REMOVING THE BINARIES BETWEEN HUMANITY AND NATURE: THE FEMALE PERCEPTION THROUGH SCIENCE FICTION UTOPIAS

by

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Abstract

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This dissertation examines utopian science fictions by women from the early modern era and the latter half of the 20th century. While the utopian genre shifts in time, the project focuses on comparing two time periods in order to discuss the topic of humanity's place in nature. By examining these two distinct eras, I am able to argue that ecofeminist debates about ecological concerns often center around the human/nature binary. These ecofeminist views, I argue, rely on analyzing certain texts in order to glean the truth about the human/nature dichotomy and to offer solutions to these problems. Using Margaret Cavendish's *The Blazing World*, Ursula Le Guin's *The Dispossessed*, Pamela Sargent's *The Shore of Women*, and Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*, five key thematic structures appear that attempt to remove the human/nature dualism: gender

relations, linguistic paradigms, the animal/human ideology, spherical constructs, and overall interaction with the environment.

The choice of each utopian work highlights some important arguments: First, sub-genres of the utopia establish a network of interacting genres, specifically through *The Blazing World* (traditional utopia), *The Dispossessed* (critical utopia), *The Shore of Women* (separatist utopia), and *Oryx and Crake* (critical dystopia), adding a complexity to the human/nature debate. Second, Cavendish's utopia and the other modern science fiction works serve as bookends to the argument about humanity's place in the environment. The recovery of Cavendish by current ecofeminist scholars demonstrates her relevance to current environmental debates and establishes her as a proto-ecofeminist. Like the utopia genre itself, this dissertation takes an activist role in discovering the scientific schemas that keep the human/nature dichotomy in place.

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Introduction

> Science will come up with some reason to put in the books, but in the end it'll be just a theory. I mean, we will fail to acknowledge that there are forces at work beyond our understanding. To be a scientist, you must have a respectful awe for the laws of nature.
>
> --M. Knight Shyamalan, *The Happening*

Including a quote from a movie that received moderate reviews may seem like a curious way to start a dissertation; nevertheless, these are the lines that inspired me to write on this topic. Writers often cast the scientist as the madman in a lab coat—a purveyor of experiments driven by hubris. The genre of science fiction informs this characterization, with certain pivotal figures standing out among the rest, notably the Victor Frankensteins of the pop culture world. Simply examining the way one perceives science in a modern setting, however, would not do this topic justice. My investigation of science fiction, and ultimately, the utopian genre lead me to ask: Where does this version of the mad scientist come from and why does this character permeate the 21st century? Upon looking at the issue further, the argument extends back to the early modern era and its connection to the mechanical sciences. In this way, I discover the representation of the modern-day scientist: the cold, calculating human being who destroys the universe for personal gain. The scientist, therefore, has a very significant story rooted within history—a history in which scientific endeavors support colonization and the subjugation of the female gender.

In order to create these early modern scientific agendas, the Royal Society—the scientists who were at the forefront of the scientific revolution—reinvision the associations between humanity and nature in three ways: they reinvent the Great Chain of Being, employ the Baconian scientific method, and adopt the philosophies of Descartian thinking. A.O. Lovejoy asserts that the original platform of the Great Chain of Being was that of humility: "to walk humble with [one's] God…with the superiority [over other creatures] only of degree, and of very slight degree."[1] In fact, the Great Chain of Being suggests that any "effort to ascend the scale" would be treated like an "act of rebellion against the divine purpose—a crime against nature."[2] However, the Royal Society changes this scale by seeing advancement as part of their divine right. They believe that mankind was not supposed "to occupy forever the same place, that the scale is literally to be ascended, not only by the imagination but in fact."[3] To ascend, however, depends on the secrets one can gleam about God through scientific inquiry and fact. Fact, in this sense, develops through the use of Sir Francis Bacon's scientific method—an inspiration for the Royal Society movement. As Carolyn Merchant states: "the scientific method combined with mechanical technology, would create a 'new organom,' a new system of

[1] Arthur O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being: A Study of the History of an Idea* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1964), 195.
[2] Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being*, 202.
[3] Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being*, 205.

investigation that unified material power."[4] The mechanical sciences provide this new form of investigation—a view that instruments, like the miscoscope and telescope, will yield a materialistic power through greater wealth and status—and will allow scientists to discover God's secrets in nature.

Reason and experimentation emphasize the primary motivation for the scientific revolution: to investigate the secrets of God in nature. Sir Francis Bacon, in his *Novum Organum*, claims this position: "For I am building in this human understanding a true model of the world…a thing which cannot be done without a very diligent dissection and anatomy of the world."[5] Dissecting the world is both a literal deconstruction and a metaphor for violating the world for greater understanding, principally violating the world to grasp God's secrets. As Robert Boyle, a member of the Royal Society, writes in *The Sceptical Chymist*: "It is one thing to be able to help nature to produce things, and another thing to understand well the nature of the things produced."[6] In this way, Bacon's philosophy, and the use of these ideals by the Royal Society, establish a science that used inductive reasoning coupled with experiment and empirical tools.[7] The mechanical science probes deeper than ever before—an idea inherent in Robert Hooke's *Micrographia*:

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[4] Carolyn Merchant, *The Death of Nature* (New York: Harper One, 1990), 172.
[5] Carolyn Merchant, *Secrets of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 158.
[6] Robert Boyle, *The Sceptical Chymist* (N.P.: Valde Books, 2009), 95.
[7] Ruth Watts, "Gender Science and Modernity in Seventeenth Century England," *Paedagogica Historica* (2005): 81.

> Thus all the uncertainty and mistakes of human actions, proceed either from the narrowness and wandering of our senses, from the slipperiness of delusions of our memory, from the confinement or rashness of our understanding, so that tis no wonder, that our power over natural causes and effects is so slowly improv'd…[8]

Of all the members of the Royal Society, Hooke is the most enthusiastic about the use of microscopes and telescopes for revealing a "new visible world."[9] According to Hooke, the complete understanding of how the world operates can only happen with the aid of mechanical instruments.

The nascent science refigures the world into one valorizing a type of sterility as the natural philosophers convert the earth into a semblance of a mechanical thing. Like a clock or an automaton, the world spins on its hinges with all the animals and life forms resembling moving parts.[10] The argument here points to a specific scientific strategy—disassemble the clock in order to inspect the inner springs. As Lynda Birke writes:

> Where nature was once seen as a living organism so, during the 17th and 18th centuries, it became increasingly seen as a machine, whose inner workings could be understood in terms of mechanical analogies. The human body, too, came to be seen as operating according to mechanical laws.[11]

Therefore, the tenets of the scientific revolution were two-fold: to see past human perception via these instruments in order to gain greater understanding, and to use

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[8] Robert Hooke, *Micrographia* (New York: Cossimo Classics, 2007), 9.
[9] Hooke, *Micrographia,* 10.
[10] Stephen McKnight, *Science, Pseudo-Science, and Utopianism in Early Modern Thought* (Colombia, MO: U of Missouri P, 1992), 184.
[11] Lynda Birke, *Women, Feminism and Biology: The Feminist Challenge* (New York: Methuen, 1986), 114.

this knowledge to find the essence of God. Finding these secrets relies on Cartesian theory as Descartes argues "God has been established in nature, and of which he has imprinted such ideas on our minds."[12] These secrets are left by God so that scientists can find them—to regain a lost knowledge caused by Eve. The Great Chain of Being, Baconian method, and Cartesian ideals reveal how the early modern age adopts the view of the nature-human dichotomy, but also the reconfiguration of the woman alongside the man.

Since the woman is to blame for the loss of God's secrets—an idea asserted by Laurence Buell who ties early modern science to the Genesis myth—scientists not only scour the earth mercilessly for God's secrets, but connect the woman to the land.[13] Therefore, as scientists plow the land to uncover secrets, they are also dissecting the female form, mutilating the body for scientific endeavors.[14] The terminology of science also helps construct certain gender boundaries. Science tracks with masculine abilities, predominantly the ability to reason. The matching of feelings and female pursuits results in a sense-based form of inquiry and leads to a paradigm where the principles of the mechanical sciences outweigh pure sensory-based investigations. Sensory inquiry reflects feminine attributes of instinctual perceptions of the world—what one can feel,

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[12] Rene Descartes, *Discourse on Method and Meditations on First Philosophy* (New York: Hackett, 1999), 97.
[13] Laurence Buell, *Future of Environmental Criticism: Environmental Crisis and Literary Imagination* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005).
[14] See Carolyn Merchant's book, *The Death of Nature*.

see, taste, touch, and hear through human faculties. While the natural philosophers of the time do use their senses to explore scientific pursuits, they try to reach beyond human faculties with the use of mechanical instruments. Under this paradigm, women, cast closer to the realm of nature, are incapable of acting rationally, and so are unable to become scientists. Just as Saussure shows how giving a thing a name begins to create a signifier/signified relationship, so do our views of science and nature characterize our relationship to the environment—views which the scientific outlook reinforces. The scientific revolution establishes masculine 'reasoning' and feminine 'instinct,' which also causes various signifier/signified relationships to develop. The image of home and hearth is feminine, while those things connected to the public sphere—politics, economy, commerce, and law— are masculine. Men, privileging reason, elevate themselves in society, while lowering the value of "instinct-driven" women in the process and also placing themselves above nature.

Of course, the question remains: How does this discussion further the scholarly conversation? I explore how and why we perceive science in relation to nature, as well as how we view ourselves in connection to these two spheres, but I do so through a particular position: current views of the western viewpoint reflect the early modern dichotomies between science and nature, man versus woman,

humans versus nature.[15] This scientific paradigm is our domain and our cultural heritage.

With this theoretical background in mind, I argue two things: First, that these early modern viewpoints, as revoltuionary as they are, fuel an interesting reaction by one female voice, Margaret Cavendish. Her utopian work, *The Blazing World*, counters many of the Royal Society's agendas by creating a new version of nature and man as she dissasembles both the value of the mechanical sciences and the hierarchical advancement in the Great Chain of Being. These thoughts are given more examination in chapter two of this dissertation. Second, I argue that Cavendish's views align to current ecofeminist debates as present-day women utopian authors are battling some of the same issues, mainly human beings are separate from our landscape because of our sense of being higher than other creatures.

To make my argument clearer, I assert that female utopian authors use five thematic elements to unify the dualism between nature and science and between man and woman with the important goal of leading humanity back into a

[15] See *The Future of Environmental Criticism* by Laurence Buell on science based on scripture; *New Science, New World* by Denise Albanese as related to the female body tied to colonial land; *Secrets of Nature* by Carolyn Merchant on the female gendered nature; *Gender, Science and Modernity in 17th Century* by Ruth Watts as connected to early modern history and the goal of science; and *The Great Chain of Being* by Arthur Lovejoy, the pivotal work that studies the royal society's vision of science in connection to the Chain of Being.

symbiotic relationship with the environment.[16] The chapters in my dissertation focus on the abolition of the gender spheres, the female language of science, the connection between the human and animal worlds, the resolution of other spheres of influence (mainly religious and economic), and the overall interaction with the environment. These elements tie the literature together and advance the overall purpose of the dissertation: to resolve the nature/science and woman/man binaries in order to create a better future. This study furthers the ecofeminist scholarship on Margaret Cavendish while framing a new argument about the perpetuation of holism in current ecological debates.

Unlike previous studies that focus on specific authors and eras—and the dualism of nature and science—this dissertation explores a powerful undercurrent of ideologies between centuries. These timeframes, specifically the 17th and 20th centuries, reflect periods of social revolution associated with science. As the female utopias of the 17th century, particularly Margaret Cavendish's *The Blazing World*, challenge the dualistic spheres of the mechanical sciences, so too do the authors of the 20th century respond to the damage inflicted by that philosophy. The authors I chose alongside Cavendish—Ursula Le Guin, Pamela Sargent and Margaret Atwood—are significant as they all discuss ecological concerns, but frame them with different political puposes: anarchism, separtism, and postmodernism. Moreover, these authors are some of the most important voices in

this genre, helping to illustrate my main claim: these two periods reflect similar ideologies relating to bridging the gap between humanity and nature.

Limiting this discussion to these texts and authors clarifies the reaction to masculine science in the context of gender subjugation and the overall human connection to the environment. These restrictions allow enough evidence to prove that dualism between science and nature exists while situating the argument within a female reactive point of view. By focusing on these periods in tandem, I illustrate how these eras act as bookends as they utilize similar female utopian strategies to combat dualism. In asserting this opinion, I fully understand that there are large gaps of utopian literature missing in this conversation.

With three centuries of utopian thought missing in this dissertation, specifically from the 1700s until the 1970s, I cannot deny this dissertation leaves a gap in the development of the human/nature debate. This dissertation only gives subtle nods of recognition to the Romantics, with their emphasis on nature and the sublime, the Victorians and the connection between utopias and the sentimental novel, and the first wave utopias of the industrial age receive.[17] Most of these provide context for what utopian science fiction authors use in the 1970s as they build female utopian worlds: the notion of the genderless female and the private/public sphere constructs come about from centuries of dualistic

[17] See chapter three in connection to the idea of female nature and the enclosed garden.

investigation. I am aware of the number of utopias glossed over as "utopographers agree that thousands of these text have been written and they are distinguished by a great variety and by a fascinating mix of literary genres."[18] Kenneth Roemer states that while Sargent's bibliography of utopian works was at the 5,612 mark ten years ago, it now stands at over 8,000.[19] Carol Kessler's book *Daring to Dream* also provides a detailed list of women's utopias from 1836-1988. Bridgitte Barclay Arnold adds to this debate in her dissertation that studies the female utopian works from 1920-1960.[20] As Barclay writes:

> American women-authored utopias written from 1920 to 1960 are a particularly fertile ground to study, not only for the political and cultural events impacting women during this time (the 19th Amendment, the New Woman of the 1920s, Depression-era gendered ideologies work, women in the workforce during WWII, the large-scale call for them to return home after the war, and connecting first wave feminisms to second and third wave feminisms)."[21]

Through extensive research Barclay finds 76 utopians texts of this era versus Kessler's 35 found texts. All of these utopias speak to their age through political context while forming new visions of a feminist future.

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[18] Roemer, *Utopian Audiences: How Readers Locate Nowhere* (Univ. of Mass. P, 2003), 20.
[19] Kenneth Roemer, email interview with author, April 15, 2015.
[20] Bridgitte Barclay, "'A Condition Of Potentiality': American Women's Utopian And Science Fiction, 1920-1960" (Dissertation, University of Texas at Arlington, 2009), 247-297.
[21] Barclay, "A Condition of Potentiality," 25.

Nevertheless, these utopian endeavors reach a peak in the 1970s, speaking to a tumultuous climate in which utopian concerns turn dystopian, in which the female utopian future deals with more global concerns, and in which careful analysis of previous female utopian thought becomes paramount. As I analyze in chapter three of this dissertation, female authors not only gain a stronger voice in this debate through political activism—causing real change for the woman in the environment—but also this age shows the growth of the ecofeminist movement. Looking backward becomes a technique for current writers, revealing what has come before and what needs to occur in the future in order to assess the best solutions in the utopian genre. As these authors seek more defined ecofeminist agendas, scholars find interest in Margaret Cavendish. I argue we have reached a point where her criticisms of the sciences are poignant because we are looking at science the way she does: as a harmful obstacle to our nature-human relationship. Her take on the dualistic spheres relate almost seamlessly to those asserted by a generation that comes centuries after. Present-day representations of nature have taken on many faces—be it a chaotic female symbol to be controlled, a view of domesticity, or the source of wisdom through scientific exploration—the one constant since the seventeenth century is that nature is something to be ruled. Nature is not a part of us but is at best some distant cousin, or some concept that humans have evolved past. As such, my dissertation concerns itself less with the transition of female utopias over three centuries of thought, but more with the

concept that Cavendish's early modern feminist utopia serves as a bookend to current ecological discussions.

The selection of sci-fi utopian works relates to an overarching idea—all of the women I have chosen in this study advocate for change in the sciences mostly through political and ecocritical debates. Although vast differences between the authors and time periods exist, their roles as female advocates does give validity to the purpose of the dissertation. Occupying the subjugated corner of the culture allows these authors room for a conversation that is rebellious and reactionary against traditional masculine science. Although male writers explore some of the same issues that occur during the golden age of feminist science fiction, I hope to highlight a historical movement manifested by a gender-specific subset of the population.

While I assert a nature/science dualism through a historical and genre-related context, my main claim is that Cavendish, Le Guin, Sargent, and Atwood counter this science/culture binary through holism. They seek to show that the separate spheres of science and nature are illusions. In this way, each text in this dissertation uses fictional worlds to define humanity and its coexistence with nature. I maintain, however, that these political agendas work best when the fiction is utopian. Utopian literature has always been the vehicle of revolutionary writing. Utopian fiction allows for a great leap of the imagination—it is a fiction that endeavors to critique society through worlds that could exist. As J.C. Davis

writes in *Utopia and the Ideal Society*, "the utopian mode is one which accepts deficiencies with men and nature and strives to contain and condition them through organizational controls and sanctions."[22] This genre explores complex societal issues in a venue that permits anarchic inquiry: the fictional worlds are so fantastic that harsh commentary can be overlooked and more easily digested.

In other words, this genre can criticize the shortcomings of the current society without incurring too much wrath from those who control the system. Utopian fiction thus provides a way to explore issues like gender relations, power constructions, and the inevitable destruction of current paths of thinking. The genre provides a cover, a mask, which paradoxically reveals the truth about a society hidden within the realm of the impossible. These worlds are fictional, yet these 'organizational controls' through world-making raise questions about the goals of a society. Utopias are myths that create images "where the good life is not available to us in this world but is confined to a lost golden age or a world beyond death."[23] Still, this masking of truths is much more complex, as the reader must also be able to identify with the landscapes the writer establishes. Darko Suvin expresses the idea of "cognitive estrangement, which stresses new perceptual skills" as the reader notices the commonalities between a utopian

[22] J.C. Davis, *Utopia and the Ideal Society: A Study of English Utopian Writing 1516-1700* (New York: Cambridge UP, 1983), 89.
[23] Levitas, *Concept of Utopia*, 1.

environment and the real world.[24] Kenneth Roemer builds upon this concept as he states that utopias "invite readers to imagine their own alternatives to the author's alternative."[25] Therefore, utopias address both how a reader will "accept the given-gospel of the text, but also how they will respond to and use the potentially unhinging experience of reading a utopia."[26] Consequently, utopias are the breeding ground for revolutionary writing.

These works examine the world and construct a consensus on what does and does not work within the prevailing system. These new worlds break away from the vision of the current culture and envision a not-too-distant future where science has attained spiritual goals. In other words, the science of the age succeeds in unmasking hidden truths left here by God. One of the best ways to design the accomplished society is through the trope of isolation. Mary Campbell views this idea in terms of "a lattice…in which a set of relations and dimensions [occur] between objects and between locations, and also between objects and observers."[27] In this sense, space becomes the location of a physical and psychological markup. The utopian space has a geographical dimension, but the crux of the argument lies in the internal associations between the reality of the

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[24] Kenneth M. Roemer, *Utopian Audiences*, 63.
[25] Roemer, *Utopian Audiences*, 63, 61.
[26] Roemer, *Utopian Audiences,* 63.
[27] Mary Campbell, *Wonder and Science: Imaging Worlds in Early Modern Europe* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1999), 34.

world and the idealization of a new world by the author. Physical locale and isolation are the easiest spaces to understand.

Both Sir Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis* and Sir Thomas More's *Utopia*, being two of the most popular examples of traditional utopias, present these arguments. In *New Atlantis*, the utopian island has a limited amount of interaction with the outside world: "nor yet of any ship of any part of the world that had made return from them."[28] In More's *Utopia* seclusion occurs through geographical boundaries: "…they lie far from the sea, and are environed with hill…they have little commerce with any other nation…"[29] Nevertheless, physical isolation is never wholly external as these locations often dissolve into a liminal state as framed by Victor Turner.[30] These lands are not a part of any real locale, as they are purely fictional accounts of lands, but they are still locations where change can occur. These lands offer their characters new ideas—ideas they can take back to their homelands. By knowing these islands, travelers can reform their societies through superior knowledge.[31]

This transformation can only occur through the psychological component, or the interplay between the author's views of these new worlds and the

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[28] Sir Frances Bacon, "*New Atlantis*." *Francis Bacon: The Major Works* (New York: Oxford UP, 2002), 466.
[29] Sir Thomas More, *Utopia* (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 2001), 19.
[30] Victor Turner, *Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (New York: Aldine Transaction, 1995).
[31] Marina Leslie, *Renaissance Utopias and the Problem of History* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1999), 9.

construction of the imagined island/utopia. Utopias allow for a form of "social dreaming…the dreams and nightmares that concern the ways in which groups of people arrange their lives" as they present lands that are both familiar and alienating.[32] The optimistic outlook of the utopia depends upon a pessimistic viewpoint of the present day. Because of this dualism, most utopias function under a satirical construction, negatively attacking the wrongs of a real society, but positively creating a solution to these problems through a new social norm.[33] Utopias represent a relationship between "what is and what ought to be."[34] Since utopian authors build their worlds based on a historical background, differences in utopian architecture depend on the structure of the actual environment.

In this way, the lands of the imagination relate to the lands existing in an author's experience: lands of the mind portray newer and better versions of the current landscape. For Darko Suvin, the psychological 'restructured' land reflects a "quasi-human community where sociopolitical institutions, norms, and individual relationships are organized according to a more perfect principle than in the author's community."[35] Times of historical metamorphosis, therefore, produce a tremendous number of utopias and sub-genres of the utopia, such as

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[32] Sargent, "The Three Faces," 19.
[33] Robert Elliott, *The Shape of Utopia: Studies in a Literary Genre* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1970), 22.
[34] Elliott, *The Shape of Utopia*, 42.
[35] Peter Fitting, "A Short History of Utopian Studies," *Science Fiction Studies* 36 (2013), 125.

dystopias and anti-utopias.[36] Disturbances within the socio-economic environment fuel exceptional thought about what has come before and what may result from an unbalanced culture. Some of the more famous utopias appear during the early modern era as a result of the major shift in scientific thought. The 'what is' and 'what ought to be' components of the utopia, especially during the seventeenth century, expose complex situations relating to colonial expansion, land ownership, discovery, and scientific endeavors. More's ideal society in *Utopia*, for example, "is [not] founded on property, there being no such thing among them."[37] Communal property and the equal distribution of wealth are hallmarks of 'better' economics, which also signify a self-governing mentality fostered by an equally idealized scientific revolution—a new model of the 'thinking' man, the scientist, who occupies the highest placement in society.[38] Utopias may exist in the minds of those who write them, but their realization depends upon application. The true measure of a utopian work is whether or not the utopia can shake the foundation of the world. In this way, fictional world building is a great platform upon which to discuss activist topics, especially since contemporary sci-fi utopias revel in similar discussions about humanity, nature, and science.

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[36] See Lyman Tower Sargent's definition of the differing sub-types of utopias as they relate to utopias, eutopias, dystopias, anti-utopias, and critical utopias in "The Three Faces of Utopianism Revisited," 9.
[37] More, *Utopia*, 28.
[38] More, *Utopia*, "…allows people as much time as is necessary for the improvement of their minds, in which they think the happiness of life consists," 28.

Some threads of twentieth-century politics seek a remedy for social concerns based on similar forms of communalism, living in peace with nature, and seeking knowledge as the ultimate source of a cultured civilization. While all of the sci-fi utopias in this dissertation share a common theme—nature versus science—the argumentative structure of the genre shifts, showing a gradual evolution from utopia to what scholars term the "critical utopia." Critical utopias are like traditional utopias in that they locate themselves in a certain time and place outside of contemporary society. However, they display "difficult problems that the society may, or may not be able to solve."[39] The reader must look at all of the ambiguous descriptions of the fictional society in order to investigate their own society with a more observant eye. This model of utopia examines current social issues and questions the solutions that the text uses in the context of real-time problems. Critical utopias are akin to traditional utopias in that they uncover the societal issues plaguing the time period. While the utopias of the twentieth century do not follow the same formula as those of early modern England—a narrator visits a distant island, returns, and enlightens a people—they are their descendants. They expose the evils of a current society through an imaginary one. Critical utopias call for "new movements of liberation which insist on a multiplicity of voices, autonomous from each other, but are commonly rooted in

[39] Sargent, "Three Faces of Utopianism Revisited," 9.

unfulfilled needs centering around the practice of autonomy."[40] Just as the utopias of the early modern era promise a kind of hope, the utopias of the present offer a view of destruction with hope that humanity will change its ways before it is too late. The current genre alternates between advocating change through cautious optimism and flagrant pessimism.

Although discussing this genre solely as a political platform is too simplistic—especially while analyzing the texts of Cavendish, Le Guin, Sargent, and Atwood—the utopian genres do allow for a kind of fluidity in structure and format that any age can use in order to discuss their political context. Certain tropes continue to exist in this genre as they consistently portray the destruction of the public/private spheres and the debate of nature versus science. As such, all of the works examined in this dissertation follow a similar line of thought. Each work uses analogous techniques to get to the same argument about holism: bridging the gap between nature and the human. Even though it has taken centuries for the female utopia to evolve into a genre capable of resolving the science debate, Cavendish is a clear forerunner for this effort as she creates a new form of female science to combat the harms of the masculine sciences—a science that seeks to bring the human back to nature versus The Royal Society's divisional science. These schemas did not simply appear in the latter half of the

[40] Tom Moylan, *Demand the Impossible: Science Fiction and the Utopian Imagination* (New York: Methuen, 1986), 28.

twentieth century—Cavendish is a mother of this movement as her views on holism act as a precursor to and an underlying (though perhaps unconscious) influence on the 20th century ecofeminists. As such, it makes sense to analyze the manifestation of these thoughts in the two time periods. Since authors in both eras utilize analogous constructs, especially with an eye toward political upheaval in the scientific realm, there are insights that we can glean from more focused study.

Each chapter of the dissertation will follow a similar pattern, illustrating a recurring concern about the distinctions between nature and science that have divided humanity from nature since the early modern period. The overall structure of this dissertation itself reflects my argument, as the layout of the novels present a particular pattern: *The Blazing World* reinvents the traditional utopia; *The Dispossessed* exemplifies the critical anarchic utopian mode; *The Shore of Women* exhibits separatist utopian literature; and *Oryx and Crake* displays the critical dystopian trend.[41] These works parallel each other and effect meaning through various changes in this ever-changing genre. By using the tenets of the early modern utopia as a historical lens, I argue for the influence of the genre upon similar era-specific problems: the issues Cavendish feared and foresaw have blossomed and fuel an ongoing debate in later sub-genres of the utopia. Thus, my

[41] In connection to Cavendish's reinvention of traditional utopias, I am referring to utopias that begin with a narrator finding a new land and gaining information from superior creatures. These travelers take this new knowledge back to their lands in hopes of creating a better world. Often these travels relate to economic and religious concerns.

dissertation undertakes both a micro- and macro-debate strategy, as I look at how each author advocates holism through her works, and how these utopian sub-genres display a holistic picture of the debate. This argument adds a richer complexity to author-specific ideologies as I demonstrate the importance of looking at the texts in conjunction with one another. Through careful examination of the political and genre context of these works a clearer picture forms about the ecological debates occurring in both the Early Modern and the late 20th century—problems related to the female/male divisions and the overall human/nature disconnect.

To facilitate the understanding of the five thematic elements, I want to briefly discuss each topic and how this dissertation will approach them. As stated previously, the female authors in this dissertation use their subjugated voice in a united effort for gender abolition and the reuniting of humanity with nature. The first step to countering the binary debate between science and nature, therefore, requires parity between the genders. The effort to establish equality could occur through blurring gender lines, as Cavendish attempts with her main character, the Empress, who takes on an empirical role as leader. A second avenue consists of flipping genders, as seen in Le Guin's *The Dispossessed*, in which the female and male both undertake scientific endeavors. A third approach takes the form of commentary on the very falseness of gender creation, as Sargent demonstrates in *The Shore of Women*, where women are scientists and men take on the role of

chaotic nature. A fourth approach arises through the creation of the other, the alien-figure, as the subjugate gender—a thought expressed in Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*. These efforts all argue for a society based on diminishing gender roles and, as such, mitigating the impacts of the imposition of the science and nature spheres. This overall idea ties into the very concept of the female scientist in the novels, demonstrating how women can take on the roles of hard and soft scientists.[42] Therefore, the first step to establishing holism in the environment necessitates eliminating those binaries and finding common ground between the genders.

Second is the use of language as a way to keep the genders separate. Similar to blurring gender roles, language structures emphasize the differences between genders. Mainly, the language of physical science embodies the realm of the masculine, whereas the language of nature (and even of the social/"soft" sciences) is feminine. Language can also illustrate power struggles among the genders. For example, Cavendish installs her Empress as the primary pursuer of scientific discovery. Cavendish gives her a voice that speaks the language of science. Le Guin's *The Dispossessed* uses language to show the barriers that exist not only between the genders, but also between class systems—language informs the culture on how to treat one another and the environment. Atwood's *Oryx and*

[42] Soft sciences are social sciences, like communications and linguistics, versus experimental sciences, like physics or chemistry.

Crake has several women whose voices are often the most poignant, but who are ignored or silenced throughout, demonstrating the perceived lack of importance of the female voice. By bridging the gaps between language and gender, the writers introduce a type of holism that counters stereotypically "proper" roles for humanity.

Third, there is a blurring between the human and the animal. During the early modern era, the mechanical sciences employed a specific schema based upon a revision of the Great Chain of Being and the employment of Cartesian theory. René Descartes proposes that humanity is a rational being imbued with a soul, while other irrational creatures, the animals and plants, are more like mechanical beings—devoid of souls and rationalisty. This philosophy reinforced the idea of placing humanity above all animal and plant life. With this rationalization, scientists felt justified in dissecting nature for any pursuit. All of the works in this study explore the dissolution of this nature/science hierarchy, along with some type of animal/human reunification. Some works are more overt, as in Cavendish's *The Blazing World*, where she assigns animals the role of scientists and even converses with them. Other works are more subtle, as in Le Guin's *The Dispossessed,* where the lack of animal lifeforms suggests a disconnect between humans and the environment. The relationship between the animal and the human can also cause a reader to question the role of science in animal testing. Cavendish was very clear about her views on animals, specifically

speaking out against the notion that animals lacked souls and, therefore, could not feel pain. The same line of thought unfolds in Atwood's novel *Oryx and Crake*, where genetic engineering shows the harms of creating hybrid animals for mere curiosity. In the end, understanding the animal-human relationship and our connection to other species is one way to eliminate the binary system.

Fourth, I discuss other spheres of influence, specifically the view of capitalism and politics in these works. While this is not a common subject addressed in Cavendish's works, as she is still a part of the royalist system, she does hint at capitalism as a driving force behind the tensions between nature and science. The economic sphere of influence is a major reason why science pursues certain ventures. In Cavendish's age, colonialism and the drive to become men of influence catalyzed scientific progress. Discovery now extends beyond the microscopic lens to the telescopic, reaching into further distances, resulting in land appropriation and furthering the goal of establishing a new Eden. *New Atlantis* proposes these thoughts, while praising the usage of mechanical instruments for discovery: "We find also divers means, yet unknown to you, of producing light originally from divers bodies. We procure means of seeing objects afar off, and things afar off as near; making feigned distances."[43] The notion of feigned distances hints at the topic of world building, echoing the effort to find and develop the Americas. Mary Campbell notes in *Wonder and Science* that

[43] Bacon, *New Atlantis*, 484.

these telescopes and the microscopes bring new lands into view.[44] Robert Hooke echoes this view on technology, noting that it helps observers understand the challenges that they face "in the surveying the already visible world, and for the discovery of many others hitherto unknown, and to make us, with the great Conqueror, to be affected that we have not overcome one world when there are so many others to be discovered."[45] Indeed, for Hooke science should inspire a thirst for dominance.

The mechanical sciences rationalize the colonial enterprise and the settling of the Americas in particular. Instruments designed to uncover the truths of nature in England can now study new lands and new people. With fresh subjects in the forms of flora and fauna, scientists have the ability to delve deeper into the roots of God's secrets. Power seeking and control implicate a deeper social paradigm as control of land symbolizes the woman. The foundation is not merely man settling and controlling land, but what that land comes to symbolize. As Denise Albanese writes, "the close correspondence this betrays between the female body on the one hand, and the notion of material ground, or territoriality, on the other, is of course an enabling move both for civilization and the allied ideology of the New Science."[46] America, like nature in general, wears female garb—rendering the land a highly exploitable and passive receptacle for scientists' pursuits. These

[44] Campbell, *Wonder and Science*, 190.
[45] Robert Hooke, *Micrographia* (New York: Cossimo Classics, 2007), 22.
[46] Denise Albanese, *New Science, New World* (Durham: Duke UP, 1996), 75.

ideas about capitalism and exploitation survive the centuries and manifest in more current works. In *The Dispossessed*, Le Guin addresses the scientific need to keep one planet above all the others for intergalactic communication: the characters, therefore, use science to improve one's station in life. In *Oryx and Crake*, Atwood discusses the importance of science as a means of profiting through the selling of products, which eventually destroys the masses and leads to the extinction of humanity. The economic element, they argue, is a pivotal influence for science, extending into the way that society uses science for capitalist gain.

Fifth is the general concept of nature and how the characters in these novels interact with their environments. Each novel has commentary on humanity's place in the world and on what our proper role should be. Cavendish reflects on a commonality between human and nature. She explores the idea that humans might possess less intelligence than animals and, in that way, attempts to humble the human ego. Le Guin shows how humans must coexist with their environments because of nature's delicate balance: any action we take impacts our environment, which affects us in turn. Sargent looks at environments as power structures—environments constructed through human endeavors that create false connections to our surroundings. She illustrates this idea in the fabricated city of women and the hinterland of men. Lastly, Atwood creates an environment almost devoid of humans in order to define what it means to be human. In so doing, she confirms that we are little more than instinctual animals. These five components

help validate the main claim for this dissertation, which is that the solution to the nature versus science debate relies on erasing certain boundaries. We need to find the connection to nature that we have lost and to reestablish the association between the genders.

This dissertation relies upon a foundation of scholarship by several leading academics in the field of ecocriticism, ecofeminism, utopian studies, cyberpunk theory, and author-specific researchers.[47] Ecocriticism and ecofeminism inform my dissertation as I discuss the environment in the context of the early modern era and the 20th century. Carolyn Merchant and her works, *Reinventing Nature* and the *Death of Nature*, influence my thoughts about the creation of science in the mechanical age and the subjugation of the woman through the use of scientific treatises. I also look at the works of Stacy Alaimo, especially *Undomesticated Ground*, as they relate to current notions of the symbolic female body found in nature. For the latter sections of my paper, Val Plumwood's *Environmental*

[47] See Marleen Barr's *Feminist Fabulations* as it reveals gender and power roles through female authorship; Donna Haraway's *Cyborg Manifesto* as it relates to fabricated gender constructions; Wolmark's *Alien and Others* as it discusses the topics of otherness in connection to utopian characterization in female personas; Lefanu's *Feminism and Science Fiction* for clarification on the role of technology and gender development; *Feminism and Mastery of Nature* by Plumwood as she seeks to show the parallelism between utopian science fiction characters and their reliance on the environment; Griffin's *Women and Nature* as a source for the genesis myth in connection to gendered relationships; Moylan's *Scraps of the Untainted Sky* on the association between the utopia of the twentieth century as influenced by technological advancement; and *Feminist Utopias* by Bartowski as she addresses the specific attributes of female authored world-making.

Culture: The Ecological Crisis of Reason and *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* help me to develop the current climate of women's mastery over the sciences and the blurring of gender boundaries through holistic reasoning. The ecocritic Robert Watson, principally his book *Back to Nature: the Green and the Real in the Late Renaissance*, aids in my understanding of the social climate of the early modern period and the rise of dualism between nature and science through discovery and colonization. Jane Donawerth is very instructive when thinking about utopian studies from a feminist perspective. Her *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* better informs me about the newest traditions of female writing. This last idea is also given more investigation in the works of Sarah Lefanu, especially *Feminism and Science Fiction*, and Justine Larbalestier's *The Battle of the Sexes in Science Fiction*. Cyberpunk theory, which is primarily included in the epilogue of this dissertation, emerges from the works of Marleen Barr, specifically *Feminist Fabulations: Space/Postmodern Fiction* and *Future Females: A Critical Anthology*. All of these works look at specific periods within certain genres. My dissertation frames the argument between centuries, showing the importance of examining the 20th century and the early modern in relation to the dualism debate.

I set this dissertation in two parts. In Part One, Chapter One examines the historical age of Margaret Cavendish as I explore the reaction that Cavendish must face when creating her utopian novel. Chapter Two then specifically

analyzes *The Blazing World* as a means of overcoming the science of her age through a new version of female science: one that combats Cartesian dualism. Her fiction represents one of the first efforts of female utopian science fiction to address the harms of the mechanical sciences. In fact, her work establishes a major premise of this dissertation—the idea of same-sphere ideologies. I then turn to Part Two, in which I create a parallel structure to Part One. Starting in Chapter 3, I study the link between the politics of current political debates and current feminist science fiction utopias. I also discuss the major tenets of modern-day utopias to advance the scholarship and themes of modern utopias, similar to the approach in Part One. These ideas will further enhance my micro/macro analysis of how the genre informs meaning and how each author contributes to the debate on the divisions between human/nature and man/woman. A discussion of the other three novels in the dissertation follows in Part Two: Ursula Le Guin's *The Dispossessed*, Pamela Sargent's *The Shore of Women*, and Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*. Le Guin creates a view of science that controls and hinders societies; Sargent uses science to show both our disconnect from nature and our fractioned genders; and Atwood takes the abuse of genetic science as a way to show the follies of humanity and the treatment of scientific conquests. My hope is that the complexity of this topic will foster conversations about ecofeminist motives through new awareness of the connections between Cavendish's works and the novels that were created in the same spirit centuries later. Literature is an

ongoing conversation that can be understood through this kind of comparative analysis and comprehensive study. Therefore, this dissertation also advocates for a genre analysis that focuses on how differing sub-genres can inform each other, adding a richer and more complicated debate than mere author-specific comparisons.

Chapter 1

The Early Modern Utopia in the Scientific Revolution

Bacon has broke that scarecrow deity
Come, enter, all that will
Behold the ripen'd fruit
Come gather now your fill
Yet still, methinks,
We fain would be
Catching at the forbidden tree.

--Abraham Cowley, "To The Royal Society"

Abraham Cowley's 1667 poem "To the Royal Society" honors the founder and leader of the group, Sir Francis Bacon, while proclaiming the organization's tenets: break nature (that scarecrow deity) and take knowledge from it (the forbidden tree). Crowley uses the symbols in his poem to explore the *raison d'etre* of the Royal Society. First, the 'scarecrow' is that mysterious truth that these scientists believe was hidden in nature by God, available for discovery—God wants mankind to seek out and find these secrets. Second, the 'forbidden' tree is what was lost to humanity when we partook of the tree of knowledge. Scientists, therefore, seek to regain the knowledge we lost in our sin. But how do these scientists unearth these hidden truths? What mechanism facilitates this type of discovery? For the Royal Society, the scientific method, with its focus on experimentation and use of mechanical instruments, provided the answer.

Although Bacon dies in 1626, he is the inspiration behind The Royal Society's mission—a group of scientists formed in 1660. Descartes also influenced this group's philosophy as his works emphasize discovering truth through experiment and reason. Sir Francis Bacon takes these general ideas and establishes the scientific method, providing a more thorough analytical model for the rational scientist. With the scientific method, scientists like Boyle and Hooke use instruments—air pumps, microscopes, telescopes—to seek out the truths that God hid from human senses. Today, the legitimacy of the mechanical sciences is almost beyond question. However, during the seventeenth century, its adoption was still controversial, as their more conservative ideas made its acceptance difficult. After all, one must possess a certain amount of pride to believe that man can uncover the unknowable in nature by dissecting it—an idea that might be unpalatable to a religiously oriented society. The spiritual undertone of the scientific enterprise belies the tension between these worldviews the Royal Society reinvents a long-established philosophy known as the Great Chain of Being.

Modern readers envisioning the role of science through an early modern lens will find that many of the Royal Society's ideas echo today's experience. Perhaps less familiar is the idea that pursuing the "forbidden tree of knowledge" leads to humanity's detachment from nature. E.M.W. Tillyard and A.O. Lovejoy discuss the philosophy of the Great Chain of Being to assert this detachment. The

Great Chain of Being elevates mankind above all other creatures on earth, as they are below angels but above the woman and the environment. Misogynistic ideologies also find purchase here, creating a philosophical environment that ecofeminist writers are reacting against. The current works of Carolyn Merchant, Sylvia Bowerbank, and Lynda Birke demonstrate that the scientific revolution fueled the destructive exploitation of Mother Nature.[48] As a symbol, the Mother Nature figure comes to represent both the subordination of the female and the destruction of nature, all as a consequence of the relentless pursuit of discovery. In this conception, both the female and nature represent bodies enslaved by the scientific movement, illustrating a specific example of the human/nature dichotomy.

The evolution of the scientific method inspired an upsurge in revolutionary utopian writing—itself a genre that appears most frequently during times of change. The Royal Society's agenda, therefore, inspires utopian writes of the time. The focus of my dissertation is on how female writers respond to the shifting times, especially in promoting a reexamination of the sciences.[49] The

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[48] See Merchant's *Reinventing Nature: The Fate of Nature in Western Culture* and *The Death of Nature;* Bowerbank's *Speaking for Nature: Women and Ecologies of Early Modern England*; and Birke's *Women, Feminism and Biology: The Feminist Challenge*.

[49] This stands in sharp contrast to male utopias that promote the scientific endeavors of the Royal Society. In this way, my argument relates to both showing a feminist viewpoint and seeing how they are reacting to a primarily male-dominated genre.

most famous female early modern utopian writer is Margaret Cavendish, and her work *The Blazing World.* I analyze her utopia alongside male utopias of the age. This comparative study helps to frame a discussion on the virtues of early modern colonial expansion, capitalism, religion, and the creation of the public and private spheres. Each of these topics informs the ecofeminist movement, a movement that shows how the repression of the female directly aligns to the exploitation of land. This type of relationsip depends on the woman-centered traits often associated with nature: nurturing, on one hand, and the wily, uncontrollable nature on the other. In other words, the works of the modern female utopians are a direct continuation of the conversation that Cavendish began.

To clarify the nature-human division, I explore the basic characteristics of most utopias in order to assert what constitutes "better" worlds within certain eras and to argue Cavendish's specific place within this discussion. A utopia, by definition, is a reaction to the prevailing social structure. Early modern utopian literature offered an avenue by which authors, many of whom were also scientists, could present their scientific beliefs and general views for a more perfect civilization.[50] I also discuss the topic of ecofeminism, and its challenge to the configuration of nature-as-the-woman. Using these theoretical frameworks, I make my main argument: female utopians deconstruct male science through

[50] This section could also reveal, on another level, a brief analysis of the Royal Society's agenda.

feminist world making. I do not focus this study solely in the seventeenth century. The ultimate goal is to demonstrate that female writers undermine male science though dissolving the boundaries between humans and nature, especially when writing in times of ecological crisis. Two such points of ecological crisis are the establishment of the scientific method (which altered our relationship to nature), and the climatic/technological changes that informed the latter half of the 20th century (which represents an apotheosis of those shifted viewpoints). In both eras, female authors attempt to rebalance the human-nature dichotomy—which they view as the root cause of the destruction of nature—by forging closer ties between every creature on earth.

My overall argument aligns with the mission of ecofeminism and its view of the correct position of the woman within nature. I agree that female authors should work to reconceive a nature that contains all things, restoring humanity to that realm and removing artificial distinctions. No human, regardless of gender, can rule over anything within creation. To unpack this idea, I investigate the scientific tenets of the early modern era, especially as they connect to utopian works.[51] After examining these tenets, I move into an examination of Margaret Cavendish's *The Blazing World*, which is the primary source for comparing

[51] The argument here will be to not only discuss the scientific philosophy of some of the scientists in the era, but also to reveal how male utopian authors were fostering these agendas. The literature of the early modern utopia is informed by the scientific agenda.

female-authored utopian literature to male utopias of the age. Cavendish's work removes the binaries between the human and nature through holism: she treats all things in nature as equal.

To start this conversation, I discuss the foundational utopian texts of Sir Thomas More's *Utopia,* Francis Godwin's *The Man in the Moone*, Sir Frances Bacon's *New Atlantis*, and Tommaso Camponella's *The City of the Sun*. Each of these texts addresses economic and political concerns of their age, but the crux of holism focuses on the codes of the scientific revolution—codes that pertain to the view of nature and humanity's relationship to it. This analysis, therefore, requires a thorough investigation of the forefather of the Royal Society, René Descartes. His ideas informed the scientific revolution in many ways. Descartes writes, in *Discourse on Method* and *Meditations*, that "God has placed the idea of Himself in one's mind just as the mark of a craftsman is stamped on his work,"[52] and that "God has been so established in nature of which He has imprinted such ideas on our mind."[53] These phrases spark and ignite the Royal Society's principal venture, to excavate some truth hidden in the world. By uncovering these secrets, the scientist unearths reflections of the Edenic self and the mysteries of creation. These discoveries are God's truths: wisdom only known to the heavenly realm.

[52] Descartes, *Discourse,* xvii.
[53] Descartes, *Discourse*, 97.

The only way to reach this enlightenment, they imagine, is to dig deep within the bowels of the earth, to scavenge the earth mercilessly.

Scientists relied on the concept of Cartesian dualism to probe nature this intensely and invasively. Descartes maintained the dualistic idea—man is separate from nature—throughout his works, most clearly expressed in the line: "The soul to which by which I am what I am, is entirely distinct from body, and is even more easy to know than is the latter, and even if body were not, the soul would not cease to be what it is."[54] To be human is to have a soul and a special link to God. The human also has an animate soul with the ability to be rational—other creatures of the earth do not contain souls or rationality. In dividing creation between the thinking, soul-possessing man and the 'other,' the Royal Society justified the mining of the earth, the harm inflicted on animals, and the subjugation of women.

These thoughts echo in the masculine utopias of the time, as they evoke worlds in which the narrator seeks knowledge for mankind without concern for the environment. In fact, the characters in these utopian works valorize individual wealth, power, and discovery in the name of science and upward mobility. Domingo Gonsales, the main character in *The Man in the Moone*, strives to find riches and wisdom in a voyage to the moon—a nod to the colonial enterprise. The character also encounters sublunary creatures in this utopia, thereby asserting a

[54] Descartes, *Discourse*, 92.

religious component. In the end, Domingo returns to Earth with new data and knowledge.[55] Sir Francis Bacon approaches the same topics in his *New Atlantis*, where the main character seeks new lands that will give him and his crew greater riches. The majority of the text envisages a society under the rule of scientists and thus imagines a land of riches where men like Bacon are in control.

These texts also establish a link between scientific ventures and religious motives. Carolyn Merchant argues that the religious context associated with the scientific revolution deals primarily with the recovery of Eden—itself a utopic vision that I briefly mentioned earlier in this chapter.[56] The narrators of Bacon's *New Atlantis*, More's *Utopia*, Godwin's *Man in the Moone*, and Campanella's *The City of the Sun* search for this Christian component in their respective lands. Without a Christian religious goal the utopia fails to exist, as these works presume God's association in utopic environments. For example, Bacon's *New Atlantis* uses the motif of Jonah being delivered by a whale: "a kind of miracle [had brought the crew] hither."[57] In Godwin's land, when the narrator mentions the word of Jesus to the people of the moon, all the "young and old fall down upon

[55] One of the most traditional components of any utopia is the idea that the character goes out into a utopian world and gains wisdom to share with his less-than-perfect land.
[56] Carolyn Merchant, *Reinventing Nature: The Fate of Nature in Western Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 36.
[57] Sir Frances Bacon, *New Atlantis*, 461.

their knees."[58] More's utopian vision suggests that the only similarity between the known world and his ideal one is that there is one "supreme God…[who] is eternal, invisible, infinite, and incomprehensible…a being that is far above all our apprehensions, that is spread over the whole universe."[59] Campanella also writes a godly component in *The City of the Sun,* stating that the "great ruler among them is a priest…who is head over all, in temporal and spiritual matters, and all business and lawsuits are settled by him."[60] In fact, Christian viewpoints are readily apparent in Campanella's fictional world as his narrator describes the beauty of the utopian buildings: "in the most dignified position I saw a representation of Jesus Christ and of the twelve apostles."[61] All of these works further complicate the Christian images and allusions—especially Bacon's *New Atlantis* and Godwin's *The Man in the Moone*—when the utopias assert Christianity as the impetus for the scientific endeavor. The imagined worlds use science to excavate God's secrets, just as the Royal Society aimed to do.

Sir Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis* is the best example of this project, primarily because of his association with the Royal Society. Bacon, the promoter of inductive reasoning and an early advocate for experimentation, laid the foundation upon which the Royal Society stood. *New Atlantis* follows these tenets

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[58] Francis Godwin, *The Man in the Moone* (New York: Broadview P, 2009), 96.
[59] Thomas More, *Utopia* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2001), 70.
[60] Tommaso Campanella, *The City of the Sun* (New York: Read How You Want P, 2006), 5.
[61] Campanella, *The City of the Sun*, 7.

as his utopia focuses on scientists who strive to expose God's secrets. He casts a statement of this purpose in religious tones: "Lord God of heaven and earth, thou hast vouchsafed of thy grace to those of our order, to know thy works of creation, and the secrets of them; and to discern between divine miracles, works of nature, works of art, impostures and illusions of all sorts."[62] This quotation is a reflection on both the hidden concept of God within nature and Bacon's view that man has been charged with uncovering it. Bacon discusses the same foundation of the Atlantian Empire with his chief objective to reveal the "secret motion of things."[63] Unveiling God's secrets prepares a way for creating a great'er' place—to make nature a 'better' nature.

The scientists in *New Atlantis* exemplify these views by fashioning fruit-bearing trees: "we make them also by art greater than their nature; and their fruit greater and sweeter and of differing tastes, smells, color, and figure, from the nature."[64] In this way, Bacon's view of an ideal state would be "not of the library, but of the laboratory."[65] Therefore, the Royal Society constructs a better landscape for humans while maintaining a religious association. Campanella's work also demonstrates the importance of science above all other forms of knowledge and makes a point to discuss education and the mechanical sciences

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[62] Bacon, *New Atlantis*, 464.
[63] Bacon, *New Atlantis*, 480.
[64] Bacon, *New Atlantis*, 482.
[65] Denise Albanese, *New Science, New World* (Durham: Duke UP, 1996), 69.

for young children: "after their sixth year they are taught natural science, and then the mechanical sciences."[66] This pedagogy is cast alongside the extreme religious practices his utopian people adhere to, even as the text discusses rituals like offerings to God.[67]

Godwin's *The Man in the Moone* is similarly fraught with religious and scientific contexts, teasing the promise of great wealth by seeking out God's truth and reminding readers of the economic interests of the Royal Society. The narrator in this story encounters a world in a sublunary plane of existence—a place between heaven and the lowly earth. The location refers to a purgatory-like zone in the context of the Edenic myth. The narrator says that one "shall have notice of a new world, of many most rare and incredible secrets of nature that all the philosophers of former ages could never so much as dream of."[68] In reality, finding these secrets relies on the use of specialized equipment. The destruction of nature for man's purpose relies on the instruments, such that an air compressor, used to test the lung capacity of animals, and the microscope, used to examine layers of animal and earth, emerge as agitators of nature. These examinations foster discovery, but they also imply a right of rule over nature. The complexity of this debate, I argue, is not only about nature versus human endeavors, but also

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[66] Campanella, *The City of the Sun,*15.
[67] These descriptions relate to an Old Testament type of sacrifice like that of Cain and Abel, or Abraham and Isaac.
[68] Francis Godwin, *The Man in the Moone* (New York: Broadview P, 2009), 75.

relies on the philosophical context in which this ideology that woman is closer to nature. Christian religion informs this idea through the Eve figure, but the Royal Society's platform also connects the woman to scientific endeavors in the name of colonialism and excavation.

The artwork of the age portrays the domination of women through a lens of colonialism. These images often portray woman as land or woman as Eve. I discuss three separate images to illustrate the context behind these ideas. The first example (Figure 1.1) is an image from 1556 titled "Recueil de la diuersite´ des," which pictures a woman holding both an apple and the harvest—a positive account of the woman as nature.[69] Nevertheless, this image still recalls the symbol of Eve, the traditional model for the feminized nature—a symbolic representation that will lead to the subjugation of the woman.

[69] De l'imprimerie de Richard Breton, *Recueil de la diuersite´ des habits*. Available from: Folger's Shakespeare Library, http://luna.folger.edu/luna/servlet/detail/FOLGERCM1~6~6~81457~106019:Recueil-de-la-diuersite´-des-habits (accessed April 27, 2015).

Figure 1.1 The Portrayal of Woman as Nature

The idea of Eve received blame for Man's exile from Eden. This notion forms the subject of an image titled "Melancholius" (seen in figure 1.2), which illustrates the downfall of mankind because of Eve's sins.[70] Of course, such a narrative overlooks Adam's own culpability and allows men to rationalize their situation. This stratagem permits men to privilege themselves over women, and to reinforce the idea of a 'natural' hierarchy. Both figure 1.1 and figure 1.2 refigure the woman in the context of nature while supporting a scientific agenda—an agenda based on lowering the female's station even as it lowers the position of nature, allowing for harms upon the environment.

[70] Raphae Sadeler. *Melancholicus*. Available from: Folger's Shakespeare Library, http://luna.folger.edu/luna/servlet/detail/FOLGERCM1~6~6~349677~129385:Melancholicus--graphic----M--de-Vos?qvq=w4s:/what/Prints%20--%2016th%20century.;lc:BINDINGS~1~1,FOLGERCM1~6~6&mi=13&trs=855 (accessed April 27, 2015).

Figure 1.2 The Destruction Caused By Eve

Figure 1.3 situates women within the context of America:

Figure 1.3 The Artist: Straet, J. *Nova Reperta* 1600

The engraving here refers to an America colonized in the name of Christianity, with the colonist first greeting a Native America woman who also stands for all

women.[71] The land, with exotic animals and plants, suggests the Garden of Eden. The man, Amerigo Vespucci, holds a scientific instrument in his left hand and a cross of Christ in his right, with the intention of reclaiming creation in the name of science and religion. Man thus represents reason and science while woman plays the role of chaotic nature.[72]

Nature, Woman, and Scientific Endeavors

The impact of the science-versus-nature debate derives from its entanglement with colonization, a project that depends on the idea that mankind and nature are distinct and unequal. To put it simply, humanity separates itself from the fabric in which all creatures relate. By understanding this division, all the puzzle pieces in this conversation connect: where the "nostalgia for Eden, for an idealized collective agrarian feudal England, for the Golden Age, and for a prelinguistic access to realist reality all come together."[73] When looking back at the groundwork in this introduction, the fingerprints of the scientific revolution become evident. If neither the land nor the nonhuman beings that live on it possess a real soul, then there is no moral dilemma in exploiting nature for

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[71] Jan van der Straet. *Nova Reperta*. Available from: Metropolitan Museum of Art, http://www.metmuseum.org/collection/the-collection-online/search/343845 (accessed April 27, 2015).

[72] There is a lot of discussion on this image. However, my main arguments come from Katharine Park's and Lorraine Daston's "The Age of the New," in *The Cambridge History of Science*, *vol. 3: Early Modern Science* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006), 1-17.

[73] Robert Watson, *Back to Nature: The Green and the Real in the Late Renaissance* (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P., 2006), 6.

personal goals. Moreover, if these ideologies are the predominant thoughts, then they will manifest in voyage literature, including utopian works. As Mary Campbell writes, the "construction of the Edenic narrative of America" is one of the most mythic stories of them all, but it is also a myth that helps to exploit "land, peoples and resources."[74] This myth relocates power from the priests to the scientists. Without this religious framework, the rationalization of placing Native American below Europeans and women below men holds no validity. Religious myths thus reinforce the culturally constructed social strata: the Great Chain of Being becomes a symbol of this reprioritization as it asserts the divisions between humans, animals, and God. The Great Chain of Being existed before the mechanical sciences, of course, but by repurposing this image, the philosophy becomes something that the scientific project can use in tandem with the Garden of Eden myth. Todd Borlik writes that this Great Chain of Being

> outlines a hierarchical and anthropocentric vision of the universe in which plants exist for the sake of animals, animals for the sake of man, and man for the sake of worshipping God….that all things in this universe of ours have been created and prepared for us to enjoy.[75]

The structure of the Chain of Being situates woman closer to nature and below man, with both woman and land being subordinate to male science.

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[74] Campbell, *Wonder and Science,* 1.
[75] Todd A. Borlik, *Ecocriticism and Early Modern English Literature: Green Pastures* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 2.

Structuring the world in this way allows for a new way of viewing humanity's interactions with nature. Lynda Birke charts this concept by showing that the early modern version of the Great Chain of Being classifies women, non-European races, and animals under the broad term of nature, whereas man and reason are found under a culture/reasoning sphere.[76] Therefore, the Great Chain no longer follows a single line of hierarchy: with the split of man and woman, humanity and nature, there are two separate structures, with woman mirroring nature and man resembling science. The result is that man and woman effectively belong to two different spheres of existence. Each has its place in society and connection to the world, but man is closer to reason/God and woman is closer to Nature/chaos. As Merchant, states there are two types of feminine nature: "…the negative wild and the positive wild. The negative wild was exemplified by unruly passions aroused by the baseness of the body, the positive wild by the sublime passions of the soul."[77] The negative female nature associates with the early modern woman that scientists sought to dominate. Nature is no longer loved but loathed, and for this reason woman must never overstep her boundaries in the public/culture sphere of men.

This negative nature has its roots in Christian religion and Greek philosophy, as the Eve myth fuels the view of the female as a temptress by nature.

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[76] Lynda Birke, *Women, Feminism and Biology: The Feminist Challenge* (New York: Methuen, 1986).
[77] Merchant, *Reinventing Nature*, 86.

Lawrence Buell asserts this same opinion as he observes that Genesis is the source that gives man the charge to rule over the creatures of the sea and earth, particularly nature and woman.[78] The sin of Eve, the sin of nature, kept mankind from reaching his potential. In 1667, Thomas Sprat writes that the "philosophy, the great and only heir of all that human knowledge, has [been] felt by man's rebellious sin."[79] The rebellious sin resulted in the curse given to humanity by Eve. Ruth Watts explores the idea that the Royal Society aimed to reestablish Solomon's house, which excluded all things feminine.[80] As such, the scientist will now deliver humanity from the effects of its sins. All of these ideas circle back to the epigraph at the beginning of this chapter. Sprat says that "Bacon, like Moses, led us forth at last, from the barren wasteland, and to the promised land."[81] Bacon, now cast as a patriarch, will help mankind master the knowledge that will lead to enlightenment. Another Royal Society member, Robert Hooke, seconds this thought in *Micrographia*, noting that what separates humans from the rest of nature is "that we [are not] only able to behold the works of nature, or barely sustain our lives by them, but we have also the power of considering, comparing,

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[78] Lawrence Buell, *Future of Environmental Criticism: Environmental Crisis and Literary Imagination* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005).
[79] Thomas Sprat, *The History of the Royal Society of London for the Improving of Natural Knowledge* (N.P.: Adamant Media Corporation, 2001), 8.
[80] Ruth Watts, "Gender Science and Modernity in Seventeenth Century England," *Paedagogica Historica* 49 (2005), 82.
[81] Sprat, *The History of the Royal Society*, 10.

altering, assisting, and improving them to various uses."[82] These scientists are the new heroes of the early modern age, raising humanity from a baser existence.

In this view, if the male scientist is a force for improving nature, woman is the source of ruining it. She must be "tamed into submission" as Eve " is inherently connected to and associated symbolically with nature and the garden."[83] These ideologies generated the symbol of the witch, an icon of violent reactions in nature and of harm to humanity.[84] So, nature is not just submissive, but an active, disorderly creature that needs guidance. She hides God's mysteries from man.[85] In this way, nature and those connected to her—woman, other races, and animals—are obstacles, and are, therefore, exploitable: an idea that arises in the debate about the Great Chain of Being and the exploitation of the female and animal.

Animals, as they are lower than humans, also become mere targets of scientific pursuits. Descartes's works include many examples of animal anatomy in experiments, specifically describing them as moving machines.[86] According to Helen Birke:

> The division into humans versus the rest of nature had a long history of theological justification, followed by a justification in terms of ideas of mechanism; in turn, it has contributed to the

[82] Robert Hooke, *Micrographia* (New York: Cossimo Classics, 2007), 8.
[83] Merchant, *Reinventing Nature*, 22.
[84] Merchant, *The Death of Nature*, 127.
[85] Bowerbank, *Speaking for Nature,* 47.
[86] Descartes, *Discourse*, 107.

> exploitation of animals—in laboratories, in intensive farming, in the fur trade…this exploitation has been connected to ecofeminism.[87]

Exploitation and division of certain groups give substance to the counterstrategies taken by ecofeminist writers. The major theories in this debate are two-fold: some authors maintain that woman and nature should form a partnership, while others argue for a complete disconnection. My thoughts align with those of Jennifer Munroe and Rebecca Laroche, who argue that N/nature correlates with a basic view of humanity.[88] In this way, man, woman, and all creatures are inherently nature. This stratagem removes the justification for exploitation. Moreover, these reflections figure prominently in female utopian genres. By using the male utopias discussed in this section of the dissertation, I can now move this argument to note the differences a woman's psychological land-making may highlight. Therefore, this discussion will turn to one of the few utopias in the seventeenth century written by a woman: Margaret Cavendish's *The Blazing World*. This work utilizes the tropes of traditional utopias and the reactions against the woman-as-nature image, addressing the notion of a human-centered nature as a rebuttal to the mechanical sciences.

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[87] Lydia Birke, *Women, Feminism and Biology,* 119.
[88] Jennifer Munroe and Rebecca Laroche, eds. *Ecofeminist Approaches to Early Modernity* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

Chapter 2

Non-Gendered Nature and the Absolution of the Nature/Culture Divide in *The Blazing World*

Known by many as "Mad Madge," Margaret Cavendish transcended gender roles, participating in the scientific discussions occurring at the time, dressing in male clothing, creating a salon for other women to discuss scientific arguments, and almost single-handedly taking on male science from a womanly point of view. As one of the few female scientific authors of the early modern era, she rebelled against the Royal Society. To understand how she revolted, one must take into consideration the reinvention of the Great Chain of Being, which depends upon the "scholastic tradition which saw matter on earth as corruptible (femaleness) and matter in heaven as not corruptible (men closer to God)."[89] This idea hearkens back to the earlier discussion about exploiting the passivity of nature in order to find the secrets of God. Land, now connected to the feminine gender, becomes a victim to masculinist science. In summary, certain beings receive a lower status based on the Royal Society's strategy, specifically: animals, non-Europeans, women, and, more generally, land, as they have a lower status on the hierarchical chain.[90] While subjugation has a lengthy history, this argument

[89] Lisa Walters, "Gender Subversion in the Science of Margaret Cavendish," in *Ashgate Critical Essays on Women Writers in England, 1550-1700* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009), 27.

[90] See the following works as they contributed to the big debates on Margaret

depends specifically upon the biblical text of Genesis, in which woman destroyed male happiness when she separated man from God's knowledge. Two of the best writers on this topic, Lovejoy and Tillyard, show the importance of this changing view of the 'Great Chain of Being' in connection with Cartesian dualism, which splits nature from reason. Animals and plant life contain no rationality or soul, while women, now positioned closer to animals, possess less cognitive abilities than European males. Cavendish defies these thoughts in two distinct ways: she finds fault with the entire philosophical structure that the Royal Society relies upon, and she presents a new view of the female/male spheres.

To argue for this eradication, Cavendish uses both her philosophical writings and her fiction, particularly *The Blazing World*, to proffer a new form of human-nature idealism. Throughout her works on the subject, Cavendish exhibits five distinct ways to overcome dualism. First, she attempts to deemphasize gender through androgynous characters. She creates these creatures even as she gives female characters more powerful roles and allows them a place within the

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Cavendish: Karla Ambruster's and Kathleen Wallace's *Beyond Nature Writing: Expanding the Boundaries of Ecocriticism*; Anna Battigelli's *Margaret Cavendish and the Exiles of the Mind*; Sylvia Bowerbank's *Speaking for Nature: Women and Ecologies of Early Modern England*; Stephen Clucas's *A Princely Brave Woman*; Chloe Houston's *New Worlds Reflected*; Marina Leslie's *Renaissance Utopias and the Problem of History*; Karen Detlefsen's "Atomism, Monism, and Causation in the Natural Philosophy of Margaret Cavendish"; Carolyn Merchant's "Secrets of Nature: The Bacon Debates Revisited" and *Reinventing Nature: The Fate of Nature in Western Culture*; and Robert Watson's *Back to Nature: The Green and the Real in the Late Renaissance*.

scientific community. Second, Cavendish produces a kind of genderless language as she develops a new way of writing using her feminist utopian world. Third, Cavendish portrays a deep connection to animals as a way to bridge the hierarchical gap between humans and other life forms. Fourth, she dissolves current sphere ideologies, including religious constructs, as a way to overturn philosophies related to subjugating gender for the pursuit of science. Last, all of these factors show how humans and nature interconnect, mainly through the topic of animism and the revolt against Cartesian mind/soul connections. Each of these aspects helps to resolve the dualities between man/woman, nature/science, and nature/humanity. Holism becomes the primary idea that Cavendish advances in order to solve the problems occurring during the early modern era—she is using a technique that involves an exclusion of fractured philosophies. Before I delve into these topics, I want to provide a brief summary of *The Blazing World*, so that the reader gains a better comprehension of the context of the work and how the utopia relates to a particular feminist agenda.

The utopia begins with a young woman being captured at sea by a merchant and his men. Blessed by some fortuitous event, she is set free while the men on the boat freeze to death. As she floats down the water, she traverses into a world parallel to earth—filled with bright, shining lights. Hybrid animals greet her and take her to meet the king. He falls in love with her instantly, marries her, and grants her the right to rule over all the land and its inhabitants. One of her first

commands is to reconstruct religious laws that allow women and men to worship freely and together. She also asks the hybrid animals, based on their skills and abilities, to investigate the wonders of the land and report back to her on their findings.

The utopia begins its more philosophical approach as the animals contact the Empress and explain the mysteries of the universe to her. The Empress cannot abide any investigation of nature by mechanical instruments (microscopes and telescopes), as she believes they inject falseness into the studies and are genuinely unhelpful with true investigation. She prefers that the animals gather information by their senses. One section of the book sees her conversing with spirit creatures about religious concepts, like the concept of the soul. Eventually, she meets the Duchess, her dearest friend in the book and a character that is a self-inserted version of Margaret Cavendish herself. Through their friendship, the utopia reveals that the greatest worlds for women have to be designed in their own minds. The ending of the book tells of the Empress going to war against those who threaten the Duchess's land. The Empress is triumphant, presenting a female character that is not only an effective ruler and scientist, but also a warrior.

One of the most poignant discussions in this summary relates to how Cavendish overturns the dualism between man above woman, and woman in the context of unruly nature, by going against views of early modern science. To do so, she must undo the Royal Society's envisioning of the hierarchical ladder, the

Great Chain of Being, and the idea of Cartesian dualism. Lovejoy asserts that during the scientific revolution, man repositioned himself on the hierarchical ladder of power. Focusing on how mankind should serve the earth, scientists forged a new tenet: "…man is made for the sake of God, namely, that he may serve him, so is the world made for the sake of man, that it may serve him."[91] This philosophy becomes the backbone of the hierarchy of "European man" above "woman" above "nature." In this way, the Great Chain of Being, or at least the re-envisioning of it, plays a significant part in the scientific agenda. The Royal Society strives to unveil God's secrets to know the 'superior' entity better, while sharpening class hierarchy formations. As stated by Lovejoy, in "The Royal Society…Platonistic and Baconian motives are conjoined [in order] to discover unknown facts of nature in order to range them in their places in the Chain of Being."[92] Placement politics gives man a higher place on the Chain of Being through knowledge of nature's secrets.[93] Discovering new lands, finding new truths in nature, and meting out new roles for each creature transitions the man into a new super human. The problem with this ascension is that man flies too close to the sun in his quest to reach the heavens. As man rises higher and higher toward the heavenly portion of the Great Chain, he loses his connection to the earth—he grows alienated from his surroundings and is no longer a part of nature.

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[91] Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being*, 187.
[92] Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being*, 237.
[93] Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being*, 259.

Another way that humanity becomes distinct from nature is through the attachment to souls and spirituality, as these two qualities are only available to humans. As Karen Raber states: "Human nature is thus quite distinct from nature itself. Similarly, those who do not believe in the soul's immortality or in divine providence fall far below the dignity of human nature" and lower their souls to a beastly nature.[94] Humanity, therefore, depends on the concept of souls—humanity has a soul and other parts of nature do not. If one cannot reach divine providence, then it is a passive object. While women are not considered base enough to lack a soul, they are closer to nature in that they are seen as irrational beings.[95] Women cannot master reason because of their chaotic characteristics, characteristics that nature shares with the female, reflecting the Eve syndrome in Genesis.

Considering the Royal Society's adoption of a new version of the Great Chain and the inferior status of women based on the Genesis story, it may seem impossible that a woman author could counter these views. Cavendish, being a rebel in every sense, picks her battles wisely and decides to remove gender boundaries by challenging the exclusivity of humanity's soul above other living creatures on earth. She simply cannot invent a new place for women with this ideology in place. Cartesian dualism is the greatest obstacle to her scientific

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[94] Karen Raber, *Early Modern Ecostudies: From the Florentine Codex to Shakespeare* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 125.
[95] Jacqueline Broad, *Women Philosophers of the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge University Press: 2002), 6.

propositions, because it is the infrastructure for the mechanical sciences. To disassemble this infrastructure, Cavendish creates a world that lacks association with one gender or identity. By removing this idea of nature as a thing apart, she establishes a new Chain of Being that does not reach for the sky but stays level to the ground, with nothing on earth above anything else. Her chain, therefore, no longer is a metaphor of the ladder: the hierarchical advancement of rungs that the Royal society advocated in their philosophy. For Cavendish, the chain is a true 'chain,' where every being on earth is interconnected—one that creates an intricate web where all creatures are on the same level influencing and relating to one another.

For Cavendish to accomplish this feat, she must destroy the notion of passive, soulless matter. Jay Stevenson suggests that Cavendish "like other vitalists, such as Spinoza and Ann Conway…believes that matter is informed with rational and sensitive power"; however, "unlike other vitalists, she believes this power does not inhere in a single hierarchical order, but is fragmented and often oppositional."[96] Cavendish breaks the ladder ideology based on this fragmented and oppositional power, both by giving souls to all of creation and presenting everything with some degree of reasoning ability. If an animal can reason, then nature can reason. Under this model, humanity has a rational soul by virtue of

[96] Jay Stevenson, "The Mechanist-Vitalist Soul of Margaret Cavendish," *Studies in English Literature* 36 (1996), 532.

being a part of nature rather than being apart from it. Instead of being stretched vertically, Cavendish's chain is seen as horizontal, with no 'earthly' being on top of any other.

The reordering of the Great Chain of Being also allows Cavendish to relocate genders in the public versus private spheres. Within the public, or male sphere, reason controls and closely relates to culture, whereas the private or female sphere connects to domesticity and nature. Like the scientific treatises of the time, these spheres established a dividing line between the genders as nature and the economy are seen as binaries. The few occupations in which a woman could earn a living in the realm of science, such as midwifery or herbal medicine, face opposition from male-driven equivalents.[97] Mary Crane examines this issue as she suggests that "architecture is shaped by assumptions about the nurturing enclosure of the female body, so that a homology between the womb and the dwelling place is operative in the subjection of a woman through their confinement in the private domestic sphere."[98] One way that Cavendish exposes these flaws is through the construction of a new nature sphere: she does not cast nature as an all-woman figure.

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[97] See Watts, *Gender Science and Modernity in Seventeenth Century England*, about the position for female workers in the early modern period.
[98] Mary Thomas Crane, "Illicit privacy and outdoor spaces in Early Modern England," *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies* 9 (2009*)*, 7.

Nature is a mothering figure, as well as a composite figure with infinite parts; each part of nature is a human, an animal, a plant with individual talents. This chain demonstrates, again, the web of connections of her Chain of Being, as it does not place the animal, the plant, etc. in hierarchical places on the chain but rather shows how we are all part of nature. *The Blazing World* illustrates this logic when the Empress says: "I find, that nature is but one self-moving body, which by the virtue of its self-motion, is divided into infinite parts, which parts being restless undergo perpetual changes and transmutations by their infinite compositions and divisions."[99] Nature is a whole made up of chaotic parts that move to her discordant will. Nature offers a harmonious rule, recognizable only if one can see the synergy of the seemingly dissonant movements of individuality. Nature also offers strict independence for her children, allowing them to act on their own aspirations. These actions change as objects and creatures refract and reflect one another's movements—all of this energy generates a powerful force. Different movements within nature fuel this dynamism marked by intense freedom for everything.

Freedom of matter does not mean that nature is an absentee mother; she is the type of monarch Cavendish frequently writes about. Webster concedes a similar idea when she states that nature is an ideal ruler with both "wisdom and

[99] Margaret Cavendish, *The Blazing World and Other Writings* (New York: Penguin Classics, 1994), 154.

moderation," allowing her individual parts to move of their own accord, but overall, moving according to her will.[100] When looking at this framework in a larger context, seemingly contradictory parts fit together—since every creature is fashioned of the same essence and all things are part of nature, they all have the same drive for innate motion. In *Philosophical Letters,* Cavendish reflects on the idea of an irregular, harmonious nature when she states that "nature suffers for taking delight in variety irregularities; otherwise, if there were only regularities, there could not be so much variety."[101]In Cavendish's worlds, differences develop solely through the interactions of each piece: "every human being, animal, vegetable, and mineral is endued with 'Life and Soul, Sense and Reason'…every particular body is still made of the same material substance."[102] Therefore, the wills and actions of all creatures are on equal footing. By offering a rebuttal to the Royal Society's Great Chain of Being and Cartesian philosophy, Cavendish is able to give nature the new image of the harmonious, undivided infinite

Some scholars believe that Cavendish creates nature in a female persona, a connection to the classical construction of 'natura' as a divine entity.[103] One of the primary claims about Cavendish is that she reinforces separate sphere ideologies

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[100] Erin Webster, "Margaret Cavendish's Socio-Political Interventions into Descartes' Philosophy," *English Studies* 92 (2011), 718.
[101] Cavendish, *The Blazing World*, 52.
[102] Jacqueline Broad, *Women Philosophers of the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge University Press: 2002), 44.
[103] George D. Economou, *The Goddess Natura in Medieval Literature* (U of Notre Dame P, 2002).

as she creates an image of nature that resembles a powerful female. In this way, the figure of woman maintains a closer (albeit positive) relationship to nature than any other creature. This reversal allows for an acceptance of the private and public spheres.[104] Feminine personas do abound in many of Cavendish's poems, and she does give power to the nature realm through a womanly personification. In Cavendish's, "Natures Dresse," she writes "her garments made of pure bright watcher skies…her stockings are of grass, that fresh and green."[105] In "Soul's Raiment," Cavendish develops a female nature as a caretaker of souls: "Nature clothes the soul…and lays them safe within an earthly chest: Then scowls them well and makes them sweet and clean, fit for the soul to wear those clothes again."[106] Nature cuts a godlike figure in these lines as she provides space for her creatures' souls and prepares them for the next domain. The problem with this depiction of nature as woman, at least in Cavendish's case, is in the debate over how nature is used by the author. The argument turns the conversation to the power of the chaotic nature figure—a paradigm that still places the woman within the realm of wily nature. Present-day scholars and Cavendish's contemporaries alike see this depiction as dangerous. As Angus Fletcher writes:

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[104] James Fitzmaurice, "Fancy and the Family: Self-Characterizations of Margaret Cavendish," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 53 (1990): 199-209.
[105] Margaret Cavendish, *Poems and Fancies* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan, Digital Library Production Service, 2005), 40.
[106] Cavendish, *Poems and Fancies*, 43.

> The resulting state of disorder stresses the abject dependence of these creatures upon her. If Cavendish's celebration of Nature's authoritarian caprice clashes with modern feminist attitudes, it would have seemed no less disturbing to many of the noblewomen of Cavendish's own time.[107]

In other words, this nature image could subjugate women, as nature and woman become synonymous with inherently destructive wills.

I assert that the majority of Cavendish's texts strive to portray a dynamic nature figure—one that displays disorder through the notion of inherent will and variety, removing gender associations. Nature takes on the role of guardian, encompassing diverse attitudes and aspects of life; *The Blazing World* explores this idea: "…by reason all parts of nature are composed in one body, and though they may be infinitely divided, commixed and changed in their particulars, yet in general, parts cannot be separated from parts as long as nature lasts."[108] In this way, nature is the chaotic womb in which all are born and all live. So, nature does not connect to the chaos due to its relation to the woman. Instead, nature is chaotic because of the dynamic movement of individual souls. Since we are all moving according to our own whims, and we are all chaotic entities ruled by a Dionysian nature, that means Cavendish is not employing 'nature as a capricious woman.' She reveals that our human nature, like all of nature, is by definition,

[107] Fletcher, "The Irregular Aesthetic of *The Blazing World*," 126-127.
[108] Cavendish, *The Blazing World*, 151.

always a disordered mixture of reason and unmediated animation (or individuality).

My position, therefore, is that Cavendish is not creating nature as woman, but rather nature as everyone—the lynchpin of her horizontal Chain of Being (all matter comes from the same source, is made of the same elements, and shares the same abilities). While I do agree that many of Cavendish's works suggest a female-nature-power component, her works often turn against themselves. In one instance, she will carve a new place for women and then, in the next work, she may place woman back in the domestic sphere. Simply stating "I want everyone to be equal" would be a very bold, unorthodox position for the time, and is one that she probably diluted with her antithetical viewpoints of women and nature. Looking at some of her subtler positions, like her views on science, a more intricate web emerges: a web that privileges nature as a deity over her creatures, encompassing them.[109] When considering her scholarship on the Royal Society and her own attempts to enter the scientific dialogue, we see her try to establish a sphere ideology based on blending genders. She would never have been allowed in the sciences if the undistilled separate sphere ideologies had persisted. This same thought is evident in *The Blazing World* when the Empress takes on the role of the scientist and subverts ascendant views of the mechanical sciences. Science

[109] This aligns with Cavendish's connection to monarchy and royalism.

allows the Empress to speak with nature, to find nature's source of truth, but only through a science based on the senses.

Cavendish advances the elimination of dualism through specific statements, such as the rejection of instrumental study, because the instrument is the key to science's power—in rejecting it, Cavendish erases the focal point of the Royal Society agenda. In *The Blazing World*, the Empress uses science in a sense-oriented way—without the aid of any mechanical devices. These ideas appear numerous times throughout the text. This Empress says "trust only to your natural eyes;"[110] and she discusses the use of the senses with her animal comrades, "to which the worm-men replied they were not blind even in the bowels of the earth."[111] This last line refers to the inability to use microscopes in the earth: unable to see things clearly, the animals' sense-based inquiry can achieve what the mechanical sciences cannot.

Other scholars suggest that Cavendish employs sense-making science because she cannot enter the empirical conversation: as a woman, she can only rely on her senses, because the doorway to learning experimentation is closed to her.[112] However, Cavendish, taught by her husband and others—like Joseph Glanville and the frequent scientific scholars who visited her home—is well

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[110] Cavendish, *The Blazing World,* 141.
[111] Cavendish, *The Blazing World,* 149.
[112] This idea is based on several biographies on Margaret Cavendish. However, the most used bibliographies are Stephen Clucas's *The Princely Brave Woman* and Anna Battigelli's *Margaret Cavendish and the Exiles of the Mind.*

versed in the primary arguments. She has no need to use those scientific methods, as her primary objective is to reveal the harms of these scientific schemata. Cavendish is not a scientist. She is exploring knowledge that does not dwell entirely in fact, but in musings. Cavendish is better considered a philosopher, and her philosophy emphasizes a new form of the female-nature ideology and a new 'nature sphere.' Whether we are looking at her musings about the formation of souls or the discussions about scientific truths in nature, the bulk of *The Blazing World* reads like the philosophical utopia that it is. These topics help humanity question its association (or disassociation) with nature. To sum up the prevailing arguments, Cavendish establishes gender integration by reinventing the Royal Society's Great Chain of Being. She gives nature a feminine rule, but asserts that all of nature is free and genderless. Her characters are genderless because all creatures possess souls and reason. She also advances an ungendered view of science.

In this way, Cavendish brings new life to the philosophical ideas addressed previously: equality in nature and the holism of the animate/ensouled and the inanimate/soulless. All of these thoughts hint at the notion that there may be individual beings in the environment, with their own special properties: just as no two men are alike, nor women, nor animals, the concepts of multiplicity and infinity based on individuality lead to holism. As the Empress says, "nature has been as bountiful to those creatures that live underground, or in the bowels of the

earth, as to those who live upon the surface of the earth, or in the air, or in the water."[113] Indeed, the one thing we all have in common is that we are all part of nature in our own ways. All of these ideals are present in Cavendish's utopian world-building, as she employs a type of feminine use of language that is both vibrant and revolutionary. Cavendish is thus able to present worlds based on new foundations that seek to undermine the mechanical sciences of the age.

Forming philosophies and reactions to the sciences is less threatening when using the fantastical images of a fictional utopia. After all, the utopia is merely a fictional account of an idea. Constructing a utopia is a plan of attack—a revelation of what a person desires, making it into a very intimate genre.[114] Considering the prevailing misogyny of science, the task of conceiving a feminist utopia was problematic at best. According to Nicole Pohl, the real difficulty lies in "what is at stake…between individual and socio-political space, between the production of space and the production of knowledge."[115] Creating a feminine space assumes that a female vision of a utopia can exist. That idea is not without controversy. This is why, particularly during the early modern period, many found Cavendish's *The Blazing World* to be as maddening as she was. Allowing the

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[113] Cavendish, *The Blazing World,* 151.
[114] Ruth Levitas, *Concept of Utopia* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse UP, 1990). This definition was taken from a summative statement made by this author.
[115] Nicole Pohl, *Women, Space, Utopia 1600-1800* (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2006), 1. This idea reflects on the notion that her land is specifically stated to exist only in the mind. She, as a woman, could not even enter the pretend utopian lands constructed by male authors.

possibility of a feminine imaginary voyage would have been mind-boggling, especially since this genre was viewed as the vehicle for philosophical notions and the classical model of geographic utopias; all of these ideas were conceived as real spaces that were not available to women. Therefore, Cavendish's journey had to be a voyage of the mind—a new female utopia.[116] The Duchess in *The Blazing World* presents the notion of the female utopia in the following lines: "she resolved to make a world of her own…composed of sensitive and rational self-moving matter…composed mostly of the rational [that] did move to the creation of the world, [appearing] so curious and full of variety."[117] These lines show how a female character establishes Cavendish's view of a utopia: the utopia is individualized, composed of all matter (hearkening back to infinite nature ideologies), and full of variety.

Moreover, Cavendish's utopia, unlike the male utopias of the time, did not uphold the trending views of science, but counterattacked. In this way, her utopia creates new worlds of insight—a much more difficult task. Utopian fiction was the only genre radical enough to let Cavendish challenge the entire social structure. Delilah Brataas believes that a "utopia holds unequaled potential for women writers, and consequently, feminist authors and theorists," because they can use the "versatile metaphor" of the utopian genre to "convey transgressive

[116] Pohl, *Women, Space, Utopia*, 10.
[117] Cavendish, *The Blazing World*, 188.

concepts."[118] Cavendish's utopia builds upon her overall philosophical themes to convey such theories. These ideas rely on the utopian literature that came before. For example, Cottegnies argues that the utopian genre, particularly the moon voyages, are a big influence on *The Blazing World,* in that they are not geographically centered, but suggest the notion of the plurality of worlds—including worlds where differences in modern thought can develop.[119] The plurality of thought depends on the imagination and the view of infinite worlds; imagination opens up possible positions in society, as the notion of infinite worlds connects back to infinite/discordant nature—multiple worlds suggests a multiplicity of thoughts by diverse creatures.

Cavendish understands that the feminine utopian world cannot survive in the prevailing order of the public and private sphere; as such, imagination and fancy allow for infinite variations of worldviews through philosophical musings. Fancy helps Cavendish to unveil truths in her *Blazing World*: "…rather actions of the rational parts of matter…requires fancy, to recreate the mind, and withdraw it from its more serious contemplations."[120] The endless possibilities of fancy lead to diversity and promote an infrastructure based on multiplicity. One such

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[118] Delilah Bermudez Brataas, "Shakespeare and Cavendish: Engendering the Early modern English Utopia," (Diss. Tufts University, 2012), 348.
[119] Line Cottegnies, "Utopia, Millenarianism, and the Baconian Programme of Margaret Cavendish's The Blazing World," in *New Worlds Reflected: Travel and Utopia in the Early modern Period* (New York: Ashgate P, 2010).
[120] Cavendish, *The Blazing World*, 123.

example of multiplicity occurs in Cavendish's views on numerous worlds. In the poem "The Infinites of Matter" (1653), Cavendish writes: "Be infinite, then more worlds may be said; Then infinities of worlds may we agree, as well, as infinites of matters be."[121] Infinite worlds confirm discordant nature: infinite possibilities exist through the willpower of infinite types of minds. This design stands in stark contrast to Baconian science that seeks to uncover and impose a strict hierarchy upon all creatures. Cavendish's world is one of discordant harmony among many creatures, and also many worlds of logic.

Cavendish plays on the standards of the male utopia, while also reinventing the genre to suit her own agenda. Like Bacon's *New Atlantis*, or Godwin's *Man in the Moone*, *The Blazing World* follows the narrative of rational thought as she discusses the truth behind science and how it can be best utilized. The narrative discussion ultimately uncovers the truth behind her science.[122] Her work also follows the trend of Descartes, as she uses examples in her writing to improve reader comprehension: Cavendish "share[s] Descartes' stylistic technique of employing anecdotal evidence in support of her theories, as well as his penchant for expressing complex ideas by way of analogies to everyday life."[123] In this way, Cavendish's utopia attempts to use standard utopian tropes,

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[121] Cavendish, *Poems and Fancies,* 28.
[122] Line Cottegnies and Nancy Weitz, *Authorial Conquests: Essays on Genre in the Writings of Margaret* Cavendish (Fairleigh Dickinson, 2003).
[123] Webster, "Margaret Cavendish's Socio-Political Interventions," 712.

but in a way that turns the discussion against the sciences: the main ideology upheld by traditional utopias of the time.

Therefore, Cavendish's land is a psychological realm: an imaginative landscape where her vision of holistic nature and role for the woman are free. Unlike the male utopias already mentioned, she takes her main character, who was captured by seaman, and frees her in a new land. She does not just visit the land as a spectator, with an aim to take knowledge back to her home world. The Empress finds a land that allows her the liberty to speak her voice and dictate orders—she does not return to her homeland again. Freedom, however, is still somewhat limited. Cavendish's Empress preaches a type of conformity among her inhabitants, centering on religion and monarchy. As Cavendish was a Royalist and admirer of Queen Elizabeth, the aristocratic influence is still dominant. Claire Jowitt contends that the "images of Elizabeth" in Cavendish's work "argues for the expansion of the English Empire" as she "yokes together images of England's glorious past under the Virgin Queen with ambitious foreign policies [and] question[s] the disenfranchisement of women in Restoration society."[124] Queen Elizabeth is a fitting exemplar for Cavendish's philosophies as she exhibits the qualities of a genderless ruler. While Cavendish may not include a male counterpart in her story to highlight the blending of the genders, having a female

[124] Claire Jowitt, "Imperial dreams? Margaret Cavendish and the cult of Elizabeth," *Women's Writing: The Elizabethan to Victorian Period* 4 (2007), 391.

character take on the role of the male is enough evidence to reinforce Cavendish's main argument: that gender roles are malleable. In figure 2.1, the male utopias of the time present Cavendish with an easy platform to counter. Using the tenets of the genre, as they closely align with scientific philosophies, she creates a new view of science through a female utopian genre.

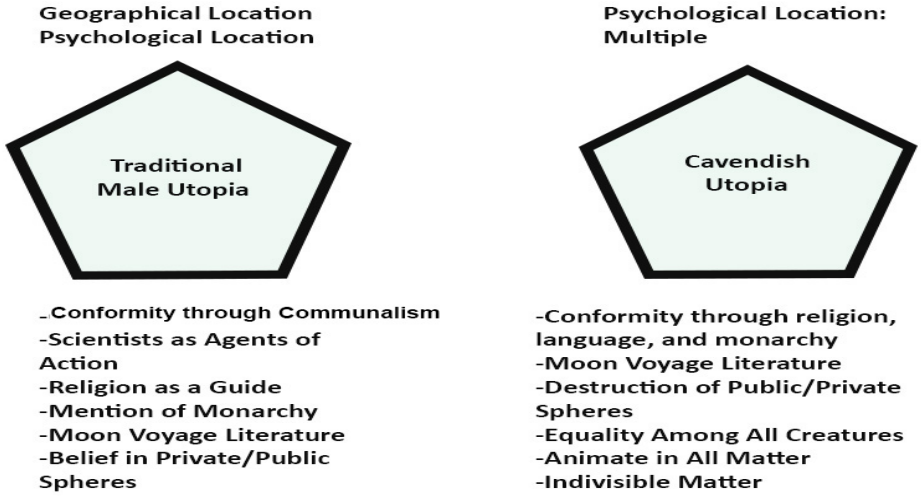

Figure 2.1 Differences in an Ecofeminist Utopia

Her new view of science fits into the larger context of her utopian framework, as it also reflects in her writing style—a mixture of plain prose and fantastical wordplay that reinforces the image of dissonant, chaotic nature moving harmoniously.

The writing style Cavendish employs is a concern for many authors, since she stresses clarity in language but often veers into imaginative exposition. At times, Cavendish preaches plain style—the style endorsed by the Royal Society—a language of simplicity. At other times, Cavendish's writing style is chaotic, which many believe suggests that the feminine figure of nature is present, reflecting back to those scholars who believe Cavendish stresses a woman-nature connection. Lara Dodds aligns Cavendish's bad writing to the constant images of the bawd and housewife as "they signify excessively and promiscuously a wide range of different, sometimes wildy inappropriate registers."[125]As such, Dodds shows these ideas associating with the complexity of the female figure, the domestic goddess and sexual depravity. All of these thoughts align with the actual construction of *The Blazing World:* "the first part whereof is romantical, the second philosophical, and the third is mere fancy."[126] The multiplicity of genres, with different writing styles, does not mean that Cavendish employs a nature as a chaos figure; a thought Angus Fletcher asserts: "chaotic writing, fanciful writing, all represent the view of female nature that is full of energy, change and chaos."[127] As such, her chaotic writing resembles the persona of wily, womanly nature. I believe there is more method behind this seeming madness as she uses both

[125] Lara Dodds, "Bawds and Housewives: Margaret Cavendish and the Work of 'Bad Writing,'" *Early Modern Studies Journal*, 2015, 34.
[126] Cavendish, *The Blazing World*, 123.
[127] Angus Fletcher, "The Irregular Aesthetic of The Blazing World," *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 2007, 52

austere and embellished writing methods to show variety and diversity, both qualities inherent in her nature sphere.

The Blazing World is an example of this argument, especially as this utopia connects to her *Experiment on Philosophy*, the scientific treatise accompanying it. The mixture of fanciful style in *The Blazing World* with the plain style of *Experiment on Philosophy* manifests the duality of nature. Her writing style is a kaleidoscope of many different parts, chaotic as they are, all shifting collectively toward a thematic goal through the context of genre reformation. As Nicole Pohl writes: "*The Blazing World* itself is a curious generic mix of travel narrative, celestial utopia and fairy tale, interspersed with a long section on 17th century natural philosophy and finally, a Royalist utopia."[128] What these royalist utopias suggest is that there can be a creation of perfect monarchy, which also shows a critical connection to traditional utopias that stress communality and the suspicions of "human weakness."[129] Thereby, Cavendish's royalist associations, mixed with her entire view of the blending of genres and the creation of a non-hierarchical chain of being, adds to the eccentricity of her works.

Trying to make sense of Cavendish's non-hierarchical chain and her royalist agendas, especially seen in her Elizabethen figures, finds a resolution in

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[128] Pohl, *Women, Space, Utopia 1600-1800*, 36.
[129] J.C. Davis, *Utopia and the Ideal Society: A Study of English Utopian Writing 1516-1700* (Cambridge UP, 1981), 279.

her writing style. While her works assert multiplicity and diversity, they do so through the concept of maintaining balance. Her various political views, such as her use of Hobbes and royalism, advance differing conversations, but these discussions give a more rounded ideology. For example, there are many contradictory political ideals in her *World's Olio*, but these contradictions foster richer conversations. These political debates create a "need for stability and peace" as they also associate with "nature's opposing forces," forces that are not inherently at "war with each other."[130]As Cavendish's writing reveals a type of chaos between fancy and plain languages, and as her view of nature takes on many discordant parts, they resolve themselves through a notion of acceptance. Individualism and inherent free will speak to her political views—views that were more than likley fostered through the Restoration. Since she was exiled for her beliefs for a good portion of her life and then allowed to return, finding and maintaining peace between discordant views seems like a good political tactic. These views do not negate her loyalty to the crown, but emphasize her acceptance of individuality.

While scholars like Fitzmaurice suggest that these wavering tendencies between writing styles merely prove she was a 'harmless eccentric,' I argue the style could present more, as her blend of plain and imaginative writing "is not a

[130] Deborah Boyle, "Fame, Virtue and Government: Margaret Cavendish on Ethics and Politics," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 67.2 (2006), 254.

result of wild and untamed wit, but rather a hermaphroditic text."[131] Wearing men's clothes, reinventing the spheres of the universe, connecting all things to one another in nature, and using writing that is imaginative at one point and rational and direct at the other all express her philosophy: the discord of nature based on individuality will ultimately lead to harmony.

The ideals of harmony and balance also occur in Cavendish's view of the animal in *The Blazing World*, harkening back to the interconnection of animals and humans as rational beings and informing her overall plan to battle the Royal Society's divisive philosophies. Each animal, human, and plant has its own sense of individuality. This individuality relies on atomism: the science of discordant parts, the science of fragmentation and oppositional movement that presents an order with many moving active forces, all vying for spaces to inhabit. In essence, one could think of multiple balls rolling on a field, each moving of its own accord, coming into contact, changing courses, moving by free will. The reason why the same object can symbolize differing creatures is that, for Cavendish, all creatures in the environment are essentially the same. This idea is most apparent when the Empress discusses amphibious animals in *The Blazing World*: "…that as they were different sorts of creatures, so they had also different ways of respirations; for respiration, said they, was nothing else but a composition and

[131] Stephen Clucas, *A Princely Brave Woman: Essays on Margaret Cavendish Duchess of Newcastle* (New York: Ashgate, 2003), 55.

division of parts, and the motions of nature being infinitely various should have the like motions."[132] The commonality that binds all living beings is the concept that all beings link to nature, and all creatures are made up of both inanimate and animate matter.

Cavendish's concept of free will and inherent motion relies on Descartes's views of primary forces and dualism of thought. As Cartesian dualism argues for a difference between animate (human) and inanimate (animal) beings, Descartes also claims that motion is a determining factor between the two. Animate beings, creatures with a soul, have inherent motion. Cavendish recognizes the import of the theory as this philosophy enforces the strict hierarchy of nature. As Jacqueline Broad states, "during this time, no English intellectual escaped the influence of Descartes' writings, and recent scholarship has shown that women philosophers were no exception."[133] What Broad is hinting at here, in including women, is that this view of dualism—while inherent in our culture today—was a revolutionary idea and one that was not palatable to many women of Cavendish's era. The "fortunes" of seventeenth-century women were never the same.[134] Cavendish opposes inherent motion with the concept of Atomism—an idea that counters the mechanical sciences. In atomism, the idea of coexisting animate and inanimate

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[132] Cavendish, *The Blazing World*, 153.
[133] Jacqueline Broad, *Women Philosophers of the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge University Press: 2002), 4.
[134] Broad, *Women Philosophers*, 3.

matter is possible. Animate and inanimate distinctions are important in this discussion because Descartes maintains that animals are made of inanimate, soulless matter, while humans are made of animate, soulful matter. Broad states that it is the "establishment of atomism in England which has been largely overlooked," especially as Cavendish imagines how the world consists of atoms—that all of life is made of atoms—and that all the changes that occur in nature stem from the motion of differently shaped atoms.[135] In Cavendish's first published work, *Poems and Fancies*, she addresses this idea directly:

> And if consisting Matter of the same (be right,)
> Then every Atome must weigh just alike.
> Thus Quantity, Quality and Weight, all
> Together meets in every Atome small.[136]

These views exist in her earliest poems, as Cavendish championed atomism in the beginning of her writing career. Her early adoption of this perspective gives her a strong foundation to oppose the Royal Society's paradigm.

The big question to ask is: If the motion of life is an innate thing, then how is this ideology a part of a feminist or ecofeminist agenda? Inherent motion corresponds to Cavendish's belief that motion is not just innate, but caused by will power; the worm-men reveal this idea in *The Blazing World*: "…by reason nature is eternal and infinite, and her particulars are subject to infinite changes

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[135] Broad, *Women Philosophers*, 42.
[136] Cavendish, *Poems and Fancies*, 38.

and transmutations by virtue of their own corporeal, figurative self-motions."[137] Motion is not a force from the outside, but a force from within. Yaakovi Mascetti believes that the "philosophical fancies of Margaret Cavendish were conceived as the feminine response, where truth was attained via subjective non-empirical observation and where the sole, true motivating element of motion and life was not force, but inherent will."[138] Cavendish, therefore, gives every being free will, as creatures move according to their own plan: chaotic nature and free will align in this viewpoint.

This free will manifests in humans and animals alike, because humans and animals consist of animate matter. Karen Destlefsen believes that this particular characteristic of free will provides a sense and reason that has a certain amount of "self-awareness" when it acts, but its reaction to "any causal influence outside itself" cannot be determined.[139] This kind of individualism stresses the importance of a nature that also has liberty and free will, a thought reinforced by other scholars, including Diane Barnes who posits that, for Cavendish, all within nature

[137] Cavendish, *The Blazing World*, 153.
[138] Yaakovi Mascetti, "A World of Nothing but Pure Wit: Margaret Cavendish and the Gendering of the Imaginary," *Partial Answers: Journal of Literature and the History of Ideas* 6 (2008), 22.
[139] Karen Detlefsen, "Atomism, Monism, and Causation in the Natural Philosophy of Margaret Cavendish," *Oxford Studies in Early Modern Philosophy* 3 (2006), 427.

has liberty and free will.[140] Free will and motion do not suggest that all beings move to some pre-determined decision. Rationality and reasoning in animate matter do not suggest free-willed motion as a rational movement, for "Cavendish conceived of nature as encompassing the entire created world and all the operations of natural things."[141]The sphere of nature is not like the sphere of God, who is often referenced as the clock-maker, leaving the earth to its own devices. In fact, nature could be imagined as what was left in God's stead as nature becomes, for Cavendish, a "self-moving, and consequently a self-living and self-knowing infinite."[142] Cavendish's persona of nature reflects this ideology as she plays the role of guide and caretaker for all creatures living within her—a place where all creatures are equal.

The Blazing World envisions Cavendish's atomistic idea as she presents a land where all are equal and treat each other as such: "as for the ordinary sort of men in that part of the world where the Emperor resided, they were of several complexions; not white, black, tawny; but some appeared of an azure, some of a deep purple"[143] This diversity emphasizes equality, especially as Cavendish

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[140] Diane Barnes, "Familiar Epistolary Philosophy: Margaret Cavendish's Philosophical Letters," *Parergon* 26 (2009), 61.
[141] Stephen Clucas, *A Princely Brave Woman: Essays on Margaret Cavendish Duchess of Newcastle* (New York: Ashgate, 2003), 190.
[142] Eve Keller, "Producing Petty Gods: Margaret Cavendish's Critique of Experimental Science," *Critical Essays on Women Writers in England, 1550-1700* (Surrey, UK; Burlington, VT, 2009), 451.
[143] Cavendish, *The Blazing World*, 133.

includes humans of different colors harmoniously working together. She also establishes diversity by employing half-animal creatures to make scientific inquiries. The analogue in male utopias—where the visitor asks the natives about what forms the values in their world—typically focuses on the discussions between a colonizer/visitor and the residents, usually men. In *The Blazing World,* these conversations transpire between the Empress and animals. In fact, the Empress is "interested in and observes the different sorts of creatures on her new land."[144] Cavendish directly asserts this significance through the Empress when she says that "each followed such a profession as was most proper for the nature of their species."[145] This line explains how each creature on the earth has individual gifts. Humans have certain ways to perceive ideas, but so do animals: "How we perceive the world depends on our rationale and senses. For humans it's how we perceive the world with our five senses, but for other creatures it may not be the same."[146] This counters Descartes's notion that animals have no consciousness, since they have no ability to convey thought through language.

Cavendish asserts that language is not the only category for intelligence, an idea that reflects on how an animal can perceive the world more clearly than a

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[144] Anna Battigelli, *Margaret Cavendish and the Exiles of the Mind* (UP of Kentucky, 1998), 94.
[145] Cavendish, *The Blazing World*, 134.
[146] Detlefsen, "Atomism, Monism, and Causation," 205.

human counterpart.[147] Karen Destelfsen presents this idea best when she states that, for Cavendish, "when looking at an animal they perceive the world as to what is natural for them, such as a flying animal would perceive the world through it's flying sense…they serve the normal behavioral ends of the natural kind to which they belong."[148] The utopian genre enhances Cavendish's ideas about animal intelligence through the genre's ability to present fantastical imaginings of hybrid animals that can speak their minds and prove their intellect. Many of these thoughts can only exist in utopias or liminal places: the space right before an actual occurrence can happen. Utopias are an in-between stage, often "at a threshold."[149] For many, including Marina Leslie, Cavendish's *The Blazing World* represents such a liminal space.

The utopia displays a woman ruling a 'traditional paradise' alongside humanized beasts, purple citizens, and gentle satyrs, as they promote spiritual and intellectual pursuits rather than material; Cavendish's world is metaphorically and literally an upside-down, reversed land.[150] In this reversed land she can be a female ruler, versus traditional male rule, and can reorder the world such that all the creatures on the land are equal. The fantastical recounting, whether

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[147] Broad, *Women Philosophers of the Seventeenth Century*, 51.
[148] Detlefsen, "Atomism, Monism, and Causation," 227.
[149] Marina Leslie, *Renaissance Utopias and the Problem of History* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell UP, 1999), 6-7.
[150] This idea reflects on the actual map of *The Blazing World* as it hinges to the real world. The world is an antithetical counterpart.

metaphorical or not, hints at her overall goal of interrelatedness in nature and the hope for a new future. Through the notion of mixed natures, or fluidity through hybridity, readers become "an intrinsic part of such moments of multiplicity."[151] Readers become active agents in the process of reading Cavendish's works. Collectively, we can experience the emotion of this type of discordance and, in a small way, comprehend how chaos works within the nature sphere. In other words, differences do not cause confusion—they form the world around us. This multiplicity is not invoking any mental/rational disturbance, but points to the hermaphroditic tendencies connected to Cavendish's larger ideologies about nature and our place within it.

The previous concepts concentrate specifically on how Cavendish is trying to reconstruct early modern views about nature, but to comprehend this reformation I must argue that Cavendish is also redefining the role of God in the world. As the Royal Society uses religion to construct a vision of nature, so Cavendish changes the role of God in society to advocate harmony with nature. Karen Detlefsen and Stephen Clucas debate whether Cavendish's works were atheistic, since she never explicitly includes the concept of religion in the name of science. As Detlefsen acknowledges:

> This skepticism with respect to God's nature is a skepticism merely with respect to what our reason is capable of ascertaining.

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[151] Elizabeth Spiller, *Science, Reading and Renaissance Literature: The Art of Making Knowledge, 1580-1670* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004), 175.

> Cavendish does not deny that faith can lead us to certain beliefs about God's nature. It is simply the case that faith, and beliefs derived from faith, belong to theology, a sphere of inquiry distinct from natural philosophy which is governed solely by our faculty of reason.[152]

This statement advances the notion of the duality of the nature and God spheres—a concept Stephen Clucas reprises. Clucas simply writes that, for Cavendish, "God is an eternal creator, Nature his eternal creature."[153] Destlefsen furthers this thought, since "nature is supposed to be separate from God in that nature is a material, moving, temporal thing, whereas God is an unmoving, unchanging rational being."[154] As Cavendish keeps the God realm completely separate from nature because the Royal Society's view of God within nature generates the harsh binaries between people, mainly the genders, as well as man's connection to nature itself (see figure 2.2).

[152] Detlefsen, "Atomism, Monism, and Causation," 421
[153] Stephen Clucas, *A Princely Brave Woman: Essays on Margaret Cavendish Duchess of Newcastle* (New York: Ashgate, 2003), 190.
[154] Detlefsen, "Atomism, Monism, and Causation," 431.

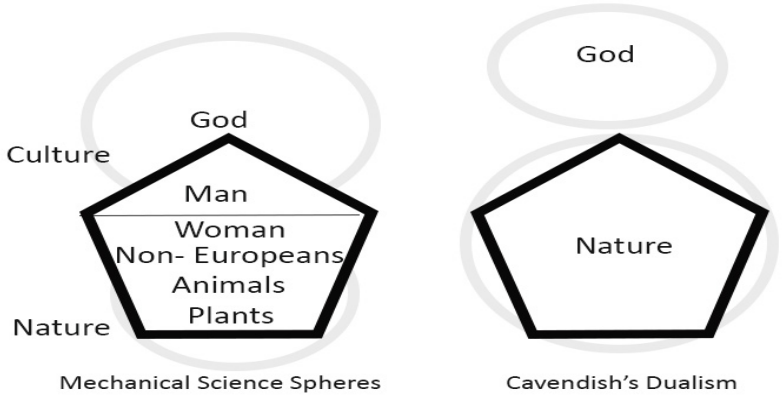

Figure 2.2 The Differing Constructions of the Spheres

For the Royal Society, God creates nature and leaves a "stamp" on it—a rationale for the use of mechanical instruments on nature. This essence, according to Cavendish, does not mean we can excavate God's secrets. Knowing that we are fashioned in an ethereal realm does not mean that anything manmade can reveal secrets that are outside our sphere of knowing.[155] The spirits in *The Blazing World* discuss this separation when they state: "God is the perfection of all things, and an expressible Being, beyond the conception of any creature, either natural or supernatural."[156] Cavendish's philosophy, therefore, separates the nature and God spheres entirely. Even though nature and God no longer interact, that does not

[155] Detlefsen, "Atomism, Monism, and Causation," 431.
[156] Cavendish, *The Blazing World*, 168.

imply that Cavendish is an atheist. For Cavendish, "God is not in [nature's] system" as she "reeinvisions the creation with nature as its creator rather than God…the only thing to know about God is that he is not at all like us."[157] Line Cottegnies also advances this thought as she applies it to *The Blazing World*: "Religion in *The Blazing World* is clearly not a question of faith, but is reduced to two very Manichean secular ideas, love of virtue and hatred of sin."[158] My argument consolidates these propositions by Battigelli, Cottegnies, Destlefson and Clucas, while adding to the conversation by providing more analysis of the scientific agendas of the time. While many scholars use lines from Cavendish's works to assert the feminist viewpoint, including the separate spheres of nature and God, the scholarship often starts and ends there. I argue that the separation must exist alongside atomist science. Cavendish's views on inherent motion and her view of discordant nature all help her to conquer dualism. The separation of the God and nature spheres allows for a broad understanding of her atomistic belief and her scientific arguments as they relate to the economy.

Cavendish employs the atomism debate to demonstrate the connection between the genders and the species as a metaphor for inherent will. Battigelli presents this notion when she writes the following, "Cavendish used atomism

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[157] Anna Battigelli, *Margaret Cavendish and the Exiles of the Mind* (UP of Kentucky, 1998), 55.
[158] Line Cottegnies, "Utopia, Millenarianism, and the Baconian Programme of Margaret Cavendish's *The Blazing World*," in *New Worlds Reflected: Travel and Utopia in the Early Modern Period* (New York: Ashgate P, 2010), 42.

[for] political uncertainties during the civil war. She [saw] the political world as an atomistic system."[159] Political clashing adds a new dimension to Cavendish's theory, as her worlds counter the view of colonialism, a form of subjugation and a continuation of dualism, by forging psychological worlds. For Cavendish, the best way to know the sphere of nature is through a space that the mind builds—spaces anyone can form. Cavendish's utopia allows for a new type of colonization: the colonization of imagined spaces of the mind. Battigelli writes that, "*The Blazing World* is a new world, like Columbus's, but it was not found—it was made. It does not focus on maps and measures or experimental philosophers, but the spaces the mind creates."[160] The psychological mindscape of the utopia is an early ecofeminist strategy that reveals individual inherent will in Cavendish's *The Blazing World*.

Cavendish maps worlds within a world, a mind within the sphere of nature. Cavendish's ideologies could not be realized in the seventeenth century, but there is no reason why her beliefs could not exist within a fantasy. In *The Blazing World,* Cavendish writes: "If I do make such a world, then I shall be mistress of two worlds, one within, and the other without…so left these two ladies to create two worlds within themselves: who did also part from each other,

[159] Battigelli, *The Exiles of the Mind,* 57.
[160] Battigelli, *The Exiles of the Mind*, 60.

until…they had brought their worlds to perfection."[161] Cavendish obliterates separate sphere ideologies and gender fractures by giving powers of discovery to both men and women; both genders can create new worlds of power in the mind. Holism thus occurs through the process of psychological land building.

Cavendish also follows the standard trope of a utopia in that she preaches conformity. Conformity is a topic found in many of the male utopias, which echo communal tendencies, as does More's *Utopia*. As the Empress states: "For there was but one language in all that world, nor no more but one Emperor, to whom they all submitted with the greatest duty and obedience, which made them live in continued peace and happiness."[162] Not only are language and monarchy the same for all, so is religion: "…but one religion in all that world, nor no diversity of opinion in that same religion."[163] The big difference, however, is that this utopia demonstrates that female rulers are just as valuable as male rulers. Additionally, this feminist utopia can imagine a perfect way of life without marriage. Even though the Empress marries the emperor, he is never mentioned in the text after their marriage. In fact, he allows her to take over the rule of the kingdom—a complete destruction of the private sphere.

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[161] Cavendish, *The Blazing World,* 186.
[162] Cavendish, *The Blazing World,* 130.
[163] Cavendish, *The Blazing World,* 135.

In summary, Cavendish goes against the prevailing views of colonization: the scientific thought of domination over things.[164] Cavendish wants to create leaders who will be loved: "…conquerors seldom enjoy their conquests, for they being more feared than loved, most commonly come to an untimely end."[165] Her views assert individuality in nature with all the innate/different moving parts. Cavendish's utopia, therefore, uses certain conventions to advance her ideas, but she also must establish her own precedents. These precedents remove the traditional boundaries between humans and animals, reframe the notion of economy and religion, and revalue the notion of colonization. In the end, all things can exist within these spheres of influence on equal footing: society can obliterate the spheres and tear down the Royal Society's Great Chain of Being.

The last section of this chapter will help to sum up some major concepts related to Cavendish's philosophy and discuss how this chapter fits into the larger argument about the human-nature binary. The first topic deals with the spheres and the environment. As I noted earlier, Cavendish reimagines the notion of animate matter—all things in nature have animation and should not be seen as passive victims—and disputes the creation of the spheres in her writings. Thomas Hobbes was a huge influence on Cavendish's views on power constructs. As Broad asserts, "Cavendish's arguments against dualism are partly indebted to the

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[164] Jo Wallwork, "Old Worlds and New: Margaret Cavendish's Response to Robert Hooke's Micrographia," *Women Writing in 1550-1750* 18 (2001), 195.
[165] Cavendish, *The Blazing World*, 185.

natural philosophy of Thomas Hobbes—especially his arguments against the conceivability of incorporeal or immaterial substances."[166] Incorporeal matter and inherent free will, in the political sense, lead to Cavendish's removal of gender binaries. While free will exists in the public sphere, it cannot be exercised in the private sphere. Cavendish's answer to this construction lies in what I have termed "Cavendish's dualism." In Cavendish's dualism there are two spheres: that of nature and that of God. In the mechanical sciences, there is the public sphere of rationality, the sphere closest to the ethereal realm, and the nature sphere, the locus of chaotic emotionalism. Within Cavendish's Nature sphere there are all living things—animals, humans, and plant life—the God sphere is for God alone. By establishing this form of dualism, Cavendish rejects Hobbesian mechanism, while taking up his views on immaterial substance. These new spheres also contradict Descartes, as he conceives that only mankind has a rational mind.

In Cavendish's dualism, all things in nature possess rational minds. Therefore, Cavendish demonstrates that there are "material and supernatural realms: one nature and the other God."[167] What she does with these new spheres is critical, since she is combatting the idea that humans can unearth God's secrets in nature. The logic follows thus: God creates nature; nature is a part of God, but not God itself; and nature is made up of all living creatures also assimilated by

[166] Broad, *Women Philosophers of the Seventeenth Century*, 46.
[167] Barnes, "Familiar Epistolary Philosophy," 48.

God. Therefore, theology can lead to the truth of God, but scientific philosophy cannot. Science can merely understand what the rational senses can comprehend and not matters of faith; therefore, the sphere of nature is philosophy, whereas the sphere of God is theology—they cannot intermingle. I argue that Cavendish overturns existing sphere dogma with a new construction. I also argue that these spheres emphatically align with the project of overturning Cartesian dualism through the idea of universal active matter—a dualism also found in later feminist utopian writers.

Building on the conversation about the spheres and exploitation, a more focused discussion can occur about very specific strategies the Royal Society employs—specifically, this approach relies on the use of instruments to rape and plunder earth for God's secrets. Mechanical instruments strip power away from a passive nature as scientists attempt to heighten their senses.[168] Cavendish's *The Blazing World* questions the legitimacy of instruments. This work contains several quotes where the Empress speaks out against the oppression caused by these devices: "the Empress began to grow angry at their telescopes, that they could give no better intelligence; for, said she, now I do plainly perceive, that your glasses are false informers."[169] Later, the Empress states that microscopes are also worthless because they cannot solve problems. She wonders what

[168] Mascetti, "A World of Nothing but Pure Wit," para. 1.
[169] Cavendish, *The Blazing World,* 141.

"virtue" instruments contribute by examining the subdivisions of a flea; will that knowledge prevent them from biting?[170]

Since instruments are exacting devices deployed against a passive nature, Cavendish questions their effectiveness: the inability to cause change through observation is her first critique; her second refers to the impossibility of discovering God's secrets in nature. As the Empress states, microscopes and telescopes "delude the senses."[171] For Cavendish, looking intensely into an object yields no real accuracy or meaning for that object—it only distorts the object of study. As Evelyn Keller suggests, "Cavendish's critique of the microscope blurred the epistemological boundaries claiming to distinguish fact from fiction, discovery from creation, truth from fancy."[172] Using these instruments asserts a mastery over nature, as well. Jo Wallwork states that instruments, like those used by Hooke, proclaim a type of possession over the specimen that is being observed.[173] In this way, the mechanical devices represent a "masculine self-promotion rather than truth finding."[174] The only problem with this type of analysis is that the argument still stays on the surface of Cavendish's overall

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[170] Cavendish, *The Blazing World,* 143.
[171] Cavendish, *The Blazing World,* 143.
[172] Keller, "Producing Petty Gods," 455.
[173] Jo Wallwork, "Old Worlds and New: Margaret Cavendish's Response to Robert Hooke's Micrographia," *Women Writing in 1550-1750* 18 (2001), 193.
[174] Eve Keller, "Producing Petty Gods: Margaret Cavendish's Critique of Experimental Science," *Critical Essays on Women Writers in England, 1550-1700,* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009), 98.

agenda: to reunite all creatures within nature. Most of the scholars who apply the 'science as evil' trope foster the following opinion about Cavendish: her work advances woman/nature assimilation simply through turning negative associations into positive ones. For example, Mascetti announces that the only thing capable of knowing truth is the mind, or the "Rational Soul," which shifts the emphasis away from male knowledge to female perspective.[175] In other words, women know more about nature, since they are in the nature sphere. I believe Cavendish is more concerned with nullifying the nature sphere altogether. Reason and emotion connect as the superiority of the masculine spheres dissipates. As seen in figure 2.3, Cavendish's dualism seeks to destroy the predominant mechanical scientific view of the world. By going against the theory that woman is closer to Nature, two important ideologies lessen: first, woman is not closer to nature and, thereby, some distinct species from man; and second, man no longer is separate from nature and his environment.

[175] Mascetti, "A World of Nothing but Pure Wit," para. 3.

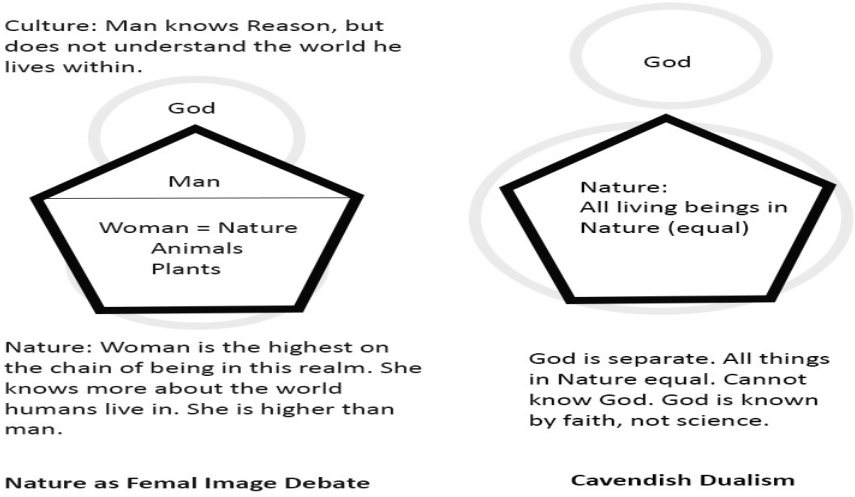

Figure 2.3 Cavendish's Female-as-Nature Debate

Cavendish designs the 'variety in nature sphere' not merely to create a better persona of the female, but as a way to show that nature, through variety, is untraceable: "She knew that nature's works are so various and wonderful, that no particular creature is able to trace her ways."[176] However, combining all creatures into the Nature sphere takes skill, as this viewpoint contradicts the norms of the time. She combats these ideas through atomism.

Within atomism, animate and inanimate matter clash and depend upon one another. Cavendish claims that this interdependence of the animate and inanimate is "so intermixed that one cannot exist without the other. All is one living

[176] Cavendish, *The Blazing World*, 157.

entity."[177]Atomism establishes the notion of variety in nature as objects contain both animate and inanimate material. The containment of both immaterial and material extends the debate into an argument about the indivisibility of thoroughly mixed matter. Cavendish adopts this idea in response to Sir Thomas More's thought on the spirit:

> Recognizing this weakness, Cavendish targets More's idea that the soul can be both extended and indivisible. In her opinion, there is nothing in nature that is indivisible, for every substance 'hath extension, and all extension hath parts, and what has parts, is divisible'. To show this, Cavendish dissects More's concept of how it could be possible for one indivisible spirit to be in so many dividable parts throughout nature.[178]

By creating indivisible matter and thoroughly mixed material, Cavendish designs a macrocosm that is animate. The term inanimate can thus be disregarded. For, if all things are indeterminately animate in their essence, then nothing in nature is purely inanimate—all things are related and active. Therefore, atomism posits an interrelation between all parts, as all living beings consist of similar components. In Cavendish's world we are all made of the mixtures of nature: as the saying goes, we are all made of stardust

Furthermore, Cavendish's interaction with More's theory on the indivisibility of the spirits substantiates her vision about the soul and body being

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[177] Lisa Walters, "Gender Subversion in the Science of Margaret Cavendish," *Critical Essays on Women Writers in England, 1550-1700* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009), 73.
[178] Broad, *Women Philosophers of the Seventeenth Century*, 59.

one and the same. The body and soul are "made from the same matter, which is infinite throughout the universe in bulk and quantity" and as such all creatures contain a mixture of "[animate, inanimate, and motion]…with no part of Nature that hath not life and knowledge."[179] If the entire world has a mixture of animate and inanimate, then all beings have a soul, and the whole of nature has a soul. This outlook delegitimizes the Royal Society's agenda regarding soulless matter. Broad sums this thought up best when she discusses Cavendish's refusal of More's and Hobbes's thoughts: "Cavendish explicitly rejects Hobbes's mechanistic conception of nature, [defending] the view that animals have the capacity for sense and reason" as she also "takes More's method to its logical extreme, to develop a full-bodied monist theory in which the entire natural world…is material and extended."[180] Cavendish, therefore, asserts that all beings relate and are indivisible. If we are all in the same plane of being, indivisible from each other, we are all the same. Animals have souls, men and women are on an equal footing, and nature encompasses us all. All of these concepts rely on the movement of atoms in each creature.

For Cavendish, atoms can move because of an innate energy, and since all things consist of both animate and inanimate matter, all things have innate motion. Nothing in life can be passive—neither the mind nor the body. In this

[179] Broad, *Women Philosophers of the Seventeenth Century*, 44.
[180] Broad, *Women Philosophers of the Seventeenth Century*, 36.

way, nature conveys the idea of dualism through the idea of motion: "atoms must be 'of a living substance, that is innate matter, otherwise they could not move.'"[181] With this analysis, Cavendish addresses the soul/mind/body debate. The soul is not the only active agent, as the body is also active; the soul and body comingle. This thought is in opposition to More's idea that matter, being inactive, is penetrable whereas the spirit, being active, is indivisible with the "essence of the soul being thought."[182] Souls and indivisible matter manifest in *The Blazing World*, as the Empress discusses material and immaterial spirits: "that those spirits were always clothed in some sort or other of material garments."[183] From a metaphorical standpoint, these souls have clothes because they represent the material and immaterial, the animate and the inanimate.

In *The Blazing World*, matter is the cause of motion in spirits, as they "repeatedly insist that motion is not caused by the spirit that imparts motion to matter, but matter is the cause of motion."[184] Cavendish's atomistic poetry conveys the same image: "the concern of motion in her poems…harmony as connected to the harmonious movements of atoms, when they stop they die."[185] Moreover, this matter is perceptive, as Elizabeth Spiller suggests: "rather than

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[181] Broad, *Women Philosophers of the Seventeenth Century*, 43.
[182] Broad, *Women Philosophers of the Seventeenth Century*, 57.
[183] Cavendish, *The Blazing World,* 165.
[184] Clucas, *A Princely Brave Woman,* 193.
[185] Hande Sudan, "Where Science Meets With Fancy: The Atomic Poems of Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle," *Hacettepe Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 22 (2005), 187-202.

seeing motion and perception as always coming from the outside, Cavendish argues that matter is within itself both self-moving and perceptive."[186] The notion of self-moving matter goes against More's conception of immaterial matter, since he stated that matter could only move by the spirit. The matter of the body cannot think; the body does not have rational senses. For Cavendish, "it is only because matter is rational that thought is possible."[187] All beings are capable of reason, because all beings contain animate matter. To design rational, thinking souls in *The Blazing World,* Cavendish allows them to talk. In essence, the Empress has discussions with the spirits in bodily form, as they have the ability for self-motion and material substance.[188]

Thus, Cavendish uses *The Blazing World* to suggest animation through the spirits, especially regarding the combination of the immaterial and material, of the soul and body, and the notion of the innate motion of every living being on earth. This concept extends into the mind/body, inanimate/animate debate that has justified experimentation on animals. Many of the scientific experiments of the era relied on the idea that animals, having no human-like mind, could feel no pain—they are not enough like us to have a soul. As seen in figure 2.4, the co-mixture of animate and inanimate cannot completely counter this mind-body

[186] Spiller, *Science, Reading and Renaissance Literature*, 148.
[187] Clucas, *A Princely Brave Woman*, 188.
[188] Clucas, *A Princely Brave Woman*, 188.

debate, however. Animate and inanimate mixtures do not fully account for the rationality of beings.

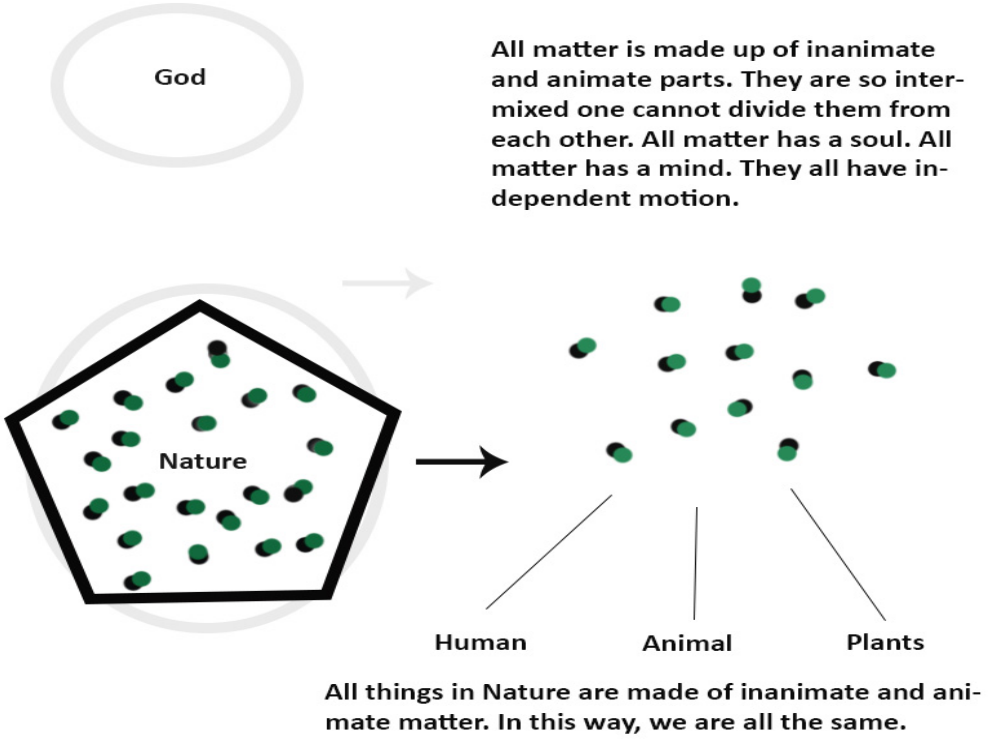

Figure 2.4 Animate and Inanimate Matter

Accordingly, Cavendish develops her philosophy one step further by "conceiving of the interaction between rational and sensitive matter as a 'society' of mind and body in which the body is able to 'contemplate' alongside the mind."[189] In this way, the body and mind interrelate as the inanimate and animate correspond—all things connect, the soul is not distinct from the body, and, therefore, dualism is

[189] Erin Webster, "Margaret Cavendish's Socio-Political Interventions into Descartes' Philosophy," *English Studies* 92 (2011), 714.

removed. Cavendish supports this theory by stating that if the mind were separate from the body, it would make for an inadequate living being. Cavendish argues for holism in nature by first identifying the root cause of anti-feminism: Woman as the figure of nature (a chaotic being that must be controlled). Second, Cavendish advocates for a new philosophy to change gender division through an altered spherical outlook. Third, animism in inanimate matter ensues in order to ensure the logic of the nature/God spheres. Fourth, she envisions nature as a separate entity that guides all living beings—the key way to separate women from the nature symbolism. Fifth, she takes these concepts and inserts them into *The Blazing World*. The utopia is her manifesto and the catalyst for change. Finally, she invents a writing style that compliments her belief in tranquility through dissonance.

Overall, Cavendish responds to the revolutionary changes in her age with thoughtful contemplation and appropriate reflections on humanity's place in the environment. She alters the historical viewpoint on dualism by gender blurring, finding a new female voice for science, discovering a connection between humanity and the animal, and countering all the other spheres of influence that go against her vision of a genderless world. In this way, she strives to provide a counterpoint to the challenges and threats posed by the Royal Society's position. The modern reader will recognize that it was the Society's view of science that carried the day, leaving Cavendish's framework on the margins. However, her

philosophy of holism, while perhaps unable to thwart mechanical science, remains an important source of inspiration. Cavendish's fears about future relationships with the environment did come to pass, perpetuating similar debates found in many of today's female utopian efforts as they attempt to dissolve these binaries.

Chapter 3

Introduction to the Feminist Ecofeminist Debate in the 20th Century

> Cavendish critiques modern theories that insist on an essential demarcation between humanity and nature that devalues the rest of life into dull, stupid matter, made for man's use and pleasure. This demarcation, in turn, permits natural philosophers to dismiss any sympathetic sentiments they might have, as well as to suspend moral philosophy in their dealings with nature.
> --Sylvia Bowerbank, *Speaking For Nature*[190]

> An ecological-feminist theology of nature must rethink the whole western theological tradition of the hierarchical chain of being and chain of command. This theology must question the hierarchy of the human over the nonhuman…it must unmask the structures of social domination, male over female, owner over worker, that mediate this domination of nonhuman nature.
> --Rosemary Ruether, "Toward and Ecological-Feminist Theology of Nature"[191]

In 1666, Margaret Cavendish wrote her utopia, *The Blazing World,* discussing the importance of the human/nature relationship and providing a conversation that turns her into a proto-ecofeminist. The debates that occur in late 20th century ecopolitics echo many of the ideals that she establishes: the ethical treatment of animals, the importance of the human as part of nature, and the objection to biological difference between the man and woman. Since utopias exist in context, critiquing and reacting to societal issues as they employ techniques to overcome and better the world they are confronting, 20th century

[190] Bowerbank, *Speaking for Nature,* 70.
[191] Rosemary Radford Ruether, "Toward and Ecological-Feminist Theology of Nature" in Judith Plant's *Healing the Wounds* (Fredericksburg, VA: New Society Publishers, 1989), 145.

science fiction utopias have their own specific agendas. Over centuries of thought, these utopian plans provide 'blueprints' of certain social dreams—dreams that emerge from particular political conversations. While the concerns of the current age mimic ideologies of the early modern nature/human binaries imposed by science, the women authors of the 20th century react against a background specific to their era: a time of increased ecological hazards, escalating platforms promoting nature-human divisions, and world-ending military weaponry. These harms to the environment spurred the authors to articulate key ecofeminist principles: first, "industrial civilization" is in "opposition to nature" as it reinforces the notion that woman is akin to nature; second, "life on earth is an interconnected web, not a hierarchy," as these projections are used for "social domination;" third, the best types of environments are those that promote "a healthy, balanced ecosystem," a view of diversity that also relates to a "decentralized global movement," as common interest should be valued among all countries; and last, that the "survival of our species" depends on us "challenging the nature-culture dualism."[192] These political debates and eco-theories inform and depend on the foundations of feminist politics, and more precisely, second and third wave feminism.

[192] Ynestra King, "The Ecology of Feminism and the Feminism of Ecology," in Judith Plant's *Healing the Wounds* (Fredericksburg, VA: New Society Publishers, 1989), 145.

Unlike second wave feminism, which centered on the 1950s-60s foundation of "work structures, employment prospects, credit and wage policies, women's educational opportunities, and childcare," most ecofeminist politics examine the "dissatisfaction with capitalism, interest in enacting religious precepts, and concern for social justice for women and minorities."[193] Discussing these trends in the late 20th century substantiates the idea that feminist science fiction works focus on these debates. Just as Margaret Cavendish reacted to her political situation, so do these science fiction utopian authors—particularly, to third wave feminism's view on gender relations and nature affiliations. Nevertheless, to understand how female science fiction utopian writers use their works to combat current failings in their society, one must take into account how women in politics help to form the context: these circumstances generate goals and create the criteria for constructing better worlds through utopian visions.

Vandana Shiva, a prominent speaker on ecocritical politics, often looks at third world countries, examining colonization and globalization; she advances the idea that third world women are more connected to the environment precisely due to their ability to make use of it. Shiva's arguments not only highlight the nature/woman connection, but also move the discussion forward as she reveals how women in different economic spheres relate to their landscape. Woman and

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[193] Sally Kitch, *Higher Ground: From Utopianism to Realism in American Feminist Thought and Theory* (Chicago, IL: U of Chicago P, 2000), 7, 39.

nature no longer have a westernized view, but one that is more globally encompassing.[194] Shiva presented these ideas in the 1975 First World Conference on Women held in Mexico City—a rally focused on women in the context of the degradation and misuse of nature. Another prominent leader in this debate is Joni Seager who discusses the predominance of many environmental societies with masculinist agendas, particularly the Sierra Club and Audubon society. The professionalism and lobbying of these groups establish them as powerful campaign builders but reveal their lack of focus as they stray from more beneficial grassroots foundations.[195] Seager's works show the upward trend of both discussing woman's connection to nature, and the construction of valid forms of ecological organizations.

Even though these are singular cases in this ecofeminist debate, many environmental and women's movements of the 1970s and 1980s focus their attention on the woman-nature relationship, as well as those issues aligned to these platforms: anti-militarism and antinuclearism. Both of these topics relate to the woman/nature focus and to how the human relies on and develops alongside nature.[196] The pollution of nature, which renders it harmful, creates stunted, poisoned humans. Lois Gibbs is one such advocate, as she confronted the

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[194] Sue Rosser, *Women, Science, and Myth: Gender Beliefs from Antiquity to the Present* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2008), 384.
[195] Rosser, *Women, Science, and Myth*, 385.
[196] Also see Stacy Alaimo, *Bodily Natures*, in relation to the human-nature dependence and biological concerns.

interrelation between the environment and health in 1978. After discovering that her hometown was built upon a toxic waste dump, Gibbs stridently advocated for the human/nature connection and persuaded her local government to relocate 833 houses out of Love Canal, New York.[197]

Local stories like Gibbs's turn into more global discussions as the ecofeminist movement uses large assemblies to discuss the ecological problems that influence and harm on a global scale. During the period of the 1970s to 1990s, numerous gatherings addressed these human-nature relationships, specifically: "Women and the Environment, Berkeley, California, 1974; Women and Life on Earth, Amherst, Massachusetts, 1980; Ecofeminist Perspectives, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, 1987; and World Women's Congress for a Healthy Planet, Miami, Florida, 1991."[198] Most of these meetings center on ecological disasters like the Exxon oil spill, focusing on how these disasters cause global concerns: how one country's ecological decisions affects others. These talks generate many environmental organizations like the Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO) and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM). The upsurge of eco-political

[197] Rosemary Skinner Keller and Rosemary Radforth Ruether. *Encyclopedia of Women and Religion in North America* (Indiana University Press, 2006).
[198] Keller and Ruether, *Encyclopedia of Women and Religion in North America*, 78.

affiliations by women establishes numerous ecofeminist works as the political context inspires and influences women to write on this subject.

The diverse subject matter of ecofeminism in the political arena motivates ecofeminist theorists to discuss issues relating to the woman-nature relationship. Most works criticize masculine controls found in religion and science, including Susan Griffin's *Roaring Inside Her*, while other works attempt to cover multiple topics in the ecofeminist discussion, such as Judith Plant's *Healing the Wounds*, or Irene Diamond's *Reweaving the World*. The larger anthologies have a more encompassing range of themes, as they examine the history of the development of the woman-nature connection or assess the woman's relationship to other creatures with subjugated status. Carol Adams and Greta Gaard are two such authors who analyze the topic of the subjugated 'other' in relation to the woman, especially in association to animal rights issues. Thereby, the arguments of the ecofeminist theorist center on global concerns of the feminine, the relationship of nature and the human, and the human's development alongside other life forms.[199]

The first concept that current science fiction utopian literature combats is the notion that man and woman are separate entities, that biologically the man and woman are two different species. Sally Kitch explains that "gender difference, including various theories about the putative differences between the sexes and/or

[199] See Keller and Ruether's *Encyclopedia of Women and Religion in North America*.

about particular characteristics…associate with maleness or femaleness, masculinity and femininity."[200] These characteristics point to a certain ideal in third wave feminism: the concept of the 'other' in society, subordinate creatures in dominant, often patriarchal, systems. As Ellen Peel argues, "this focus helps account for the persuasive problem of otherness that women face in patriarchy, for dominant male focus defines woman as other, and then distributes specific traits as needed."[201]Gender traits, therefore, lessen in value as feminist utopian science fiction writers argue that the female sex and male sex are equivalents, bypassing gender characteristics associated with biology.[202]

Second, feminist utopian science fiction authors investigate the concept of nature as a symbol of oppression and domination, as nature, like woman, is dominated by systems pertaining to scientific and capitalist pursuits. As such, the hatred of women and the subordination of the natural world interconnect, highlighting one of the main tenets of the ecofeminist movement: "to oppose these negative connections, research the historical and contemporary evidence, and work to improve life for women and nature."[203] Therefore, feminist science fiction utopias no longer focus only on household concerns or the family structure

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[200] Ellen Peel, *Politics Persuasion Pragmatism: Rhetoric of Feminist Utopian Fiction* (Ohio State UP, 2002), 14
[201] Peel, *Politics Persuasion Pragmatism*, 56
[202] Peel, *Politics Persuasion Pragmatism*, 68.
[203] See Keller and Ruether's *Encyclopedia of Women and Religion in North America*.

that 1950s and 1960s female science fiction exposes, but move to a more global concern of the woman as she connects to nature. These works look at inherent structures of the binary system, especially through post-structuralist principles that reveal how power accrues through linguistic structures. Therefore, as these authors discuss woman's relationship to nature and gender construction, they also examine the use of language in these systems.

Language, an unconscious marker of power dichotomies between the man and woman, reveals gender creation to be a false system and one that can change to fit cultural needs. Power relies on knowing these falsehoods and deconstructing the very words one uses to uphold certain deleterious values. Consequently, the harms of science and the upsurge of ecofeminist activists exhibit both ecofeminist and third wave ideals, providing an avenue in which feminist science fiction writers can thrive. Jane Donawerth states that "the science fiction by women and the feminist utopias after 1960 offer critiques of the process of utopia, as much as dreams for the future."[204] These types of dreams rely on the "political demand for equality, the personal demand for autonomy and selfhood, and the deconstruction of received ideas of gender opposition."[205] The feminist science fiction utopian works defamiliarize patriarchy, allowing women to create utopias based on female-oriented propositions. The increase of female science fiction writing

[204] Donawerth, *Utopian and Science Fiction by Women,* 11.
[205] Relf, "Women in Retreat," 131.

during this era demonstrates how this political upheaval allowed for female utopian growth. Before this period, women occupied a marginal space, at best, in the science fiction utopian conversation. In fact, women's utopian works start to gain recognition as the female ecopolitical voice grows in strength, leading to numerous acknowledgments of women's original utopian visions. Two such examples are Anne McCaffrey who, in the late 1960s, was the first female science fiction writer to win both the Nebula and the Hugo award, and Ursula Le Guin who, in 1970, also won both awards for *The Left Hand of Darkness*.[206] As new utopian writers gain esteem, "older writers are being rediscovered."[207] With the expansion of feminist science fiction writers, and those who become increasingly involved in the ecofeminist movements, there is an interest in the female utopian genre and those women who attempted to answer some of the debates occurring in the latter half of the twentieth century.

Margaret Cavendish is one such author that achieved fame in these decades. Her works, lost for centuries among theorists and literary scholars, garnered gradual interest in the decades leading to the new millennium. While there are two minor works done on Cavendish in the mid-20th century—Samuel Mintz's 1952 article, "The Duchess of Newcastle's Visit to The Royal Society," and Jean Gagen's 1959 biography of her works —the majority of these studies

[206] Pamela Sargent, *The New Women of Wonder*, xvi.
[207] Pamela Sargent, *The New Women of Wonder*, xxi.

occur in the late 1970s. Works about Cavendish peaked in the 1990s with the most prominent discussions focusing on her political and ecofeminist alliances. In 1994, Jane Donawerth argues: "Cavendish's *The Blazing World* embodies the qualities that we saw emphasized in recent critics' descriptions of women's literature of estrangement, offering the freedoms for women of an alternate world."[208] Cavendish's viewpoints become more relevant as scholars are taking notice of her depiction of the human/nature and man/woman binaries.[209] The rediscovery of Cavendish and her works make her a precursor to the current debates. She was a silenced female voice that found her stride centuries later: a figurehead for a feminist movement that never developed in her own generation.

Even though this dissertation does not suggest that Cavendish's time period is synonymous with the current political agendas—as there are certain discrepancies, such as her Royalist tendencies, that do not align to current ecocritical debates—her solutions to the nature-science binaries do appear in later feminist science fiction utopias. Cavendish's philosophies aid in extending the utopian debate, showing how these utopias continue to flourish and complicate

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[208] Donawerth, *Utopian and Science Fiction by Women,* 5.
[209] See Line Cottegnies's "Utopia, Millenarianism, and the Baconian Programme of Margaret Cavendish's *The Blazing World*," Karen Destlefsen's "Atomism, Monism, and Causation in the Natural Philosophy of Margaret Cavendish," Eve Keller's "Margaret Cavendish's Critique of Experimental Science," Jennifer Munroe's and Rebecca Laroche's *Ecofeminist Approaches to Early Modernity*, Jay Stevenson's "The Mechanist-Vitalist Soul of Margaret Cavendish," and Lisa Walter's "Gender Subversion in the Science of Margaret Cavendish."

ecological solutions. I show this complexity by investigating three novels that take similar stances on overcoming gendered characteristics and the overall conception that humanity is separate from nature. Each of these works uphold political positions based on their time period—Ursula Le Guin's anarchic politics in *The Dispossessed*, the separatist policies of Pamela Sargent's *The Shore of Women*, and the postmodern critical dystopia of Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*. Each of these authors addresses the needs of her own age, but do so through careful constructions of their characters and plots: each element connects to the five themes this dissertation investigates. These selected pieces provide a clear framework of how utopias persuade readers to consider alternatives about the nature-human binaries while also disclosing diverse perspectives on the ecological debates occurring during their respective time periods.

While there is plenty of discussion on the ecofeminist movement of the 1970s and beyond, there is not as much reflection on how these issues connect to similar debates found in the scientific revolution—as evident in the ties between authors like Margaret Cavendish and female utopian writers of today. Therefore, the most significant counterargument to studying early modern utopian texts, like Cavendish's *The Blazing World,* in conjunction with 20th century literature is whether or not there is a strong enough correlation. These sci-fi utopias debate the concepts of nature versus science and man versus woman as they strive to eliminate dualism through holistic agendas. Unlike the early modern period, when

mechanical science only hints at progress, the twentieth and twenty-first centuries must address the consequences that science has wrought upon humanity. Current female science fiction writers focus their attention on the equally entrenched, fraudulent ideas of duality and biological determinism. The contemporary utopic worlds counter binaries through the reversal of gendered stereotypes, and by addressing the anachronistic notion that humans are too rational to be a part of nature. Because of the long-standing tradition of the feminist science fiction utopia, there is a wealth of knowledge to choose from when creating new lands that remove dualism. To understand the broad context of this genre certain topics need analysis. First, I provide a discussion on how feminist science fiction connects to the utopian genre. Second, I examine how feminist science fiction utopias thrive during periods of instability, advocating change in a turbulent climate. Third, I investigate how women have traditionally appeared in utopian literature and how science fiction is no exception, offering an association between gendered viewpoints and genre. Lastly, I discuss how worldmaking in science fiction debates binary oppositions. All of these topics help to inform later discussions on how each contemporary author builds worlds in connection to her own cultural setting.

The utopian genre and feminist science fiction link in countless ways, leaving one to wonder where one genre ends and the other begins. Darko Suvin asserts that "science fiction has an interesting and close kinship with other literary

sub genres" during different eras, especially "the Renaissance and baroque 'Utopia'…and [the] 'anti utopia.'"[210] All of these genres address the idea of "cognitive estrangement": Involving the reader with an alternative world in order to present a critical analysis of a current culture.[211] In the fantastical worlds of the science fiction utopia, aliens and monsters represent the real world, as they signify "relationships and communities…that can be judged as similar or dissimilar to human ones."[212] Essentially, these symbolic figures stand as metaphors for truth in present-day situations. Whether they represent figments of our own need to master the world (like Shelley's monster in *Frankenstein*) or a portrayal of mindless women (as seen in the robotic functionality of Ira Levin's *Stepford Wives*), the unrealistic conveys some deeper truth about current society. In this way, contemporary utopian science fiction provides a panorama of a current political or economic situation, as the genre uses fantastical elements to reconceive these issues. This literature asks the readers to put together imaginative pieces with the mindset of actively changing their current systems.

Ultimately, change in gender status or the removal of the binary nature/science concept cannot occur without the reinvention of the female persona in these works. Marleen Barr writes that "most heroines, because of their

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[210] Darko Suvin, *Metamorphosis of Science Fiction: On the Poetics and History of Literary Genre* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1979), 3.
[211] Suvin, *Metamorphosis of Science Fiction*, 4.
[212] Suvin, *Metamorphosis of Science Fiction,* 60.

supposed affinity with nature, are acted upon rather than acting" in early science fiction.[213] In fact, the surge of science fiction from the 1930s to 1940s typifies the idea that male characters were "created for thought and heroic deeds, woman for love and sex."[214] Joanna Russ stakes out a similar position when she writes that "the purpose of the science fiction story is to show that women cannot handle power, ought not to have it, and cannot keep it."[215] Like the early modern utopias, the history of the science fiction genre did not highlight female aspirations. These literary works were filtered through the male lens, specifically the lens of scientific endeavors. In the book *Terminal Identity*, Scott Bukatman suggests that the science fiction genre shifts in relation to the technological environment.

Like the invention of the steam engine, electricity, the combustion engine, and the "development of nuclear and electronic technologies," views of manifest destiny and progress adhere to utopian principles.[216] Improvement relies on the notion that "the movements of life are determined by predictable lines of logic, each movement is an improvement."[217] This kind of progress draws on the masculine sphere of logic, helping to strengthen the validity of the reason/masculine sphere and adherence to the feminine/private sphere. Nature and

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[213] Marleen Barr, *Future Females: A Critical Anthology* (N.P.: Popular P., 1981), 55.
[214] Barr, *Future Females*, 56.
[215] Joanna Russ, *To Write Like a Woman: Essays in Feminism and Science Fiction* (Indiana: Indiana UP, 1995), 42.
[216] Bukatman, *Terminal Identity,* 3.
[217] Susan Griffin, *The Roaring Inside Her* (N.P.: Sierra Club, 2000), 129.

the woman slip further into the private sphere, marking a trend that follows from the early modern period into the mid-twentieth century. The emphasis on feminine domesticity and the private sphere fits into the image of chaotic, uncontrolled nature.

This construction shows in the way that women of this period impose order in their domestic environments. In *Made from This Earth*, Vera Norwood claims that women of the "nineteenth-and twentieth-century… emphasized the importance of planting native flowers and attracting local birds into suburban gardens, preserving public spaces for wildflower and wildlife."[218] Feminine nature spaces are now cultivated domestic spaces: nature is even more directly associated with the domestic sphere where family and "harmony is expressed in home horticulture."[219] Since nature is further controlled and connected to the sphere of the woman, there is little separation between caring for one's home and caring for nature. According to Anderson and Edwards, nineteenth and twentieth century "ornithology and botany were [also] found within the confines of home and neighborhood and were considered to be fitting pursuits for women, but

[218] Vera Norwood, *Made from This Earth: American Woman and Nature* (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1993), 141.
[219] Norwood, *Made from This Earth*, 100.

solitary back country living and wilderness exploration" was not.[220] This idea appears in Figure 3.1, as the enclosed, domesticated garden took shape.[221]

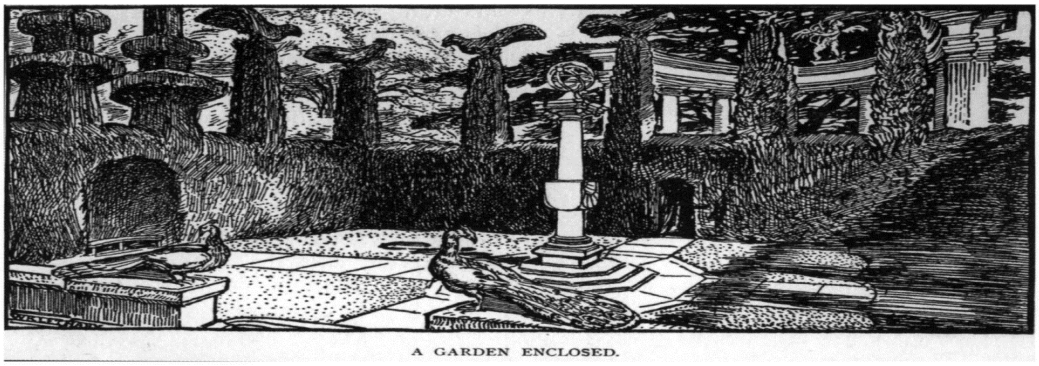

Figure 3.1 An Enclosed Garden

Free women and free nature face increasing censure through the centuries, eventually becoming an idea that must be fenced, pruned, and contained.[222] As such, the preserver of nature, the domesticated woman, keeps her own nature under close guard. In a sense, woman is complicit in her own subjugation by adopting these clearly defined roles.

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[220] Lorraine Anderson and Thomas S. Edwards, eds, *At Home on This Earth: Two Centuries of U.S. Women's Nature Writing* (Hanover, NH: UP of New England, 2002), 3.

[221] Unknown Artist, *Garden Enclosed* found in Michael Weisham's and Christina Roig's *From a Victorian Garden: Creating the Romance of a Bygone Age Right in Your Own Backyard* (Studio, 2004), 74.

[222] This idea will be present in several of the utopias analyzed in this dissertation, specifically Birana in *The Shore of Women* and Jimmy/Snowman in *Oryx and Crake.* Also, see Amy Tigner's *Literature and the Renaissance Garden from Elizabeth I to Charles II: England's Paradise* in regards to space and gender formations.

The idea of nature and women's new place within it still figures prominently in the literature of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries—literature that advances anti-feminist agendas. Even the so-called feminist science fiction of the current age is far from feminist, as it "idealizes the 'true' woman of the domestic sphere, not the 'new' woman."[223] As the female stereotype stays the same, the utopian genre does not. Technology, which fueled the early modern scientific agenda, leaks into the desires of the early twentieth century, establishing a world where utopian thinking becomes dystopian. In this case, progress leads to environmental despair. Thus, the genre that houses revolutionary literature starts to fracture into many types, with the two most prominent fields being utopias and dystopias.

The utopia and dystopia, both dependent upon their social climates, speak of their age with one major difference: dystopias are pessimistic about the future. As Lymann Sargent argues: "The dystopia is stating that things could get worse unless we act, and most utopias suggest that whether life gets better or worse depends on the choices made by people exercising their freedom."[224] However, the exercise of freedom that happens in the 1960s and 1970s shakes the foundation of two centuries of thought. As Tom Moylan puts it, "the 1960s and 1970s was a time of such overt opposition, such serious challenges to the ruling

[223] Frances Bartkowski, *Feminist Utopias* (Nebraska: U of Nebraska P., 1991), 9.
[224] Sargent, "The Three Faces of Utopianism Revisited," 3, 26.

order in the United States, Europe, and around…that dystopian expression took a backseat to the revival of utopian writing."[225] The 1960s and 1970s illustrated the depth of humanity's connection to the realm of science and its pursuits, in what could be termed an unhealthy relationship. The idea is that utopian literature attempts to solve new problems in the world by grappling with them and steering the outcome in a new and better direction. In fact, Kenneth Roemer states that the futurists, looking at science and technology, foresaw "a time when the sophisticated evolving minds of machines would blur the boundaries between human and machine, and people would become servants of technology…our subservience to the machine would overcome us silently."[226] This dependence on science again demonstrates the interconnection between early modern pursuits and current viewpoints.

Even though the structure of the contemporary utopian novel is not the same as the early modern utopia, in which a narrator visits a distant island, returns, and enlightens a people, both, at heart, are trying to reveal evils of a current society through an imaginary one. These utopias call for "new movements of liberation which insist on a multiplicity of voices, autonomous from each other, but commonly rooted in unfulfilled needs centering around the practice of

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[225] Tom Moylan, *Scraps of the Untainted Sky: Science Fiction, Utopia, Dystopia* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 2000), xiv.
[226] Kenneth Roemer, *Utopian Audiences: How Readers Locate Nowhere* (Univ. of Mass. P, 2003), 90.

autonomy."[227] What this genre attempts to do, especially within the feminist science fiction domain—and akin to *The Blazing World*—is to reassemble the disunity caused by carving out a scientific sphere from nature, thereby making nature whole again.

Disunity in the current science fiction utopia genre can show itself in similar ways. First, there is the deconstruction of the female body, as the actual physical body is dissected by the texts in order to fragment the personhood of the woman. The physical dislocation of the body mimics the breakdown of a unified psychological self. Deborah Harter examines this issue, asking "why is it so often that the female body is torn apart, whether in the realm of language, within the tangible world evoked by the text, or in the arena of the narrator's partializing gaze?"[228] The most obvious answer is that it relies on the early modern foundation of nature that can be dissected for scientific pursuits.[229] This kind of fragmentation of the female body, therefore, is desirable, even as it fosters disunity.[230] Harter uses the examples found in Edgar Allen Poe's works, including "Berenice," and Nathaniel Hawthorne's "The Birthmark" as they focus on a part of the female body and the removal of some aspect of her form, each work studying a scientific narrator that does the tearing. Through the examination of the

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[227] Moylan, *Demand the Impossible,* 28.
[228] Deborah Harter, *Bodies in Pieces: Fantastic Narrative and the Poetics of the Fragment* (Stanford UP, 1995), 3.
[229] May have also started with the blazon.
[230] Harter, *Bodies in Pieces*, 24.

fragmented body, the personhood of the woman diminishes; she is but pieces that science examines and explores.

This discussion relies on the understanding of the general construction of the feminine body as part of nature. As Jane Donawerth notes in *Frankenstein's Daughters* "…the science is male and nature is female…the domination is erotic: the scientist pursues nature, uncovers her and unveils her, penetrates her, and rejoices in his mastery."[231] Kate Soper furthers this conversation by stating that female bodies are put together artificially, often in a way that removes the common connection between all human beings and nature.[232] This construction of a fragmented female form illustrates a lack of wholeness. The disjointing of the actual body makes one focus on the differences inherent in each piece, rather than how the pieces fit into the whole—a symbol of humanity's disconnection from nature, as well as female subordination to a masculine science.

Another way to establish this disunity is through the metaphor of the alien in science fiction utopian works. Jenny Wolmark suggests that the alien is often the representation of the 'other' in science fiction as this role "enables difference to be constructed in terms of binary oppositions which reinforces relations of

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[231] Jane Donawerth, *Frankenstein's Daughters: Women Writing Science Fiction* (New York: Syracuse UP, 1997), xix.
[232] Kate Soper, "Feminism and Ecology: Realism and Rhetoric in the Discourse of Nature," *Science, Technology & Human Values* 20 (1995), 322-323.

dominance and subordination."[233] Aliens are synonymous with the female—an idea that occurs frequently in science fiction fanzines, such as the *Amazing Stories* editions from the 1950s (as seen in Figure 3.2).

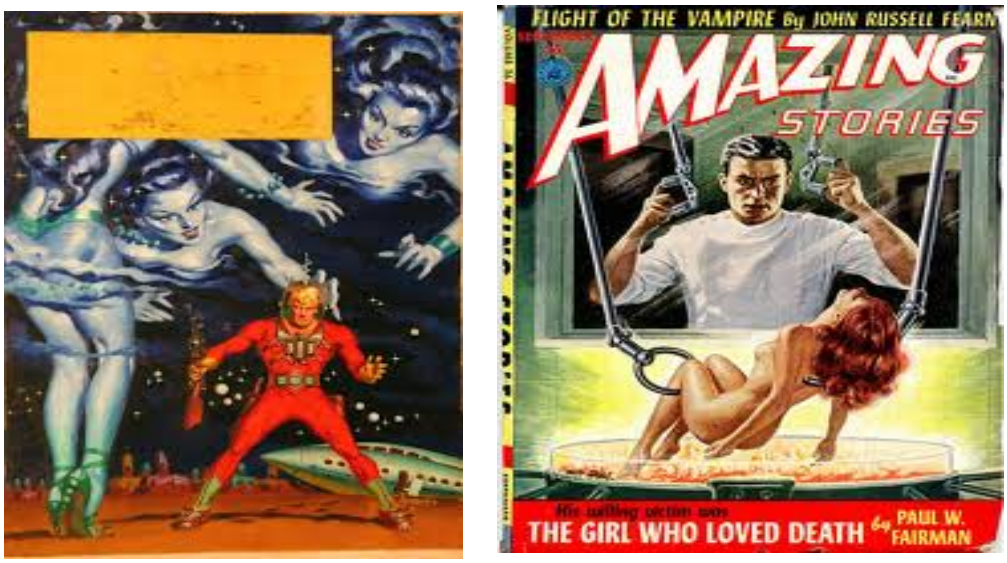

Figure 3.2 The Portrayal of the Male Scientist and Female Alien in Fanzines

One of the main storylines in these comic books is that of male astronauts who visit strange lands, eventually enslaving the unruly alien woman into submission. This binary construction aligns with the early modern development of the dualism between the dominant and subordinate: the male spheres of reason and science, and the feminine identification with unruly nature. In these works, there is a fear

[233] Jenny Wolmark, *Aliens and Others: Science Fiction, Feminism and Postmodernism* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf), 2.

of the 'other,' the chaotic woman, and a simultaneous desire for the 'other'—a trope that appears in feminist science fiction texts. The idea of otherness in science fiction happens through "four categories of the woman as alien: woman as humanoid alien, woman as machine, woman as animal, and minority women as alien among us."[234] All of these categories speak to the dualism of the spheres, however, as women are outside of male culture in the uncontrollable domestic sphere.

Similar to Cavendish's works, feminist science fiction utopias from the 1970s into the twenty-first century endeavor to oppose dominant/subordinate binaries by establishing holism between nature and humanity. One way to effect such opposition is to blur the gender boundaries. Tom Staircar writes that "it is not strange to see masculine and feminine components as both needed in a rounded personality," particularly within feminist science fiction works.[235] The rounded personality manifests by giving female characters the quality of reason and moving men into the emotional sphere. Charlotte Gilman experiments with this idea in the famous utopian science fiction novel *Herland*. In this world, women live peacefully among themselves, part of nature, eventually finding co-existence with two of the male characters. Feminist science fiction, therefore, reverses the traditional view of dualism to prove that gendered characteristics

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[234] Wolmark, *Aliens and Others*, 43.
[235] Tom Staircar, *The Feminine Eye: Science Fiction and the Women Who Write It* (Ungar Pub Co., 1984), 46.

never really existed. As such, these novels falsify the binary construction from the early modern era, showing the inaccuracies of defining personality based on biological conditions. Marleen Barr furthers this thought when she states "the feminist fabulator destroys patriarchal myths by creating feminist metafictions—fictions about patriarchal myths."[236] Therefore, holism ensues by making the private sphere appear more like the public sphere.[237] Frances Bartowski suggests this notion when she argues that "the home, the interior, the private, are the spaces in which women are seen moving and acting.…which could create new values for these interior spaces…."[238] In other words, female science fiction, already thought of as non-traditional science fiction, is a genre that upends patriarchy through certain characterizations: the 'feminist fabulation.' These characterizations often use the harmful qualities of the female/nature realm and transpose them into the character of the male scientist.

Another way that feminist science fiction utopias remove the binary spheres is through the concept of a genderless human. Brian Attebury states that feminist science fiction writers eliminate dualism between the male and female, science and nature, through "such concepts as a literal third sex, a society without division, gender as a matter of individual choice, involuntary metamorphosis from

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[236] Marleen Barr, "Revamping the Rut Regarding Reading and Writing about Feminist Science Fiction: Or, I want to Engage in 'Procrustean Bedmaking,'" *Extrapolation* 41 (2000), para. 15.
[237] This is a thought most aptly seen in *The Shore of Women*.
[238] Bartkowski, *Feminist Utopias*, 117.

one sex to another, gender as prosthesis, and all manner of unorthodox manifestations of sexual desire."[239] This concept of the "third sex" foregrounds the androgynous figure. For Attebury, "androgyny has stood for wholeness, narcissism, fashion, bisexuality, heterosexual marriage, liberation of women, decadence, the balance of yin and yang, and, yes, appropriation of women's prerogatives by men."[240] Ursula Le Guin's *The Left Hand of Darkness* is the text most often cited when addressing this viewpoint. In this work, the humanoid alien can change gender in cycles depending on their partners, and, consequently, power cannot be limited according to gender or dualistic spheres.[241]

Last is the notion of removing duality through a sense of wholeness with all creatures and nature. This kind of non-duality can take the metaphorical form of a net or a web.[242] In this conception, all things interconnect. Interconnected non-dualism comes from the idea that real dualism arises in the tension between the human sphere and the non-human sphere, rather than the domestic sphere versus the cultural sphere that separates man from woman. The remedy requires "developing an environmental culture that values and fully acknowledges the non-human sphere and our dependency on it, and is able to make good decisions about

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[239] Attebury, *Decoding Gender,* 9.
[240] Attebury, *Decoding Gender,* 133.
[241] The biggest counter to this argument is that the dominant of the two aliens becomes the male during kemur, or sexual arousal. Therefore, androgyny still allocates the masculine to the dominant role in a relationship.
[242] Karen Warren, *Ecofeminism: Women, Culture, Nature* (Indiana UP, 1997), 427.

how we live and impact the non-human world."[243] Another way to reframe such dualism is to fuse the animal world with the human world. The animal-human complication occurs through "the human/animal binary with categories not just of a humanized human, but animalized human, humanized animal, and animalized animal, but also animalized woman and feminized animal."[244] The works of Andre Norton often blur these divisions as she creates characters that are animal in physical form, but human in terms of language or culture. These blurred lines between the animal and the human establish a system where the nature sphere is all encompassing—the same trope Cavendish's *Blazing World* uses when she gives animals speech and thought. The big questions here are two-fold: Where does the human and animal begin, and are humans not also animals?

A connection to the animal world extends the holistic vision of the world to the entire universe, an absolute form of holism. Marleen Barr and Nicholas Smith discuss this notion when they state that all things connect in feminist science fiction utopias: "Electrons are indivisible parts of ever larger physical bodies such as man. Continuing, we can perceive man as an indivisible part of a third planet called Earth, and then…we can perceive this planet as an indivisible

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[243] Val Plumwood, *Environmental Culture: The Ecological Crisis of Reason* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 3.
[244] Greta Gaard, "New Directions for Ecofeminism: Toward a More Feminist Ecocriticism," *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment* 17 (2010), 645.

part of a galaxy…and so on."[245] These thoughts are, interestingly enough, the same as those proposed centuries before in Cavendish's works as she argues that all matter, made of both corporeal and incorporeal substance, interrelate. Cavendish relies on atomism to assert this interaction as beings are made of inanimate and animate parts. Similarly, contemporary novels seek systems to show the interconnection and unity of all things. As Patrick Murphy points out, the early modern era created "our visions of nature" as they "reinforce our own prejudice toward each other…man's relationship to nature [as] replicated in man's relation with woman," demonstrating that "a truly self-consistent biological egalitarianism cannot become socially manifest until the deep ecologists radically accept this view."[246] Unlike the seventeenth century, however, the late twentieth century allows feminists, including ecofeminists, a much stronger voice to advance the narratives about our connection to the environment, with the strongest emphasis on having "narrators unlearn misogyny and learn equitable relations" among the genders and with nature.[247] This type of unlearning requires world-building incorporating a feminist point of view.

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[245] Marleen S. Barr and Nicholas Smith, *Women and Utopia: Critical Interpretations* (N.P: UP of America, 1983), 21.
[246] Patrick Murphy, *Literature, Nature, Other: Ecofeminist Critiques* (New York: SUNY P, 1995), 60.
[247] Jane Donawerth, *Frankenstein's Daughters: Women Writing Science Fiction* (New York: Syracuse UP, 1997), 117.

The study of feminist science fiction worlds has received a great deal of analysis, especially as it relates to the characteristics of the science fiction utopian worlds created by female authors. One of the most prominent scholars in this field is Sarah Lefanu. In *Feminism and Science Fiction*, she examines specific feminist science fiction characteristics, including: communal societies, lack of formal government, concerns for ecology, the non-urban and non-industrial societies, lack of war, sexual permissiveness, economic independence for everyone, elimination of the nuclear family into a tribal family, reproduction through technology, zero domination found in race or class, women excelling in telekinesis or telepathy, and the removal of language that subordinates the female.[248] To the list above, I would add the notion that these worlds give traditional powers back to women in the form of witchcraft and healing.[249] Moreover, each of the traits listed above has impacts on four specific categories: reproduction, economy, language, and newly defined ecological spaces.

Studying these issues shows that these utopian structures are in opposition to the dualism of the male/female, culture/nature dichotomy. First, dissolving the nuclear family and domestic sphere eradicates the traits related to the concepts of reproduction and the nuclear family. Women do not have to perform domestic

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[248] Sarah Lefanu, *Feminism and Science Fiction* (Indiana UP, 1989), 54-68.
[249] Marleen S. Barr and Nicholas Smith, *Women and Utopia: Critical Interpretations* (N.P: UP of America, 1983), 31. This is also an idea found in chapter one as it connects to removing women out of the economic sphere to bring them closer to the private/domestic sphere.

duties, nor endure the bodily harms of reproduction. The dissolution also reduces some of the dimorphism between the personalities of men and women as the "definitions of home must not remove men from the roles of nurturing and caring, or perpetuate the burden of homemaking as exclusive to women."[250] This dimorphism refers back to the previous discussion of the reversing of gender roles in science fiction.

The second issue removes the binary functions of the economic and rational male sphere. Thus, "…cultural feminism is rooted in the old Marxist debate about the primacy of the base (economics) over the superstructure (culture)."[251] According to Judith Little, "[S]ocial feminist theory attempts to synthesize components of Marxist and radical feminist theories into a unified political theory as it… links the sexual division labor with the social constructs of femininity and masculinity."[252] In other words, women and men live in a natural environment of communality. They also live in harmony with nature. Nature and humanity reconnect through the removal of an industrial agenda, and capitalist desires no longer drive the economy.

Third, language provides the structural foundation for dualism and, therefore, becomes a prime debate among contemporary science fiction utopias.

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[250] Barr and Smith, *Women and Utopia*, 656.
[251] Irene Diamond, *Reweaving the World: The Emergence of Ecofeminism* (San Francisco: Sierra Club, 1990), 115.
[252] Judith Little, *Feminist Philosophy And Science Fiction: Utopias And Dystopias* (N.P.: Prometheus Books, 2007), 28.

The genre modifies gendered language with syntax that no longer designates male as reason and woman as nature. Within the work, *Ecofeminism: Women, Culture, Nature*, Warren examines the female's connection to nature through language. She cites Nicole Griffin in the following lines: "like post structuralists, ecofeminists argue that neither the word woman nor the word nature can be read apart from each other" as they "contain traces of a larger system, a philosophy that is also submerged psychologically."[253] Barr stresses similar thoughts as she argues that female characters in feminist science fiction "identify the power relations between female and male discourses, imbuing women's words with status, and uses newly empowered female language to re-create themselves."[254] Elgin's works, particularly in *The Native Tongue* series, to reveal the power of womanly language in feminist science fiction as the female characters liberate themselves via the establishment of a female language to overturn patriarchy.

Lastly, some feminist science fiction works depict worlds where the ultimate form of removing dualism occurs through allowing men and women separate planes of existence. Douglas Vakoch states that these worlds "envision healthy ecological spaces as the outgrowths of the cultural valuing of the feminine and the containment and/or absence of the masculine—a move characteristic of

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[253] Karen Warren, *Ecofeminism: Women, Culture, Nature* (Indiana UP, 1997), 216.
[254] Marleen Barr, *Future Females: A Critical Anthology* (N.P.: Popular P., 1981), 184.

affinity ecofeminism."[255] Nevertheless, I argue that worlds that remove the male sphere completely do not favor dualism, but try to ignore the issue altogether. These all-female worlds often highlight the connection between woman and nature. As Val Plumwood writes, feminist science fiction often "attributes to women a range of different but related virtues, those of empathy, nurturance, cooperativeness and connectedness to others and to nature."[256] In this way, the women can encompass personas related to traditional female characters. Another viewpoint by Sally Kitch supports a position where the "establishment of a separate space for women" enables "the creation of new myths central to women's identities; the elimination of binary oppositions; and a focus on women's lived experiences, especially motherhood."[257] They look at feminist issues through stratification: knowledge of gendered existence occurs with removal of the masculine sphere. In other words, separatist societies reveal an inherent feminine nature, which often exhibits a view that all humans share similar attributes.

What all of the aforementioned theories suggest, however, is that a revolutionary utopia can counter gender binaries; the "kind of utopianism that is holistic, social, future-located, committed, and linked to the present by some

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[255] Douglas A.Vakoch, ed., *Feminist Ecocriticism: Environment, Women, and Literature* (Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2012), 14.
[256] Val Plumwood, *Environmental Culture: The Ecological Crisis of Reason* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 42.
[257] Sally Kitch, *Higher Ground: From Utopianism to Realism in American Feminist Thought and Theory* (U of Chicago P., 2000), 84.

identifiable narrative of change."[258] What these science fiction worlds require is a way to "develop a different understanding of the relationship between human and nonhuman nature, based on the stewardship of evolution" where "social history of the species are not separated."[259] Such an understanding is possible within the genre of science fiction and utopianism. The reason, as Karla Armbruster and Kathleen Wallace suggest, is that science fiction "has a strong potential to function as parable addressing the issue of how people become inhabitants and what it means to be indigenous in relation to environmental control, responsibility, and the mutual adaptation between humans and the rest of nature."[260] Stacy Alaimo demonstrates the same thought in her work, *Undomesticated Ground*, where she writes that "as long as nature is imagined as the outdoors of culture, the advance of language pushes the frontier of nature further away. Culture and textuality then become self-enclosed systems for which nature is always outside."[261] This solution relies on creating an environment that is not gendered and does not "reduce nature to a caricatured mirror of human

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[258] Raffaella Baccolini and Tom Moylan, eds, *Dark Horizons: Science Fiction and the Dystopian Imagnination* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 15.
[259] Irene Diamond, *Reweaving the World: The Emergence of Ecofeminism* (San Francisco: Sierra Club, 1990), 120.
[260] Karla Armbruster and Kathleen Wallace, *Beyond Nature Writing: Expanding the Boundaries of Ecocriticism* (U of Virginia P, 2001), 265.
[261] Stacy Alaimo, *Undomesticated Ground: Recasting Nature as Feminist Space* (Cornell UP, 2000), 12.

culture."[262] We are very much a part of nature in that we affect nature and it affects us reciprocally. The toxins we put into nature are shaped by our ecosystems and find their way into our food chain. Our bodies function only as part of the larger systems that surround it.[263]

Along these lines, modern utopias look into the past and predict what the future will become; these musings always have a historical underpinning.[264] The worlds are blueprints for how to correct life, rather than metaphors.[265] The texts also allow the question to be the answer, asking the reader to identify with the struggles of the characters and find some type of solution through unrealistic conflicts.[266] The works request the reader to think before acting, looking at "society like a coral island, each individual contributing."[267] These texts allow us, as Jane Donawerth writes, to understand the literature of estrangement at it uncover the follies in our current environment.[268] My dissertation aligns with

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[262] Alaimo, *Undomesticated Ground,* 172
[263] Stacy Alaimo, *Bodily Natures: Science, Environment, and the Material Self* (Indiana UP, 2010.Bodily Natures), 10-12.
[264] Jennifer Wagner-Lawlor, *Postmodern Utopias and Feminist Fictions* (Cambridge UP, 2013), 4.
[265] Lucy Sargisson, *Contemporary Feminist Utopianism* (London: Routledge, 1996), 59.
[266] Ellen Peel, *Politics Persuasion Pragmatism: Rhetoric of Feminist Utopian Fiction* (Ohio State UP, 2002), 15-27.
[267] Carol Kessler, *Daring to Dream: Utopian Fiction by United States Women Before, 1950* (Syracuse UP, 1995), 134.
[268] Jane Donawerth, *Frankenstein's Daughters,* 3.

many of these positions, but my argument aims at uncovering the historical underpinnings.

With the creation of the dualistic spheres in the early modern era, the concept of science also splits into two spheres as the ages progress, relocating certain sciences firmly within the female and male domains. Female science relies on communicative science, humanitarian science: the science of the private sphere. Masculine science is hard, factual, data-driven science. The language reinforces and embodies many of the ideas (and ideals) about virility:

> common examples are such dichotomies as "hard" and "soft" data, the "rigor" of the natural science vs. the "softness" of social science, reason and intuition, mind and matter, nature and culture, as well as familiar appeals to the "penetrating thrust of an argument," "seminal ideas," and the like.[269]

Combatting the dualism of the spheres requires women either to excel within the female sciences, or have the female become competent within the realm of the hard sciences. If the work stresses women's competence in the female science, a woman becomes a sentimental thinker and not a scientific one. Eve Keller examines this issue when she writes that "the making of men, women and science, or, more precisely, how the making of men and women has affected the making of

[269] Sandra Harding, *The Science Question in Feminism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1986), 120.

science" are the key issues at stake.[270] Science in feminist science fiction utopias must overturn this kind of thinking by reexamining how science is seen in relation to nature in feminist science fiction works.

All of the novels in this dissertation deal with how women handle the issues of science and nature, either by having women excel in the female sciences, or in the masculine. The overall issue is how science and nature are reinvented in the author's mind. How the characters overcome, how they assimilate, how they become part of nature, and how nature and culture inform one another is a part of the argument for these novels. As Sarah Lefanu suggests:

> The central struggle between, and final resolution of self and other, is presented not so much in the human/alien binary structure as in the structure of protagonist and landscape; the journey is both through and around a landscape that is at once beautiful, hostile, frightening and fascinating.[271]

Therefore, women's relationship to the environment becomes a key topic for inquiry. According to Gaard, "first wave feminism dealt with nature writing and conservation efforts, second wave ecofeminism starts to redefine the environment, and the third wave looks at ethnic particulars with the environment [as it] 'explores all facets of human experience from an environmental point of

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[270] Eve Keller, "Producing Petty Gods: Margaret Cavendish's Critique of Experimental Science," in *Margaret Cavendish* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009), 4.
[271] Sarah Lefanu, *Feminism and Science Fiction* (Indiana UP, 1989), 135.

view.'"[272] The feminist science fiction utopian novels in the latter 20th century remove dualism by using similar criteria, along with the idea of interconnectedness in the name of science. Unlike the utopias of the early modern age, they address utopia under the mantle of "critical utopia," meaning they offer criticism along with offering solutions to problems. They are "ambiguous utopias," as they make the reader question what qualities to apply to their current society.

Each of the discussions that occur in this section of the dissertation inform Le Guin's *The Dispossessed*, Sargent's *The Shore of Women*, and Atwood's *Oryx and Crake.* By providing this context, the themes of each novel should interconnect through a specific feminist science fiction schema, paying special attention to gender building as it relates to the male/female spheres will demonstrate each author's ability to overcome the fragmented female body. Moreover, the overall tropes that occur in feminist science fiction, like that of the animal in the environment or the platform of science in these novels, give a greater understanding about how each novel adds to conversation about holism in utopian science fiction texts.

[272] Greta Gaard, "New Directions for Ecofeminism: Toward a More Feminist Ecocriticism," in *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009), 644.

Chapter 4

The Exploration of the Scientific Agenda in the Modern Age: Duality, Ecofeminism, and Environmental Agendas in Ursula LeGuin's *The Dispossessed*

Ursula Le Guin's *The Dispossessed* situates itself in several science fiction utopian debates—the interconnection of all things in nature, the communalistic atmosphere of a feminist economy, the fragmented female body, and the role of the female in the sciences—while reinforcing the tropes of current feminist science fiction scholarship, and connecting to early modern utopian debates.[273] Like Cavendish in *The Blazing World*, Le Guin explores the binaries between science and nature. She attempts to overturn boundaries between the genders as she seeks to reconcile the duality of the private/public spheres through the moon of Anarres and the plaent, Urras. Anarres, a barren moon, fosters community at the price of individualism. Class distinction, cast in gendered terms, is minimal on Anarres; instead, certain scientific hierarchies arise, such as those who wish to keep control over scientific knowledge and those who limit scientific communication with Urras—namely, the PDC. In contrast, Urras, a planet rich with materials, has more rigid hierarchies and stronger gender biases. On Urras,

[273] See in this order: Barr and Smith's *Women and Utopia: Critical Interpretations*; Judith Little's *Feminist Philosophy And Science Fiction: Utopias And Dystopias*; Deborah Harter's *Bodies in Pieces: Fantastic Narrative and the Poetics of the Fragment*; and Jane Donawerth's *Frankenstein's Daughters: Women Writing Science Fiction*.

only the educated and wealthy men practice science—women and those in lower economic brackets do not have access to this type of knowledge. Both Anarres and Urras informs the other on the topic of human and nature binaries, giving a greater complexity to Le Guin's novel as she uses two landscapes to convey issues inherent in dualism.

Below the surface, the science in this novel hints at the way nature and culture can bring about an interconnection among peoples, societies, and other planets.[274] An instantaneous communication device is the mechanism Le Guin uses to overcome the binaries occurring between Urras and Anarres. Through this invention, a science of harmony and interrelatedness develops as the main

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[274] See the following sources as they inform my argument of Le Guin's view of dualism: Christine Nadir's "Utopian Studies, Environmental Literature and the Legacy of an Idea: Educating Desire in Miguel Abensour and Ursula K. Le Guin," William Marcellino's "Shadows to Walk: Ursula Le Guin's Transgressions in Utopia," Werner Christie Mathisen's "The Underestimation of Politics in Green Utopias: The Description of Politics in Huxley's *Island,* Le Guin's *The Dispossessed*, and Callenbach's *Ecotopia*," Laurence Davis and Peter Stillman's *The New Utopian Politics of Ursula K. Le Guin's The Dispossessed*, and Judith Bierman's "Ambiguity in Utopia: "The Dispossessed"' as it relates to the green utopia debate; Victor Urbanowicz's "Personal and Political in "The Dispossessed,"' Daniel Jaekle's "Embodied Anarchy in Ursula K. Le Guin's *The Dispossessed*,"' Tony Burns's *Political Theory, Science Fiction, and Utopian Literature: Ursula K. Le Guin and The Dispossessed,* Lewis Call's "Postmodern Anarchism in the Novels of Ursula K. Le Guin," and Susan Benfield's "The Interplanetary Dialectic: Freedom and Equality in Ursula Le Guin's *The Dispossessed"* as connected to Le Guin's views of anarchic politics; Brian McHale's *Postmodernist Fiction* and Robert Siegle's "Postmodernism" as it connects to postmodern theory; Douglas Vakoch's *Feminist Ecocriticism: Environment, Women, and Literature* and Marleen Barr's "Revamping the Rut Regarding Reading and Writing about Feminist Science Fiction: Or, I want to Engage in 'Procrustean Bedmaking" as it relates to ecofeminist theory.

character, Shevek, views time and communication as concepts that ebb and flow through everything. In spite of the various divisions and strata of society, he sees everything as interconnected through the concept of instantaneous communication. Of course, this reasoning depends on many other factors, including the fact that Le Guin's theory relates to the feminist science fiction strategy of replacing capitalist views with more communal ideologies.[275] The thrust of this discussion relies on understanding the beliefs inherent in a communal society—ideas based primarily on Marxist values. Through the lens of communalism, Le Guin establishes some interesting analogies between Urras and Anarres as she raises questions about our own values in American society.[276]

These questions rely on the genre that Le Guin uses, the critical utopia, as the novel fosters a more acute examination of the settings in order to assert certain social agendas. Therefore, I will begin my argument by situating Le Guin's text within this tradition and by explaining her relationship to the critical utopian tropes. Following this discussion, I indicate how Le Guin offers her own destruction of the nature/reason division—thoughts that are dependent on the five tropes previously discussed.[277] Le Guin ties the land, the people, and the universe

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[275] See Judith Little and Chapter Three's section on "overcoming dualism."
[276] See Darko Suvin's *Metamorphosis of Science Fiction* comment in Chapter Three, as this idea relates to the symbolic reveal real issues plaguing currents society.
[277] Gender absolution, language, animal-nature dichotomy, spheres of influence, and the overall interaction with the environment.

together through her philosophy of anarchy and the science of infinite time. The resolution, therefore, is similar to Cavendish's in that the ultimate solution to our disconnection from the world is our ability to see how lives interrelate, not only to each other, but also to the worlds we live upon. Nevertheless, Le Guin's work is responding to her political views of anarchy—a politics that strives to find the balance between the community and the individual. Before I delve into these arguments, I begin with a brief summary of the novel in order to clarify the five holistic themes.

Summary of *The Dispossessed*

The Dispossessed is a story that features a planet and a moon: Urras and Anarres. The main character, Shevek, grows up on Anarres: a moon that is highly communitarian—all things are done for the community with no individual ownership. The land also fosters a certain amount of freedom: each person is allowed to pursue any career and sexuality is fluid (meaning you can have multiple partners, or marry). Men and women have the same types of career choices. This kind of freedom comes from the moon's historical background. Seventy years prior there was a revolution by an anarchic group, led by a female leader named Odo, who despised the Urras way of life. In reaction, Urras allowed these people to live on Anarres. Anarres has little in the way of natural resources and their people must live with scarcity, which is why material objects are of great practical importance and are preserved.

Shevek is a brilliant scientist, which is why the Urras government asks him to come and study at their premier scientific institution. The reader comes to realize that Shevek is inventing a concept that will allow people to communicate faster than the speed of light. Once on Urras, Shevek revels in the beauty of the landscape and the freedom of academia. As time progresses, however, he sees the harsh contrasts in the ways of life between the two cultures. Urras is much more capitalistic and seeks knowledge as a way to generate power for certain individuals. They also live their lives in material excess. For the most part, women dwell within the private sphere where they serve their husbands and are not allowed access to higher realms of learning. After some time, Shevek becomes the symbol of a political reactionary. As Shevek attempts to escape Urras, he sees that there is a poorer class, like those on Anarres. However, this underclass has no concept of helping one another. As such, this system of government creates individuals who are self-serving on every stratum. Eventually, Shevek takes shelter at the Terran embassy, where he offers his time communication device for free to all people, eliminating the possibility of Urras's control over others. As he makes his way home, he offers a Hainish traveler the opportunity to visit his world in order to gain a better understanding of his people; this visit ultimately will break the isolation from others that the Anarresti cherish.

Utopia and Societal Change

The Dispossessed and Cavendish's *The Blazing World* exist within a societal context, appearing, like most utopias, during times of great change: *The Blazing World* during a time of scientific insurgence and incipient environmental destruction and *The Dispossessed* during an era of recognized ecological crisis. For *The Dispossessed*, the 1970s marks the reawakening and expansion of the environmental discussion, one that we are experiencing today. Before this time, science—and its technological improvements—helped establish the spheres of the private/public that remain in place. Since the early modern age, women have largely accepted their roles of mothers and domestic keepers. With the apparent harm to nature in the 1970s, women found a clear opportunity to leverage their roles in the domestic sphere and push for a different construction of the spheres. Le Guin's take on this activism places her utopia within the model of postmodern anarchism. Alongside this political crusading, *The Dispossessed* advances the tenets of the utopian genre and the societal context in which it developed. Le Guin, therefore, uses current debates about humanity, nature, and the setting for this type of literature—the critical utopian landscape—to assert a connection between the real ecological crisis and the fictional calamity.

The Dispossessed presents a world that is desolate and without environmental hope in order to complicate the concept of the ideal utopian landscape and, by association, model societal values. Christine Nadir asks some

important questions about this novel as she writes: “How does a sustainable society educate open-ended desire when desires must be arranged by ecological necessity? How does *The Dispossessed*, as a 1970's green utopian literary text, stimulate readers’ longing for a better world in the context of crisis?”[278] These comments lead to the critical utopian genre that Le Guin and others have perfected. While Le Guin uses similar devices as other feminist science fiction utopias, she is also a trailblazer for this movement—making her novel one of the first feminist ‘green’ critical utopias (a subgenre of the utopia). Therefore, this novel is not only a feminist science fiction, and a utopia, but also a critical utopia: a far more complicated type of literature.[279] In a critical utopia, not everything is good and there are more questions at the conclusion than answers. Judah Bierman analyzes Shevek, stating that "he may be more knowingly involved in the making of a better world, but the story does not offer a compelling vision of a more desirable alternative possibility."[280] In this way, the reader experiences conflict without resolution, wondering, like the protagonist, how does one foster a perfect society. What does a perfect society look like? The big questions in Le Guin’s novels ask what makes a human a human, and how to blur the lines between

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[278] Christine Nadir, “Utopian Studies, Environmental Literature and the Legacy of an Idea: Educating Desire in Miguel Abensour and Ursula K. Le Guin,” *Utopian Studies* 21 (2010), 33.
[279] See Moylan’s critical utopia idea in *Scraps of the Untainted Sky*.
[280] Judah Bierman, “Ambiguity in Utopia: "The Dispossessed,"’ *Science Fiction Studies* 2 (1975), 254.

nature and culture. One way Le Guin blurs these lines is through her construction of gender on both Urras and Anarres as this formation gives insight into proper gender behavior—an awareness that should make a reader not only be more inquisitive about the gender structure in their own culture, but also construct ways to counter male/female dualism.

Anarres versus Urras: Gender Construction

Le Guin obliterates the gender binaries in her text in multiple ways, as she uses Anarres and Urras to discuss how economic position, sexual relationships, and the portrayal of public/private spheres are the primary targets in her efforts. Both Urras and Anarres inform the other, as they give contradictory views of the proper roles of women and men: together they provide the reader a full picture of gender construction. First, the land of Anarres seemingly strips away the public and private spheres of female and male characteristics, especially through the view of the nuclear family. Shevek's mother leaves at a young age to work as a scientist, later telling him that she does not possess an emotional personality needed to raise children like his father: "Palat was the one to stay with you through your integrative years. He was supportive, he was parental, as I am not."[281] For Le Guin, personality types do not map to gender. Families no longer presume that the domestic caregiver needs to be female; personality types associate with individuals and not biology. Second, women and men have the

[281] Le Guin, *The Dispossessed,* 125

same freedom to work on whatever they desire. Women can be scientists or hard physical laborers. Therefore, there is also economic freedom among the genders. The basis of this philosophy comes from Odo, the woman who formed the philosophical structure of Anarres. Having lived on Urras, Odo decided it was better to live in scarcity than in a land of plenty, provided there was equality. Being a woman from Urras, with its strict gender hierarchies, her philosophy eliminates those divisions. Moreover, her philosophy also works for a land devoid of life—scarcity means that all humans must participate in equal ways for survival. Nevertheless, Le Guin obscures her critical utopia by presenting moments of gender bias on Anarres. As one of Shevek's friends puts it, "She'll only let you go if she can trade you for something else. All women are propetarians."[282] Le Guin uses the trope of ownership through reproduction as a way to present the ideals of the Anarresti society—all things centered around the individual is egoizing—and to exhibit a fear of the female private sphere.

This type of ambiguity appears again through gender blurring and the concept of sexual freedom. Le Guin's most famous work, *The Left Hand of Darkness*, includes aliens that "are like those of animals yet whose alien androgyny—a true androgyny—means that they have surpassed us in achieving a

[282] Le Guin, *The Dispossessed,* 52.

society free of sex-related crimes and stigma."[283] *The Dispossessed* does something similar as the book presents multiple levels of sexuality. As such, sexuality is synonymous with freedom—as there is no reference to marriage in Anarres—even though couples can determine to stay together in monogamous relationships. While sex occurs heterosexually and homosexually, the prime focus is the connection between individuals. However, Le Guin obscures this sexual freedom within the context of social conformity. Shevek states the following about Odonian sexual ethics: "He knew from Odo's writings that two hundred years ago the main Urrasti sexual institutions had been "marriage," a partnership authorized and enforced by the legal and economic mode. Odo had condemned them both."[284] The break from Urrasti marriage formations generates sexual freedom at the cost of partnerships, as Shevek states: "Life partnership is really against the Odonian ethic, I think."[285] Monogamous relationships, therefore, are extremely hard to maintain, leading to a lack of lifetime commitments. Anarresti gender formations thus ask the reader if this society is performing the role of a perfect society and whether a world based on communalism can ever create the ideal situation for the sexes?

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[283] Keith N. Hull, "What is Human? Ursula LeGuin and Science Fiction's Great Theme," 32 (1986), 70.
[284] Le Guin, *The Dispossessed,* 18.
[285] Le Guin, *The Dispossessed,* 50.

These ideas are in contrast to the land of Urras, as this planet reflects the traditional western capitalist environment—the women use sexuality for power, even as it is a duty assigned to them by their husbands. They are situated within the domestic sphere. In this way, women on Urras are domestic goddesses inside the private sphere, unable to enter the realm of knowledge. Through the eyes of Shevek, the reader observes how Anarres' beliefs about women differ from Urrassti perceptions of women. One such instance arises when discussing female characteristics: "…the men may work faster—the big ones—but the women work longer…often I have wished I was as tough as a woman."[286] Shevek lets those on Urras know that women's bodies are built for endurance, despite the domestic goddess figures this planet places them within. Urras, therefore, has stricter economic conditions for their women. While women can teach school children, they cannot advance to a collegiate level: "There are some female teachers in the girls schools, of course. But they never get past Certificate level…can't do the math; no head for abstract thought, don't belong."[287] They are put strictly within the private sphere, raising children and caring for the men. In the most basic terms, on Urras "what women call thinking is done with the uterus."[288] These harsh comments assume that men and women must remain in a type of capitalistic

[286] Le Guin, *The Dispossessed,* 17.
[287] Le Guin, *The Dispossessed,* 73.
[288] Le Guin, *The Dispossessed*, 73.

patriarchy—a common topic to address against the evils occurring in both the 1970s American landscapes and the early modern era.

Nevertheless, Le Guin problematizes the gender dualism matter by looking at the subtle differences between women on both Anarres and Urras, giving a richer complexity to this debate through the concept of sexual freedom. As suggested earlier, Anarresti women are profiteers through reproduction, they claim children as their own—a form of egoizing. On Urras, women become profiteers through the concept of sexuality. The sexualization of the women on Urras asserts that women are wily in nature and cannot control their urges, just as women use their innate harmful nature to control men. While Vea symbolizes the highly sexualized object on Urras—"To look at her, Vea was the body profiteer to end them all. …she incarnated the sexuality the Ioti repressed into their dreams"— she is also a sound box for Anarresti women. She says to Shevek: "You threw out the priests and judges and divorce laws and all that, but you kept the real trouble behind them. You just stuck it inside, into your consciences. But it's still there. You're just as much a slave as ever. You aren't really free."[289] The highly sexualized division between the genders on Urrasti are no better or worse than the ossified relationships on Anarres. While women face a harsh placement in Urras, particularly in the city of A-Io, they are able to create monogamous bonds. Oiie, a scientist on Urras, represents this idea as Shevek notices him at his

[289] Le Guin, *The Dispossessed,* 219.

home: "[Oiie] suddenly appeared as a simple, brotherly kind of man, a free man."[290] His ability to marry gives him a greater freedom than those on Anarres. On Anarres partners are often sent away from each other for long periods of time. Through the evils and virtues that ensue on each, the two contradictory societies help the reader assess which view of gender is best. On Anarres, freedom for gender comes from one's vocation, whereas on Urras, there is the possibility of permanent bonds.

Anarres versus Urras: Language and Gender

Gender construction shares a similar approach as language in *The Dispossessed,* since language, like gender construction, is central to understanding how Le Guin overcomes dualism. Language is central to Le Guin's argument as Urras and Anaressti's linguistic systems uncover the hidden problems in each culture. As stated earlier, language informs our views of the world—often unconsciously. By analyzing the subtle structures of our language one can notice what values we hold dear and, as an active reader, find solutions to these harmful constructions. Le Guin linguistic structure connects more to the economic sphere than the gender sphere.

Le Guin addresses these linguistic structures through the languages of the capitalist and the communalist—the two most pertinent realms of censure and

[290] Le Guin, *The Dispossessed,* 147.

praise in many feminist science fiction texts.[291] Werner Mathisens states that communal language development starts early in the Anarres: "children learn to avoid the use of possessive pronouns."[292] Possessiveness also transcends into the relationships that children have with their elders and with each other: "The singular form of the possessive pronoun in Pravic were used mostly for emphasis; idiom avoided them. Little children might say 'my mother,' but very soon they learned to say 'the mother.'"[293] The construction here denotes the common feminist science fiction trope of the destruction of the nuclear family—motherhood does not refer to one mother. The responsibility for caring for each other's children truly takes a village. This thought arises in the school environment, as Shevek quickly learns that expressing opinions in a communal format requires a delicate mastery. During nursery, Shevek takes ownership of the sun in discussion with his caretaker:

> "Mine sun!"
>
> "It is not yours," the one-eyed woman said with the mildness of utter certainty. "Nothing is yours. It is to use. It is to share. If you will not share it, you cannot use it."[294]

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[291] This political debate often favors communalism as it fosters equality for the genders. Le Guin questions communalism, however, through ossification. Perhaps, a blending of the two party politics works for a utopian society.
[292] Werner Christie Mathisen, "The Underestimation of Politics in Green Utopias: The Description of Politics in Huxley's *Island,* Le Guin's *The Dispossessed*, and Callenbach's *Ecotopia*," *Utopian Studies* 12 (2001), 66.
[293] Le Guin, *The Dispossessed,* 58.
[294] Le Guin, *The Dispossessed,* 27.

For Shevek, one's opinions do not need to build upon the opinions of others, but they belong to the community. To assert opinions, in the eyes of an Anarresti, is to promote needless individuality and self-praise rather than common good. Therefore, the social paradigm of communalism manifests itself in the very language by the people, reinforcing the viewpoint that large cultural binaries occur in the subtleties of a linguistic structure.

Linguistic communalism contrasts to the language of Urras, where a very strict hierarchy develops—a commentary upon the language structure of the Western landscape. Shevek discovers this hierarchy in Urras through the usage of social denotation, particularly in the use of the word "Sir."[295] On Urras, status depends upon your professional vocation. Identity stems from their letter, their individual contributions, and their monetary wealth. As Shevek puts it, "this curious matter of superiority, of relative height, was important to the Urrasti; they often used the word "higher" as a synonym for "better" in the writings, where an Anarresti would use "more central."[296] This kind of social stratification also manifests in the types of reading materials accessed by society. Shevek first notices this distinction when looking at the newspapers of the A-Io region, a type of literature that the higher class disdains. However, it is also the literature of truth, written by the downtrodden in society. In this way, language that prefers

[295] Le Guin, *The Dispossessed,* 66.
[296] Le Guin, *The Dispossessed,* 15.

higher intonations of individualism also fosters binaries, while the language of communality 'seemingly' erases gender distinction and economic class distinctions. Nevertheless, this erasure hides the truth behind the languages, especially in Anarresti language. There is a type of hierarchy established among the scientists of Abbenay that makes the communal language hypocritical. Therefore, Urrasti language is more truthful about the class dynamic than the Anarresti language.

Le Guin counters the gender and economic class binaries in Urras and Anarresti using the language of science, as she asserts that science can be an objective source of removing dualism. As a youth, Shevek encounters his first mathematics book and ponders:

> If a book were written all in numbers, it would be true. It would be just. Nothing said in words ever came out quite even. Things in words got twisted and ran together, instead of staying straight and fitting together… If you saw the numbers you could see that, the balance, the pattern. You saw the foundations of the world. And they were solid.[297]

The truth of language, even of scientific language, is objective. Language does not seek to harm a community. Shevek also believes that the "frame of words could not contain the totality of experience."[298] Therefore, scientific language can overcome the binaries of the two worlds, by becoming a language that is more holistic. Using science as a way to free the bonds between people, lands, and the

[297] Le Guin, *The Dispossessed,* 31.
[298] Le Guin, *The Dispossessed,* 53.

entire universe, therefore, first reveals itself through the linguistic barriers Shevek sees around him. This discussion, then, relies on exposing how language can reinforce binaries between people, and their connections to one another, and attests to the idea that the language of objective science can remove a linguistic binary, just as language can create it.

Anarres Versus Urras: Animal and the Human World

While Le Guin does not discuss the animal world as explicitly in her work as Cavendish does, her book verifies the importance of the human-animal connection through the scarcity of animal-human relationships. The scarcity forces readers to observe their own landscape and wonder what life would be like without the delicate 'web of life.' For example, Shevek thinks about the animal life in his homeland, wondering if any creature would have the resilience to make it in such a limited environment. Significantly, this moon, devoid of life, hints at the ecological movement of contemporary culture: if we do not remedy the way we treat our world we will end up with a land without resources. This idea appears at the end of the novel, in a discussion between Keng, the Terran ambassador, and Shevek, where Keng discusses how Terrans destroyed their own landscape and needed to colonize abroad. Urras is a nice contrast to this concept. When Shevek visits, he notices, first, the absolute beauty of the landscape, and later the plasticity of the environment, the overabundance, and the overuse. Shevek perceives the lack of respect for such an environment as it comes so easily

for the Urrasti people: "for seven generations they had never touched an animal's warm fur or seen the flash of wings in the shade of trees."[299] Coming from a moon devoid of land life, where one takes advantage of any resource, Shevek more clearly appreciates the connection between the animal world and the human.

Le Guin problematizes these issues by writing an ambiguous text—a text that forces the reader to continually question the author's motives—especially on Anarres, to argue for a more intense human-environment association. First, Le Guin's Anarres, while devoid of animal/plant life on land, enjoys a fecund sea: "The three oceans of Anarres were as full of animal life as the land was empty of it."[300] As such, investing time and effort to populate these species becomes an important position on this land—most notably observed in Shevek's partner, Takver. It was her job to "[improve] the edible fish stocks in the three oceans of Anarres."[301] Takver also takes on an interesting role in this novel as Le Guin casts her as a nature deity: "It was strange to see Takver take a leaf into her hand, or even a rock. She became an extension of it, it of her."[302] Nature, therefore, has an intimate bond with the human; people are an extension of their environment. Takver also reveals this connection through the following lines: "Think of it: everywhere you looked animals, other creatures, sharing the earth and air with

[299] Le Guin, *The Dispossessed,* 152.
[300] Le Guin, *The Dispossessed,* 185.
[301] Le Guin, *The Dispossessed,* 185.
[302] Le Guin, *The Dispossessed,* 185.

you. You'd feel so much more a part."[303] Thus, the land of Urras, full of life, does not fit into the majority of this conversation. To be devoid—to suffer the loss of teeming life—helps a person, the reader, understand the importance of the animal-human connection. Without these associations, there is a missing element to the human experience.

Annares Versus Urras: Interaction with Other Spheres

While the animal-human connection is a somewhat subtle argument in *The Dispossessed*, the discussion of government and the economic sphere is blunt. I claim that Le Guin's use of the economic spheres is the most blatant argument in her work, as she uses it to clarify our own Western viewpoints of the world, while trying to overcome how these man-made conventions divide us from others and the environment. As already established, Urras is wealthy in comparison to Annares. While Shevek, before visiting the land, was unsure of monetary motivation, he swiftly learns that "the lure of profit was evidently a much more effective replacement of the natural initiative than he had been led to believe."[304] This form of government relies heavily on the idea of corporate capitalism and surviving through the exploitation of others—an idea like that of Cavendish's reaction to land and colonialism. As Cavendish asserts that humanity cannot proclaim mastery over land, and by extension, mastery over people, Le Guin

[303] Le Guin, *The Dispossessed* 186.
[304] Le Guin, *The Dispossessed,* 82.

envisions the harms one people can have over another—an idea most evidently seen in the Anarres/Urras intercultural politics.[305] Le Guin addresses this thought when she discusses the trading policies between the two worlds:

> The land of Urras brought fossil oils and petroleum products, certain delicate machine parts and electronic components that Anarresti manufacturing was not geared to supply, and often a new strain of fruit tree or grain for testing. They took back to Urras a full load of mercury, copper, aluminum, uranium, tin and gold. It was, for them, a very good bargain.[306]

In a land of scarcity, trading for machine parts, or even new life—which was evidently unable to sustain itself—keeps Anarres subservient to Urras. Anarres needs food, clothing, and water—the basics of life. However, providing them with these necessary items will strengthen them and make them more independent. Over time, Shevek sees Urras for what it really is, and that is a land where capitalism seems like a "primitive religion, as barbaric, as elaborate, and as unnecessary."[307]

This scarcity trickles down to the Urrasti's poorer class, extending the dependence structures in Urras society. Shevek soon realizes that the deprived of Urras, their servants, suffer from a form of scarcity like the Anarresti; an idea most evident in Shevek's servant, Efor: "The unpropertied classes" [who] remained as remote from him as when he had read about them in history at

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[305] See discussion on the Nature/God division of land as related to unearthing God's secrets in Chapter Two.
[306] Le Guin, *The Dispossessed,* 92.
[307] Le Guin, *The Dispossessed,* 130.

Northsetting Regional Institute."[308] However, unlike the poor in Anarres, they do not care for one another. In one scene, a man is dying in the street yet the poor walk over him, pretending he does not exist. In the land of Anarres, everyone shares the same economic background. This commonality fosters bonds where people tend to live together, especially since the land "cannot support the building, maintenance, heating, lighting of individual houses and apartments."[309] Commonality cannot occur on any level in Urras. The higher class cannot achieve camaraderie because of the constant competition to surpass each other, and the poorer class cannot bond because of their subjugation to a higher class. In this way, Le Guin proves that the lack of monetary means is not a counter to the concept of dualism among the economic spheres, especially in a capitalist environment: a highly individualized, stratified society cannot foster the type of communalism that occurs in a more third world country.

The Dispossessed advances holism over the binaries the best when discussing economic overthrow and the concept of free exchange. Free exchange does not solely refer to economic trade, but to communication and knowledge sharing as well. Throughout the work, we understand Shevek is creating a very important physics project—a project that would change the structure of the universe. The reader only later discovers what this project is: an instant

[308] Le Guin, *The Dispossessed,* 194.
[309] Le Guin, *The Dispossessed,* 110.

communication system. As suggested by Lewis Call, the issue of time in the novel hints at the real topic. Shevek refers to time as cyclical and linear, where nothing in life is stagnant.[310] Shevek's philosophy of time reveals how "past and future are always found intertwined with each other, and with the present."[311] Shevek explains his theory in one very long synopsis:

> It constitutes the timeteller, the clock. But within the system, the cycle, where is time? Where is beginning or end? Infinite repetition is an atemporal process…the atoms…have a cyclic motion…the whole universe is a cyclic process…and there is the circle or the cycle, without which there is chaos, meaningless succession of instants, a world without clocks or seasons or promises.[312]

The idea that "the atoms…have cyclical motion," presents a holistic nature. Le Guin uses the atom metaphor as she shows the ebb and flow of existence; we all connect through this concept of unending time.

Shevek explains this holistic thought through the analogy of throwing a rock at a tree. If you throw a rock and you do reach that tree, there is another tree behind that one, so that you are always in the present moment, but there is no end.[313] Later in the book, Shevek reveals how his instantaneous communication device works: any world, no matter how close or far away, will receive real-time

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[310] Lewis Call, "Postmodern Anarchism in the Novels of Ursula K. Le Guin," *SubStance* 36 (2007), 103.
[311] Laurence Davis and Peter Stillman, *The New Utopian Politics of Ursula K. Le Guin's* The Dispossessed (Lexington Books, 2005), 7.
[312] Le Guin, *The Dispossessed,* 223.
[313] Le Guin, *The Dispossessed,* 29.

communication. In the end, Shevek makes a bold decision that, done any other way, may keep the spheres in place for Urras and Anarres (or possibly Urras and the entire known universe). Shevek decides to gives his ideas to the Terrans so that "all can benefit from it, rather than allowing it to be used by Urrasti to win wars or make money."[314] Figure 4.1 shows the basic binaries that Anarres and Urras must overcome: a more comprehensive picture of what the communication device must help to resolve.

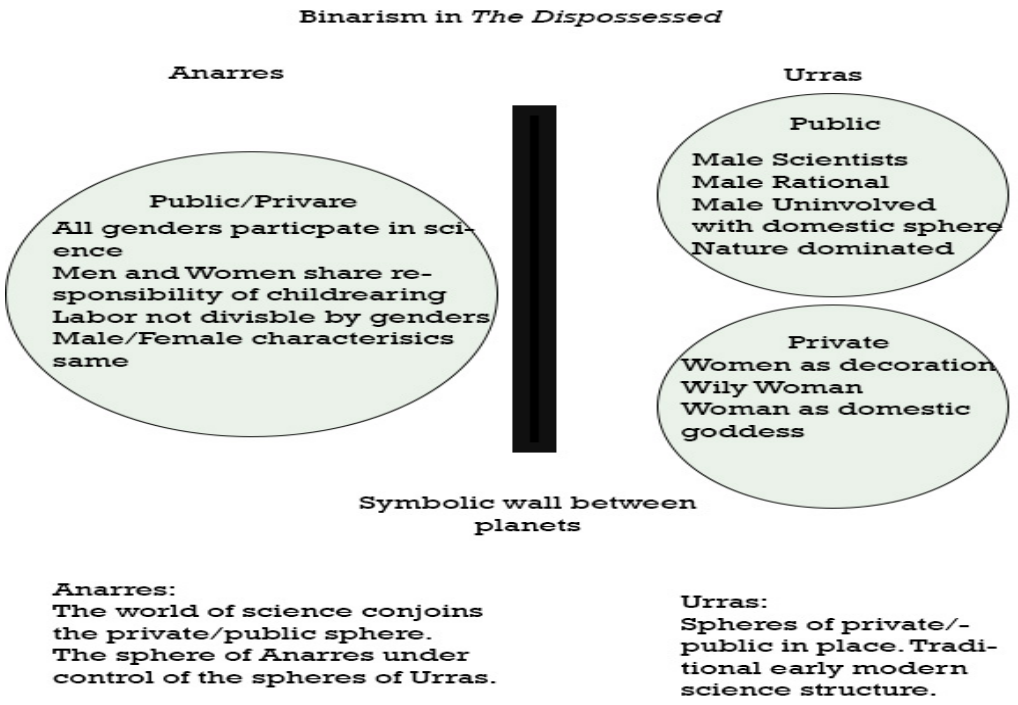

Figure 4.1 Binarism Between the Two Worlds

[314] Susan Benfield, "The Interplanetary Dialectic: Freedom and Equality in Ursula Le Guin's *The Dispossessed*," *Perspectives on Political Science* 35 (2006), 131.

With this gift of communication, an intergalactic empire can come into existence. Free trade and communication could dissolve the boundaries, creating new spheres of being for each world.

Anarres versus Urras: Overall Interaction with the Environment

The overall argument on Anarres and Urras depends upon the discussion of environment as it connects to every other aspect of the societies: gender construction, the animal-human connection, and the economic spheres debate. The environment is the crux of these themes. Broadly speaking, Anarres portrays a moon more deeply indebted to the ecological debate based on "sacrifice, scarcity, and economy," which eventually progresses into a "veritable political movement in the 1970s, showing the limits of growth."[315] Anarres has little wildlife, almost no plant life, and is a verifiable desert wasteland. As such, the society of scarceness relies highly on the concept of solidarity and usefulness. Anarres is, as Christie Mathisen suggests, a "society with a high level of trust and solidarity with a strong social conscience that functions as an effective impediment to wasteful consumption."[316] The natives of this moon consume less

[315] Christine Nadir, "Utopian Studies, Environmental Literature and the Legacy of an Idea: Educating Desire in Miguel Abensour and Ursula K. Le Guin," *Utopian Studies* 21 (2010), 36.
[316] Christie Werner Mathisen, "The Underestimation of Politics in Green Utopias: The Description of Politics in Huxley's *Island,* Le Guin's *The Dispossessed*, and Callenbach's *Ecotopia*," *Utopian Studies* 12 (2001), 63.

and need less, which signals the importance of how a society dealing with an ecological crisis should act, emphasizing conservation and sustainability.

Le Guin unifies the historical movement and green utopian agendas, creating a vivid cultural context through the notion of "alternative[s] to the protection of the environment" as people form "strong formal political institutions…and solidarity with both present and future human beings and other living creatures."[317] Le Guin then counterpoints this idealism of minimalism with that of plenty. In Urras, five-sixths of its surface is water and there is no need to economize.[318] Wastefulness and the lack of sustainability are reminiscent of Earth, while Anarres is a representation of what would occur without a scarcity mentality. However, this is not a dystopian view. Le Guin complicates these binaries through complex landscapes: at first glance the two worlds seem like binary worlds, one good, Anarres, one evil, Urras. Nevertheless, both lands form a holistic picture of what generates a utopian landscape, proving that multifaceted ideas, like ideas about nature/culture binaries, occur in complex societies and diverse political structures.

Le Guin does not invent static worlds, but gives them immense stratification—a mimicry of what a global environment must face; her lands assimilate the many cultures and values Earth encounters. Reality through fiction

[317] Mathisen, "The Underestimation of Politics," 67.
[318] Le Guin, *The Dispossessed*, 64.

generates action. Nevertheless, *The Dispossessed* does not just portray two worlds. These lands consist of several cities—each with distinctive viewpoints. Figure 4.2 pictures the intricacy of this book, as there are actually three levels of boundaries occurring between Anarres and Urras. First, there is the big division between Anarres and Urras—two conflicting governmental structures. Next, there is the division that occurs within each society, as cities on each world have their own agendas based upon their environmental/political context. Lastly, there is the division occurring between Anarres/Urras and the outsiders from Terra and Hain.

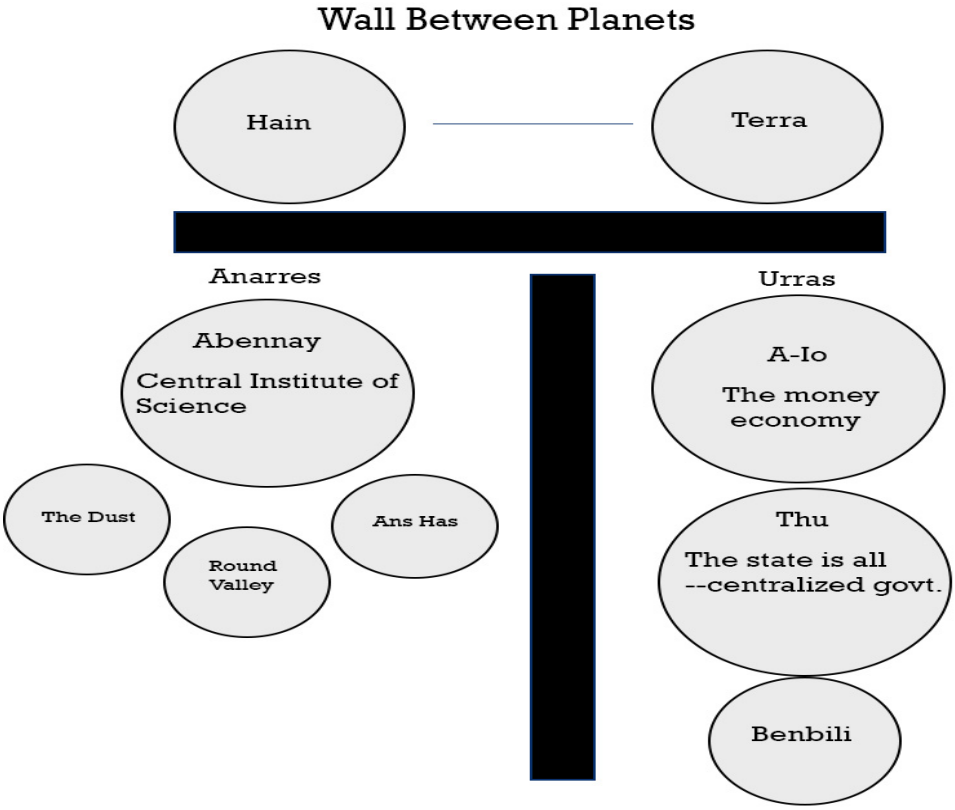

Figure 4.2 Complexity of Planet Formation

To be more specific, on Anarres, there are several smaller regions: the Dust of Anarres, " a place of nothing but grey dust. Forest [that were] gone,"[319] Round Valley, "a place with such few a people [there was] hardly enough to get work done and [they] didn't get high priority from the Divlab computers,"[320] and Ans Has, a "green place between the mountains and the sea."[321] These smaller towns invest the most in the communal idea, as they are deserted areas where you depend on your neighbors. These towns contrast to the city of Abbenay— a place where there must be a "balance of the diversity…[through] the division of labor…and the central federatives…an unavoidable centralization that was a lasting threat."[322]

Abbenay highlights the ills of the Anarresti society best. First, Abennay illustrates the harms of science. Science on Abennay is hierarchical—top scientists withhold information, illustrated by "Sabul [who] wanted to keep the new Urrasti physics private—to own it, as a property, a source of power over his colleagues on Anarres."[323] Second, Abbenay shows the lack of freedom of speech. As Shevek states, "defense insists that every word that leaves here on those freighters be passed by a PDC-approval expert."[324] These vices also help to

[319] Le Guin, *The Dispossessed*, 47.
[320] Le Guin, *The Dispossessed*, 184.
[321] Le Guin, *The Dispossessed*, 93.
[322] Le Guin, *The Dispossessed*, 96.
[323] Le Guin, *The Dispossessed*, 110.
[324] Le Guin, *The Dispossessed*, 113.

display the overall problems in Anarres as the land contextualizes the ossification on the moon. Shevek states that "the social conscience, the opinion of others, was the most powerful moral force motivating the behavior of most Anarresti."[325] These stratagems come into play at an early age, for "as a child, if you slept alone in a single it meant you had bothered others in the dormitory until they wouldn't tolerate you; you had egoized."[326] As an adult this implicates home ownership as one "could build himself a house wherever he liked (though if it spoiled a good view or a fertile bit of land he might find himself under heavy pressure from his neighbors to move elsewhere)."[327] Therefore, Abbenay, being a central location, is a hypocritical state in which true hierarchies do exist, while the smaller city-states impose such a rigid conformity that individuality is repressed.

Le Guin views the communalism of the land of Anarres as questionable, as she enters into a feminist science fiction debate about community over individual needs. Le Guin's text complicates this idea as she asks how one balances the needs of community against the desire for individuality. As Lewis Call states, "Le Guin remains trapped within the basic dilemma that has haunted political theory at least since Rousseau: the problem of reconciling the specific needs of the individual with the broader social needs of the community."[328] The

[325] Le Guin, *The Dispossessed*, 112.
[326] Le Guin, *The Dispossessed*, 110.
[327] Le Guin, *The Dispossessed*, 110.
[328] Call, "Postmodern Anarchism," 90.

problem builds on the principle that individual needs should be complimentary with other individuals, but also that one's needs cannot be completely reconciled with society.[329]

Urras provides the flip side to the communality problem, as they are highly individualized. Like Anarres, Urras has multiple cities. They are also in more direct contact with other people: people like the Terrans and Hains. Shevek states that the land of Urras: "…[was] as complex and various as their culture, as their landscape."[330] The biggest city of Urras, A-Io, "led the world for centuries in ecological control and the husbanding of natural resources."[331] A-Io is also the location for the university, Ieu Eun. As described in the book, it "was not organized federatively but hierarchically, from the top down…it felt like a community"[332] Ieu Eun is a place of great enterprise. In contrast, the land of Thu, their rival, privileges censorship, dominated by one power structure: "the state is all, and all for the state."[333] Benbili, the land in the middle of Thu and A-Io, embodies the struggles between A-Io and Thu; the Benbilis are revolutionaries who could not fight for freedom for the lack of guns.[334] On the outside of these lands is the embassy of Terra and the bordering ship of Hain. The Terrans and

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[329] Victor Urbanowicz, "Personal and Political in *The Dispossessed*," *Science Fiction Studies* 5 (1978), 117.
[330] Le Guin, *The Dispossessed*, 77.
[331] Le Guin, *The Dispossessed*, 82.
[332] Le Guin, *The Dispossessed*, 81.
[333] Le Guin, *The Dispossessed*, 80.
[334] Le Guin, *The Dispossessed*, 203.

Hain both view Urras and Anarres as "Cetians," grouping them together without a real understanding of the differences between them. The individualism on Urras stems from the fact that the Urrans do not communicate effectively with one another. As Anarres ossifies itself from the rest of the universe, this culture does not even effectively communicate with its own members. People are stratified in their cities—Thu and A-Io—through differing viewpoints; the elite and the unpropertied; and galactically, with the Terrans and Hain. In this way, the lands of Anarres and Urras oppose each other in big ways, but on a general level they are dealing with similar issues. They are both suffering from lack of communication through the concept of anarchic states.

Anarchy, being a primary focus of Le Guin's, supports the ideas of duality and how Urras and Anarres's dissimilarity forces the reader to accept what each society does well and then enact change in their own societies. Looking at these worlds combined lets the reader construct a better world. The main characteristics of anarchic states, as Victor Urbanowicz suggests, "regard social (but not state) control as the means of production and it is a decentralized, federal organization of society…with a social life that is regarded as a continual striving against both tyranny and decadence of freedom alike."[335] The anarchic states resemble "[societies] without the three great enemies of freedom: the state, organized

[335] Urbanowicz, "Personal and Political," 112.

religion, and private property."[336] In this way, the moon of Anarres is highly anarchic, but so is the world of Urras. Describing the water planet, Le Guin writes, "they knew that their anarchism was the product of a very high civilization, or a complex diversified culture, of a stable economy and highly industrialized technology that could maintain high production and rapid transportation of goods."[337] Urras is an anarchy that presents a balance in her approach to utopia, as Le Guin strives to develop lands that are "diametrically opposed to one another," and yet, through their interconnection, fosters a utopianism based on interplanetary dependence.[338] As such, she establishes a postmodern view that "a thing can be itself and not itself at the same time."[339] The world of Urras heightens the good qualities of Anarres—basic ideals of community and resourcefulness— while the knowledge of Urras shows what the desert moon is missing: individuality and free speech. Therefore, *The Dispossessed* removes duality through wholeness necessarily modified by "the other."[340] William Marcellino maps out Le Guin's unique way of combatting dualism through the context of "counter colonist approaches," of "modalities

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[336] Daniel Jaeckle, "Embodied Anarchy in Ursula K. Le Guin's *The Dispossessed*," *Utopian Studies* 20 (2009), 75.
[337] Le Guin, *The Dispossessed*, 95.
[338] Tony Burns, *Political Theory, Science Fiction, and Utopian Literature: Ursula K. Le Guin and 'The Dispossessed'* (N.P.: Lexington Books, 2010), 115.
[339] Robert Siegle, "Postmodernism," in *Modern Fiction Studies* 41 (1995), 168.
[340] Donald. F. Theall, "The Art of Social-Science Fiction: The Ambiguous Utopian Dialectics of Ursula K. Le Guin," 2 (1975), 260.

concerned with balance."[341] In this way, the balance between the social construction of a people and their relationship to their natural environments helps to resolve the binary divisions.

The rationale for discussing the viewpoint of communism and individualism in this work is to set the foundation for how Le Guin destroys dualism and advances the nature/culture assimilation. While perhaps not as simplistic in terms of the utopian construction of an ideal nature/culture world, the same basic conclusion ensues: nature and all things in it interrelate. Le Guin shows the connection to humanity and nature through the notion that land informs culture, as well as revealing that communication is key to destroying walls. Shevek's communication device becomes a way to foster holism as it removes binaries in terms of breaking down invisible barriers between societies while fostering new understandings of other cultures.

The dependence on land and the interconnection of the core and the periphery rely on the study of science in these two cultures, as each society's views come from a certain position of power: the dominant and subordinate positions.[342] The big questions are: Can science aid the population? How does each society view science? What is science trying to overcome? And, who can

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[341] William Marcellino, "Shadows to Walk: Ursula Le Guin's Transgressions in Utopia," *The Journal of American Culture* 32 (2009), 204.
[342] See Immanuel Wallerstein's *World Systems Theory* for more information on peripheral and core economics.

participate in science? Just as Le Guin creates lands to show the human-nature interconnection, so does she construct the views of science in these relationships. Le Guin's view of science is similar to *The Blazing World,* as Cavendish tries to overcome dualities through the erasure of the harsher mechanical science, which limits who can participate, who it chooses to control, and what is the ultimate goal. The traditional utopia highlights faith in "science and rationality that will lead to perfection and involves the management of this 'perfect' populace and the suppression of nonconforming 'others' who pose obstacles to the inevitable march of progress."[343] Those who believe that science enables a march against suppression face doubters on both Anarres and Urras. On Urras, Shevek poses the following questions: "Could they really admit equality and participate in intellectual solidarity, or were they merely trying to dominate, to assert their power, to possess?"[344] The science of Urras is very much the science of the traditional rational sphere—the same view of competition and domination found in the sphere of science since the early modern age. The science of Urras is one in which men live in apartments free from the constraints of the domestic sphere. They had their meals served to them by servants, their homes cleaned, their wives

[343] Christine Nadir, "Utopian Studies, Environmental Literature and the Legacy of an Idea: Educating Desire in Miguel Abensour and Ursula K. Le Guin," *Utopian Studies* 21 (2010), 31.
[344] Le Guin, *The Dispossessed*, 55.

at home taking care of the children. The spheres of private and public blend together efficiently, if unnaturally.

The science of Anarres is similar to Urras—a tool that reinforces rigid hierarchies among people, especially as the scientists in this land are the only people who sit at the top rung of the power ladder. For example, Shevek, on returning to Anarres, must work for a scholar, Sabul, who basically steals work from his colleagues and sends information off to Urras secretly—trading the communal knowledge for individual gain. Hierarchies, unequal distribution of power, and boundaries of knowledge all connect to the notion of boundaries and communication walls. The very first page speaks to this idea:

> The Port of Anarres…like all the walls it was ambiguous, two-faced. What was inside it and was outside it depended upon which side of it were you on… the wall shut in not only the landing field but also the ships that came down out of space, and the men that came on the ships, and the worlds they came from, and the rest of the universe, leaving Anarres outside, free. Looked at from the other side, the wall enclosed Anarres: the whole planet was inside it, a great prison camp, cut off from other worlds and other men, in quarantine.[345]

Truth is hard to know on Anarres, as it can only appear in the "hill one happens to be sitting on."[346] In order to break these walls, more effective communication must take place. According to Keng, the Terran ambassador, "Urras now, rather remote, an interesting experiment. But I was wrong, wasn't I? It is important.

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[345] Le Guin, *The Dispossessed*, 1-2.
[346] Le Guin, *The Dispossessed*, 54.

Perhaps, Anarres is the key to Urras."[347] By constructing physical walls, Le Guin hints at the stronger central theme that involves the symbol of destroying walls to remove the binaries between nations.

The breaking down of culture comes from the outside: that individual that never seems to fit into any world they inhabit. For Le Guin, Shevek embodies the character that does not fit into the cultural sphere of existence—the economic sphere of communality. The first time we encounter this idea is in the language of science: "…look it for 1, then understood what it was—the primal number, that was both unity and plurality. 'That is the cornerstone,' said a voice of dear familiarity, and Shevek was pierced through with joy."[348] In this case, Le Guin creates the isolated character in Shevek through the notion of singularity; the cornerstone figure that everything relies upon for change. There are many instances where Le Guin allows the reader to take notice of his isolation, but the most powerful moments happen in the narrator's own internal dialogue. As Shevek states at the very beginning of the book: "He was clearly aware of only one thing, his own total isolation."[349] He makes the same declaration when he arrives on the planet Urras: "He was not part of it. Nor was he part of the world of his birth."[350] Nevertheless, Shevek knows he has a mission, which he notes might

[347] Le Guin, *The Dispossessed*, 342.
[348] Le Guin, *The Dispossessed*, 33.
[349] Le Guin, *The Dispossessed*, 6.
[350] Le Guin, *The Dispossessed*, 89.

be difficult: “he had been fool enough to think [about bringing] together two worlds to which he did not belong.”[351] Le Guin uses this character as a bridge to a former revolution, as she connects the founder of the Odonian movement of Anarres to the state of Shevek. She states that Odo never set foot onto Anarres as she “was an alien: an exile.”[352] The ones who never truly belong are the ones who can see the truth of a situation—they can see past their surroundings. Instead, they question, find the inaccuracies, and seek a solution. Brian McHale argues that “…rather than left as a irresolvable paradox of outside the character's minds…the canceled events of modernist fiction occur in one or other character's subjective domain or sub world."[353] The reader, like Shevek, is also an outsider to the two words. We, like the main character, must analyze the utopia—to find its weaknesses, and ask how we can bring about positive change in our own culture—especially since Urras so distinctly resembles our world.

For Le Guin, the solution lies in breaking the symbolic wall between lands; in creating an interconnection among things, nature, and culture; and in establishing interrelatedness between the opposing environments. This discussion of individuality focuses on harmonizing and connecting rather than opposing.[354] Susan Benefield writes that this society “would offer more human connection,

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[351] Le Guin, *The Dispossessed*, 90.
[352] Le Guin, *The Dispossessed*, 101.
[353] Brian McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction* (New York: Methuen, 1987), 101.
[354] Urbanowicz, “Personal and Politica,” 115.

more equality, and, above all, more freedom."[355] Shevek discusses walls and their images in the worlds in order to overcome the binaries of opposing lands. The first example occurs in the land of Anarres, and the actual physical wall between the spaceship landing site of Urras and the area of Anarres that surrounds it: "Far across the road he saw a line. As he approached it across the plain he saw it was a wall. It went from horizon to horizon cross the barren land. The road ran up to it and was stopped."[356] In a brick in the wall he saw a number: "…it was the primal number, that was both unity and plurality….that is the cornerstone."[357] The first quote discusses the disconnection between Anarres and Urras, while the second citation considers how to find some commonality between the locations, a cornerstone of unity.

Walls also exist in the world of Urras, showing parallels with Anarres: the wall imagery on both places emphasizes the need to break them down to develop communication. Shevek first sees these walls in the natural environment: "Even where the green faded into blue distance, the dark lines of lanes, hedgerows, or trees could still be made out, a network as fine as the nervous system of a living body. At last hills rose up bordering the valley."[358] All of these lines and divisions, these walls, represent the disunity of the Urras society. Figure 4.3

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[355] Susan Benfield, "The Interplanetary Dialectic: Freedom and Equality in Ursula Le Guin's *The Dispossessed*," *Perspectives on Political Science* 35 (2006), 129.
[356] Le Guin, *The Dispossessed*, 33.
[357] Le Guin, *The Dispossessed*, 33.
[358] Le Guin, *The Dispossessed*, 65.

discusses the role of communication in that the endless flow of communication also connects to Shevek's view of instantaneous time. The flow of time is parallel to communication in that, like time, communication exists in a fluid manner: never ending as long as the barriers are down and the other party is listening. Instantaneous communication, therefore, becomes the clearest choice for Shevek to use to destroy walls.

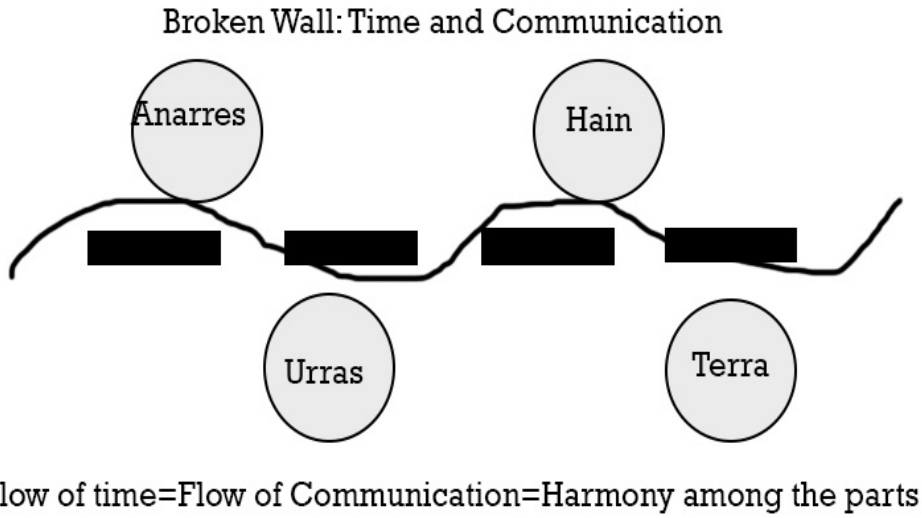

Figure 4.3 The Breaking of Boundaries in *The Dispossessed*

Many times, Shevek doubts his ability to reshape the future, as the walls represent external and internal conflict—a division of selfhood that weakens his drive and stamina for enacting a revolution: "He saw space shrink in upon him like the walls of a collapsing sphere driving in and in towards a central void, closing…struggling in science to escape from the knowledge of his own external

emptiness."[359] Once he accepts his fate to bind the lands, however, he asserts why he wants to connect Urras and Anarres: "I want the walls down. I want solidarity. I want free exchange between Urras and Anarres."[360] Removing walls also ties into the ongoing discussion of time in this novel. Communication is like time in that it is "like a river, the arrow, the stone, but he did not move."[361] Salas, Shevek's musician friend, discusses it in the terms of musical harmony: "the forward process entirely in relationship of its parts. It makes a lovely harmony. But they don't hear it."[362] When communication passes freely, it passes with a constant progression of time: an ongoing, all-encompassing movement. Nevertheless, the end goal of communication is return. Like the utopias of the early modern era, knowledge and change can happen when the narrator returns to their lands. As stated on Odo's grave: "to be whole is to be part; true voyage is return."[363] Shevek relates this idea when a member of Hain asks to follow Shevek back to Anarres. Shevek says: "You know for me it is easy. Whatever happens I am coming home. But you are leaving home. True journey is return."[364] The entire novel, the adventure, the journey, is what prepares Shevek to unbuild walls. For Hain, he is just beginning to understand the interrelatedness and connections

[359] Le Guin, *The Dispossessed*, 113.
[360] Le Guin, *The Dispossessed*, 138.
[361] Le Guin, *The Dispossessed*, 9.
[362] Le Guin, *The Dispossessed*, 175.
[363] Le Guin, *The Dispossessed*, 84.
[364] Le Guin, *The Dispossessed*, 386.

among the people. Communication begins with the voyage and receiving the information, understanding it requires the return.

Therefore, the attempt to remove walls reinforces the concepts of holism within the genders and the environment as based on specific feminist science fiction criteria, establishing a science that goes about ridding the world of dualism. The overall context related in this work is that all nature is one; all is the same. Shevek also reveals the importance of this holism, as Le Guin gives him the role of spokesperson for truth. He states that 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, or an adventurer; and his sons are born in exile.[365]

Without going back to your land, to notice the subtleties of your background, one cannot hope to reveal the truth of other worlds. Knowledge is key in this text, and science, in its newly shaped form, is the harbinger of the utopia.

All of these ideas establish a new science, proving all things in nature are one. Le Guin invents a science in which the knowledge of life, whether our connections to each other or to our landscape, needs to address these dualisms. She breaks down walls of communication between people in order to erase difference through the individual explorer—the individual that stands apart from his or her society and who fosters revolution. Le Guin's fictional locations

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[365] Le Guin, *The Dispossessed*, 89.

provide her a way to express her specific ‘social dream’ for a ‘better’ world, as she focuses on critical utopian elements: lands that raise difficult to answer questions, but provide hope for these solutions. Most of these solutions rely on her political context of anarchism, balancing the needs of the individual with that of the community. Nevertheless, her answer to the political context in her work reflects on the political climate of the utopia: she is trying to overcome the ecological scarcity of Anarres, a mimicry of Earthly sustainability concerns, and global connections between worlds (a larger debate found in the ecomfeminsit movement of the day).

Chapter 5

Separatist Utopian Literature: Holism and Duality in Pamela Sargent's *The Shore of Women*

Separatist utopian literature relies on the conception of feminist world-building as this genre discusses tensions between the stratified public/private spheres; the utopia provides a narrative construction that removes direct contact between the genders in order to assert innate human characteristics versus culturally constructed ones. Pamela Sargent's *The Shore of Women* presents a separatist utopian fiction that asserts the physical division of men from women as a means to discuss patriarchal concerns of gender constructions. The novel thus follows the tradition of Charlotte Perkin Gilman's *Herland*, the prime text of the separatist tradition, and both exhibit gender isolation that fosters female solidarity and freedom from private/public sphere classifications. As Sally Kitch writes, "people relate as individuals in fluid and negotiated, rather than legislated, relationships" in these separatist spaces.[366] By keeping the genders distinct, the sphere ideologies cannot exist; female characters gain freedom through a lack of a constrictive hierarchical structure. As Naomi Stankow-Mercer argues, many "feminist authors interrogated ideas of worlds with equality and often without men, endorsing the theory that women could gain true freedom and complete

[366] Sally Kitch, *Higher Ground: From Utopianism to Realism in American Feminist Thought and Theory* (Chicago, IL: U of Chicago P, 2000), 69.

personhood in men's absence."[367] In other words, women flourish in all-female paradises—the ruin only occurs when men enter the scene.[368]

The ending of these paradises often depicts dystopian conclusions: tragedy ensues when a male character visits, upsetting the female/nature balance.[369] At the point of contact, the women often relinquish their happiness and control over their lives—presumably in the name of love.[370] The utopian aspect hangs by a fragile thread upheld only by the absence of the male counterpart. While the landscapes, the reasons behind the separation, and the relationships among women may change (including whether those relationships are sexual or asexual) in separatist utopias, one constant is that women and men remain physically isolated. Nevertheless, the causes for the separatist movement are as complex as the resolutions employed by feminist authors—each separatist utopia responds to a certain cultural condition occurring in reality and, as such, presents itself as a highly revolutionary work.

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[367] Naomi Stankow-Mercer, "Dystopian visions: Women, men and equality in *The Gate to Women's Country*," *The Outlander: Captivity*," and *The Shore of Women*" *Electronic Doctoral Dissertations for UMass Amherst,* 1.
[368] Susanna J. Sturgis, "When Women Seize Power," *Sojourner: The Women's Forum* 14 (1989), 4A.
[369] See other works of Utopian separatist literature: Joanna Russ's *The Female Man*, James Tiptree's "Houston, Houston, Do You Read?," Nicole Griffith's *Ammonite*.
[370] This idea has an interesting connection to earlier literature. Some of the literature by Cavendish, especially her plays, reveals all-female societies where freedom ends when marriage begins ("The Convent of Pleasure"). The same ideology can be found in numerous conduct novels of the 18th to late 19th century. This suggests a borrowing of stratagems from early misogynist literature.

Like *Herland*, Sargent's novel finds its argument through a direct historical movement in the 1970s, asserting that the actions of an era reflect and influence the construction of the separatist landscape. Dana Shugar believes that Sargent's novel originates from the "radical-feminist, lesbian-feminist, and the lesbian separatist movements of the 1960's and 1970's."[371] This separatism refers to Marxist philosophies as the genre considers capitalist class oppression and the women's liberation movement.[372] *The Shore of Women* examines this power struggle between the sexes, but within a framework different from many other feminist separatist novels. Even though Pamela Sargent's book is a part of this controversial conversation, her work is more thought provoking as she illustrates the evils of separatist literature through a more 'critical' separatist novel. *The Shore of Women* questions the ideal of separatism while propagating hope for holism between man/woman and humanity/nature. In this way, her novel is combining the critical and separatist utopia. Like Le Guin's *The Dispossessed*, Sargent's utopia asks the reader to interrogate the actions made by the characters, apply these reactions to current society, and create a resolution. Like Cavendish's *The Blazing World*, Sargent employs a separatist strategy to show that the innate qualities of humans are not gender-specific. The blending of the strong female narrative voice in *The Shore of Women*, particularly evident in the character of

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[371] Dana R. Shugar, *Separatism and Women's Community* (Lincoln: U of Nebraska, 1995), xv.
[372] Shugar, *Separatism and Women's Community*, 99.

Birana, displays the skepticism that Shevek, Le Guin's narrator, has towards his own culture. As such, Sargent's novel exhibits many of the qualities of both *The Dispossessed* and *The Blazing World* and adds to the conversation through the blending of these two genres—the traditional utopia and the critical utopia—showing how utopian genres inform each other on the topic of dualism.

Each work in this study—*The Blazing World, The Dispossessed, The Shore of Women,* and *Oryx and Crake*—focuses more intently on one of the five tenets asserted throughout the dissertation: the gender binary, the issue of language and holism, the animal-human connection, the influence of the spheres, and the overall interaction with the environment. By looking at each novel in tandem, there is a greater sense of the overall conversation unfolding in the utopians genres. Specifically, in the ecofeminist debate about nature and the human, we see a type of understanding that does not develop from looking at one text alone. In reading each type of feminist utopia, a complicated picture forms and the reader observes how the subtle differences inform each other, providing a larger context to this holism debate. For example, Le Guin's green utopia concentrates on the interaction among the economic and ecological spheres, Cavendish's *The Blazing World* investigates the human-animal connection through a unique formation of animate nature, and Sargent's novel exposes the falseness of gendered behaviors through the context of separatist utopias. These

concentrations suggest each author's primary concern in the ecological debate, as well as how these arguments solidify the idea about overcoming binaries.

While the similarities amongst *The Shores of Women*, *The Dispossessed*, and *The Blazing World* are pertinent, so is the originality that Sargent brings to the table, particularly how she goes about removing the divisive binaries between humanity and nature through her separatist construction. Sargent invents a science that does the exact opposite: her religion-based science keeps men on the lower rungs of the Great Chain of Being. Sargent illustrates how science is a powerful tool for any gender. The book, therefore, views science as something that harms through its ability to preserve static gender affiliations. Moreover, stereotypical gendered identity reverses in this novel, highlighting the inaccuracies about genetic primacy. Gender-power constructs are more apparent in this novel because power is in the hands of the traditionally subordinate woman. Placing females in roles held previously by male scientists enables Sargent to present a dynamic argument about gender-based positions and attributions. Even more intriguing, scholars have paid scant attention to *The Shore of Women,* despite its significant place within the realm of separatist literature.[373] I analyze Pamela

[373] For more scholarship about the separatist utopias debate see the following works: Sally Kitch's *Higher Ground* as it studies the political background of separatist movements in 20th century feminist debates, Naomi Wolf's *Fire with Fire: The New Female Power and How It Will Change the 21st Century* as this work focuses on gendered identities as prescribed by cultural constructions, Linda Alcoff's "Cultural Feminism versus Post-Structuralism: The Identity Crisis in

Sargent's work in light of Marleen Barr's argument that newer authors belong in the discussion so that we might have a better sense of the range of feminist utopian works. Pamela Sargent is one such author who needs to be added to any science fiction collection, especially since a lot of her work centers on male/female constructs. As many have not read this out-of-print work, I will provide a brief summary of the novel. The summary will help to address some of the theoretical ideas I later suggest.

Summary of *The Shore of Women*

The novel begins with a backstory about an apocalypse caused by wars and male scientific inquiry. With the loss of male life, women are able to take over the world. Women construct a city with high walls to keep the surviving men out. The only problem is that women need to reproduce with a diverse genetic base to keep the society alive and well. To be able to keep men subordinate and relinquishing their sperm, women invent a religion that keeps men docile and obedient. The women make shrines throughout the hinterlands where men can

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Feminist Theory," George Slusser et al.'s *Transformations of Utopia: Changing Views of the Perfect Society*, Dana Shugar's *Separatism and Women's Community*, and Marleen Barr and Nicholas Smith's *Women and Utopia: Critical Interpretations Feminist*; also see postmodernist theory as related to separatist utopia formations in Patricia Waugh's *Feminine Fictions: Revisiting the Postmodern*, Robin Robert's "Post-Modernism and Feminist Science Fiction," and Janet Flax's "Postmodernism and Gender Relations in Feminist Theory;" as well as more Pamela Sargent specific scholarship in Naomi Stankow-Mercer's "Dystopian visions: Women, Men and Equality in '"The Gate to Women's Country," "The Outlander: Captivity," and "The Shore of Women,'" and Susanna Sturgis's "When Women Seize Power."

commune with virtual representations of women who look like specters or goddesses. The religion is polytheistic, with multiple women playing roles as goddesses through mind-speakers—devices that create virtual representations of actual women. When men are called to the city walls, they are "receiving a blessing." Once within the city, men are put to sleep, given mind-altering drugs that help to arouse them, and then eventually female scientists can collect male semen. Only certain women in the city may bear children and are called the "Mothers of the City." They are also the only ones to study and become leaders in society. If a Mother has a male child, the child's father is called to the wall and the child goes with them to live with male clans. Before the child leaves, his memory is wiped clean so that he does not remember his place within the wall. Moreover, the men are never told that the boys they retrieve are their sons. The men merely consider it a reward from the goddess, because the larger the tribe of men, the stronger they are in the hinterlands.

The beginning of the novel addresses cultural constructs through three stories. The first deals with Larissa's mother, a Mother of the City, who has a difficult time getting rid of her son, Buttons. Larissa's mother's lack of conformity destroys her daughter's status in the society. The second story deals with Larissa's changing status, as she moves in with another outsider named Zarina. Together these two women study history instead of the traditional studies of science. Society considers history an abhorrent type of research, because it

examines a time when men and women lived together. The third story is about a young woman named Birana and her mother. Both are exiled outside the wall after Birana's mother violently attacked her lover. Since Birana did not call the authorities, she faces punishment. Once outside the wall, the majority of the story centers on Birana's survival.

Since this novel switches chapters between characters, the chapters of the hinterlands receive their own sections. The main character in the hinterland is Avril, whose twin sister is Larissa. After receiving a blessing from the goddess in a shrine, he goes to the wall where he receives his brother, Buttons, and reunites with his guardian/father. Before this retrieval, however, Avril meets Birana in a shrine. She pretends to be a goddess and tells him not to reveal her identity to the wall. Avril is unable to hide this information and is told by the women in the city to kill her—that she is an imposter. When Avril attempts to kill Birana, he finds that he cannot. Instead, he kills his guardian, who attempts to murder Birana. The rest of the story tells of his adventures with Birana as they hide from fellow clansmen. Avril agrees not to kill Birana as long as she reveals the truths from behind the wall. As the chapters progress, Birana and Avril begin to find affinity with one another, which eventually leads to romantic love.

Several critical scenes pull the plot and thematic elements together in this book. Of great importance are two events in the Birana and Avril scenes. The first occurs when Avril and Birana visit a large agricultural clan over the wall—the

wall being the marker between the land that is close to the city and the wild frontier. It is here that Birana discovers another female who was exiled. However, unlike the love and friendship Birana and Avril share, Nallei has been giving blessings (sex) to maintain peace and power among the group of men. Later, we discover that the headsman has been using Nallei to maintain power among the villagers—since he receives blessings on a monthly basis and blessings mark the importance of a man. The second important event occurs when Birana and Avril visit the shore and find a culture where men physically and emotionally control women. When they find out that Birana is pregnant they allow her and Avril to stay. Eventually, Birana and Avril leave because of the harsh conditions put on women.

The main story within the city deals with Larissa, especially when Birana contacts her at the end of the book. When Larissa finds Birana in the hinterland, she realizes that Birana established a partnership with a male and has given birth to a daughter. Both of these things should cause Larissa to kill Birana. Instead, Larissa agrees to take the child and raise her in the city. When the Mothers of the City find out, they remove her from her position as a Mother, meaning she will no longer have the opportunity to have her own children. Larissa is exiled to her small apartment with Zarina while raising her brother's daughter. The end of the book suggests rumors that men are questioning the female goddess religion, inspired by Birana in the hinterlands. The destruction of this cultural coding also

occurs in Larissa, who begins to study history vigorously, hoping that the minds of the city women can also be changed. Identity, therefore, becomes the prime focal point of this work for both genders.

Gender Integration

The Shore of Women posits that innate gender characteristics are myths, since destruction and subordination occur at the hand of both sexes: power is dangerous in anyone's hands. Even though Naomi Wolf does not directly associate this idea to *The Shore of Women,* she explains it in a larger theoretical sense: "we overlook our own parallel irrational fear…women who use traditionally masculine power [can] rise becoming like men."[374] Sargent complicates this idea within the city of women as there are those who question this order, leading to a much stronger analysis of the gender binaries than traditional separatist utopias.[375] The first woman to question the binary order is Larissa's mother, who has a difficult time ridding herself of her male child. The second is Zarina, who wants to know the history of their planet and questions the social constructs of the connections between men and women. The third is Larissa herself, who decides to let Birana live and keeps Birana's child under the protection of the city. These three examples are a minority in the social order,

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[374] Naomi Wolf, *Fire with Fire: The New Female Power and How It Will Change the 21st Century* (New York: Random House, 1993), 176

[375] This thought hints back to the beginning of this chapter, as I discuss how this novel is akin to a critical utopia alongside a separatist utopia.

however, making it difficult for any changes to transpire in such a stringent system.

Nevertheless, power struggle takes on new meaning through this book as the primary emotions that the reader experiences comes from characters who see flaws in the system, making the vices of the society even more apparent. Naomi Mercer states that this book shows "how humans can easily pervert feminist utopian characteristics in order for one group to seize and maintain power and continue the exploitation and oppression of other people."[376] Exploitation, in this case, relates to women keeping information from men. A lack of access to knowledge links back to *The Dispossessed,* as the city of Abennay keeps knowledge from the masses in order to assert a type of communal control. Exploitation and oppression, especially in terms of gender domination, become a large piece of the holistic puzzle. Countering binaries and destroying the male/female spheres relies on everyone having equal opportunities to acquire information. As a result, gaining power by withholding knowledge is an ultimate theme of utopian works, proving that ignorance is a prime way to assert power over others—an ignorance found through a discussion of science in these novels.

What is interesting about *The Shore of Women* is that the utopia explores science as way to illustrate female wrongs against men. Sargent uses a type of female science to keep men subordinate and fashion reverse gender and nature

[376] Mercer, "Dystopian visions," 3.

binaries, mainly through religious nature deities. As the background of the story unfolds, Sargent affirms that men carry the blame for the destruction of the world through civil wars and scientific weaponry. Krishan Kumar expounds on this idea when he writes "technology and technocratic domination," in *The Shore of Women,* "is seen in particular as a male principle responsible for the waste, pollution, and exploitation of nature and society."[377] Women rise to power to remedy the harmful effects wrought by men and to use science both to exploit men and to keep their barbaric ways under control. Yet, over time, these beliefs create false representations of the male gender, just as the science of the mechanical age generated false representations of the woman through biological stereotypes. *The Shore of Women* attempts to counter these thoughts by locating "a space where women and men can live together with mutual dignity."[378] Differences in the lands and the genders in this book eventually inspire the holistic viewpoint that all things interrelate—everything is more closely aligned than separate. The use of disparate lands to prove holism is another way this text connects to *The Dispossessed*. Like the structures of Anarres and Urras, the differing environments in Sargent's fiction—the city, the hinterlands, and the shore—reveal how views and societal constructs can inform a people. The

[377] Krishna Kumar, "Primitivism in Feminist Utopias," *Alternative Futures* 4 (1981), 63.
[378] Marleen Barr, *Future Females: A Critical Anthology* (N.P.: Popular P., 1981), 100.

reaction to these variances develop as a product of actively criticizing the values held in the city, the hinterlands, the land beyond the wall, and the shore. Each scene exposes the falseness of gender and leads to active, critical reading.

Sargent presents a different version of this dynamic in her "Fears," which tells of a time when women become extinct, due to the unintended consequence of wars and the need to replace fallen soldiers with more males, coupled with the need for women to birth men. In essence, families genetically choose male babies over females. Because of the lack of women, many women go into hiding to avoid assault. Sargent's short story speaks to a similar theme found in her novel: men and women are such distinct creatures that they seem like separate species.[379] This debate of the female versus male encapsulates many different messages: chaotic uncontrolled nature, the angel in the house, and the subordinate, weaker sex. All of these images suggest that, biologically, woman should be controlled. This gender binary reverberates throughout the ages, starting with scientific pursuits and then trickling into the social and economic spheres that influence cultural interaction. Over time, these images of the woman are "over determined by her behavior" defining a belief in "innate womanhood."[380] Culture, through advertisements and cultural norms, continues the picture of the "proper" woman.

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[379] See argument in chapter two of dissertation as it relates to the scientific justification of the separation of man/woman on the Great Chain of Being.
[380] Linda Alcoff, "Cultural Feminism versus Post-Structuralism: The Identity Crisis in Feminist Theory," *Signs* 13 (1988), 416; 414.

However, the scientific paradigm fashioned the woman we know today. When the scientific revolution theorized a binary between nature and science, locating woman within the nature realm, all other ideologies followed suit. In these incarnations of ecofeminism, the qualities that define the separate spheres overturn traditional systems that classify woman as the weaker sex.[381]

The first way to overturn identity, then, is by making the reader uncomfortable with castes determined by biology. Sargent's society reverses gendered behaviors in the beginning chapters. In Larissa's group of friends, someone comments about the young boy, Buttons, in regards to his name: "young boys do not need names."[382] Since young boys will be given to male companions before they are grown, women do not name their male children. Giving a creature a name established a deeper connection to it. Still, there is another reason why the women do not bond with Buttons: men possess harmful characteristics. The girls state the following about Buttons: "[Male] feelings are shallower and more violent; they cannot give life and so must deal in death; their minds are narrow and incapable of higher intellectual function."[383] Women construct men in a way that conveys negativity—a role-reversal of the construction of the male/female gender binary. In a later section of the novel, men connect to aggressive nature: "The biological well being of humankind as a whole required some of their

[381] Wolf, *Fire with Fire*, 175.
[382] Pamela Sargent, *The Shore of Women* (New York: Random House, 1986), 6.
[383] Sargent, *The Shore of Women*, 9.

qualities, but the survival of civilization demanded that women, who were less driven and able to channel their aggressiveness constructively, remain in control."[384] Female control builds from their reproductive capabilities, their biology—"Men destroy; women build and nurture. It's because we carry our children inside us, and men can't."[385] In this way, Sargent is reversing the traditional binary of the woman with a new antithetical view of the male.

As I argue in previous chapters, particularly the introduction to chapter two, women are traditionally portrayed as less intelligent, less rational than men. As seen in figure 5.1, the binaries that develop place man firmly in the realm of nature—a location that makes the male subordinate to the feminine realm of reason. There is a clear distinction between the early modern dichotomy and this 20th century construction: Sargent not only comprehends the placement of women in traditional society; she also, through her presentation of the mirrored binary, displays the inaccuracies of a model that is so transitory and highly mutable.

[384] Sargent, *The Shore of Women*, 90
[385] Sargent, *The Shore of Women*, 96.

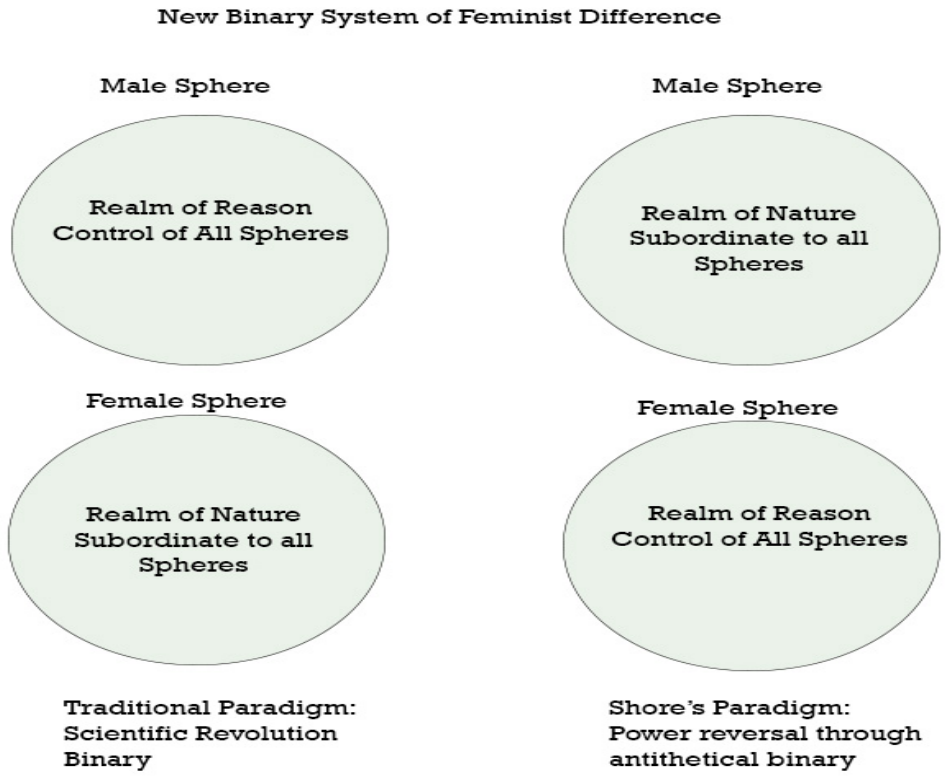

Figure 5.1 Binary Realms of Gender

In Cavendish's *The Blazing World*, Le Guin's *The Dispossessed*, and Sargent's *The Shore of Women,* the dichotomy of gender services the authors' own original agendas. Cavendish maintains the idea of a female association with chaotic nature, while also creating a bridge between humanity and nature. The connection results from the exploration of a female scientific agenda and ethos: do not harm nature for scientific pursuits. Le Guin's novel closes the gap between genders as she juxtaposes the genders on Annares with the gender hierarchy found in Urras,

establishing a unified view of the perfect gender—one that is free from public sphere constraints. And Sargent finds solidarity through a reversal of roles. She allows female characters to play the role of villain, proving that power in any hands can be dangerous. However, unlike previous separatist literature, Sargent does not portray separatism as a utopian ideal, placing her closer to critical utopias. The reader, becoming so immersed in the lives of Birana and Avril, realizes that the qualities of man and women are not biologically, but culturally constructed. In this manner, Sargent uses her space to discuss not only these gendered stereotypes, but also how certain systems propagate these ideals, especially by systems of communication—the major theoretical strategy Le Guin deploys in *The Dispossessed*.[386]

Language and Gender

Like Le Guin, Sargent uses the topic of language and communication as a trope that hints at gender subjugation, reinforcing the separate spheres debate in linguistic formations. *The Shore of Women* promotes dualistic language in two ways. The first method deals with the language of the walled city, specifically the language of the goddess religion. At one point in the novel, Larissa feels a certain amount of envy for those women in society who are not the mothers of the city. While they are of a lower status, they never "have to communicate with [men]

[386] See argument for Le Guin in chapter four on the communication systems of possessive and communal language of the two planets.

over a mindspeaker…or concern [themselves] with what lay out there."[387] Larissa, being a future mother of the city, must use the language of this false religion to keep men under her control and, at some point, she must have children: children who may be sent away from her if they become boys. Torment and separation are also common for the men in this book, as their only sense of satisfaction comes from communing with these religious goddesses. Avril ponders the psychological effects that this type of communication fosters between the wild men and the aura of the goddess: "she has made us mindless creatures."[388] Therefore, religious communication generates dualism among the sexes: for one gender it fosters domination and for the other subordination.

The second way that communication and language enforce dualism is by contrasting the communication of the city—a reversal of traditional gendered binaries—with the language of the shore—a representation of standard gendered binaries. As soon as Birana reaches the shore she finds that she is a member of the dominated gender. First, Tern, the headsman, does not allow her a voice: "You are not to speak. [Avril] will ask the questions."[389] Then later, Birana realizes that men do not communicate with women at all except for sign language: "The first relates to hand gestures that males make toward their genital region, signaling

[387] Sargent, *The Shore of Women*, 68.
[388] Sargent, *The Shore of Women*, 88.
[389] Sargent, *The Shore of Women*, 400.

women to immediately satisfy their needs."[390] These two contrasting worlds, the city and the shore, echo Le Guin's construction of the female voice. In *The Dispossessed,* Le Guin shows that the language of Anarress is community-oriented, leading to a language that assumes non-gender bias, while on Urras, language reflects capitalist structures that create hierarchies among the genders and the poor. Like Le Guin, Sargent enhances the dualism inherent in language from multiple perspectives—the land of the shore and the land of the city—as they each give a differing view of gender relations: one that enforces typical gender stereotypes and the other which reverses stereotypes. And, like Le Guin, Sargent challenges the reader to take notice of how fictive language structures enforce dualistic cultural systems.

Animal and the Human World

The animal-human debate in *The Shore of Women* presents a correlation between the animal and human, asserting that humans are, in fact, animals. She also furthers this argument through humanity's relationship within its environmental setting. Noel Birkby and Leslie Weisman explore this notion of space in terms of gender orientation. Places like grocery stores or powder rooms evoke images of women and, as such, there is an inherent value of power and

[390] Sargent, *The Shore of Women*, 405.

territory to every aspect of society.[391] *The Shore of Women* explores this idea with every new ideology; ideologies that alter the perception of humans in the novel, especially when the human being portrays animal-like qualities.[392] Consequently, one way the animal-as-human theory unfolds is through the characters' relationships with the setting.

Sargent best displays the connection between animal and setting when situating Birana in the wilderness, as the location of nature ultimately draws out innate animal characteristics. As Kumar suggests, primitive feminist utopias present "societies and characters [that] are embedded in forests, mountains, and deserts, and most of the action consists in journeys through this landscape."[393] The landscape is where one can find knowledge and enculturation. Birana mentions the association with nature as something identifiable with power construction. For example, Birana says the following while walking through the meadow: "There was some beauty in Avril's world, a beauty which was lost to the city, a beauty its tended parks could not match."[394] She also says that "pokeweed and dandelion…[were] plucked out of the city" rather than left to grow freely.[395] The image of domesticated nature relates to a topic stressed in part two: the

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[391] Noel Birkby and Leslie Weisman, "A Woman-built Environment: Constructive Fantasies," *Quest* 2.1 (1975), 12.
[392] See earlier debate in chapter four on the animal-human connection.
[393] Kumar, "Primitivism in Feminist Utopias," 62.
[394] Sargent, *The Shore of Women*, 225.
[395] Sargent, *The Shore of Women*, 243.

domesticated landscape along with controlled chaotic female nature.[396] Freedom in the wild land inspires a freedom and aggression within Birana. This aggression manifests after Birana and Avril murder a horde of barbarians: "A new feeling was rising in me—a wild joy that I was alive and that our enemies were dead."[397] While society characterized Buttons, being male, as having a violent nature, Birana illustrates that the setting, the wildness of nature itself, brings about human-animal qualities. Having Birana kill in this land suggests that all humans share the same qualities, good and bad. This novel hints at the abolition of the female/nature binary by giving women a sense of power in an unhindered, uncontrolled, animalistic space. Without the city's harsh rules and regulations, the freedom of the land unearths a hidden and uncontrollable fierceness in the human—the environment produces an animalistic survival mode.

The wild landscape allows Birana a wild nature that she could not act on before, as this type of wildness removes the duality of the genders: both Avril and Birana exhibit the same inherent natural characteristics. There are many times that Avril finds that his feelings towards Birana are not unlike the other animals he has seen in nature. The creatures he observes are of different sexes, producing offspring, finding some type of mutual companionship despite their outward biological differences. Animals, by their inherent nature, help Avril to understand

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[396] Also see discussion about domesticated landscapes as they relate to the domesticated goddess in chapter 1.
[397] Sargent, *The Shore of Women*, 220.

that it is not wrong to love a woman.[398] As such, *The Shore of Women* is part of an emerging "post separatist feminist utopia" which aims to "discover how to enjoy equal relationships with men' and how women and men can live together with mutual dignity and equality."[399] This equality relies on breaking down barriers that keep women and men separate. The barrier occurs through the fabricated wall of science that obscures Birana's natural self—a self that thrives in the undomesticated, animal world.

Unlike Cavendish's novel, in which there is an explicit reference to the viability of animal knowledge and their importance, or Le Guin's, which shows our connection to the animal world by imagining its absence, Sargent shows how our innate behaviors really are animal-like. As such, Sargent suggests, through our immersion in unruly nature, we can reconnect to the animal/natural world. The dualism between animal-human is a false dichotomy as we are, in fact, both. Birana's situation allows for deeper reflections on the cultural makeup: Birana, and humans in general, no longer bombarded with culturally specific stimuli, can form opinions freely without outside influence. Nature is the ultimate catalyst for the human-animal debate as the natural environment brings the humans closer to

[398] This conversation also aligns with gay/lesbian studies that examine how cultural constructs inform our views of whom we are allowed to love. Sargent is using a reversal of terms in this book to explore this issue more clearly.
[399] Sargent, *The Shore of Women*, 281; 284.

their relationship as mammals—they are creatures that forgot that they belong more to the woods than they do the exacting concrete of the city walls.

Interaction with Other Spheres

The governmental structures of the female city rely on the same fundamental falsehoods that Cavendish opposes in the early modern era. As the Royal Society perpetuates a false religious philosophy that places women and animals below God and man, so does Sargent's fictional world generate dualism between the sexes through false histories. In this way, biological nature is the justification for separatist ideologies. Elaine Baruch writes that the "universal division of human labor into male and female roles would seem to suggest that among humans, biology has ever determined destiny…[a thought] to suggest that biology was not a sufficient basis for role differentiation."[400] Only when women remove themselves from biological differentiation is it possible that they "can connect authentically."[401] Authenticity, however, does not suggest that there is a removal of hierarchy. Even among the women in the city, there is distrust. One of the biggest topics in this work relates to the study of history, a seemingly disruptive and caustic field. History promotes revolution as the discipline asks women to see the past, when men and women lived together, as something that was natural. As Zarina states to Larissa: "Most women don't want to admit that

[400] Elaine Baruch, "A Natural and Necessary Monster: Women in Utopia," *Alternative Futures* 2 (1972), 30.
[401] Wolf, *Fire with Fire,* 171.

men had the capacity to think and act in certain ways. They'd rather believe that men always had certain innate limitations, because to believe otherwise raises a lot of questions about the way things are."[402] The propaganda of the female government tries to obscure this knowledge through the enforcement of sameness and a non-questioning attitude toward one's government. By enforcing these constrictive attitudes, there is no way for the two genders to achieve sameness—the dualistic spheres will remain in place.

One way the government creates this dualism is by giving the male an identity of 'otherness," the status of traditional 1950s science fiction. Sargent's work creates this binary with a play on the traditional *Amazing Stories* motif in which the rational, scientific male must control the female, alien other. This topic appears in a lot of separatist literature—the idea that "feminist utopias view men as aliens."[403] The alien, as a symbol, is separate from society and culture, and is a deterrent to progress. Moreover, the 'otherness' of the alien hints at the nature-animal debate discussed earlier. If the 'other,' traditionally the woman, must be suppressed, she also takes on the form of not only the alien, but also of the nature-animal. The conversation ultimately comments on the idea of the "woman as other" motif that early modern science advanced through the Great Chain of

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[402] Sargent, *The Shore of Women,* 93.
[403] George Slusser, Paul Alkon, Roger Galliard, and Daniele Chatelain, eds., *Transformations of Utopia: Changing Views of the Perfect Society* (New York: AMS P Inc., 1999), 282.

Being, especially as it casts the female as closer to the animal instead of the rational.

This power play requires a complex association between lands and the people who inhabit them. Sargent's argument, however, removes this binary as the placement of 'the other' factors into the environment—the traditional hierarchy of the shore and the reversal of order in the city. Marleen Barr notes this idea when she states: "the City sends forth surveillance ships, piloted by women, which fire upon men who disregard social codes regarding male subordination. The women in ships who attack men's territory reverse the notion that men are aliens. These women themselves are the science fiction alien invaders."[404] In this way, the identification of the alien depends on cultural positioning. As posited by Zorina: "Men sinned in the past by denying us a full life, by ruling over us. They justified this by saying that we were incapable of such rules ourselves. Now we rule over them and call it right."[405] Thus, the men see women as higher powers, capable of blessing or harming them as a result of the goddess motif. Women see men as barbaric alien others who must be controlled for the continuance of the planet and civilization.

Complicating the notions about gender construction, Sargent's novel shows how influential all spheres of influence are as they work together to

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[404] Marleen Barr, *Future Females: A Critical Anthology* (N.P.: Popular P., 1981), 163.
[405] Sargent, *The Shore of Women,* 121.

establish dualism. In this way, she has the reader look at all aspects of culture and how these spheres (economic, religious, cultural) form power hierarchies. As Janet Flax writes: "in the US, such [power] transformations include changes in the structure of the economy [and] the family" as a "[declining] authority of previously powerful social institutions" display "divergent demands…concerning justice, equality, social legislation, and the proper role of the state."[406] In *The Shore of Women,* the power shift occurs due to an anarchic past where male rule destroyed the earth. All aspects of the society, much like after the Scientific Revolution, aligns to a new paradigm—a shift that relies on changing the social/cultural spheres and the private/public spheres. As such, Sargent "considers the impact of scientific and social change on the concept of self and on the institutions that help define us for ourselves."[407] These concepts can be easily identifiable as long as one takes the time to reflect on those constructs hidden within cultural propaganda. Looking at Sargent's world, the reader perceives a reversal of roles that explores the fabricated beliefs of inherent gendered stereotypes. Reversing gender roles, like intellectual ability or innate violence, presents issues in the book that become satirical and demonstrate a mockery of the late 20th century social strata.

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[406] Janet Flax, "Postmodernism and Gender Relations in Feminist Theory," *Signs* 12 (1987), 627.
[407] Thomas Morrissey, "Pamela Sargent's Science Fiction for Young Adults: Celebrations of Change," in *Science Fiction Studies* 16 (1989), 184.

One of the ways in which men and women differentiate is through reproduction and sexual-cultural binaries. The theme of reproduction occurs repeatedly in feminist science fiction utopias as it demonstrates one of the main ways women align to the private sphere.[408] Sargent enters this debate using a technological angle: she uses science to make childbearing less connected to the private sphere as male sperm is harvested, even eliminating the need for sexual intercourse. Science helps women remain distinct from men through reproductive technology. By using artificial insemination, and by the collection of semen through mind-altering virtual realities, women do not need to create bonds with the opposite sex. The same is true for men. With the absence of women, men are forced to find relationships with other men. Science also helps women create a fabricated religion, enacting it through technological shrines and large weaponized ships—all of these inventions aim to open fissures between the sexes. Nevertheless, reproductive science has evident flaws. Valerie Broege discusses this idea as she states "it is obvious from [Sargent's] story and others…that genetic experimentation can have a profound effect on reproduction, causing unviable mutations, death, or even extinction of the human race."[409] I argue that it

[408] See discussion in chapter 3 on world-building in contemporary worlds as it connects to the ways traditional sci-fi utopias overcome the binaries of reproduction: reproduction without males, reproduction replaced by technology, reproduction inherent in the male gender.

[409] Valerie Broege, "Views on Human Reproduction and Technology in Science Fiction," *Extrapolation* 29 (1988), 207.

is not only the extinction of the race that could occur from this reproductive science, but that this science involves manipulating the religious sphere for hierarchical reasons.

Those closest to the reproductive process question the devices as they impose an unhealthy and stagnant relationship between that man and woman. In the earlier chapters of the work, a female scientist and a procurer of sperm, named Fari, sees the dangers in this kind of relationship. She describes to Larissa the type of love she hopes to one day have: not "an enslaving love, or its sordid physical expression, but a love in which each could draw on the strengths of the other and become more than each might have been alone."[410] Fari's words reveal that the love between a man and a woman is possible and, perhaps, desirable. With a firm structure of religion in place the land of the city and hinterland remain paralyzed. Akin to Le Guin's *The Dispossessed,* Sargent presents a world where the concept of freedom and individual choice remains stagnant and, as such, little progression can occur between the genders. The significance of this discussion relies on removing a female from the cultural context, Birana, and creating conversations with the opposite gender: Avril. Holism among the genders happens through Avril and Birana, as they awaken to new ideas and perspectives. These perspectives come about as the reader begins to analyze the belief systems of three separate lands: the walled city/hinterland, beyond the wall, and the shore. The viewpoints,

[410] Sargent, *The Shore of Women,* 122.

like that of Le Guin's Shevek, involve having the character take a journey that reveals binary points of view related to community and power hierarchies.

Overall Interaction with the Environment

While the early part of *The Shore of Women* asserts female hierarchy over the male through a faux religious construction, specifically within the realm of science, the latter half of the book exposes power constructs against the woman; the woman no longer holds a place of power in the hinterlands as she becomes a tool for male pursuits.[411] These changes occur through the shifting landscape. The closer Birana is to the city, the stronger the female religion, the more power she has. The further she travels from the city walls, the weaker she becomes. In the beginning of the novel, Birana tries to use the goddess ideology while in the male hinterlands. However, this type of religious structure cannot hold, for as soon as she shows favoritism to Avril, the other men in the tribe become jealous. Once separated from the group, and from Avril's father, Avril and Birana start to form a bond of friendship, a friendship that exists because there are only two people involved. Later, after visiting the agricultural village beyond the wall, Birana meets another female exile, Nallei. She later finds out that in order to keep peace between the men, she must allow them to have her blessing. The headsman is the

[411] This idea is evident in Le Guin's *The Dispossessed* as seen in the city of A-Io on the planet Urras.

one who takes the most advantage of this situation as he uses the blessings to gain power over the other men.

Location informs the type of dualism that Birana must face as the most evident dualism occurs between the walled city and the shore. When Birana and Avril visit the shore, a place where women are under the control of men, a reversal to the female-dominated city transpires. This shore reflects the traditional western values among men and women. As soon as the couple land on the shore, they are greeted by the clan headsman, Tern, who divides them up—men and women dwell in different homes. As Tern tells Avril: "he cannot sleep in the hut the women are in."[412] Sexual misconduct is another way to establish power in this realm. One such instance occurs when Tern rapes Willow, causing Avril to question his own desires and needs as he takes pleasure in the scene. Birana soothes Avril's mixed feelings about the event by stating the following: "There's evil in all of us--what matters is whether or not we act on it."[413] Again, biological tendencies and aggressive behavior no longer apply to gender—a thought that is also mentioned in the beginning chapters by Zarina: "Men used pleasure to enslave women…women now use the pleasure of the goddess to enslave men."[414] Hierarchy, therefore, depends on the paradigms of the societal makeup: who holds the power, how is the power upheld, and why does the stratagem exist.

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[412] Sargent, *The Shore of Women,* 403.
[413] Sargent, *The Shore of Women*, 413.
[414] Sargent, *The Shore of Women*, 232.

Sargent uses these highly stratified binaries to assert the mythological components they carry—myths can be re-written and they can change the entire structure of a society for the better. Knowing these power strategies, like the women on the shore, removes the unconscious aspect of who remains in power and why. The ideas inherent in culture are readily accessible if the person knows the information embedded within the society. They are tangible, understandable things that can cause revolutions for or against a subordinate people. For example, the women of the shore find hope in Birana as she represents a female goddess. These women saw the emergence of Birana, a lady of the city, as a sign that their subordination will end: "The women lived in hope that others of her kind would someday come to the camp and restore their magic to them. They took Birana's presence as a sign that this might happen soon."[415] Sargent, through the interactions of different cultural values, explores a deeper debate about gender position in relation to knowledge.

In the hinterlands, the goddess keeps the men subordinate as religion—aided by science—keeps men ignorant of the truth. In the land beyond the wall, the goddess figure is questioned and used for male domination over other males. Nallei becomes the female symbol of power for male domination. Lastly, the shore shows "lands in the east that are not controlled and no goddess lives there,"

[415] Sargent, *The Shore of Women*, 409.

reverting back to male domination through physical strength.[416] The point being: power inheres through cultural ideologies, but is not the result of an inherently gendered trait. As seen in figure 5.2, relationships between the sexes develop based on how far Birana and Avril move past the city center. Like any culturally created system, the closer one is to the core of the ideas (the walled city) the stronger the beliefs. The walled city places shrines in the hinterlands closest to themselves, propagating stronger religious ties as these men visit and commune with the goddesses daily. Their existence depends on the this type of social interaction as men see the goddess as something that protects them and gives them power—as in the blessings and the giving to men young children for their clans. Once Birana and Avril reach the outer walls, a place of ruined shrines, the system fades somewhat, allowing a new type of flexibility: the female goddess serves man in a more dominated position. Lastly, at the shore, no longer a part of the walled system paradigms as there are no constructs set up to enforce the religion, a new system occurs: one in which women become slaves. The flow of ideas lessens according to the landscape, revealing how culture must repeatedly enforce certain false dichotomies or fall apart—the mutability of these systems of thought is an inaccurate informer of a person's place in the environment.

[416] Sargent, *The Shore of Women,* 188.

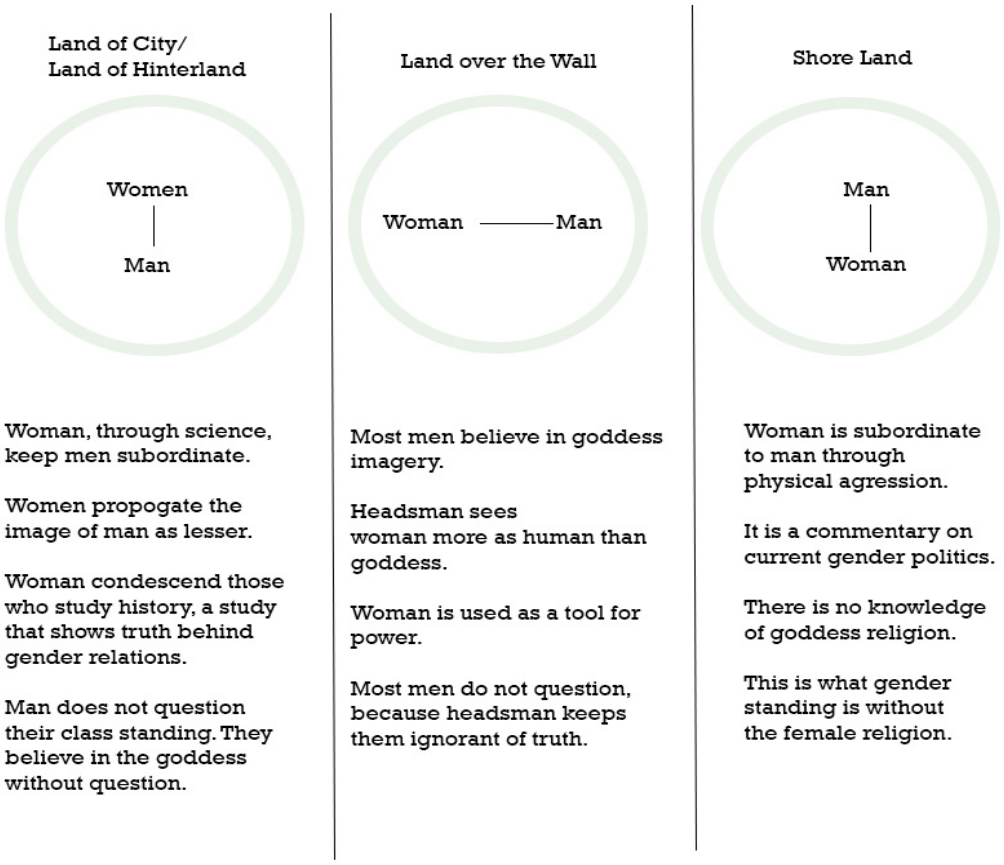

Figure 5.2 Land-Gender Construct

Sargent also reveals how separate worlds can reunite through understanding the truths behind humanity. This idea arises when Birana and Avril leave the shore, fostering their own nucleus in the lands—they do not abide by any of the cultural constructs of the walled city, the hinterlands, or the shore. They rely on each other and on the notion of equality. Robin Roberts similarly notes that works steeped in mechanism "celebrate liminality, the disruption of boundaries, the confounding of traditional markers of 'difference,' the

undermining of the authorial security of the egotistical sublime."[417] In essence, *The Shore of Women* wishes to blur identities through sharp contrast. As Le Guin shows in *The Dispossessed*, sharp dichotomies between lands helps the reader navigate through the dualism that is occurring. When one looks at the walled city, one sees how power structures inhibit healthy male-female relationships, an idea that becomes more apparent at each new location. Holism occurs by showing that the animal-human and the male-female connection exist only because of false assumptions based on private/public sphere mentalities.

Therefore, the contrast appears within the closed worlds of women and men, introducing the interactions between Birana and Avril to prove that identity is not biologically or culturally exclusive. This work fights "for a sense of unified selfhood, a rational, coherent, effective identity."[418] In fact, many see this novel as one that endorses yin-yang idealism—a place where everything is "enclosed in one circle, deep within each half a seed of the other."[419] As such, holism appears between the sexes, as well as within humanity's connection to nature. This reconnection requires several steps. First, men and women must look at each other as individuals. Their reactions to each other should not draw on stereotypes of a perceived gender. Second, they need the notion of friendship between the sexes.

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[417] Robin Roberts "Post-Modernism and Feminist Science Fiction," *Science Fiction Studies* 17 (1990), 136.
[418] Patricia Waugh, *Feminine Fictions: Revisiting the Postmodern* (London: Routledge, 1989), 6.
[419] Sturgis, "When Women Seize Power," 5A.

Third, there should be recognition that man and woman are both wholly connected to the natural environment. All things are made of equal parts and should be respected as such. A cyclical view of the world depends on moving away from a science that dominates, from the science that causes the fictional and actual division of all things. As Larissa states on the last page of the novel: "We are being given a chance to reach out to our other selves. What we do will show what we are and determine what we shall become."[420] Selfhood is finding the other half, perhaps finding humanity within a wild nature free of scientific domination. Freedom is being able to relieve oneself from the city with a new 'shore of women'.

[420] Sargent, *The Shore of Women,* 471

Chapter 6

Environmental Concerns Through the Context of Scientific Inquiry, Language, and Genetics in Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*

Margaret Atwood's novel *Oryx and Crake* is the first book in the Maddaddam trilogy and serves as a bookend to her famous 1986 work, *The Handmaid's Tale*.[421] While *Oryx and Crake* connects more to corporate research and marketing, the association between these novels hinges on societal destruction due to governmental control, loss of social awareness between the genders and, more broadly, the tension between humanity and nature. Atwood imagines a world where science constructs constrictive borders. These borders alienate humanity from the environment as a product of scientific progress. Science, in Atwood's case, manifests in the manipulation of nature with god-like hubris, as seen in the creation of hybrid animal/hominids, the breeding of pigoons (chicken-like animals) to feed the overpopulated masses, and the hybrid pets that turn into predators. Yet, the binaries that develop between nature and culture—or nature and science—are harder to detect. Atwood addresses these binaries on a linguistic level. This subtlety requires the reader to be extremely active and mindful in the analysis of the characters and the pivotal plot points.[422]

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[421] Earl Ingersoll, "Survival in Margaret Atwood's Novel *Oryx and Crake*," *Extrapolation* (2011), 162.

[422] See the following scholarship as it informs the overall discussion of Atwood in connection to overcoming dualism: Bouson Brooks's *Margaret Atwood*: *The*

Atwood posits an argument that resituates humanity's association to nature via the use of language and places her argument closer to *The Dispossessed* in relation to binary language structures that enhances cultural values. Nevertheless, *Oryx and Crake* adds to many of the conversations in the previous chapters. To review, Cavendish asserts a new scientific philosophy that examines the human-animal/man-woman connection, Le Guin offers a scientific paradigm that involves economic spheres in relation to the ecological, and Sargent investigates the binary claims between the genders through reverse stereotypes. Atwood focuses her energy on using the concept of word language versus scientific language to overcome the binaries. These binaries develop between the contrasting philosophies of "word people" and "number people." The main characters of this book represent these starkly different views: Jimmy/Showman as "word" man and Crake as "number" man. These characters provide differing viewpoints about their world and proffer countering opinions about how to solve ecological problems. The resolutions depend on how this fictional society views

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Robber Bride, *The Blind Assassin*, *Oryx and Crake*; Holly Lynn Baumgartner's and Roger Davis's *Hosting the Monster*; Dunja Mohr's "Transgressive Utopian Dystopias: The Postmodern Reappearance of Utopia in the Disguise of Dystopia"; Tom Moylan's *Scraps of the Untainted Sky*; Fiona Tolan's *Margaret Atwood: Feminism and Fiction*; Susan Hall's "The Last Laugh: A Critique of the Object Economy in Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*"; Hannes Bergthaller's "Housebreaking the Human Animal: Humanism and the Problem of Sustainability in Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* and *The Year of the Flood*"; and Ronald Hatch's "Margaret Atwood, the Land, and the Ecology."

the "word" and "number" people. Jimmy, a man of words, is censured by his society for his innate talent with word play, even as the system exploits him by the end of the novel.[423] In this highly scientific, capitalist society, "word people" do not rise in ranks.[424] His best friend, Crake, is a calculating individual with an aptitude for science which, being the field of highest attainment in their society, affords Crake greater riches and status. Through these two characters, Atwood explores the concept of what it means to be human. Humanity and the connection of our relationship to nature emerge once societal labels strip away from concepts of personhood. Atwood uses this understanding to forward her message on healing the disconnection between humanity and the environment. Atwood uses the genre of the critical dystopia to assert her opinions. Once again, the critical genre plays a pivotal role in allowing authors the ability to explore complex subjects as they characterize freedom and resistance to the status quo. The utopian genres provide specific formulas that uncover problems in the environment through misguided scientific investigation.

Since these worlds exist in the playing field of the imagination, the characters find resolutions to the plagues that face humanity, but also nurture

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[423] As his use of words were subverted for copywriting for the blyss pill.
[424] Atwood cleverly creates a Great Chain of Being here, but instead of it being based on gender, as both men and women can interact in the public sphere, she bases it on talents. Talents, like science, earn you more money and status. It is a nice mapping of economic talents to current 21st Western views of valued disciplines.

ideas for those reading the works: fiction forces action. The clarity of this purpose unfolds through the overall trope of the utopian genre, as well as author-specific agendas. Therefore, the first topic I explore in this chapter is the concept of genre and its adaptation to ecofeminist agendas. This investigation develops the themes of gender reintegration, language and gender, the animal-human connection, the interaction with other spheres, and the overall involvement with the surrounding environment. Atwood addresses these topics as she explores the realm of scientific pursuits, the growth of bioengineering, and the solution to the current ecological crisis.

While the topic of overcoming dualism is evident in Atwood's work, the categorization of the genre of *Oryx and Crake* faces some debate. Margaret Atwood wrote an article clarifying her views on the genre of her novel, in which she states it is an adventure-romance because "the hero goes on a quest—coupled with a Menippean satire: the literary form that deals in intellectual obsession."[425] Others disagree with her assessment, asserting that it has all the marks of a classic dystopian novel. Snyder defines the genre as one that "takes what already exists and makes an imaginative leap into the future, following current socio-cultural, political, or scientific developments to their potentially devastating conclusions," with the result being "simultaneously recognizable and unrecognizable, both like

[425] Margaret Atwood, "The Handmaid's Tale and Oryx and Crake "In Context,"' *Special Topic: Science Fiction and Literary Studies: The Next Millennium* (2004), 517.

and not-like the present."[426] This definition is certainly relevant to *Oryx and Crake*, as the characters and plot twist around dramatic reflections on how science and the abuse of power lead to the destruction of the human race. However, the conclusion of the book is ambiguous, as Jimmy/Snowman questions whether he should kill off a race of humans or join them.

I agree that this novel is very much a critical dystopian novel, as it shares inconclusive solutions for the fictional world through the notion of faulty science. Dunja Mohr supports this, noting "that this [book presents] an age devoid of imaginative hope and speculation, an age that cannot picture…a world that is essentially different from the present one, and at the same time, better."[427] Therefore, *Oryx and Crake* fits into what Tom Moylan describes as the critical dystopia, which is the "new literary motor of utopian agency, which [provides] a space for a new form of political opposition, one fundamentally based in difference and multiplicity."[428] This type of ambiguity aligns to both *The Dispossessed* and *The Shore of Women,* as these novels share inconclusive solutions for worlds shaped by false science.

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[426] Katherine Snyder, "'Time to go': The Post-apocalyptic and The Post-traumatic in Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*," *Studies in the Novel* 43 (2011), 470.
[427] Dunja M. Mohr, "Transgressive Utopian Dystopias: The Postmodern Reappearance of Utopia in the Disguise of Dystopia," *ZAA* (2007), 5.
[428] Tom Moylan, *Scraps of the Untainted Sky* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2000), 7.

While I do not assert a new perspective about the novel's genre, I do argue that looking at the novels as examples of their differing genres—the traditional utopia, the critical utopia, the separatist utopia and the critical dystopia—provides a more holistic picture about the topic of dualistic nature/culture. The utopian genre of Cavendish shows the potential harms of science, along with a hopeful optimism that these problems can be thwarted. Current female authors must work with a firmly entrenched science that is difficult to overcome—the genre responds to this pessimism. These critical utopias require dystopian elements, even while they "anticipate…a potential utopian future that classical dystopia evades."[429] In fact, some of the more famous female critical utopias exhibit these qualities, including *The Female Man, Woman on the Edge of Time,* and the *Native Tongue Trilogy*. These novels, as Mohr describes, are works with a process, a genre concerned with the "transgressions of subject/object, male/female, human/animal, and human/alien, nature/nurture, nature/culture, mind/body, self/other."[430] When looking at these complex ideologies in tandem, the reader notices both where the argument about science/nature arises, and how many of the ideas in the early modern era inform and enhance the utopias and dystopias of today.

These dichotomies highlight the science versus nature debate that occurs in Atwood's *Oryx and Crake,* as the argument no longer stems from the

[429] Moylan, *Scraps of the Untainted Sky,* 9.
[430] Dunja Mohr, "Transgressive Utopias," 12.

mechanical sciences, but from its offspring: bio-engineering. Both sciences foster the assumption that humanity is above natural creation and propagate the notion of human mastery over nature. Atwood uses her novel to demonstrate the dualistic harms between humanity/nature that science can inflict. To understand this effort to overcome issues of dualism, I provide a short summary to help the reader grasp some of the more specific arguments made in this chapter. As with the other texts, this brief summation should help to illustrate the five thematic elements that each book in this dissertation advances, including gender integration, gender and language, the human-animal connection, influence of other spheres, and the overall interaction with the environment.

Summary of *Oryx and Crake*

The beginning of the book starts in present/future as Jimmy/Snowman reveals his new position in the environment.[431] After the reader becomes familiar with the harsh climate and changing status of the human, the reader is given the backstory of Jimmy and Crake's childhood. Jimmy's experiences with his father and mother provide the early focus—the reader watches as Jimmy's mother, a once talented and revered scientist, falls further into depression. This catatonic attitude sharply contrasts with that of Jimmy's father, who is employed by a genetic bioengineering company. As the story progresses we learn that Jimmy's father is a scientist who starts to fall in love with his assistant. After disclosing

[431] Present in his timeframe, but this would be the distant future for the reader.

these marital problems, Atwood introduces us to the next main character of the novel: Crake. Crake quickly befriends Jimmy and the two spend a great deal of time together. Before long, it is evident that Crake will move up in society, whereas Jimmy will be a part of the dregs—all based on their talents: Jimmy is a man of words, Crake of numbers. Not too long after the two boys meet, Jimmy's mother decides to go and live in the lands beyond the city (a place that is chaotic and has no rules) and protest against the scientific corporations. The next woman to enter Jimmy's life is Oryx, a young girl whom Jimmy and Crake see as boys in a pornographic film. Their fascination with this girl carries into their college life.

While Crake gains admission to the top schools in their city, Jimmy barely makes it into a less-regarded school that centers on the arts. Even though Crake does very well in school, becoming a leader in the field of genetics, he is still jealous of Jimmy's ability to woo women. One day Jimmy visits Crake at work and he notices a young woman who seems to be helping a race of genetically altered hominids: the Crakers. The reader finds out that the young woman is Oryx, who is Crake's lover, and shortly thereafter, Jimmy's lover. The genetic super beings are an important part of Crake's ecological plan. Crake hires Jimmy to create an advertisement to persuade the public to take a pill similar in scope to Viagra. Jimmy, being a words man, does such a good job that everyone buys this pleasure pill. However, Crake's pill kills the entire human race. Since humans are harmful to their environment, Crake sees this extinction as the solution to the

ecological problem. In the end, Crake kills himself and Oryx, telling Jimmy he must take care of the Crakers: they are the future. The rest of the novel explores Jimmy's character as he tries to teach the Crakers life lessons through religious myths—myths that turn Crake into a god-like figure and Oryx into a nature-figure. Nevertheless, the peacefulness of the Crakers begins to dissolve as some try to rise in rank. The last scene of the novel shows a small group of humans on the shore, leading Jimmy, known as Snowman now, to question whether he should let the humans live or carry out Crake's plan and remove all humans from the world.

Women and Gender—Overall Language Dualism

The solution of eradicating the human from nature relies on understanding some pivotal topics of the man/woman interaction as these relationships are critized by Atwood throughout the novel, building upon her views on holism. The topic of gender in feminist utopian texts is always visible, but Atwood approaches the issue in a way that focuses on dynamic representations of gender: stereotypes take on new meaning as the power of language enforces harsh gender dichotomies. For Atwood, more is at stake than a view of men versus women, as in *The Shore of Women*, or the elimination of men, as in *The Blazing World*, or even a dualistic social commentary of gender relations, as in *The Dispossessed*. Rather, the voice of the female comes in two distinct forms: Jimmy/Snowman's mother and Jimmy/Snowman's lover, Oryx.

Both "signal the loss of the female voice, in which Atwood's protagonists inhabits a future that is only not postfeminist, but post human."[432] Jimmy/Snowman's mother is the perfect example of this post-human idea, as her "essential belief in truth, justice and morality is sympathetic to a feminist ethical position."[433] The first time we meet Jimmy/Snowman's mother, we hear that she was a "microbiologist: it had been her job to study the proteins of the bioforms unhealthy to pigeons, and to modify their receptors in such a way that they could not bond with the receptors on pigeon cells, or else to develop drugs that would act as blockers."[434] After time, Jimmy/Snowman's mother becomes more and more distant. Eventually, she resembles "a porcelain sink: clean, shining, hard."[435] The more hardened she gets with life, however, the more vocal she becomes. Her words are clear and precise. One of the best examples of this bluntness appears through a conversation she has with her husband: "You're interfering with the building blocks of life. It's immoral. It's sacrilegious."[436] Her comments here suggest that science and nature are not working together in symmetry; there is something immoral to using science when it goes against nature.

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[432] Fiona Tolan, *Margaret Atwood: Feminism and Fiction* (New York: Rodopi, 2007), 273.
[433] Tolan, *Margaret Atwood*, 278.
[434] Margaret Atwood, *Oryx and Crake* (New York: Anchor, 2004), 29.
[435] Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 32
[436] Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 57

Jimmy's mother is a parallel to Crake, and to Crake's mother, adding a richer complexity to the female scientist in utopian novels. Crake's mother, who seems to embody the traditional angel in the house metaphor, does not stretch or influence the mind of Crake. Jimmy's mother, however, is a comrade to Crake—both share a similar insight: humans are corrupt. The difference, however, is that Jimmy's mother sees science as the cause whereas Crake sees human beings themselves as the root problem. Their plans of actions are consequently different: one rallies against the bioengineering platforms and the other uses the platforms to create a superhuman. Jimmy's mom is acting like a "number" person who actually sees the innate evil in the scientific community. This character is similar to Le Guin's Shevek and Sargent's Birana, as all three come from a specific cultural context and later realize, through careful scrutiny, the importance of removing dualism from the nature/science binaries. These are the figures to follow in these books.

While Jimmy/Snowman's mother leaves the compounds and becomes a member of a chaotic faction, the other woman in Jimmy/Snowman's life, a former child pornography star and his long-time love interest, Oryx, complicates the voice of the female as she presents images of both a powerful female image and a subjugated one. Context is important here as Jimmy/Snowman presents her with

moments of individualism, whereas Crake stunts her voice.[437] The love triangle she has with Jimmy/Snowman and Crake demonstrates that her "lack of a preference for either Jimmy/Snowman or Crake may arise partly from the fact that she is in the structural position of object with every man she encounters," a position that stems from her sex slave childhood.[438] However, she is fully aware of her status with men. The first time Jimmy/Snowman and Crake see her, she is in a pornographic movie. Atwood's description affirms Oryx's unsubordinated character: "she looked right into the eyes of the viewer—right into Jimmy/Snowman's eyes, into the secret person inside him [saying] I see you. I see you watching. I know you. I know what you want."[439] When Jimmy/Snowman confronts her later in life, asking her if she was the young girl in the movie, she tells him that "a lot of girls have eyes…a lot of girls did these things. Very many." Then, seeing the disappointment, she says, "It might be me. Maybe it is. Would that make you happy, Jimmy/Snowman?"[440] Even though she is often the victim, deep down she has an alarming ability to disarm others with her language: "it made her feel strong to know that men thought she was helpless but she was

[437] One could make an argument that Crake's personality fits into early modern context of silencing the female voice—an idea found on the shore in *The Shore of Women* and on Urras in *The Dispossessed*.
[438] Susan Hall, "The Last Laugh: A Critique of the Object Economy in Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*," *Contemporary Women's Writing* 4 (2010), 189.
[439] Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 91.
[440] Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 91.

not."[441] Oryx is a Machiavellian character, using sex appeal to destabilize the subjugated "other" and break the boundaries between male and female power.

Another way she displays strength is through laughter, a non-verbal form of language that nonetheless has a powerful and stripping sound to Jimmy/Snowman. As Susan Hall suggests, "her laughter is an act of vengeance in which she can ridicule the men who abused her."[442] In this way, she is a "feminine subject whose laughter signifies resistance to the object economy."[443] Her laughter gives her a personality that, as Jimmy/Snowman states, is "three dimensional from the start."[444] Oryx's laugher, more than anything, keeps Jimmy/Snowman's egoism in check: "…Oryx, with her small rippling laughter [is what] he feared the most from her, because it distinguished amused contempt. It chilled him: a cold breeze on a moonlit lake."[445] Laughter is also one of the few ways Oryx can truly express herself. Oryx is a "words" person at heart, but who has consistently been denied use of the language. Jimmy/Snowman often misconstrues her words, as he questions her thoughts. Atwood includes one important line to demonstrate this blockade. Oryx comments about her situation with words from an early age and then proceeds with verbal imagery as she feeds

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[441] Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 133.
[442] Hall, "The Last Laugh," 194.
[443] Katherine Snyder, '"Time to go": The Post-apocalyptic and The Post-traumatic in Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*," *Studies in the Novel* 43 (2011), 474.
[444] Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 90.
[445] Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 119.

Jimmy dinner: "Nobody in our village could read," said Oryx, "Here, Jimmy/Snowman open your mouth. I give you the last piece."[446] Two things are occurring here. First, Oryx is expressing her sense of powerlessness from a young age, as she is unable to read or form proper language. This remark is a direct commentary on a woman's loss of voice in society. Secondly, she does not allow Jimmy/Snowman to speak in this scene, filling his mouth with food, proving that Oryx knows the power that language can provide. The power of words and speech are bound up with female power, an idea particularly evident in her demise. Crake kills Oryx by slitting her throat—a much more graphic loss of voice and power.[447]

There are two scholarly views related to the role of Oryx. The first, as suggested by Snyder, is that she plays the role of everywoman, who is "variably a prostitute, mother, a friend, a lover…Oryx playing all of these roles."[448] She is also seen as a "human instrument to serve personal needs and …an instrument to be used to sustain community and love."[449] I see her as a generalized figure of humanity whose language, despite the culture's efforts to eliminate this ability, leaves her in a static position. Being unable to clearly express her thoughts and having her opinions swayed by the men in her life shows a person who has the inability to effect change. As such, she is a lot more genderless than I think many

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[446] Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 122.
[447] Hall, "The Last Laugh," 192.
[448] Snyder, "Time to go," 478.
[449] Danette DiMarco, "Paradise Lost, Paradise Regained: *homo faber* and the Makings of a New Beginning in *Oryx and Crake*," *PLL*, 186.

argue. She could even be seen as a counterpart to Jimmy/Snowman. He is a words man, the myth-maker prophet, with the ability to speak, but through the story he only uses his words to corrupt (as seen with his work at the advertising company). He uses his words to push a scientific product to the masses—the only use for a words man in that community. Oryx is the voice of the masses, the "other," striving to have her voice heard while attempting to break the power boundaries that exist between herself and the men in her life.

Language—"Word" Versus "Numbers"

Atwood's use of language is the primary way of removing dualism between the genders and between humanity and the environment, particularly through her original view of "words" and "numbers" people: two characters that represent the dichotomy between nature and science. Atwood uses Jimmy/Snowman as both a poster child for human distinctiveness and as a champion of linguistic talent. For Atwood, language is our greatest source of power. Karen Stein writes that "for Atwood, not only is storytelling a central act of the imagination, but storytelling is one of the traits that makes us human."[450] This ability to weave stories, to create thoughts in seamless patterns, to make

[450] See Karen F. Stein's "Problematic Paradise in *Oryx and Crake*" in *Margaret Atwood: The Robber Bride, The Blind Assassin, Oryx and Crake* (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2010) on the connection between storytelling and the human condition: "The woman gave her jocular woodpecker yodel, and explained that they's removed all the brain function that had nothing to do with digestion, assimilation and growth," 203.

sense of our situations, is how we will go about recovering ourselves—stories will reveal whom we really are.[451] This idea reminds us that "through the imagination alone we come to recognize what truly sustains us—our kinship with the non-human world."[452] Language "restores the past and a potential future as anchors of thought for Jimmy/Snowman, creating a whole new reality and new meaning."[453] Jimmy/Snowman relates this idea in the following lines: "Homo Sapiens were once so ingenious with language, and not only with language. Ingenious in every direction at once."[454] Figure 6.1 addresses how these binaries between nature (words people) and science (numbers) people create dualism in the environment. In fact, looking at this chart, a clearer connection to Cavendish appears, as this chart resembles the nature versus science debate she goes against: science relates to numbers and connects to those higher in the economic platform; nature is for those who are lower on the Great Chain of Being.

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[451] Shannon Hengen, "Moral/Environmental Debt in *Payback* and *Oryx and Crake*," in *Margaret Atwood: The Robber Bride, The Blind Assassin, Oryx and Crake* (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2010), 135.
[452] Hannes Bergthaller, "Housebreaking the Human Animal: Humanism and the Problem of Sustainability in Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* and *The Year of the Flood*," *Ecocriticism and English Studies* 91 (2010), 730.
[453] Mohr, "Transgressive Utopian,"18.
[454] Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 99.

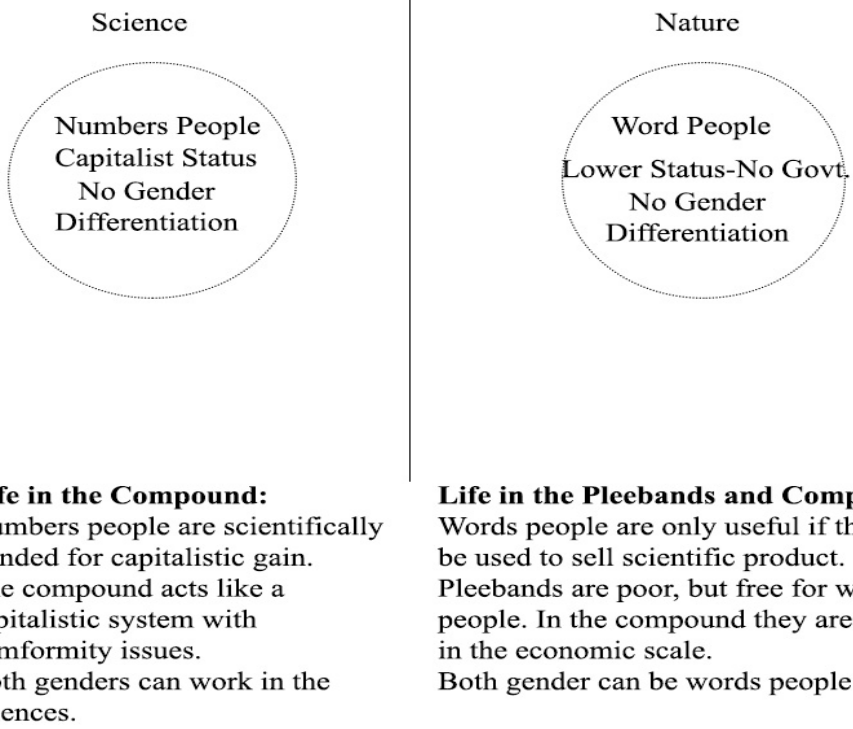

Figure 6.1 Science Versus Nature

While "numbers" people control the government, "words" people are powerful instruments to the scientific movement as they use their gifts to support the scientific model rather than overturning it. Jimmy/Snowman wields power through the myths he tells the Crakers and through manipulative advertisements. As shown in figure 6.1, "word" people and "number" people associate with specific spheres and status. Unlike the other books discussed in this dissertation, the use of language in *Oryx and Crake* encompasses every thematic argument, every sphere of influence.

Other Spheres of Influence—Gender Boundaries and Language

As such, every aspect of society intertwines and hinges on some aspect(s) of these spheres. Atwood's book is a response to these spheres—particularly capitalism and corporate consumerism. As Danette DiMarco writes, Atwood is trying to counter the "…past cycle of aggression against nature in the name of personal profit, or to re-imagine a way for future living grounded in a genuine concern for others."[455] For DiMarco, then, *Oryx and Crake* is a reflection on capitalism and its history, as Atwood works to indicate the connection between today's values and those of colonialism as an "exploitative transnational capitalism."[456] Such a deep-rooted capitalism illuminates the interconnections between the spheres—a topic talked about at length earlier in this dissertation. To show the perspectives of capitalism, Atwood creates two main characters to represent diverse economic values, establishing differing viewpoints on how to resolve ecological issues in relation to social order.

The two main characters, Crake and Jimmy/Snowman, present two sides to the environmental issue: Crake, the "aggressive post humanist," and Jimmy/Snowman the "traditional humanist."[457] The catastrophic outcome owes to the success of the "numbers man" in the book, operating from his place of privilege. Considering that the "numbers man" chooses the monstrous solution of

[455] DiMarco, "Paradise Lost," 170.
[456] Bergthaller, "Housebreaking the Human Animal," 733.
[457] Bergthaller, "Housebreaking the Human Animal," 733.

genocide, one must wonder what would have happened if the "words man" could speak from a position of authority: would the critical dystopia turn into a traditional utopia? This entire paradigm reflects on the idea that Jimmy/Snowman is cast lower in all aspects of society. Jimmy/Snowman discovers his outward placement in society from his own father as they discuss their family lineage: "It was because they were numbers people, not word people, said Jimmy/Snowman's father. Jimmy/Snowman already knew that he himself was not a numbers person."[458] Atwood strives to show numbers people as cold and calculating, while words people are insightful and imaginative. In this way, word people and number people are "two different species."[459] Some argue that Jimmy/Snowman, as a word person, is cast in the female role, as the "arts" become "positioned as feminist and self-indulgent, while Crake and science are gendered 'masculine,' in a blatantly masculinist performance of power."[460] This concept echoes Cavendish's use of a female scientist to counter the prevailing system, Le Guin's focus on the lack of female scientists in Urras, and the positions of scientists and power in *The Shore of Women.*

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[458] Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 25.
[459] Chung-Hao Ku, "Of Monster and Man: Transgenics and Transgression in Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*," *Concentric: Literary and Cultural Studies* 32 (2006), 110.
[460] Earl Ingersoll, "Survival in Margaret Atwood's Novel *Oryx and Crake*," *Extrapolation* (2011), 166.

In this way, Jimmy/Snowman is more firmly located in the realm of nature and the female, as he both excels in a more feminine art, and becomes the nurturing character in his role as caretaker and protector of the Crakers. One way that Jimmy/Snowman cares for the Crakers is through linguistic powers. He uses religious constructs—akin to *The Shore of Women's* society—as a way to care for the Crakers (and dominate them), but he also uses religion as a way to keep them safe from the dangers of the world. Religion helps Snowman keep order in his community against the risk of chaos; whereas in *The Shore of Women,* religion keeps order for the sake of domination of the masses. In all the works, however, the concept of nature and science is kept separate as though they can never intermingle or influence a positive outcome.

Crake, the numbers man, represents the harsh outlook of science, even as he creates the Crakers, while Jimmy/Snowman represents nature. The two are completely separate, unable to bridge the gap between them. Atwood thus advances the holism debate, even as she presents the barriers between science and nature. She allows her male protagonist to adopt the role of nurturer and caretaker for all other creatures left on the earth. This idea of the 'words' person equalily feminine qualities makes sense in parts of the novel, but not in the scenes where Jimmy/Snowman is the last remaining human. In my view, he is not "only" a representation of a female character simply because of the word-as-nature connection. He is also a pure representation of the subjugated human as he stands

as the "seemingly" last human survivor. Jimmy's language, and therefore his power, parallels Oryx. She wants to use words, but the system keeps her words in check. Jimmy/Snowman has influential words, but the government and Crake exploit them. When Jimmy finally does find the right words to remedy the situation, he uses them to help foster the system of the scientist. Gender is not important here—voice is.

Blurred gender also develops with Jimmy/Snowman's connection to an uncontrolled government—a topic previously discussed in *The Shore of Women.*[461] Atwood shows this concept of the human through her description of the land. As in Le Guin's *The Dispossessed*, "the landscape is frequently presented as primitive and uncontrolled, a presence in sharp contrast to those who attempt to control their lives through reason or logic."[462] According to Ronald Hatch, the land in Atwood "becomes a metaphor by which the plight of the contemporary individual can be explored."[463] The land is a place of liminal states, especially the pleebands, the lands outside the compound walls.[464] Jimmy/Snowman explores this stark contrast between the compounds and the hinterlands: "But in the compound everything was screwed down tight. Night

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[461] This idea relates to finding your humanity through wild nature. Nature is not controlled by any governmental sphere.
[462] Ronald B. Hatch, "Margaret Atwood, the Land, and the Ecology," in *Margaret Atwood: Works and Impact,* (Camden House: New York, 2000), 182.
[463] Hatch, "Margaret Atwood, the Land, and the Ecology," 183.
[464] Lee Rozelle, "Liminal Ecologies in Margaret Atwood's 'Oryx and Crake,'" *Canadian Literature* 206 (2010), 61.

patrols, curfews."[465] The pleebands are free. The compounds resemble castles because they "[keep] you and your buddies nice and safe inside, and [keep] everyone else outside."[466] These constructs expose how big government keeps the 'useless' people outside the city gates, especially through the influence of scientists as venture capitalists. In fact, Jimmy/Snowman's father, like many of the other characters in Jimmy/Snowman's life, seeks discovery in support of profit margins. Science and money are now bedfellows, relegating those who exhibit other skills to the lower rungs of society.[467] Perhaps, if "number" people and "words" people did not see each other as distinct entities, or science and nature as separate spheres, a more thorough and helpful resolution for solving the ecological crisis could ensue.

Human/Animal Connection

Oryx and Crake looks at genetic engineering, positioning the human alongside other genetically created beings—the superhuman Crakers and the hybrids (the pigoons, wolvpups, and so on). Such a relocation reflects on how Atwood connects to "recent ecocentrist writers in their rejection of the anthropomorphic viewpoint and their struggles to re-position humanity as one

[465] Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 28.
[466] Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 28.
[467] Of course, this assessment directly connects to what Atwood saw occurring in our own world: science for the sake of profit not science for the sake of ecological progress.

species among many in a web of natural connections."[468] This idea appears most directly in *The Blazing World,* as Cavendish's Empress works alongside other hybrid creatures in the pursuit of lofty science. Yet, unlike that work, Atwood's thesis is one that explores "moral and environmental debt" in which "humankind must have a sense of responsible behavior, a sense that acknowledges and accepts our dependence upon one another—our vulnerability—and the interconnection of ourselves with nature."[469] Atwood offers a plea to accept human nature as one that is genderless and interconnected—an idea most evident in Birana of *The Shore of Women*. As Hannes Bergthaller writes, "[the] ecological imperative" is that "humans ought to acknowledge that they are a part of nature and behave accordingly."[470] Through her depiction of genetic engineering, Atwood argues that science can sever our connection to nature by suggesting the social inappropriateness of playing god. Even the idealized pursuit of science for the sake of knowledge devolves into an egotistical display of superiority over nature.

The best way to explore this idea is to examine the characterization of Jimmy/Snowman, whose moral reflections occur frequently throughout the book as Atwood uses subtle remarks about the positions of creatures he has been taught

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[468] Hatch, "Margaret Atwood, the Land, and the Ecology," 181.
[469] Shannon Hengen, "Moral/Environmental Debt in *Payback* and *Oryx and Crake*," in *Margaret Atwood: The Robber Bride, The Blind Assassin, Oryx and Crake* (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2010), 129.
[470] Bergthaller, "Housebreaking the Human Animal," 731.

are lower than him. For instance, when Jimmy/Snowman sees his first pigoon, a biologically created food source without thoughts or feelings, he thinks the following: "He didn't want to eat a pigoon, because he thought of the pigoons as creatures much like himself. Neither he nor they had a lot of say in what was going on."[471] Ecological sameness and the inter-webbing of humanity with nature manifest here. The problem is that Jimmy/Snowman does not have a forceful enough range of tools to clean up such a mess.

Overall Interaction with the Environment

Scholars argue that *Oryx and Crake*, written in 2003, is a response to the current issues occurring in our environment, especially genetic engineering, bioterrorism, and general climate change.[472] In fact, the main character, Jimmy/Snowman, although he does not say so directly, often hints at the impact of global warming. One of the first mentions of climate change appears when Jimmy/Snowman states the following about the weather: it is "one of those months that used to be called autumn."[473] Seasons are warm and hot with little fluctuation in temperature, which echoes current climate concerns. Once more, the literature calls attention to the idea of science versus nature, although the gap between the author's "could be" and the real world's "is" is increasingly narrower.

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[471] Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 24.
[472] Hall, "The Last Laugh," 179
[473] Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 71.

The common thread amongst all of the works analyzed in this dissertation is how the mechanical sciences impacts and impairs humanity's interaction with nature. Cavendish's *The Blazing World*, Le Guin's *The Dispossessed*, Sargent's *The Shore of Women,* and Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* value similar ecofeminist aspirations of rejoining humanity with nature and reminding us of our interconnectedness. Humanity's use of science challenges this harmonious blending, however. Margaret Atwood addresses this idea by presenting the traditional scientist in her work, particularly through the character of Crake, as well as through the other scientists in the compound. Karen Stein writes that "the misuse of science expose[s] the arrogance of Promethean scientists who not only seek to manipulate and control nature, but who also separate themselves from their communities and set themselves above ordinary people."[474] In fact, Crake is a model of the "Western, unbounded character," as he wishes to better humanity, but destroys it as he

> shares Descartes' rejection of received authority, his desire to work within a comprehensive epistemology founded on ideas as clear and distinct as mathematical proofs, his preference for mechanical models of living beings, his identification of the self as *res cognates*, and his misrelation to the feminine, or Nature.[475]

His commitment to that worldview leads Crake to acquire god-like status, which is the same self-image of the scientist in the early modern era.

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[474] Stein, "Problematic Paradise in *Oryx and Crake*," 143.
[475] Stephen Dunning, "Margaret Atwood's Oryx and Crake: The Terror of the Therapeutic," *Canadian Literature* (2005), 88.

Crake is also the prime example of the unethical wielder of scientific powers whose ultimate work reveals mankind's fallibility. Whereas his creation, the Crakers, replace humanity, most scientists in the novel invent beings for mere pleasure and for profit, showing how the mechanical sciences morph into present-day beliefs. This evolution is particularly evident in how "science pursues its own ends or materialistic ends regardless of the consequences of its actions or findings."[476] This idea is most evident in the Rakunks (half skunk-half raccoons): "creating an animal was so much fun, said the guys doing it; it made you feel like God."[477] Atwood takes genetic bio-engineering a step further as she suggests that the pleasure aspect of creating altered animals can also lead to the solution: the Crakers.

Therefore, Atwood complicates the problem with Crake by making him a scientist with a specific ecological mission; he seeks to replace man with the perfected Crakers. Atwood turns the traditional mechanical scientist into one with a loftier goal, albeit a twisted one.[478] The point of the Crakers is to breed the wildness out of man as "they have been thoroughly and permanently

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[476] R. Davis, "'A White Illusion of a Man': Snowman, Survival and Speculation in Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*," *Hosting the Monster* (N.P.: Rodopi, 2008), 240.
[477] Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 51.
[478] See Bouson, in connection to these lines: "Crake, who, in a strange twist on the idea of scientific imperialism, uses science not to conquer the natural world but to control human nature by creating his bioengineered and environmentally friendly hominids, the Crakers, as a replacement for humanity" (141).

housebroken."[479] Removing that wildness results in beings with "limited intelligence, unlike the maker who knows the problems the mind can create."[480] Jimmy/Snowman sees this problem as he tries to communicate with the Crakers: "you must attempt to respect their traditions and confine your explanations to simple concepts that can be understood within the context of their belief systems."[481] The Crakers, while inept at deeper thoughts, do not exhibit any signs of racism or territoriality. As a way to combat racism, for instance, Crake made them in different colors: "chocolate, rose, tea, butter, cream, honey—but each with green eyes."[482] Their sexuality is also non-violent, since a female only comes into heat every three years, tempering their irrationality around sexuality and jealousy. They also exist aesthetically, as if they live in "retouched fashion photos, or ads for a high-priced workout program."[483] Ultimately, Crakers represent the superhuman, as they exist harmoniously with their surroundings—they cannot harm their environment like humans, making them the perfect substitute for life forms on a semi-destroyed landscape.

Perfection, however, is held together by a delicate balance—a balance that requires the Crakers to be ignorant of their place in the world. I previously mention the importance of the religious sphere in connection to

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[479] Bergthaller, "Housebreaking the Human Animal," 735.
[480] Ingersoll, "Survival in Margaret Atwood's Novel *Oryx and Crake*," 167.
[481] Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 97.
[482] Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 8.
[483] Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 100.

Jimmy/Snowman's placement in society, but I want to continue this debate, as religion informs one of the largest arguments about environmental construction in this book: the concept of origin stories and how they inform worldviews. Crakers, like humans, are inquisitive and require meaning for their existence, which is why Jimmy/Snowman spends so much time giving them origin stories.

Jimmy/Snowman plays the role of prophet in this way, as he resembles a creature alone in the world and the one that knows the real truth of their story. Since Jimmy/Snowman was once purely human—a distinction that fades as he becomes more animalistic for survival—he relies on distinctive human myths to tell the Crakers: his words remain the one aspect that defines his humanity. As Earl Ingersoll writes: "in this new cosmogony the human-like creations are made in the Garden by their father, while the other fauna can be relegated to the Earth-Mother."[484] For Jimmy/Snowman, the children of Crake were Crakers, whereas the children of Oryx were the animals and nature.[485] Snowman teaches the Crakers a belief system, a way to make sense of the world. Through this myth making, Jimmy sees how power structures keep the Crakers in line and, in essence, inform Jimmy's awareness about system(s) that kept him on the lower rung. In other words, this novel asks the reader to consider "what do the Crakers

[484] Earl Ingersoll, "Survival in Margaret Atwood's Novel *Oryx and Crake*," 169.
[485] Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 96.

teach us about our own biotic relationships?"[486] Religion proves to be a rather false structure, one that can be easily created for any cultural context.[487] Nevertheless, the Crakers teach Jimmy/Snowman about what it means to be a human at the most basic level: a reminder of a time before the spheres of influence interfere or dominate the human being.

This notion relies on nostalgia for Jimmy/Snowman that could not exist in a thwarted ecological environment. As Jimmy/Snowman sits on the beach, watching the nearby Crakers, "He [sees] them with envy or is it nostalgia? It can't be that: he never swam in the sea as a child, never ran around on a beach without clothes on."[488] Jimmy/Snowman was never allowed to be at one with nature. His past environment was too polluted. As such, his inclusion in this new society of genetically created beings turns him into a kind of Frankenstein's monster, making him question what makes him worthy of life or attention. Even though the Crakers are the genetically altered beings, they have each other and they are mapping a new structure on the environment. Jimmy is the natural product of this planet, yet he does not fit the new society. Jimmy's placement also suggests the "alien" and "other" figure present in most sci-fi utopias. This distinctiveness is

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[486] See Ku for connections to human hybrid ideology: "Since the pigoons and Crakers are now endowed with human, DNA, these two species push Snowman to reconsider what it means to be human in the age of transgenic" (109).
[487] See context of false religions structures for domination in *The Shore of Women*.
[488] Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 6.

lonely, just as Shelley's monster is lonely. In fact, Jimmy/Snowman directly says the following: "How come I'm alone? Where's my Bride of Frankenstein?"[489] Lee Rozelle states, "his range of vision, has drastically changed. He is in a new niche within an ecosystem concerned with predators and sustenance, his primary concerns not social but ecological."[490] Jimmy/Snowman is no longer the top of the food chain, especially as he must deal with new half-breed predators. His new position returns him to humanity's roots of basic survival. By becoming weaker, he learns to understand the frailty of humanity, even as he reconnects to his environment. He sees himself as part of nature and its victim: predators often hunt him for food.

His hubris, therefore, lessens as the harsh societal dichotomies of man versus nature disappear, replaced with a different sort of harsh challenge. As a consequence, the power that associates with man's mastery over nature through science diminishes as "the human ability to dominate nature [signals] a loss of power [and] a loss of humanity."[491] With this loss of power, Jimmy/Snowman finds himself disillusioned. This emotion appears in the way he interacts with the world around him: "Jimmy/Snowman pisses on the grasshoppers, as usual. I have a daily routine, he thinks. Routines are good. His entire head is becoming one big

[489] Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 169.
[490] Rozelle, "Liminal Ecologies," 68.
[491] R. Davis, "A White Illusion," 244.

stash of obsolete fridge magnets."[492] Jimmy/Snowman tries to reclaim some mastery over nature through his disrespect of the insects. There are also numerous flashbacks in which the humans treat the environment with equal disrespect, as Oryx says to Jimmy/Snowman: "The rivers are so useful, for the garbage and the dead people and babies that get thrown away, and the shit."[493] Reading these lines, one begins to perceive humanity's fall as inevitable. By making this assumption, readers can also see their own lack of power, especially with regard to speaking out against the harms that are occurring in this world.

Jimmy/Snowman is in a state of transition throughout the work, beginning in a place of subjugation to the corporate system, then again as he becomes the victim of nature, and finally, in coming to terms with his innate animal-like essence.[494] He is like a "caterpillar in a liminal stage between larva and moth or butterfly. The developmental transition of caterpillar represents not only Jimmy/Snowman's transformation, but the fragile mutability of indigenous series observed in the natural world."[495] Atwood states this thought at the beginning of the book as well, as she refers to the mythic, liminal existence he has to lead: "The abominable snowman—existing and not existing, flickering at the edges of blizzards, apelike man or manlike ape, stealthy, elusive, known only through

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[492] Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 148.
[493] Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 135.
[494] See *The Shore of Women* section on environmental connections to the environment and innate human animalism.
[495] Rozelle, "Liminal Ecologies," 65.

rumors and through its backward-pointing footprints."[496] Furthermore, Jimmy/Snowman is named "snowman" by Atwood for a reason. Some may insist that his new name reflects his new mythological place in the environment. I believe that the name returns to what Atwood wrote in her novel: snowman is now ape-like, returning to his evolutionary roots. Snowman could also be a bridge from the past to the present, someone who lives in the new apocalyptic future without knowledge of or hope for the future of his race.[497] In fact, becoming "the other" in this new biosphere means that he is ever more human, as he must grow more attuned to what makes him a distinct species.[498] Jimmy/Snowman's distinction is his ability to see himself in connection to the new creatures around him and to use his voice to make sense of his surroundings.

The more Jimmy/Snowman comes to terms with his surroundings and his new status, the more he clings to what he was once known for, his words. As Atwood says, "He'd developed a strangely tender feeling towards such words, as if they were his children abandoned in the woods and it was his duty to rescue them."[499] Jimmy/Snowman rescues words by using them as a source of power over the Crakers. His creation of the Crakers' origin myths made him "[dance] gracefully around the truth, light-footed, light-fingered. But it was almost too

[496] Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 8.
[497] Snyder, "Time to go," 472.
[498] Ku, "Of Monster and Man," 112.
[499] Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 195.

easy: they accepted, without question, everything he said."[500] Even more, the words Jimmy/Snowman uses help to cause humanity's destruction.[501] In the same way, Jimmy/ Snowman's mythologies could do the same for the Crakers. After their creation story takes root, the Crakers start to follow one leader in the group, a Craker named Abraham. Leadership leads to hierarchy, as Jimmy/Snowman recalls: "Crake used to say. First the leaders and the led, then the tyrants and the slaves, then the massacres. That's how it's always been done."[502] After the diminishment of the humans, the Crakers develop a sense of reverence for Crake and Oryx, their father and mother figures. Crake also foreshadowed this sense of awe (and its dangers) when he observed that "Symbolic thinking of any kind would signal downfall…inviting idols, and funerals, and grave goods, and the afterlife, and sin…."[503] The emphasis on words and language does not necessarily mean that all language has the possibility to heal the world. Words must strike a delicate balance between what is occurring and what is needed. Jimmy/Snowman carelessly repeats history with his mythology. Perhaps this religious structure is the seed of their destruction. They can now use religion, as in the mechanical age, to propose ideas that lead to adverse outcomes. This knowledge leads the reader

[500] Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 350.
[501] As in reference to the blyss pill advertisements.
[502] Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 155.
[503] Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 361.

to question the point of the novel: Are we simply watching the downfall of yet another creation with this book?

Jimmy's attempt to impose order on a peaceful life form dampens any optimism in *Oryx and Crake*, leading to the idea that humanity's innate behavior of creating systems to control chaos, or animalistic behavior, often leads to harmful dominate/subordinate positions. Katherine Snyder relates a similar idea when she argues that Atwood's plotting of the pandemic in the novel emphasizes "the futility of attempting to quarantine an individual's subjective interiority from...overlapping circles of power and obligation: the familial, the corporate, the national, the global, the non-human and the post-human."[504] The novel does offer a warning for the present day, a warning that all species, including humans, are susceptible to annihilation. These types of comments recur often, mostly through Crake: "All it takes," said Crake, "is the elimination of one generation of anything. Beetles, trees, microbes, scientists, speakers of French, whatever. To break the link between one generation and the next, and it's game forever."[505] Jimmy/Snowman also offers his own take on this issue though internal monologues, like this one: "Maybe that's the real him, the last Homo Sapiens—a white illusion of a man, here today, gone tomorrow, so easily shoved over, left to melt in the sun, getting thinner and thinner until he liquefies and trickles away

[504] Snyder, "Time to go," 473.
[505] Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 223.

altogether."[506] Like Jimmy, humanity can fade away if new measures are not taken; these measure depend on humans being active participants in their societies—not allowing current systems of control to create false dichotomies.

Therefore, the genre of the critical dystopia fits into this argument, as the themes in these types of novels create shocking, ambiguous endings—which inspires action through a type of fear for the future. The work, then, is an exhortation to try to train the human to go against its ingrained tendencies to dominate through science. The critical dystopia is, essentially, an argument for sustainability based on "housebreaking the animal."[507] The genre also fosters a type of understanding that should resonate with the reader—every day we negotiate a world that requires connecting with our environment. We see these problems as they are inherent in the way we treat the earth, and we how we do nothing to save it. Jimmy/Snowman proffers this idea several times. In the beginning of the book, he says, "In some way all of this—the bonfire, the charred smell, but most of all the lit-up, suffering animals—was his fault, because he'd done nothing to rescue them"[508] Later in the book, he says that he is "a fanged animal gazing out from the shadowy cave of space inside his own skull."[509] The human is now a predatory animal. Finally, the human comes to represent a living,

[506] Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 224.
[507] Bergthaller, "Housebreaking the Human Animal," 728.
[508] Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 18.
[509] Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 261.

breathing creature of the "other," inhabiting the world with other living, breathing animals. This text makes the reader question "ideas of humanity, making the text a dynamic space of introspective ethical choices."[510] As such, Atwood's book closely aligns to Cavendish's *The Blazing World* because, like Cavendish, she shows that what "comprises the universe…[is] a new combination of atoms…[which are all] different expression of God."[511] Like the atomism suggested by Cavendish, Atwood creates a world where every creature is important in its function—a web of connections that bind humanity to everything around itself. The argument of how humans can overcome destructive science is the same argument made centuries before: one must find harmonious associations with the world around them and treat nature as part of themselves. We can no longer afford to be beings separate from the land.

[510] Tolan, *Margaret Atwood*, 296.
[511] Shannon Hengen, "Moral/Environmental Debt in *Payback* and *Oryx and Crake*," *Margaret Atwood: The Robber Bride, The Blind Assassin, Oryx and Crake* (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2010), 129.

Epilogue

As I argue in this dissertation, the various utopian genres inform each other, enhancing and clarifying the themes of gender abolition, language formation, the animal-human connection, alternative spheres of influence, and humanity's overall view of the environment. Each element supports the idea of holism in nature, which reinforces the ecofeminist discussion of this dissertation. The works analyzed—*The Blazing World, The Dispossessed, The Shore of Women,* and *Oryx and Crake*—relate to and enrich the idea of holism between humanity and nature in several ways, as the books' similarities demonstrate that they continually inform and re-envision the rich complexity in these binaries.[512] Utopian constuction also relies on the political context in which the utopia originates. As Cavendish's early modern utopia opposes the Royal Society agenda and the utopias written in support of these doctrines, so do the works of Le Guin, Sargent and Atwood build upon the upsurge of ecocrticial debates and ecofeminist activists in their time.

Analyzing these works through the lens of dualism opens the door to some interesting future studies. First, this study illustrates that the multiple utopian genres, with their overall themes of revolution and world-creation, utilize similar techniques to draw on the idea of the Great Chain of Being. This philosophy is the most pervasive topic throughout the works, as this cultural construct informs the

[512] See figure one in Appendix A.

foundations of western thoughts about our environmental associations. While Cavendish invents a new version of this schema in order to combat Cartesian ideologies, Le Guin constructs a world, Urras, in order to explore concerns related to gender and science. Sargent's *The Shore of Women* subverts the Great Chain of Being model to study power through the reversal of the gendered stereotypes, ultimately showing the falsity of such a philosophy.[513] Finally, Atwood comments on the Great Chain by exploring the harms that scientists inflict when they play God with creation. These works illustrate a debate that remains as relevant today as it was in Cavendish's time. While the two eras, the early modern period and the late 20th century, are very different in political scope, Cavendish's arguments do follow similar tropes and highlight similar themes. Considering how Cavendish reappears in scholarly works during the late 20th century, especially since most scholars focus on her scientific agendas and her utopia, comparative studies between her works and more current science fictions utopias can be fruitful. If Cavendish is a type of proto-ecofeminist, then what sort of conversations does her voice as an ecofeminist reveal; what does a female writer, centuries ahead of the ecofeminist movement, show about women's writing in science fiction utopias?

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[513]Sargent, *The Shore of Women,* 8. This idea is most evident in the following lines: "The men believe in Her. We had better see that they keep doing so, that they both worship and fear her--its the only way we can control them. We have to give men a belief they can understand-they aren't capable of anything more. My belief is more complex."

One topic relies on the sense of selfhood as Cavendish, Le Guin, Sargent, and Atwood discuss the eco-political debates that materialize in their holistic agendas, exposing how the human being factors into nature and gender relations. As Victor Urbanowicz writes: "The necessity exists in part because the demands of the individual can never be perfectly reconciled with those of society, but only balanced in a dynamic, conflicting equilibrium."[514] Conflicting dynamics within the eco-critical discussion allow individuals to recognize where they fit into the environmental framework. As Sargent writes in *The Shore of Women:* "We are being given a chance to reach out to our other selves. What we do will show what we are and determine what we shall become."[515] This self-knowledge emerges from an analysis of the social studies that appear in each work—Cavendish's discussion of the masculine science, Le Guin's ossification of Anarres, Sargent's stationary exploration of the two genders, and Atwood's solution to ecocritical concerns—all address this idea. Each work argues that stagnation is ultimately the reason for humanity's lack of action. In *Oryx and Crake*, Atwood also notes that this stasis inspires solutions that emerge from the same system of thought—in this case, a radical and devastating scientific approach that ultimately enshrines the root problems in religious trappings. Perhaps, for Atwood, the problems caused by science are beyond our imagination to fix. In light of that fact, this dissertation

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[514] Victor Urbanowicz, "The Personal and The Political in "The Dispossessed,"' *Science Fiction Studies* 9 (1999), 117.
[515] Sargent, *The Shore of Women*, 471.

argues for studying how utopian genres inform each other in the debate, while seeking to incite the reader to action.

The human-nature link lets the reader perceive, like Le Guin's Shevek, how we are an extension of the land: "It was strange to see Takver take a leaf into her hand, or even a rock. She became an extension of it, it of her."[516] These works, as fantastical as they are, reflect truth and call for action though Darko Suvin's cognitive estrangement. As frutiful as this dissertation has proven, showing me how political context and genre inform active evaluations of our cultures, and how authors are recovered to meet current needs—there are still more works that I would have liked to include this dissertation, but did not have the space to do so.

Both the *The Native Tongue Trilogy,* started by Suzette Elgin in 1984, and Naomi Mitschison's *Memoirs of Spacewoman,* written in 1962, discuss the issue of language in the female domain as the source for rigid masculine control. While I am able to analyze language construction in Le Guin and Atwood—Le Guin in relation to societal constriction and Atwood in association with language's power of creating change—the science fiction novels by Elgin and Mitschison address language as a predominant theme. Mitschison's work, in particular, discusses how communication relates to eco-balance. Another key figure missing from this dissertation is James Tiptree, Jr. (Alice Sheldon)—an exemplar of mixing hard

[516] Le Guin, *The Dispossessed*, 185.

and soft science fiction. Hard science fiction focuses more on scientific accuracy versus 'soft' science fiction's reliance on the social sciences. Since the lack of hard science in women's science fiction was a predominant criticism during the 20th century, including Tiptree would be useful as a counter-attack. Her *Up the Walls of the World* (1978) would be an inspiring work to incorporate in the holistic discussion, as this science fiction leads to the understanding of the human through the alien: the human is more alien than the alien itself.

I was also unable to include Andre Norton in this dissertation, particularly those works that are a hybrid of science fiction and fantasy. Her work, *Witch World*, started in 1963, and continued for four decades, focuses on the notion of power in the hands of women—power that relies on a strong foundation of matriarchical witches and exposes both oppression and protection from these strong woman alliances. In connection to feminine worlds, as analyzed in Sargent's *Shore of Women*, a more thorough analysis of separatist utopias could be fruitful. Nicola Griffith's *Ammonite* (1992) would be a nice addition, as she deals with the deconstruction of gender, but with a reproductive focus. While Sargent deals somewhat with reproduction, she doesn't do it as much in connection to biological determinism. Like *Herland*, Griffith's book has an all-woman community that is able to conceive without men—a type of separatist literature that highlights a woman's independence by making her gender all-encompassing: a notion also found in Le Guin's *The Left Hand of Darkness*.

Lastly, I could include an interesting novel by Jeanette Winterson, titled *Sexing the Cherry* (1989), a work that blends many genres: the historical novel, magical realism, and science fiction. Including works with mixed genres, like this one, could add some dimension to this discussion, showing how these texts are using similar holistic concepts—removing dualism from nature—in inventive genres. In this work, there is a questioning of cultural constructs in regard to sexuality and gender norms. A very pertinent question for this dualism debate, and one that is currently a political powerhouse, is that of gender performance: "I have met a number of people who, anxious to be free of the burdens of their gender, have dressed themselves men as women and women as men."[517] This work also looks at ecological concerns. Since this novel covers two time periods, the 1600s and late 1980s, Winterston shows the ecological deprivation in both climates: "anywhere that profit might have been. The levels were always too high, the fish were dying, children had scaly diseases which the government said had no connection with anything."[518] Winterston also makes this debate into one about globalism in connection with the environment, especially through her constant references to rivers and streams: "the river runs from one country to another without stopping."[519] Another intriguing crossover between this book and perhaps Le Guin's *The Dispossessed* or Cavendish's *The Blazing World* is the notion of

[517] Jeanette Winterson, *Sexing the Cherry* (New York: Grove Press, 1998), 25.
[518] Winterson, *Sexing the Cherry*, 90.
[519] Winterson, *Sexing the Cherry* 107.

temporal space. Most of the descriptions about land, and of the voyages, are ones related to psychic journeys: "time has no meaning, space and place have no meaning, on this journey. All times can be inhabited, all places visited."[520] The journey concept mimics the idea of Cavendish's psychic utopias—places of beauty and truth found only through individual dreams. The time issue seems to connect to Le Guin's belief in holistic time; unending time relates to interconnection: "cutting through the dictates of daily time, and leaving us free to ignore boundaries of here and now," as "we are no longer bound by matter, matter has become what it is: empty space and light."[521]While the genre's fantasy elements slightly obscure the argument, careful inquiry reminds us that these outlandish ideas hint at some of the most important topics facing the world today: political concerns that need to be addressed to secure humanity's environmental future.

[520] Winterson, *Sexing the Cherry*, 58.
[521] Winterson, *Sexing the Cherry*, 65; 67

Appendix A

An Overview of the Five Themes in the Primary Texts

	Gender	Language	Animal	Spheres	Environment
BW	Great Chain Descartian New Nature/ No Gendered Nature Individualism	Infinite Worlds Chaotic Writng Imagination	Atomism Lack of Soul Concept	The Female Scientist God/ Nature Sphere	Free Will Anti- Mechanical
TD	Urras and Anarres- Great Chain Nature (Scarce vs. Fecund) Individual vs. Communalism	Infinite Worlds- Lack of Communication Language- Individualism and Communalism Language of Science	Connection to Nature Scarcity- Leads to Truth	Captilalism of Urras Socialism of Anarres Interplay of Worlds (Economy)	Free Will Tear Down Walls: Communication
SW	Separatist Literature- Great Chain (reversal) Holsitic Nature Individualism vs. Broad socetal constructs	Infinite Worlds- Communication Lack of Female voice vs. Female Religious Language	Human as Animal Environment informs Human-Animal	The Female Scientist Sphere control (walled city, hinterland, shore) Interplay of Worlds (religion)	Free Will Remove Political Influence
OC	*Holistic Nature throuch* *Voice*	*Language of Science versus* *Language of words*	Mad Scientist-- Creation of new animals as the solution	*Interplay of Characters* *(Economy)* *Sphere control* *(through religion)*	Free Will eliminated by sceince Remove politicla in- fluence--allow all peple a voice Create New Life- forms

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