, sexuality, and gender.

By aligning her audience with these characters and in opposition to traditional masculinities, Butler rejects these earlier writers' speculations of evolutionary progress as predicated upon aggression and subjugation. Texts concerning such supermen typically involve an optimistic prediction of the future in which humankind progresses onto the next stage of evolutionary development. The utopian aspects of these works, however, are belied by the violence attending such advancements. John W. Campbell, Jr. and the authors he influenced conceived of the superman as a figure whose leadership role is justified by his advanced physical, intellectual, and sexual abilities. His pushing of humankind toward progress, often violently, is therefore considered a form of "long-term benevolence" that "often involves short-term cruelties" ranging "from the withholding of technology to selective executions of dangerous individuals" (Attebery 67). Butler includes early in *Dawn* an example of such short-term cruelties when Lilith finds upon awakening that her body has been altered without her consent; her immune system has been strengthened and her cells have been modified to prevent the

growth of cancer. In this way, the Oankali have forcefully made Lilith a superwoman. Butler highlights the unethical nature of such long-term benevolence through the thoughts of her protagonist: "This was one more thing they had done to her body without her consent and supposedly for her own good" (32). This concern with such short-term cruelties justified by their end result remains with Lilith throughout her interactions with the Oankali: "Was that what she was headed for? Forced artificial insemination. Surrogate motherhood? Fertility drugs and forced 'donations' of eggs? Implantation of unrelated fertilized eggs. Removal of children from mothers at birth … Humans had done these things to captive breeders — all for a higher good, of course" (60).

Butler connects in this passage the traditionally masculine will to dominate to racist ideologies, highlighting the similarities between the Oankali subjugation of human survivors and historical human accounts of slavery, both of which are informed by similarly patriarchal and racist ideologies. At the conclusion of *Dawn*, Lilith's fears are realized when she is notified that she has been impregnated by her ooloi partner without her consent. The traditional masculinities Butler defamiliarizes in these texts, therefore, are characterized by a will to dominate the other in order to reach a new level of evolutionary development. The adoption or rejection of this approach to evolutionary progress demarcates the opposing masculinities of Butler's trilogy.

Such a positivist conception of social Darwinian progress and the short-term cruelties it justifies are rejected by the new men of Butler's texts. In the second novel of her trilogy, *Adulthood Rites*, she presents, for example, an activist for new masculinities who seeks to undermine the short-term cruelties justified by the Oankali and human separatists and, therefore, acts as an ideal replacement for the supermen of earlier science fiction. Lilith's son, Akin, is a human-born male hybrid whose experiences as a hostage of the human resistor camp, Phoenix,

and as a member of the Oankali-human camps reveal to him problematic aspects of both human

and Oankali polities. He challenges each society's practices of subjugating the other based upon

certain attributes: non-normative sexualities, genders, class positions, and races (defamiliarized

by Butler as *species*). He, like Haraway's cyborg rejects the dualisms of Western civilization

such as human/animal that have "been systematic to the logics and practices of domination of

women, people of color, nature, workers, animals-in short, domination of all constituted as

others" (Haraway 177). He is an activist for new masculinities who rejects traditional Western

myths and teleology and the products of this tradition that are presented among the human

survivors and defamiliarized by those Oankali characters favoring traditional gender scripts.

One such product of Western ideologies Akin challenges is the domination and

subjugation of those marginalized according to their non-normative sexualities. During his time

in Phoenix, he learns of the separatist commitment to heteronormative sexualities. Troubled by

their aversion to homosexuality and understanding of sexual experience as hierarchical, he

introduces to them new, egalitarian understandings of sexualities. Pivotal to Butler's critique of

traditional masculinities and their marginalizing of other sexualities are Akin's critiques of the

Oankali intolerance of sexualities not normalized in their culture. In challenging the

normalization of select sexualities, Akin disrupts traditional American masculinities

defamiliarized by Butler within Oankali society. Specifically, he considers the criticisms levied

by these separatists at the Oankali and their intolerance of human sexualities as a result of their

quest for the next step of evolutionary progress. Central to this complaint is the human-to-human

intimacy denied these survivors during and after their first sexual encounters with the Oankali:

"Human beings liked to touch one another—needed to. But once they mated through an ooloi,

they could not mate with each other in the Human way—could not even stroke and handle one

another in the Human way. Akin did not understand why they needed this, but he knew they did, knew it frustrated and embittered them that they could not" (305). While he is ultimately unable to aid his partners in achieving this goal of direct intimacy, his attitude towards this need demonstrates a new, egalitarian approach to other sexualities. Butler provides in Akin a new masculinity within speculative fiction that rejects social Darwinian justifications of domination and instead seeks to introduce new, non-hierarchical, alternative masculinities.

Butler's aligning of her audience with these human-Oankali constructs is strengthened by their similarities to humans as subjects capable of adopting both toxic and egalitarian masculinities. Instead of presenting in these Oankali and hybrid characters utopian exemplars of new masculinities that possess perspectives as morally simplistic as their golden age supermen predecessors, Butler depicts their struggles and occasional failures to actualize egalitarian concepts of manhood. While Akin, for example, does not deny information to human survivors in order to subjugate their wills to a greater evolutionary goal, Jodahs withholds information from its human partners, Tomás and Jesusa, concerning the ramifications of intimacy with an ooloi in order to develop a relationship with them. Informing them only much later of the permanent biological dependency each participant will experience on the other members forming the relationship, Jodahs recognizes the unethical qualities of its actions and seeks to ease the suffering produced. It attempts to correct its mistake by providing that which its actions denied its human partners: intimacy without the necessity of its presence. After linking with the nervous systems of Tomás and Jesusa, Jodahs connects their neural networks directly, providing the direct, intimate contact they desire: "It was not illusion. They were in contact through me. Then I gave them a bit of illusion. I 'vanished' for them. For a moment, they were together, holding one

another. There was no one between them. By the time Jesusa finished her scream of surprise, I was 'back,' and more exhausted than ever. I let them go and lay down" (646).

Butler illustrates in this passage the performative qualities of masculinities and the imperfect qualities of these new men of speculative fiction who must recognize and combat their own culturally informed biases toward marginalized groups. In addition, Butler depicts the importance of oppressed groups gaining access to those tools denied them according to the subjugating logic of traditional masculinities. As the first hybrid ooloi whose power granted the construct generation power only heretofore possessed by the Oankali and whose existence caused great uproar among the Oankali, Jodahs is uniquely equipped to challenge human and Oankali hierarchies of power. As an ooloi, it possesses a more advanced, powerful version of the Oankali organelle that allows for genetic manipulation, the yashi. It, therefore, actualizes new, egalitarian masculinities in its battle to provide humans and constructs access to this powerful biotechnology, its ownership of traditionally masculine mistakes, and its acceptance of sexual needs and preferences not normalized by hegemony.

The power of this new conception of masculinity is most trenchantly manifested in these hybrids' fights for the rights of human and Oankali subjects to live, govern, and reproduce with complete autonomy and to not, therefore, be required to engage in each society's system of trade. Rejecting overtly the "short-term cruelties" thought to be justified by the achievement of long-term evolutionary goals, Lilith's children challenge the normative, hierarchical attitudes of both the Oankali and human species according to species/race. While living in Phoenix, Akin, for example, learns to condemn conceptions of the *other* as valuable merely for trade after noticing such racist attitudes among the human separatists. Neci, a female survivor, wishes to forcefully remove the sensory organs of kidnapped hybrid children in order to increase the profit earned

from their sale. In Neci's actions Akin recognizes the final product of traditional masculinities'

attitudes toward the other according to race/species and the justification for harming such

marginalized subjects as a side effect of free market trade. Butler illustrates the materialist nature

of masculinities through this inclusion of a gendered society whose desires to revive traditional

Western ideologies results in the subjugation of others according to the logic of capitalistic

patriarchy and racism.

Maintaining this materialist portrait of traditional masculinities as the products of specific

polities, Butler includes images of similar inequalities in Oankali society. Upon talking with a

female human ally, Tate, Akin learns that the Oankali similarly subjugate others in order to

benefit from trade, though these transactions involve strictly genetic profiteering. Considering

those past species coerced into such biological exchanges, he asserts they were merely

"'consumed'" by the Oankali and posits that such enforced trades with species are "'wrong and

unnecessary'" (443). In opposition, he proposes that the human separatists be granted their own

Akjai, a segment of a population allowed to continue without modification: "'There should be

Humans who don't change or die—Humans to go on if the Dinso and Toaht unions fail'" (378).

Rejecting the notion that the supermen—the Oankali in this case—are justified in forcing their

seemingly less advanced counterparts to follow their directives for the sake of evolutionary

progress, Butler provides in Akin a new image of manhood that seeks to eliminate oppressive

social hierarchies. Recognizing key connections between the nation and the masculinities it

normalizes, she incorporates characters that reject the gendered systems of power unique to each

society.

The nature of Lilith's two hybrid children, Akin and Jodahs, as non-hierarchical

revolutionaries fighting aggression and domination is not due solely to their genetic information.

While biological makeup influences the actions of subjects, their adoptions of particular masculinities are influenced by other elements, as Akin points out: "'Chance exists. Mutation. Unexpected effects of the new environment. Things no one has thought of'" (501). Instead, their egalitarian perspectives are informed by their exposure—rare among members of the trader villages—to both polities, those of the partnered Oankali and humans and those of the human separatists. Butler centralizes in her narrative characters who, like Haraway's cyborg, lack a rigid commitment to the metanarratives of either society. Their egalitarian perspectives and the new masculinities they adopt are shaped by the diverse milieus in which they developed. In this way, Butler proposes new masculinities within speculative fiction and society that are only possible through a materialist understanding of gender.

While Butler identified herself as an essentialist, there is ample evidence from her texts to demonstrate an understanding of hegemonic masculinities as significantly socially produced. As Nancy Jesser outlines, "a biological humanity is not, it seems Butler is saying, a 'fixed' humanity. Butler acknowledges the force of biology and environment/history/learning" (43). She presents power and control, aggression, and domination as aspects of traditional masculinities uniquely influenced by societal factors. The balance she strikes between biological and societal aspects of masculinities involves the interaction she portrays between biology and performativity. During a conversation with two female construct children, Shkaht and Amma, Akin delineates the similarities between the Oankali and humankind, highlighting the possibility of significant improvements within human culture if such truths could be recognized: "'We are them! And we are the Oankali. You know. If they could perceive, they would know!'" (377). In response, Shkaht presents a biologically essentialist case for the continued hierarchical behavior of humankind: "'If they could perceive, they would be us. They can't and they aren't'" (377).

Tellingly, Akin retorts in support of the materialist case for humankind and, therefore, its ability to adopt new, healthier masculinities: "'I can see the conflict in their genes—the new intelligence put at the service of ancient hierarchical tendencies. But … they didn't have to destroy themselves. They certainly don't have to do it again'" (377). Analyzing these texts through a materialist lens, therefore, reveals the possibilities for these human, alien, and hybrid characters to both adopt and reject the traditionally masculine desire to consolidate power and control through aggression and domination.

Through her development of human, Oankali and Oankali-human construct characters that oppose aggression, subjugation, and domination, Butler presents a new man of speculative fiction. Due to the nature of masculinities, which must be negotiated and performed daily through a series of decisions and actions, these characters are not idealized, perfect exemplars of healthier conceptions of manhood. Unlike the supermen they replace, they are not simplified heroes but, instead, falter in their efforts to challenge the gender scripts of their nations. They are united by the utopian qualities of their masculinities, specifically, their dedication to overthrowing oppressive systems of power that consolidate control through aggression and domination. Like those characters produced by other feminist science fiction authors such as Bryant, Le Guin, and Piercy, Butler's hybrids represent a distinct, new image of manhood in contemporary speculative fiction. This new man is a unique product of feminist utopian writing and its imagining of ideal polities in which all subjects, and not just super men, enjoy the "deeply radical, futuristic concepts" Le Guin identifies as needed in speculative fiction: liberty, equality, and fraternity (210).

Conclusion

These key characteristics of the utopian man—his interest in liberty, equality, and fraternity—unite the divergent novels upon which this dissertation focuses, Dorothy Bryant's *The Kin of Ata Are Waiting for You*, Ursula K. Le Guin's *The Dispossessed*, Marge Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time*, and Octavia Butler's *Lilith's Brood* trilogy. This analysis illustrates the unique power of feminist writers to imagine new masculinities and the suitability of science fiction as a genre for the presentation of alternative masculinities. A central strength of these texts is their presentation of masculinity as socially situated and shaped by the relationships between men. Masculinity studies scholars often and accurately highlight the importance of male homosocial relationships to men's conceptions and performances of gender. Herbert Sussman, for example, identifies the goal of his research as focusing "on the varied way that in different times and places, a man fashions a self—an identity—by linking his own being to other men within a collective social ideal or script that defines manliness" (9). While this relationship between men is central to concepts of manhood, the shaping and configuration of this collective social ideal is similarly crucial. By emphasizing the ways homosocial relationships and societal conceptions of manhood influence masculinities, the feminist writers discussed in this dissertation may potentially impact societal gender conceptions through their utopian texts.

These feminist utopias and their embedded commentaries on gender are crucial to masculinity studies since they, as narratives developed by women, enable audiences to imagine new, feminist-informed masculinities and recognize current societal mechanisms by which the patriarchal order functions. Defining *narrative* as "not restricted to literary and cultural artifacts but" extending "from the construction of individual gender identity by way of biographical, material and embodied social processes to collective national identities and images," Stefan

Horlacher describes this communicative mode as crucial to conceptions of masculinity and the future of masculinity studies (5n14). Utilizing their own biographical, material, and embodied knowledge produced within the social processes of the patriarchal United States, Bryant, Le Guin, Piercy, and Butler construct new gender identities for their male and female characters alike. The new conceptions of manhood they posit significantly enrich current masculinity studies scholarship since they are informed by the perspectives of those subjects—women and women of color—who are pointedly impacted by patriarchal gender norms.

In addition to the importance of these works as the extension of these authors' gender identities to the larger collective gender ideologies they imagine, they are crucial to masculinity studies since they highlight the overlooked importance of literature as a site for gender transformation. If, as Horlacher outlines, gender identity is understood as an "evolving cultural product akin to language and the narrative operations of literature," the literary text "could really be seen as a privileged space and epistemological medium where the manifold mechanisms of configuring ever different and divergent masculinities in the discursive condition becomes readable, knowable, and thereby also rewriteable" (5-6). Due to its generic conventions, science fiction enhances such abilities to imagine new worlds and societies in which new gender scripts may be posited and the traditional gender order may be made readable, knowable, and rewriteable. In presenting the transformability of masculinities, literature and, more specifically, science fiction makes up an invaluable site at which alternative conceptions of manhood may be tested.

As this analysis demonstrates, the flexibility of science fiction grants feminist writers the opportunity to craft worlds reflecting their own social and political interests. While these writers are united in their inclusion of non-normative masculinities in better, imagined polities, they

emphasize distinct elements of the contemporary American capitalistic patriarchy requiring alteration. In addition, they center in their fiction characters who interact uniquely with such dystopian polities and their utopian alternatives, exchanges determined significantly by their identities. Dorothy Bryant stresses the importance of a new consciousness and a social constructionist view of gender. Utilizing the specific characteristics of utopian fiction, she imagines a collectivist anarchy that, in valuing a new consciousness characterized by interests in the non-verbal, mystical, and realm of dreams, enables a new, better masculinity to flourish that is rejected by the United States patriarchy. Centering also non-essentialist theories of gender, she presents to her reader both the radical possibility of transforming hypermasculine, toxic masculinities and the sobering observation that such an alteration requires fundamental changes to the capitalistic patriarchy. Though Bryant's utopia is comparatively limited in its focus upon a white male protagonist, it is powerful in its presentation through his narration of the ways the capitalistic patriarchy both serves and harms hegemonic men. While *The Kin of Ata Are Waiting for You* reflects, therefore, Bryant's sociopolitical interests and only highlights the experiences of subjects marginalized according to their identities to a limited degree, the novel is crucial to discussions concerning gender since it, through a patriarchal narrator, rewrites what it means to be masculine.

These novels are valuable to ongoing discussions of masculinity since they focus upon unique characters that interact distinctly with masculinities, revealing to the audience the myriad ways the patriarchal order impacts its various subjects. Similarly reflecting feminist ideals that, like those of Bryant, depart from radical feminist, essentialist conceptions of gender, Ursula Le Guin's *The Dispossessed* is an important text at the intersection of narrative and masculinity studies due to its emphasis upon the continuously dynamic qualities of gender. Recognizing, like

Bryant, the mutually constitutive relationship binding society and gender, she focuses upon the

constant danger that feminist-oriented nations and their masculinities may succumb to the

temptations of capitalism and patriarchy. By focusing upon a male protagonist desired by the

ruling class of a capitalistic patriarchy and granted, therefore, significant access to power should

he adopt the values of this nation, Le Guin traces the precarious ways feminist-oriented men

interact with American systems of power. In addition, *The Dispossessed* considers how the

interactions of such new men with patriarchal ideals produce constant threats to the feminist

project. Her identification of the better society as ambiguously utopian highlights her disinterest

in presenting a closed off, static, imagined nation and masculinities; instead, she is concerned

with the instability of gender as a potential threat to alternative conceptions of manhood. Her

novel reveals her political and social interests as a feminist in that it both presents the

socioeconomic changes necessary for the transformation of men and warns its audience that such

altered nations and masculinities require constant reassessment and interrogation.

By widening the scope of focus to include the experiences of subjects distanced from

power within the patriarchal order, the novels upon which the second half of this dissertation

focuses, Marge Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time* and Octavia Butler's *Lilith's Brood* trilogy,

reflect the widening sociopolitical interests of feminist authors that are germane to current

discussions surrounding masculinity. *Woman on the Edge of Time*, for example, highlights the

mechanisms of the American capitalistic patriarchy that marginalize subjects in unique ways

predicated upon their identity makeup. Piercy illustrates to her audience how conversations

concerning manhood must necessarily recognize the interlocking systems of oppression

benefitting and, in turn, supported by traditional gender scripts. Aligning her audience with a

female protagonist of color, Piercy compels her reader to vicariously experience the ways the

contemporary American socioeconomic system subjugates subjects according to, in the case the novel presents, class, race, and biological sex. In this way, *Woman on the Edge of Time* provides insight to its audience concerning American society and, by illuminating the ways patriarchal masculinities are central to this polity, demonstrates the necessity for concepts of manliness to be rethought and transformed. Piercy further delineates this need for alternative masculinities by presenting their centrality to a feminist, utopian community that grants equal power to subjects such as the protagonist regardless of their identity makeup. *Woman on the Edge of Time* exemplifies, therefore, the value of feminist utopias as a site for mining new masculinities and, through the narrative mode, considering how society and gender ideals must change to realize a world conducive to the needs of both men and women.

The impact of utilizing the narrative mode at the intersection of masculinity studies and science fiction studies is perhaps most dramatically demonstrated by Octavia Butler's *Lilith's Brood*. Drawing upon her lived experiences as a woman of color, Butler encodes within this trilogy the sociopolitical interests of those most impacted by interlocking sources of oppression within the contemporary American capitalistic patriarchy. Her interests in exploring and highlighting for her audience the distinct ways traditional conceptions of manhood impact individuals possessing non-normative identity markers are illustrated by the protagonists upon which her novels focus. While centering a female protagonist of color in the first novel of this series, *Dawn*, Butler (like Piercy) aligns her audience with an interspecies hybrid male lead in the second text, *Adulthood Rites*, and an interspecies hybrid whose gender does not fit within the traditional binary in the final entry to the trilogy, *Imago*. Utilizing the narrative mode, Butler explores her own experiences as a woman of color and moves beyond these borders,

emphasizing the ways subjects marked by, among other elements, their non-normative

sexualities and gender identities experience intersectionality.

In addition, she, through the experiences of these characters within the ambiguously

utopian Oankali communities and the dystopian, separatist, human camps concerned with

resurrecting a capitalistic patriarchal polity, asks her audience to consider hierarchical behavior

as not essentially human. Deconstructing the interlocking systems of patriarchy, capitalism, and

racism among other related ideologies, she reveals to her audience the necessity for humankind

to transform socioeconomic systems of power. Presenting a sober warning about the toxicity of

patriarchy and a measured hope that traditional masculinities may be transformed, she compels

her audience to examine contemporary American intersectional forces and the methods by which

they may be challenged. Her trilogy is, therefore, important to discussions concerning

masculinity since it radically traces connections between the traditional gender order and other

oppressive ideologies and challenges male readers to rewrite their own understandings of

manliness.

Uniting Butler with Bryant, Le Guin, and Piercy are the diverse, productive ways these

female writers frame masculinities. In discussing the roots of masculinity studies in 1960s

feminist activism, Peter Murphy reflects how "men were not alone in this feminist analysis of

masculinities. Several women contributed invaluable insights into the discourse of 'men's

studies,' a 'feminist masculinity,' and the 'male condition,' and in this dialogue with women, the

investigation of what it means to be a man in a patriarchal society became more subtle, more

layered, more radical" (10). As the chapters making up my analysis demonstrate, such radical,

complex examinations of what it means to be a man are located in a widely overlooked site of

feminist activism: utopian fiction. Central to the value of such speculative works is the way they

frame ideal and problematic masculinities. These texts more specifically avoid the trend Michael

Kimmel identifies of cultural products such as media and literature blurring the boundary

separating positive and problematic masculinities or mislabeling these categories altogether (2).

In opposition to such toxic or blurred portrayals of patriarchal masculinities, these feminist

writers correctly portray abusive conceptions of manhood and align their readers in opposition to

characters subscribing to these gender scripts. A central source of power for *The Kin of Ata Are*

Waiting for You, for example, is Bryant's reframing of the violent attributes of traditional

masculinities. Bryant presents a protagonist whose initial patriarchal interests in power and

control through violence significantly parallel those of Stephen Rojack, the protagonist of

Norman Mailer's *An American Dream*, but are framed as horrific by Bryant through her

unnamed, remorseful narrator. Bryant therefore demonstrates the opportunities literature grants

for challenging traditional representations of patriarchal masculinities as ideal.

In positioning in *The Dispossessed* a male protagonist who rejects the capitalistic and

heteronormative underpinnings of hegemonic American manhood, Le Guin similarly introduces

complexity to discussions surrounding masculinity and this contribution is due significantly to

her framing of manliness. Le Guin aligns her audience with Shevek, who subscribes to

improved, feminist masculinities and positions him and the reader in opposition to the

misogynistic male characters inhabiting A-Io. Le Guin therefore carefully frames as positive

radical concepts of manliness. *The Dispossessed* illuminates how feminist authors may, by

carefully framing presentations of masculinities in their novels, compel their readers to rethink

and rewrite their own perceptions of manliness.

While relocating male characters to the margins of *Woman on the Edge of Time*, Marge

Piercy demonstrates how the inclusion in fiction of intersectionality enables the development of

more complex, compelling representations of masculinity. Moving beyond Le Guin's approach

of positively framing a queer male character while only briefly exploring his non-normative

sexuality, Piercy places on the sidelines of her utopia male characters possessing diverse racial,

sexual, gender, and class identities. She, for example, presents with rich detail problematic men

such as Everett Silvester, a professor and former employer of the protagonist, Connie, who

benefits due to his class position, sex, and race. In outlining how Silvester hired a new Spanish-

speaking secretary, whom he refers to as "Chiquita, like bananas," Piercy illustrates how

interlocking systems of subjugation based upon class, race, and biological sex uniquely harm

women like Connie who are fired each year simply to please a hegemonic man (50). Piercy

presents myriad male characters at the margins of her novel who are complex in their attitudes

toward Connie and their proximity to power. By aligning her reader with a character who is a

woman of color and using her experience to represent the stark contrast between toxic and

positive masculinities, Piercy illustrates the ways feminist writers may contribute significantly to

conversations surrounding manhood through their fictional representations of masculinity.

Similarly complicating representations of manliness in *Lilith's Brood* through

increasingly complex and imaginary representations of intersectionality, Octavia Butler

demonstrates through blurring identity categories the ways genre fiction enables critiques of

masculinities. Like Piercy, Butler centers protagonists whose complex identities uniquely justify

their social disempowerment. Butler, however, extends conversations concerning gender and

manliness by presenting a host of characters that, while possessing myriad combinations of

identity elements including new sexualities and genders, are shown to be equally capable of

adopting and transforming masculinities. The manner by which feminist-oriented masculinities

are positively framed and noted as not essential to any particular race, biological sex, or other

identity category in *Lilith's Brood* illustrates the benefit of science fiction for creating challenges to traditional masculinities.

Feminist writers add to discussions concerning alternatives to the patriarchal order and the gender scripts, making this dissertation relevant to American culture and ongoing concerns about the future of manhood. The relevance of both feminist thought and fiction to discussions surrounding manliness is emphasized at an increasing rate by masculinity studies scholars. Works such as *Feminism and Masculinities* (2004), for example, contain essays that "focus specifically on the ways in which a feminist analysis provides insights into the social, cultural, and political construction of manhood" (Murphy 10). While this text, which is "about what feminism has to tell us about being a man," focuses upon feminist perspectives on masculinity, it does not utilize fiction as a site for mining such ideals (Murphy 10). Though my dissertation builds upon this collection's interest in feminism and the construction of male identity, it more closely aligns with approaches analyzing cultural products as sources for new masculinities.

In recent years, more scholars have begun to adopt such an approach. The edited collection *Performing American Masculinities: The 21st-Century Man in Popular Culture* (2011), for example, "focuses on the possibilities for identity formation for men in the United States since the mid-1990s" by mining various avenues of popular culture "to posit questions about the processes of gender creation and the contestation of masculinities as constantly changing political forms" (Watson 1). Still more recent publications narrow this field of inquiry to literature. Exemplifying this trend, Stefan Horlacher introduces *Configuring Masculinity in Theory and Literary Practice* (2015), made up of essays applying masculinity studies to literature, by pointing "to the problems the construction of male gender identities seems to pose (not only) in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries" and emphasizing "the outstanding

contribution that literature can make with regard to male gender identity formation" (1). There is

a pattern developing within studies of American culture and, more specifically, at the

intersection of literary studies and masculinity studies. This trend points to the ongoing relevancy

of discussions concerning American masculinities and the culture shaping them. This dissertation

emphasizes as an invaluable resource for masculinity studies the voices of feminist utopias.

Feminist utopias, informed by the diverse lived experiences of white female writers and female

writers of color, make up important sources of alternative, feminist-oriented masculinities.

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