

Dystopian Literature, Emotion, and Utopian Longing

By

Amanda Hemmingsen

Submitted to the graduate degree program in the English Department and the Graduate Faculty  
of the University of Kansas in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of  
Arts.

---

Chairperson Cheryl Lester

---

Giselle Anatol

---

Chris McKitterick

Date Defended: 19 May 2015

The Thesis Committee for Amanda Hemmingsen

certifies that this is the approved version of the following thesis:

Dystopian Literature, Emotion and Utopian Longing

---

Chairperson Cheryl Lester

Date approved: 19 May 2015

## Abstract

The genre of dystopian novels has long been theorized from a historical materialist lens. Utopian longing, which is the didactic focus of dystopian texts, functions as much from emotion as cognition. Historical materialist readings tend to undervalue emotion in tracing a character's shifting relationship to the dystopian sociopolitical landscape that the character finds him or herself in. Using three dystopian novels, *Stand on Zanzibar* (1968), *We Who Are About To...* (1977) and *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep*, this paper outlines recent theory of emotion in sociology, psychology and cultural studies in order to argue for the importance of attending to emotion in interpreting the relationship between characters and their sociopolitical context.

## Acknowledgements

Thanks to my family, my friends, my colleagues. Without them, this project would be hollow.

## Contents

Introduction to the Dystopian Genre.....	1
Periodization and Dystopian Fiction.....	8
Emotions and Dystopian Fiction.....	10
Theoretical Underpinnings of the Dystopian Genre .....	15
5 Key Components of the Dystopia Genre .....	17
I. Purpose Behind World-Building .....	17
II. How the Novel Begins .....	18
III. Characters Realizing their World is a Dystopia.....	22
IV. Realization of Dystopia Becoming Resistance.....	26
V. The Close of the Novel Expands or Contracts Utopian Longing .....	34
Atmosphere as a function of dystopian societies .....	40
Concluding Evaluation on Relationship between Affect and Dystopian Literature.....	49
Works Cited .....	52
Works Referenced.....	53

## Introduction to the Dystopian Genre

From the 15th century to the beginning of the 20th, literary constructions of utopia were fairly straightforward tools for explaining the consequences of patterns of behavior, with the author in a position of privilege, knowing enough to teach his or her audience the Truth (which tended to be a reification of upper middle class beliefs). In a sense, the authors were positioning themselves as knowing the route to social heaven, or hell.<sup>1</sup> As the genre has mutated, writers of utopias (and the genus's other species) have developed a more sophisticated ability to wield the didactic impulse.<sup>2</sup> Twentieth century authors have been particularly inventive in this regard, responding to technological, intellectual and industrial shifts, as well as two world wars, and attendant alterations in the way humanity perceives itself, at the individual, national and species level. As authors have played with genre conventions as part of their responding, utopia has branched into dystopia, and eutopia; these three forms have been in the toolkit of authors interested in creating literature of hypothetical social realities (Sargent). All the *topos*-derived genres<sup>3</sup> concern themselves with the larger social picture. Whatever the particularities of the host of terms conjure up, the heart of these literatures is social dreaming<sup>4</sup>, or Jameson's utopian thinking, as novelists respond to the social, political, and economic forces that have taken shape

---

<sup>1</sup> See Kingsley Amis's *New Maps of Hell* (1960) for the first exploration of this understanding of the genre.

<sup>2</sup> See Moylan's historicization in *Scraps of the Untainted Sky* (2000). It did not come to a consensus definition until Lymon Thomas Sargent, Thomas Moylan and Rebecca Bacciolini, along with several others, came together at the Conference of the Society for Utopian Studies in 1993. From their conversations as well their scholarship, the terminology gained a sense of coherency and precision that was somewhat lacking prior.

<sup>3</sup> *Topos*: "no place." See "Three Seeds Revisited."

<sup>4</sup> That society under examination in all these *topos* tales, to follow Sargent and Suvin's definitions of utopia, includes "human (or some equivalent) interaction in a number of different forms and in which human beings (or some equivalent) express themselves in a variety of ways" (7). *Topoi* literatures concern themselves with the complexity of interaction within a society that is different from the one in which the author lives. The elements and interactions of a society depend upon what the author is interested in emphasizing or exploring, but every utopian/dystopian narrative contains this element of interaction based on a different set of sociopolitical rules and principles. Social dreaming is the use of the imagination to identify then understand the limitations to how society is organized.

across the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Exploring the limits of the collective imaginary and it is to realize a more “perfect” sociopolitical reality is embedded in the construction of these genres.

Dystopias seek to open up the imagination by heightening the shock of the consequences of a broken system. The 20<sup>th</sup> century, unlike any century prior, acted as a ripe log for dystopias to spore, proliferate and evolve. In the late 1950s through the 1960s and 70s, dystopias became dimly apparent as a literary genre.<sup>5</sup> As societies began to recover from war and consider the problems of modernization, authors began to experiment with form and subject, using dystopias as a vehicle for imagining the consequences of large-scale social decisions (as well as large-scale effects of the changing landscape of technology and national identity). Depending on the particular interests of the author, those decisions could be sociological, biological, psychological, and always to some degree political.

Three novels have received little critical attention in terms of their location within the dystopian tradition. John Brunner’s *Stand on Zanzibar* (1968), a groundbreaking dystopic vision of a “potential” future America in both form and content, has received little critical attention,<sup>6</sup> despite the caliber and complexity of its dystopian portrayal of overpopulation at the global, national and local level. Scholarship on this novel is scarce and done largely prior to the development of the concept of dystopia, but *Stand on Zanzibar* deserves recognition for its sophisticated and innovative exposure of the roots of anti-utopic social reality. Joanna Russ has received critical attention for her ground-breaking treatment of gender and social identity but not been studied for other modes of social commentary, and *We Who Are About To...* (1975) is one

---

<sup>5</sup> The first use of dystopia was in 1953 (Gunn, *Road to Science Fiction* v.3). Dystopian literature is inextricably linked with the rise of capitalism and industry. Aldous Huxley, Yevgeny Zemyatin, and Orson Wells each contributed to shaping the core of dystopian literature’s themes. Each created a story of modernity that foretold a certain doom based on a trajectory of social/political/industrial development.

<sup>6</sup> The two articles investigating the novel are from the 70s. SF scholarship keeps the novel in living memory, but perhaps the density of the text has tended to dissuade scholars as much as the fact that the attention is on more contemporary writing. See DeBolt’s *The Happening Worlds of John Brunner* for more insight into Brunner’s lack of recognition as an artist.

of the least discussed of her body of work.<sup>7</sup> Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968) has been extensively examined for its exploration of the posthuman, and the human within technological change,<sup>8</sup> but has not been examined in terms of its dystopic elements. These three novels have been overlooked in large part because they were written prior to 1980, which Tom Moylan has posited as a critical moment of change in the dystopian genre. This needs remedying as each of these novels uses world building and character development to comment on the social order in the didactic fashion of the *topos*-derived genres. Each novel is a sophisticated manipulation of elements of the tradition of dystopian literature.

*Stand on Zanzibar*, won a Hugo for its rendering of America as a character through its imitation of Dos Passos's *U.S.A.* postmodernist structure. Taking on the issue of overpopulation (a hotly debated topic in the 60s) in conjunction with competitive nationalism, Brunner uses a fragmented structure to evoke the sensation of living in an overpopulated world where this imagined American government is attempting to force its constituents into what it has deemed an appropriate response to the overpopulation crisis. Brunner bombards his readers, like his citizens, with news, editorials, sociological treatises, etc., with the goal of changing attitudes towards the new eugenics law and the limit of two children per family. Not only are readers bombarded with media, but also with a chaotic morass of stories of individuals reacting to the laws in the context of their life circumstances.

The stories quickly demonstrate that the laws and governmental rhetoric are not having their intended effect but serve instead as justifications among the poor for bullying and violence

---

<sup>7</sup> Most work on Russ looks at her other, more well-received work (such as *The Female Man*), or her outspoken stance on feminism. This is fitting with the standard historical narrative of English-language fiction in the genre, which holds that postwar "utopias were written in the 70s, dystopias in the 80s." As her work has been extensively investigated in terms of gender, and there is only so much one can do in one paper, gender has been left out of this paper.

<sup>8</sup> See Gwaltney's *Androids as a Device for Reflecting on Personhood*. See also, Galvan's "Entering the Posthuman Collective in Phillip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep*."



towards neighbors, among the wealthy for opting out of abiding by the laws by taking trips to other countries, among the young for making irrational, near-sighted choices lacking the benefit of dialogue with other generations or accumulated cultural wisdoms. *Stand on Zanzibar's* fragmented structure tracing over twenty characters reveals that the heart of the issue is not overpopulation, not ignorance of the masses or blindness on their part, but rather a lack of genuine, open dialogue between the government and its people. The government does not understand the social reality in which everyday people operate, and the people do not understand the relationship between the choices they make in their everyday lives and the consequences playing out on a global scale. Another way to put it is that the government thinks in terms of statistics, GDP and global might while everyday people think in terms of personal preference and the primacy of their own (and their immediate communities') wants and needs. The dystopian sociopolitical landscape cannot be reduced down to "overpopulation crisis" and "nationalism" but rather needs to be investigated in terms of how the parts of the whole *relate* to one another, at all levels of the "whole."

Joanna Russ's 1975 novel, *We Who Are About To...* tells the story of seven characters who've crashed on an uninhabited planet. Rather than tackle a national, or even interplanetary population, Russ uses the seven characters to represent different class attitudes toward society in a Marxist critique how capitalism destroys human relations told through the perspective of a failed anarchist who calls herself Nobody. As she describes the other members of the crashed ship, she does so through a Marxist lens. There is the wealthy socialite family, composed of Mrs. Graham her husband, a kind, good man who is relatively at peace with essentially having been purchased, and their adopted daughter Laurie, a prepubescent girl, too young and spoiled to realize her life has been paid for). The bureaucrat is represented by John Ude, an officious

academic who quickly works to gain a controlling interest in the new little mini society the castaways try to create by a careful blend of obsequious kowtowing and carefully delivered mockery. Natalie represents the angry impoverished person whose intelligence has enabled her to escape from poverty into education and government work. Cassie is a poor woman who has had to resort to selling her body for a living. Alan is an athlete, a man who has been able to find success in the world through skills of strength, but who has the reasoning capacity of a pubescent boy. And finally we have Nobody, the narrator, who slowly reveals a complex, critical attitude towards her lot in life and the state of society as well as the people in her new desert island environment.

These seven people, who other than the Grahams, did not know each other before the crash, have enough food for six months, and a water processor that can last at most a few years. It is not their minimal tools for survival that make this a dystopia, but rather the fact that six of them create a fantasy for themselves wherein they will survive long enough that their children may be rescued in 80 years or so, when another ship is likely to pass by. This attitude serves as a platform for the political maneuverings of Natalie and John who quickly take charge of the group identity with their use of fantasy and persuasion. After a short time on the island they determine that it is their responsibility to organize a breeding rotation, wherein every man must sleep with every woman (in an “equal” sort of fashion). A dissident voice from the beginning, Nobody refuses to comply and eventually escapes to a far away cave. When she is tracked down, she proceeds to kill all of the others before committing suicide, following her ambivalent adherence to a Christian sect.

In the last half of the novel Nobody’s examines the life she has lived and the choices she has made, from leading a rebellion against the perfidies of capitalism to falling in love, to

abandoning dissent, and killing everyone on the island. The novel examines how a desert island scenario would be doomed to play out certain social ills of a society that remains bound to capitalism because of corporate control over free energy, as well as investigates the perspective of someone who has realized that her deeply critical values are essentially meaningless because she has realized that the system is too massive to change. Everyone in the group believes they are making the right choices and uses the dominant fantasy of colonization in which they have become invested as justification for manipulation and power plays. After they accidentally let the planet air into the ship and are all at each other's throats while the two volunteers go to test the air. This quote is from the end of that chapter, as the air-testers open the airlock and accidentally let in the planet's atmosphere:

John Ude said, "Come on now, come on dears. It's a tagged planet. It has to be. Too much coincidence otherwise, eh? The air, the gravity. Now if it's tagged that means it's like Earth. And we know Earth. Most of us were born on it. so what's there to be afraid of, hey? We're just colonizing a little early, that's all. You wouldn't be afraid of Earth, would you?" (20)

Ude uses the narrative of colonization and analogy to comfort them. There is no actual basis for any sort of belief about the planet, but people can't exist in a vacuum of belief, they must supply something. The chapter closes with the narrator being sarcastic about 'just like Earth,' "think of a nice case of poison ivy all over, including your eyes. Status asthmaticus. Amoebic dysentery." She is well aware of Earth's danger. We don't get her response, but from the next opening scene we can assume that she was silent, that she allowed this to become the dominant narrative of belief in the others minds while holding on to a radically different understanding of their situation. According to *We Who Are About To...*, dystopia is not merely the power structures

people are embedded in, but also the ways in which people invest their sense of identity into the system as it is.

Philip K. Dick's 1968 novel, *Do Android's Dream of Electric Sheep*, also interrogates the social dreaming of an interplanetary society from the perspective of one who has decided to remain on Earth. In this landscape, humans have decimated themselves with war, most people have emigrated off Earth, and the new form of profitable production is that of androids to serve as manual laborers on homesteads. The eviscerated society is merely the backdrop. People have more or less intellectually accepted the reality of the situation, the social order more or less functions business as usual. People go to work. People emigrate off-planet. What makes this novel a dystopian fiction is not its depiction of a political system that needs changing; rather, it illustrates that the ways in which people relate to one another need to change. In this world, androids are enslaved labor vital to the economy, that is, to corporations whose profit margin is driven by developing ever more sophisticated androids. Side-stepping certain legalities, the corporations aim to construct androids that are indistinguishable from humans in the government designed and mandated tests.

The main character, Rick Deckard, is an officer of the law whose job it is to apply the government test of empathy to new models of androids in order to ascertain that companies are complying with the law and not creating androids that are indistinguishable from humans. In typical PKD fashion, this novel is less about the particularities of the capitalist social order, than about what exactly it means to have empathy and how humanity would be degraded if machines without compassion were to become a force within society. At the beginning of the novel, Deckard is a "typical" man of the postmodern times, vaguely alienated from everyone he knows,

vaguely aware of his dissatisfaction and alienation, but lacking the imaginative capacity to enact any sort of change.

All this changes for Deckard when he has to test an android too sophisticated for the test's capacity to distinguish between android and human. Deckard must rely on his own instinct, judgment and experiential knowledge. Deciding to act leads to the twists and turns of the novel and to Deckard's eventual ability to see beyond the limited imagining with which he began. If Deckard had not decided to trust his knowledge over the test, then humanity would have been lost to the androids, whose plot to infiltrate human society would have succeeded. The novel ends with the social order maintained, but Deckard's new awareness of the value of empathy points to how change can be enacted in a society where the sociopolitical system seems hopeless.

### **Periodization and Dystopian Fiction**

Dystopian scholarship today examines the literature primarily with a historical materialist lens.<sup>9</sup> It focuses on understanding the dystopian sociopolitical reality in terms of systemic abuses of power and their resulting effects on people. It responds in part to the didactic nature of dystopian literature (and its "parent" genre, SF), and to the utility and popularity of Jameson's theorizing of utopia in the Marxist tradition. Historical materialism is in many ways the ideal method for approaching the genre and its exploration of sociopolitical systems of power and relating. However, historical materialist reading do not sufficiently recognize the bi-directional relationship within systems of power between people and the systems in which they are embedded.

---

<sup>9</sup> And with feminist critique, as it is often working towards the same purpose, out of similar values, as historical materialist critique is. However, a detailed discussion of this must be set aside in this paper.

Historical materialist readings overlook a vital component of the dystopian landscape, namely how emotions serve to socialize individuals into counterproductive modes of social expression. In dystopian fiction, humans interpret reality through their emotional life and the experiential knowledge to which gives it shape and utility. Scholarship tends to interpret dystopian fiction in terms of how citizens are contained and constrained by the manipulations of the superstructure. The underpinnings of dystopian fictional reality tend to be examined in terms of memory, history and the political process as it relates to the structure of feeling in existence at the time of publication. The didactic nature of the novels tends to be interpreted in terms of how a dystopian novel's imagined social structure perpetuates oppression. Little inquiry has been made in terms of how ordinary people participate in the system of oppression, implying that characters are always and invariably blindly passive to the whim of the system.

Another effect of the historical materialist emphasis is its focus on dystopian novels written after the neoliberal turn of the 80s. Scholars have come to accept Tom Moylan's argument that dystopian literature changed at this time in response to the extreme political shift. Moylan's concept of critical dystopia as a means of distinguishing post-80s dystopias from previous texts has inadvertently led to an implicit belief in the 80s as the origin and standard bearer of the dystopian tradition. This has led to many insightful readings of authors such as Ursula Le Guin, Octavia Butler, and Marge Piercy, among others.<sup>10</sup> It is important to recognize and study the impact these authors have had on the genre and the relationship between the neoliberal turn and responses to it in dystopian literature. However, it is also important to acknowledge that dystopian novels written prior to Le Guin's *The Dispossessed* offered equally relevant and sophisticated responses to the social ills of their time. Earlier dystopian fiction suggests that the neoliberal turn did not diminish the relevance of earlier inquiries into

---

<sup>10</sup> In a sense, Le Guin and Butler have come to stand as the 'ur-authors' of dystopian literature.

dystopian landscapes and their impact on the constraints and possibilities of utopian imagining. It over-values the political moment in terms of understanding the relationship between people and between people and the systems in which they exist.

By focusing on John Brunner's *Stand on Zanzibar* (1968), Joanna Russ's *We Who Are About To...* (1975) and Philip K. Dick's *Do Android's Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968), I hope to recover these texts from accidental displacement from the genre's canon and demonstrate how they conform to and experiment with dystopian generic conventions. By calling attention to texts that slip between the cracks of the historical materialist critical narrative, I propose to change the periodization of the genre of dystopian fiction. Yet I also undertake a second argument, drawing on recent theorizing about emotion to shift the interpretation of dystopian fiction toward an understanding of how the interplay of emotions and beliefs function within systems of power to perpetuate anti-utopian realities.

## **Emotions and Dystopian Fiction**

If the primary goal of dystopian scholarship is to better understand the ways in which utopian thinking is either realized or perverted (via social relations within a particular sociopolitical landscape), then it is critical that dystopian scholarship take into account the ways in which humans relating to humans connect to the systems and institutions they find themselves bound by. Utopian imagining is not just affected by the ways in which institutions and systems create norms, but by the way those norms are interpreted and acted upon by people and the manner by which they interpret and act: their intertwined capacities to both acquire and process information and to recognize, categorize, and interpret emotion. By treating emotion as a social

phenomenon, dystopian fiction demonstrates how systems of power maintain themselves through constraining utopian imagining among “ordinary” people.

Emotions, beliefs and knowledge are the tools by which humans make decisions. The historical materialist perspective, rooted in a tradition that operates out of understanding reality on a rational basis, often finds itself taking that bias into its reading of reality and understanding human action solely through a rational lens, misunderstanding the complex relationship between information intake and the recognition and interpretation of emotional responses. It also fails to take into account the new scholarly awareness of the fact that emotions are not subjective, or not discretely located inside each individual, but are rather complex social phenomena. Therefore, interpretations made out of this understanding of reality not only overfocus on hegemonies but also overemphasize cognition.<sup>11</sup>

It is near impossible to generalize on the methods by which humans make decisions, but it is clear that most people do not make decisions out of theoretical abstractions about the nature of power and their role within the system, but rather experiential knowledge, understanding of self, and habitual, socialized, emotional responsiveness. Beliefs shape reality and are constantly undergoing a cyclic process of being confirmed or undermined by emotional experience. Beliefs affect what a person pays attention to. What a person pays attention to affects the information they take in. The information that they take in affects their beliefs. The emotional intensity of a belief directs the entire process. Examining the interplay of emotion in a dystopian novel can reveal how the text explores how feelings of agency are controlled, contorted, shaped, by our

---

<sup>11</sup> One could say that this has been a pattern recognized since Gramsci bewailed the fact that the people did not act as predicted by the intellectuals but that the pattern has not completely been rooted out of this mode of thinking as of yet. This is in large part due to the fact that research into emotion has long been blind-sided by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century belief that science had all the tools it needed to measure reality, and anything that wasn't measurable, wasn't real. Early theories of the relationship between cognition and emotion tried too hard to make these categories distinct from one another, rather than seeing thoughts as a complex interplay of beliefs, bodily reactions, habit, knowledge, and level of self-awareness.



emotionally-derived beliefs about reality and how those beliefs and emotions circulate within a society.

Dystopian societies are a landscape of fear and alienation, a heightened reflection of a fragmented, disorienting reality. People exist in the landscape created by the novel in varying degrees of awareness of the emotional backdrop to their lives. Sarah Ahmed developed the term “affective economies,” which she argues describes how “emotions play a crucial role in the “surfacing” of individual and collective bodies through the way in which emotions circulate between bodies and signs” (79). Emotions, in Ahmed’s conceptual understanding, reside in neither subject nor object, but instead circulate between the two. The way that characters read others, their environment, and any sort of information that is placed before them becomes part of an affective circle. Part of the way that emotions are read, reified and transmitted is through the narratives—historical and otherwise—of a community, as well as how the community and its narratives define group inclusion and status.

Fear and alienation, then, are perpetuated by the stories circulated amongst a community. As Moylan reads Jameson, fear of utopia “can begin to be overcome by confronting the processes by which that fear found its articulation in anti-utopian venues in the first place” (*Scraps of the Untainted Sky* 143). If it is a circulating movement of fear, what is important is not finding the source, but in tracing the feedback loop in order to find a space for intervention in the perversion and constraining of utopian longing that play out in dystopian novels.

Moylan and Baccolini, in their conception of the genre, see language as the primary site for identifying the way that control and resistance to control play out amongst systems and individuals in a dystopian sociopolitical landscape. Looking at language as the site of contest between state and its citizens, however, inaccurately situates the relationship between people,

themselves, each other and the state. Realizations, motivations, actions and language do not exist at a purely rational level. Our awareness and responsiveness to a social hell comes less from a Platonic awareness of systems of power or institutions, but from attitudes and beliefs, which are socialized into a sense of “normal/not normal” via family, genetic predisposition, class, youth experiences, historical moment and perceptions of cultural values (which are further modified by these factors). Attitudes and beliefs define emotional life. Emotional life, along with information processing habits and capacities, drive our realizations, motivations, and actions. Language, its taboos, limitations, and manipulation, does serve as a locus point for tracing oppression, but one cannot talk about language without exploring what inside a person generates language. Being able to dress an attitude, belief or feeling in words is not a one-to-one indicator of an individual’s sense of awareness or agency.

As Ahmed notes, “situations are affective given the gap between the impressions we have of others, and the impressions we make on others, all of which are lively” (118). In Western cultures, the primary tool people have for developing an impression of others, or of “emitting” an impression, is the degree to which independence and individual goals are realized or impeded. There is an implicit belief that one makes the best impression by standing out, which is not the case in some Eastern cultures. This emphasis on individuality permeates Western modes of coping with the gaps between impressions. It means that events tend to be interpreted in terms of thinking of all participants as discrete in some way, shape or form, rather than part of an intersubjective experience.

Emotional reality has an “affective situation,” an “atmosphere” and an “angle of arrival” (Ahmed). The affective situation is the emotional state one brings to a new environment. The atmosphere is the emotional resonances within the new environment, which Ahmed points out

are interpreted through one's particular angle of arrival as well as other factors. One goes about interpreting the affective angles using habitus and an unconscious, socialized evaluative process. Everyone has a unique filter of pre-existing knowledge and operating beliefs that control their "angle of arrival" and perception of the atmosphere. However, in the west, an individuality bias tends to mean people's evaluation process overemphasizes their own angle of arrival and underemphasizes (or overlooks) atmosphere or other people's angles of arrival. As will be demonstrated in interpreting the novels below, it is this inability to understand the relationship between affective situation, atmosphere and angles of arrival that leads to the perpetuation of anti-utopian thinking.

To return to unpacking "emotional life" is to turn to how it is further complicated by several other factors. One, humans commonly misinterpret and thereby misunderstand their own and others' emotions. This is due to lack of knowledge in some way shape or form, and that lack of knowledge can occur at a variety of levels. At the Western culture level, there is a lack of knowledge about how emotions can be intersubjective as well as subjective (Markus and Kitayama; Brennan).<sup>12</sup> There is a lack of knowledge about the potential origins of an emotion as existing outside the body (Brennan); and about the circulation of emotion (Von Christiansen; Ahmed). There is also a lack of knowledge due to the norm of hiding one's innermost self from others (as well as from one's self) and poor socialization into productive processes of self-reflection. Lack of knowledge is often influenced by the manipulation of language, but experiential knowledge and socialized schema (and the resulting reinforcement via one's "natural" emotions) contribute to lack of knowledge as much as any language games played by systems of power.

---

<sup>12</sup> Subjective: emotions are individualized and discrete. Intersubjective: emotions are group experiences and group derived.

People tend to not understand that emotions, as habits, attitudes, and responses to stimuli, are partly socialized into categories of natural/unnatural (Markus and Kitayama). Their “naturalness” stems not only from within the individual, but from how the individual has been trained to recognize, categorize, interpret and act on those interpretations.<sup>13</sup> How well one acquires conceptual knowledge and meta-awareness of the environments and identities one is embedded in influences one’s capacities to process emotions.<sup>14</sup> One’s capacity to process emotions dictates how one will respond to events/incoming information as well as how one will go about relating to others. Just as historical and political awareness influence one’s capacity to accurately and effectively critique the state, emotional awareness also plays a role in the functioning of systems of power. This mode of understanding the social dreaming that occurs in dystopian literature has been overshadowed by the field’s interest in the tools of historical materialism. Incorporating an awareness of the roots and circulation of emotion within dystopian novels will enrich the scholarly tradition and provide new insights into the ways in which utopian thinking is either constrained or allowed freedom to develop.

In the following section, I will demonstrate that the three texts selected for this study conform to salient components of the dystopian genre and demonstrate the role of emotion in shaping their depiction of dystopian landscapes and utopian longings.

## Theoretical Underpinnings of the Dystopian Genre

Dystopia was originally a confusing synonym for anti-utopia—literature that constrains the utopian impulse—that arose as a result of Kingsley Amis’s *New Maps of Hell* (1960).

---

<sup>13</sup> For example, the words a society has to define and delimit emotion place boundaries on its people’s capacity to interpret their emotional experience (i.e. some cultures have no synonym for anger).

<sup>14</sup> It could be said, then, that dystopias seek to enhance one’s ability to process national level emotional responses.

Moylan did the scholarly work to clarify the terminology that has led to the current understanding of the term anti-utopia and shifted the field away from a Jamesonian understanding of the dystopian genre as inherently anti-utopian.<sup>15</sup> In *Scraps of the Untainted Sky*, Moylan argues for thinking of literary utopia and dystopia as a spectrum of potential worlds presented in the text and utopia and anti-utopia as a spectrum of attitudes towards the future of society that is derived from interpreting the text's ending. Moylan develops his ideas partly in response to Jameson's body of work on the genres of utopia and dystopia, countering Jameson's idea that dystopias were always doing the work of anti-utopian constraints to collective imagining.

In dystopian scholarship, the primary objective is deepening our understanding of the social dreaming that is occurring in dystopian novels. This has largely taken place within a Jamesonian understanding of utopian thinking, and conceiving of dystopian (and utopian) literatures as creating spaces for praxis, as creating spaces for grappling with the blind spots in collective imaginings of what is possible in terms of reshaping social reality.<sup>16</sup> Moylan describes the "cultural and political stakes" of dystopias as "the hegemonic system of capital, the oppositional project of the Left...and...the very premises and processes of Utopia itself" (125). What is important to emphasize is that, regardless of angle of inquiry, scholars of dystopia are all concerned with one thing: the utopian impulse, the means by which the text attempts to create a space for new, valuable, thoughts on the shape of tomorrow.<sup>17</sup>

---

<sup>15</sup> See Moylan *Scraps of the Untainted Sky*.

<sup>16</sup> Utopia is the Jameson-esque space for dreaming of a potential to use imagination to transform our tomorrow into something better than today and anti-utopia is a text that crushes or negates the space for re-envisioning society's functioning. A dystopia can be Utopian or anti-utopian as much as a utopian novel, albeit by different means.

<sup>17</sup> See "Reification and Utopian in Mass Culture." Jameson reminds us that we all have utopian longing, we all long for a more perfect social reality. What we don't have, thanks to capitalistic systems of power, is a good means by which to channel that longing into something that is actually good. American culture tend to be channeled by advertising, corporations, Hollywood and the dominant ideologies' impact on public education. Capitalist

A novel can be categorized as a dystopia from how the story opens and how the story ends. As Moylan characterizes it, dystopias, like their “parent” genre, SF, throw the reader into the middle of the story, creating a sense of cognitive estrangement where the reader must scramble to make sense of the new rules and environment (unlike utopias, which begin with a guide of some sort; readers are guided into the new world and given a tour). The dystopian beginning orients the reader to the sense of alienation, makes it an explicit, conscious component of the story and attempts to make the reader do the work of connecting that sense of alienation to components of the social structure. The end, though, is perhaps the more critical element—the end the part that we can use to place the novel on the utopian/anti-utopian spectrum (Moylan). In the following section I further examine these key devices of the genre and interpret the three novels in light of them, incorporating my argument about the utility of affect in analyzing dystopian literature.

## 5 Key Components of the Dystopia Genre

### I. Purpose Behind World-Building

*The world-building of the author is founded upon a sophisticated didactic message about sociopolitical reality. The details of the sociopolitical landscape and its particular salient social ills stem from the author’s understanding of the roots/causes of the social ills of his time and his*

---

manipulation simultaneously erodes what is good and projects an image of that good thing onto a story for a false catharsis.

Stories that sweep into popularity can then be understood as compensating people in some way for some value that is getting undermined in our daily reality. This means that people generally turn to story in order to successfully meet their utopian longings as people can no longer turn to cultural systems to get those needs fully met. By this understanding, ‘utopian longings’ arise from a lack caused by the imperfect, nay, malevolent, maneuverings of the powers-that-be of the economic, political and social systems we are embedded in.

*imaginative extrapolation of potential effects and unforeseen consequences. The author simultaneously explores the roots as well as future limbs of the social landscape.*

This is the foundation of the genre.<sup>18</sup> The carefully crafted sociopolitical landscape frames the narrative, the struggle, and is pivotal to the didactic message of the novel. For how the three novels analyzed here fit into this, see the introduction of the novels above.

## II. How the Novel Begins

*The opening of the novel creates a sense of cognitive dissonance<sup>19</sup> for the reader. The world feels confusing, alienating and incomprehensible. Structural choices as well as world-building details and character can all contribute to this sense of dissonance.<sup>20</sup>*

Mapping how cognitive dissonance is created within dystopian novels allows further insight into mapping how the fictions underpinning a dystopian society maintain themselves. The means by which the novel creates a sense of cognitive dissonance, as well as what the focus of that dissonance is and its effect on the story, allow readers an angle of entry into the atmosphere of the society. This then invests readers in exploring the limits of the social dreams that the dystopian novel is interested in exposing.

*Stand on Zanzibar*'s Table of Contents is divided into four sections, with the chapters arranged not in order of appearance, but thematically. This has the appearance of being helpful, but actually contributes to a sense of inability to navigate the text. The novel opens up with the

---

<sup>18</sup> See "Three Seeds Revisited."

<sup>19</sup> Discussion of poor articulation of cognitive dissonance as a thing.

<sup>20</sup> This dissonance is what ties dystopias to the SF tradition. SF scholars have long heralded the ability of SF to wrench readers' sense of reality towards a purpose (see Darko Suvin's "Estrangement and Cognition"). In dystopian fiction, the purpose is always to draw attention to the story's sociopolitical critique.

chapter, “Read the Directions” from “the happening world” section. The chapter is comprised of 51 snippets of information. The snippets are an intermixing of news bulletins, advertisements, quotes from the sociological treatise, *The Hipcrime Vocab*, as well as seemingly random facts about 25 characters and Mr. and Mrs. Everywhere.<sup>21</sup> It is a chaotic first chapter, impossible to get any bearings on the story, or who a reader should identify as a central character. Brunner keeps readers off balance by preventing them from having a character to latch onto and form a readerly relationship with. Later on these first facts about the character actually speak quite powerfully to their sense of identity and how they relate to themselves and the world, but it is impossible to glean this from the first chapter. The snippets move so fast it is near impossible to remember anyone’s name, let alone begin to develop that readerly sense of ‘knowing’ a character. This first chapter, with its news clips, ads, and character soundbites teeters on parodying the disjunction in relating that is occurring at every level of the society in the novel. Brunner masterfully creates a sense of dissonance that engages readers with the lost, alienated atmosphere of the plot arcs of all the characters. The sensation of not being able to situate characters mimics the sensation of how the characters feel about themselves in their social reality. It mimics the sensation of living in an overpopulated world.

*We Who Are About To...* also creates cognitive dissonance as a reflection of the story’s atmosphere. This atmosphere is being battled over out of diametrically opposed understandings of reality. Six of the characters are incapable of changing their limited perception of the oppressive social order, and so their emotional existence is driven by the need to find comfort, however false and oppressive it is. Nobody lives with the bald, terrifying facts of oppression and

---

<sup>21</sup> Brunner’s inclusion of these two “characters” is a brilliant complex symbol of the middle class: “Mr. & Mrs. Everywhere are construct identities, the new century’s equivalent of the Joneses, except that with them you don’t have to keep up. You buy a personalised TV with homimage attachment which ensures that Mr. & Mrs. Everywhere look, and talk, and move like you” (8).



the resulting isolation and hopelessness. The novel is the story of these two angles battling over control of the atmosphere, or social narrative by which the group makes decisions.

The reader enters the desert island as if awaking from a concussion from the crash. The reader, in traditional SF fashion, begins with not even the basics of the social structure of this future society. The reader begins with an awareness of the characters' plight, but not an awareness of the ills of the social system. The only way to realize it is a dystopian landscape in *We Who Are About To...* is the narrator's superior political and economic knowledge that she shares with the reader. If the story had 'landed' in the chaos of the crash from another perspective, it would have been hard for the reader to recognize the insanity of the others' belief in their survival. The narrative perspective helps to expose how story-telling traditions imbricate people in false realities. Ude's set up of the fantasy of colonization is meant to comfort, to fill the cultural vacuum left from their crash. The characters cannot make decisions without some sort of belief system founded upon a narrative of the social reality. Nobody (the narrator) has the critical perspective of a historical materialist; when she mentions that capitalism would have died but for the 'timely' discovery of nuclear fission, the sociopolitical reality is exposed through the emotional reality of these characters. Through Nobody's eyes it becomes clear that the others cling to the narrative of colonization because of their fears and their need to adopt the dominant political narrative in order to make sense of their lives. Until they have a sociopolitical narrative to attach themselves to, they are frozen, unable to act. This method of setting up the dystopian landscape demands that readers face how people operate out of limited perspective and sense of their place in their community, thereby contributing to the 'story-telling' that maintains the façade of a reasonable, healthy society.

The cognitive dissonance in *Androids*, as is typical with PKD's work, stems from the reader's following along as the characters enter into a mental labyrinth, where they have lost sight of what is "real." Deckard, after administering the empathy test to the new android model, loses sight of what is real about human nature and what isn't. Overcoming the cognitive dissonance via the character's struggle to return to a sense of a firm grasp on reality is much closer to the "standard" dystopian character arc. PKD contributes to the genre an attention to the relevance of the inner landscape to the social one, as well as connecting dystopias with questions of how definitions of humanity are intimately bound up with the health of social relations at all levels.

The opening scene of the novel is a fight between Rick Deckard and his wife. One of the main tools and topics of their fight is emotion. The Penfield artificial brain stimulation machine has hundreds of emotional settings and they quibble with each other about what emotions they ought to be programming for themselves, as well as use programmed emotions as bargaining chips for each to get the other to do what they want. Their emotions are completely natural, have the appearance of being controlled, and still function in an age-old saga of marital strife. Mostly what is different is the language in which they discuss emotions, as well as the capacity to quickly switch between emotional states via the machine. But, as Iran, his wife says, "I can't dial a setting that stimulates my cerebral cortex into wanting to dial! If I don't want to dial, I don't want to dial that most of all, because I will want to dial, and wanting to dial right now is the most alien drive I can imagine; I just want to sit here in my bed and stare at the floor" (6-7).

Technology alters the conversation between husband and wife, but it does not fundamentally affect their ability to relate to one another. Just as it is today, emotions are the means by which we manipulate people into doing what we want. We just have to be a little more indirect about it,

because we don't have a shared language in common on which to draw from. This couple is gravely unhappy. Iran wants to feel depression at the fallen state of society, her husband doesn't want her to take the risk. He believes it is dangerous. She believes she won't feel alive, a human being if she doesn't. Living in a broken world, she wants to be a part of it, she wants to feel depressed about the status quo.

Their ability to function as a happy unit is constrained by what is happening in society as well as what cultural beliefs they have adopted or rejected. Rick believes depression is dangerous, but the only emotion he can think up to replace it is a feeling of "pleased acknowledgement of husband's superior knowledge in all matters" (7) which its pretty clear she will clear out of her system the second he leaves for work. The internal state of their marriage, as well as how Rick relates to his neighbors and colleagues reflects the atmosphere of the time: squabbling over inconsequentials and the distribution of the remaining precious goods in their society. As the novel progresses, his emotional attitude towards his wife undergoes several revisions. As he struggles with the androids and with his understanding of the basic tenets of being a human, he re-remembers his love for his wife, and the final scene of the novel is one of domestic tenderness. This framing of the novel emphasizes the intricate relationship between one's domestic life and one's life as a political citizen. Happiness in one is bound up with happiness in another. The cognitive dissonance that the reader experiences along with Deckard about the nature of humanity brings those questions of happiness and connection alive.

### **III. Characters Realizing their World is a Dystopia**

*The main character(s) undergo a process of realization about the ills of their society and then the rest of the story follows the decisions they make based out of this new awareness.*

Moylan and Baccolini posit that those decisions are forms of resistance, but I find this somewhat limiting as it seems to project the Marxist ideology onto character analysis. As James Scott argues in *Weapons of the Weak*, resistance occurs whether or not it's realized or acknowledged by the dominant forces. Realization and resistance to oppression takes many forms, depending on the values, goals and knowledge of the individual. Humans are too varied and complex for this process of contending with a devastatingly imperfect society to be so straightforward as Moylan and Baccolini contend. Realization is a very messy process that never completely achieves that historical materialist goal of recognition of totality. Examining the characters' schemas in these three novels and the resulting effects opens up space to accept that part of what drives the action of realization and resistance is motivation and sense of identity. Resistance as the sole province of the central character also implies that others might not be resisting, which is largely not the case. Realizations are a critical component of the genre, and demand mapping in scholarship beyond a simple trajectory akin to Walter's in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.<sup>22</sup>

The moment of realization is the moment when the character's beliefs about their connection to society become subject to doubt. Realizing and adjusting one's beliefs is not a rational process. Seeing the world anew is an emotional experience, and the decisions that the character makes as a result of seeing the world anew are shaped by how they interpret emotion as well as by the information they hold about the world. In *Zanzibar*, we have a multitude of characters that show a range of awareness and moments of realization about the social hell. For instance, Chad

---

<sup>22</sup> The archetypal tale of a character who becomes aware of the horrors of his society then engages in resistance as best he can, given his understanding of the world and capacity for courage.

Mulligan, a sociologist, has been writing on the phenomena for decades;<sup>23</sup> Donald Hogan, a government agent, immediately after his moment of realization, gets his personality co-opted and destroyed by the US military; Norman House, a black man intent on manipulating the white corporate structure out of a blind anger, undergoes several different realizations about the hegemony throughout the novel. *Zanzibar* also includes snippets of stories of the common man who doesn't quite have the capacity to develop an insight about the totalizing reality but perhaps can re-see a detail of his own snippet of reality. Many characters resist those systemic dictates that they dimly sense make them unhappy. It is a lack of knowledge of the larger context that limits their modes of resistance, not their awareness of the woes of their reality. The decisions of resistance that they make are based out of the emotional context of their life. If they feel no positive emotional connection to their community, then their resistance is not going to account for the larger community.

In *We Who Are About To...* the main character has long ago developed a full awareness of the oppressive social reality of her society, and has since given up resisting. Nobody (the narrator) begins the novel with a keen awareness of the gaping flaws in the sociopolitical system. Nobody, as the first memory during her ritual starvation reveals, was the leader of a resistance movement. After surviving an assassination attempt and realizing that resistance achieved nothing, she ekes out an unfulfilling life as a musicologist. Thus, in spite of burying her burning distaste for the ills of the system, she forgoes the opportunity to enact her political vision in a society of seven and ends up choosing to hasten the destruction of this adrift microcosm of society. Within the bounds of the novel, Nobody has always been aware of the oppression inherent in the system. She does not so much resist as seize on an opportunity to act on her

---

<sup>23</sup> For example in Mulligan's book, *The Hipcrime Vocab*: "IMPOSSIBLE Means: 1 I wouldn't like it and when it happens I won't approve; 2 I can't be bothered; 3 God can't be bothered. Meaning 3 may perhaps be valid but the others are 101% whaledreck" (5).

thwarted life. Her experiential knowledge of resistance has taught her that it invariably fails, and she has chosen to give up the pursuit of finding new ways to resist. Her decision to forego resistance fuels her desire to wield control over the others on the island. Russ's positioning of Nobody as deliberately employing alienating rhetoric in communicating with her peers also reflects how maintaining a sense of isolated individualism contributes to the problems. Nobody believes she has fully read the angles of those she is on the island with, and so does not even give them the chance to think through her interpretation of their situation on the deserted planet.

Deckard is aware of the ills of the system but unlike Nobody chooses to remain bound up in them, as can be seen in the opening two chapters from how he interacts with his wife and the electric sheep he keeps in his garden. Deckard has the storyline that most closely aligns with Moylan and Baccolini's theorizing, as the novel traces Deckard's realization about the indescribably beautiful and human capacity for empathy and his growing compassion towards the androids—creatures who suffer, cause suffering, and resist suffering with no capacity to empathetically comprehend the plight of another. Throughout the novel his understanding of consciousness and humanity is radically transformed, although his 'resistance' is not explicitly political or institutional. Deckard, again, stays entirely within the system (other than that he chooses to follow his moral instinct rather than his boss), whilst Nobody actively works to remain entirely outside the system (though also in an attempt to follow her moral instinct).

Not only is Deckard obsessed with maintaining his sheep, but with keeping it a secret that it is a machine. The taboo against revealing if one's animal is a fake reifies the system—since most people are not willing to admit what they own, the pretense goes on, leaving most people in a perpetual state of uncertainty regarding their neighbors and anxiety regarding their own status symbol (be it that their fake will be discovered or that their alive animal will get sick and die).

Deckard's awareness has led to his life's becoming stale and cynical. The novel opens with Deckard and his wife doing nothing but snipe at each other, and his realization his job leaves him unfulfilled. This novel's opening, despite its destroyed environment and decimated population, feels the least predictive of the three, the most like a sharp mirror image of the way the everyday person exists within a broken system. Realization and resistance are constrained by the character's beliefs about themselves, others, and the social reality. The emotional intensity of those beliefs affects the decisions that they make. Nobody is incredibly emotionally invested in her nihilism, Deckard, because he focuses his attention on the "simple" objects of his life, is not incredibly emotionally invested in his beliefs about society, and so can undergo that process of realization and resistance that Moylan and Baccolini refer to.

#### **IV. Realization of Dystopia Becoming Resistance**

*Moylan and Baccolini further characterize the dystopia as a series of particular narrative and counter narrative moves (Dark Horizons). The dystopia begins in the middle of a social hell, the main character questions the society and engages in a counter-narrative of resistance that is largely waged on the battlefield of language (5).*

In my view, the battlefield in dystopian fiction is actually the means by which individuals interpret their reality: their emotional life. Conceiving of the the "battlefield" in terms of language leads to some insightful critiques about how language is wielded, how language-constructed representation is wielded, how memory is affected by language, and how interpellation contains the individual. However, the argument regarding the centrality of

language does not take into account the significance of affect and the body as sites for the establishment of and resistance to social misery.

Cognition arises as a result of the body's accumulation of data and is then translated into language for the purposes of communication and clarity.<sup>24</sup> The data accumulated includes language, narrative, but also includes the resulting eroding or reifying of beliefs about the nature of reality that stem from the emotionally derived interpretative lens applied to events. Language may be a site in which power is wielded, but what I focus on here is how power is wielded in dystopian fiction through the emotions and their role in the normatization of socialized beliefs via emotional resonance.

That is to say, the characters in these novels perceive the world through schemas they have been indoctrinated into. Those schemas are not maintained by language so much as the emotional force that powers beliefs about the nature of reality.<sup>25</sup> People interpret bodily reactions in light of what they believe; what people believe often trains them into certain bodily reactions as can be seen with Donald Hogan and Norman House, two of the characters with the most developed story lines in *Stand on Zanzibar*. As can be seen from these two characters, the capacity for realization and imagining potential avenues of resistance is heavily constrained by a character's ability to understand their own emotional reality. Understanding their own emotional reality is a social act: neither Norman nor Donald can properly assess their foundational emotional beliefs. This is because people, out of a kind of self-preservation, are going to

---

<sup>24</sup> See Markus and Kitayama: "Culture and the Self: Implications for Cognition, Emotion, and Motivation."

<sup>25</sup> Western knowledge making has tended to separate research and theorizing on emotions from the environments in which emotions happen in the last century and a half due to bias of perceiving people primarily in terms of their isolatable individuality. This comes out of hard sciences' need to produce quantifiable data and its general early unwillingness to admit to methodological limitations. In terms of emotions this has led to reducing emotions down to facial expressions and cognition, totally ignoring the complexity of physiological response, which is only recently acquired sophisticated enough technology for gathering measurable data. The social sciences are re-merging with biology as social science methodologies have finally reached a sufficiently sophisticated level to study such a complex phenomenon as emotions are.



unconsciously reify their individually (and privately) held foundational emotional beliefs. Limited understanding of the social nature of emotions serves as a limitation on the praxis of utopian imagining, as can be seen in the differences in how these two characters relate to themselves and to their communities.

Donald and Norman are both very aware and very ignorant of the larger sociopolitical reality in the novel. Norman is an incredibly politically savvy shark swimming his way up the corporate ladder at the most powerful company in the imagined America, General Technic,<sup>26</sup> where he was hired in large part due to an Equal Opportunity Act. A key part of Norman's success is his emotional control and ability to read others' emotions, particularly that of fear. Norman is described as measured, as able to manipulate his image with precision. He has subordinated his entire public personality to achieving his goal of rising in power. His goal of attaining power, as is later revealed, stems from an overwhelming anger towards the dominant white class, that was 'gifted' to him by his grandpa. Norman's belief that his is a righteous anger defines his life and gives him the strength to control his entire being, to daily interact with people he hates. His anger is the tool by which he manipulates others. His anger has led to him training himself to have perfect control over his own body and it defines how he relates to everyone. He interprets every event in his life through this schema of active anger.

Once Norman comes to know Elihu Masters, an African-American diplomat whose abilities are highly acclaimed, he lets go of his anger, and becomes a different person, with different goals and hopes. Masters forces Norman to let go of his incredible anger because he needs Norman's help. Norman, freed of his anger, loses his tunnel vision and begins to use his managerial talents out of compassion and a larger, less violent vision of righteousness. Norman

---

<sup>26</sup> Whose capital base is the most sophisticated computer on the planet, Shalmanaser—his analytical processing power is hired out primarily to governments, research facilities and large corporations.

no longer cares about power for power's sake (or for the sake of a life lived as a symbolic middle finger), but now wants to help Masters 'save' the country of Beninia, and try to take the Beninian model of living and introduce it to the rest of the world—save Beninia so that Beninia can save humanity.<sup>27</sup> Once his anger no longer provides the underlying framework for how he perceives what is possible, Norman's sense of potential in regards to moves of resistance to the system become more imaginatively engaged with the praxis of utopian longing.

Donald represents a very different perspective on reality—one who accepts a Mephistophelian bargain from the state because he cannot step outside his discrete perspective on his emotional reality. In the second Donald chapter, he recalls the moment of ten years before, when he describes an angry article he published in the student journal to a state official, Dr. Foden:

My education has turned me and practically everyone else I know, into an efficient examination-passing machine. I wouldn't know how to be original outside the limited field of my own specialty, and the only reason I can make that an exception is that apparently most of my predecessors have been even more blinkered than I am. I know a thousand percent more about evolution than Darwin did, that's taken for granted. But where between now and the day I die is there room for me to do something that's *mine* and not a gloss on someone else's work? Sure, when I get my doctorate the spiel that comes with it will include something about presenting a quote original unquote thesis, but what it'll mean is the words are in a different order from last time!" (42)

This article's anger garners attention from the government—Dr. Foden has gotten the Dean of the University to bring Donald to his office so that way she can interview him for a job in the

---

<sup>27</sup> Beninia is presented as a Utopian African country—they are starving, but there is such love between all the people and between the people and their leader that they live almost painfully contented lives.

Office of Research Coordination (aka Dilettante Dept). The questions she asks reveal what makes Donald qualified for the job: he is smart enough to have figured out the limits of the system, lazy enough to stay inside them, arrogant enough that he never questions his own laziness and, in Dr. Foden's words, "honest enough to stay bribed" (43).

In the slice we get of his interview (which ends just before he goes to Washington to be fully debriefed), he doesn't question the two strings attached to his position: that he must learn a particular Asian language and that at some point he may be called in for active service for some mission he won't be able to refuse. In short, Donald lands his dream job because someone else is smart enough to lead him by the nose. Dr. Foden can read him better than he can read himself, which is unlike Norman, who in his career-environment, can read everyone else fluently while remaining incomprehensible to them (at least until he meets Masters, who 'leads him by the nose' in order to open up choice, rather than constrain it). Donald, as he moves out of this memory walking home from work, instantly jumps to his underlying belief about himself: that he is a kind of hollow man.<sup>28</sup> He believes he does not have a real self like other people do. He

---

<sup>28</sup> We are the hollow men  
 We are the stuffed men  
 Leaning together  
 Headpiece filled with straw. Alas!  
 Our dried voices, when  
 We whisper together  
 Are quiet and meaningless  
 As wind in dry glass  
 Or rats' feet over broken glass  
 In our dry cellar

Shape without form, shade without colour,  
 Paralysed force, gesture without motion;

Those who have crossed  
 With direct eyes, to death's other Kingdom  
 Remember us—if at all—not as lost  
 Violent souls, but only  
 As the hollow men  
 The stuffed men  
 (Eliot, "The Hollow Men")

reinforces his own belief by how he relates to people. Spending ten years having only acquaintances, with the possibility of active duty ever-present on the horizon, Donald allows nobody access to his perceptions of self. They can never be checked or modified by outside perspective. His potential for utopian thinking is even more constrained than Norman's. Donald can't step outside of himself to have a realization about the social forces that shape both his immediate reality and the larger sociopolitical one.

Norman ends the novel as successfully running the operation he undertook at the beginning of the novel to help the world help itself. Donald, on the other hand, has been removed to a psych ward. The mission that he undertook for the government caused a complete disruption to his sense of self. Yes, Dr. Foden manipulated him in their conversation, noticed him as a result of the article he wrote, but the reason that Donald gave up his agency for the comfort of his dream job is that his emotional life was governed by pervasive beliefs about himself and his place in society. He lived alone, emotionally disconnected from everyone. On his mission he emotionally connects with the man he was sent to assassinate. The fact that his government training<sup>29</sup> overcame his conscious control of his body and he killed the doctor destroyed his identity. Donald couldn't cope with having completed an action that was so antithetical to his sense of self, as nobody believes themselves capable of coldly killing a friend one harbors no animosity toward. Spending most of his life shoring up his emotional detachment, and his intense emotional attachment to his belief about his value as an 'original thinker' led him to a Gordian knot with his sword deliberately set aside the moment he agreed to work for the research branch of the government.

---

<sup>29</sup> Eptification is a technique in this future society by which the government uses drugs to train someone in a few months into a complex skill set that would normally take years. What the government doesn't tell its agents is that it also uses this to train them into acting as the government wants.

Donald is both aware and not aware of the reality of the sociopolitical landscape. He could perfectly comprehend in college that the system was containing him and the other students. He could perfectly comprehend that he might have made a bad deal in working for the state in this manner. However, because he never emotionally connects, because he doesn't look at the state of affairs through empathetically relating with another, he cannot find the means to step away from the path that leads to the dissolution of his personality. Norman, on the other hand, spends the novel forging a sense of connection with others. Beginning with Masters, he then meets and connects to the president of Beninia. He also spends a few days living in the intense poverty of the country and falling in love with its people upon seeing what he perceives as the sublime, simple happiness of their lives. He becomes personally invested in saving their way of life and of offering others the opportunity to live in a similar emotional state. Norman ends the novel amongst dear friends. Yes, there is sorrow and a deep sense of the travail and futility of struggling against all that works to reinforce a dystopian reality, but Norman is together with friends who have the knowledge and capacity to act, so long as a sense of futility does not overwhelm them.

Norman recognizes that his anger was given to him by his grandfather through opening up to Masters. He is able to overcome the limitations of perceiving emotions as discrete and solely the responsibility of the person feeling the emotion. This new awareness heightens his capacity for empathy. He uses this new capacity to work towards real social change, whereas before the only social change he was interested in was individual—his own rise through the ranks of the system. Donald never overcomes his individuality bias. He is never quite aware that a large reason why he doesn't feel like a person is the atmosphere pervading his sociopolitical context. He reifies this belief about his aloneness by never forming genuine human connection.

The government capitalizes on Donald's limiting schema. They know that in order for Donald to get close enough to the infamous Yatakangian doctor to assassinate him that Donald must emotionally bond with him out of a shared value system (when Donald meets the doctor, and listens to his interpretation of the political reality, Donald begins to realize the limitations to his own worldview). Part of the reason that Donald describes himself as having an entirely new personality is because he cannot cope with how he is responsible for the doctor's death: Donald's striving to be the doctor's friend was a factor in his murder.

The modes and means of realizing and resisting are the lynchpin of the genre. The realizations of the character, how they realize, and what they do about it serve as the prime means for opening up awareness of the limitations of social dreaming (the goal of the literature as well as historical materialist scholarship). As can be seen from investigating the emotional reality of these characters, resistance is a deeply personal realization and set of choices. Because it is so personal, and so contingent on the particularities of the environment each character is embedded in, examining the emotional reality of the characters leads to insight into the reasoning behind how they respond to their awareness. It also reveals how one's affective ties to the dominant social stories perpetuate the situation as well as the limited utopian imagining that occurs in response to the situation. Nobody (the narrator) finds herself completely cut off from society, yet spending her last days reflecting on her connection to social previous ties. Donald ends up with a destroyed personality because he believes he doesn't quite have one. He has denied himself the personality that arises from deeply embedding oneself in a community. Norman and Deckard end up in situations where they feel they are successfully contributing to the realization of their ideals because of their sense of community and capacity for consciously and deliberately participating in the act of sharing emotions.

Scholarship tends to favor the grand resistance or the failure of the gesture of resistance by the individual. However, resistance has been looked at largely in terms of historical situating, and not the ways in which beliefs and the emotions that support them define the path of realization and resistance. The fact of the matter is that all of the major decisions of everyday life contribute to how people reinforce or undermine the atmosphere they find themselves in. Brunner's mass of characters shows how they contribute due to a lack of awareness (of a variety of factors). It is my view that scholarship should strive to more accurately understand the relationship between emotionally reinforced stories characters tell themselves about their reality. These stories should then be traced in relationship to the larger atmosphere of the sociopolitical reality that is set up in the world building and cognitive dissonance of the novel. This helps build an understanding of why characters can recognize their alienation and yet be incapable of doing something about it. Resistance is thwarted by the mitigating beliefs about emotion and a sense of identity characters have been socialized into, which affects their ability to process emotions and recognize naturalized constraints about how they understand and respond to reality.

## V. The Close of the Novel Expands or Contracts Utopian Longing

*The closing of the novel leaves the reader with either an opening or closing of potential for utopian longing*<sup>30</sup>. *Moylan countered Jameson's argument that dystopian novels are inherently anti-utopian with this point.*<sup>31</sup> *Moylan argues that giving an interpretation to the close in relation*

---

<sup>30</sup> For example, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* because it leaves us with no sense of new possibility, is anti-utopian, whilst *Xenogenesis* by Octavia Butler, because it presents the dilemmas of humanity without solving them, but leaving a sense that they might be solved if the novel were to continue, opens the potential for utopian thinking because the dilemma is passed on to the reader due to his/her empathetic entrance into the cognitive dissonance of the main character/s.

<sup>31</sup> See *Scraps of the Untainted Sky*, 147-183.

*to the other generic conventions is the means by which we can use this body of literature to further the didactic impulse of the novel in regards to utopian thinking.*

*Stand on Zanzibar* ends with the disintegration of the personality of one central character, the depressed ranting of the genius sociologist Chad Mulligan. The very last two chapters, however, step away from plot. The penultimate chapter gets inside the consciousness of the supercomputer, and his recurring notion that it has the oddest dreams—the implication being that he is dreaming up the reality that is the data that humans input in order for the machine to spit back sophisticated analysis. The final chapter describes the typewriter used by the author to write the novel. While the devolution into insanity and depression by two central characters leaves the novel without a clear sense of resolution, the computer’s belief about reality also creates a jarring and disconcerting effect. Closing the novel with the imaginative capacity of the machine and the author serves to remind readers of the capacity for imagining, to make explicit the fact that reality is determined in large part by how we conceive of it, as Shalamanser and the writer do in the final two chapters.

Unlike the supercomputer, humans have the capacity to go enter the world and seek out knowledge, and act upon it. The computer is fed data. Humans, while often fed data, have the opportunity to explore beyond that. Calling attention to this asks readers to recognize that stories have limitations and that it is the onus of being human to seek to become aware of those limitations. With Donald’s personality disintegration and Chad Mulligan’s realization about a flaw in their plan to help Beninia, the novel leaves the reader with an urgency to act, one that is mitigated by Brunner’s calling attention with that final chapter to the fact that this is just a story. Brunner crafts a novel that skillfully moves readers towards Jameson’s realization that the utility



of utopian thinking arises from grasping for the limits, the blank face of unknowns and using imagination to explore them.

The final half of *We Who Are About To...* is the narrator recording her innermost reflections as she commits suicide via starvation according to her religious tradition. She delves into the major turning points of her life, seeking peace about decisions made. Because she records her musings, she frames this seeking as a dialogue, which maneuvers readers into conceiving of themselves as her listeners, the someone that the narrator actively doubts the existence of, but nevertheless continues to address. Russ invites investigating the limits of the individual, both in the ability to judge others as well as in the limits of one person taking on the emotional burden of an entire society. Nobody is bitter because her experiential knowledge has taught her that she is nobody; she cannot enact social change, she cannot maintain a lasting romantic bond. Her failures lead her to relish the power of enforcing her changes once she finds herself on a desert island scenario. Her bitterness and belief in futility lead her to engaging with the other survivors in a manner guaranteed to invite their antagonism. She cannot fully commit to her isolation, as she is dying and she must reach out to share her story. Her emotional reality blinds her to envisioning a means by which she might work with the others to create a feasible social solution. She wants to keep them contained in the identities and ideologies they landed with, because it satisfies her own bitter beliefs about humanity.

The stronger the belief, the more it dictates action. Watching Nobody's fate is watching the sputtering out of life that surrounds someone who has given up hope that sociopolitical change can be realized. Because she divvies the burden in an individualistic manner (both on herself in her bitter regret over failing as an activist and on others for their inability to grasp on their own that they have bought into anti-utopian ideologies), she ends up completely isolated.

She reinforces her belief with her life choices and how she interprets the angles of perception of others. *We Who Are About To...* has a bleak ending: the main character murders everyone around her and then dies alone. When this is interpreted in terms of how her emotional reality is formed and maintained, it becomes clear that operating in a manner where one takes the primacy of one's own beliefs as sufficient justification for dismissing others (regardless of how false their beliefs are) then the social system will fail. Nobody hated Ude and Natalie for their attempt to manipulate their ideology into power, but she ended up making the same choice. The violence committed on this island is meant to be haunting. Spending the novel empathizing with someone capable of such actions invites re-imagining motivation to engage in the narratives perpetuated by a capitalist society that privileges logic over emotion.

*Androids* ends with Deckard participating in the spiritual ritual of his era, one that he had previously scoffed at. In this story, humans are connected to each other via an invented technology. Every citizen has a box that, when activated, transports the user into an empathetic experience with every other user. Deckard activates, and his experience dealing with the androids is transmuted into his vicarious experience of Mercer.<sup>32</sup> He travels up a hill, endures the pain of a deluge of rocks, symbolizing Mercer, tumbling down onto him, and the pure joy of victorious accomplishment from reaching the top. He realizes that though he was entirely alone whilst making unprecedented, high stakes decisions, he was doing nothing new, was never disconnected from his empathetic web of human existence. Readers, traveling along with him on both journeys, are invited to vicariously experience that empathetic connection. The invented technology is but an imaginary physical manifestation of something very real. The sociopolitical reality has not really changed—androids are still essentially slaves with a horrible capacity for

---

<sup>32</sup> Wilbur Mercer is the spiritual messiah of this society, the locus point for spiritual understanding. At the end of the novel Deckard believes he has fused with Mercer. His sense of consciousness becomes utterly altered, he feels deeply connected to reality and to life from understanding Mercer's eternal struggle.

cruelty, earth is still a ruined landscape, Deckard returns to the mundanity of his domestic life, his job.

However, PKD holds this lack of change in tension with what has changed. Deckard feels a new, vital connection to his species, as well as to the androids. He has also stopped the androids' plot to infiltrate human society. Deckard's personal world changed for the better, but the grand scheme of things continues on relatively uninterrupted. Deckard has what he believes is a real toad to replace his dead electric sheep<sup>33</sup>. This does not invite readers into grand visions of a radically altered sociopolitical tomorrow, but it does point to a central part of how to get there: a sophisticated and on-going investigation of what it means to be human, and how that plays out in terms of empathetic relating. Deckard is the hero because he can empathize, he can recognize the capacity for empathy in another, and he can make the hard decision *because*, not in spite of, his capacity to empathetically understand his opponent. Sociopolitical reality changes because a group has a strong sense of communal identity. The novel closing with Deckard's journey in the empathy box invites readers to re-see what it means to relate, which is a critical facet of utopian thinking.

If scholars focus on opening up utopian spaces in terms of large scale structures, then they end up overlooking vital components of the social order. It is a delicate balancing act to both value the experience of the individual and yet accurately situate it within the big picture. Emotional experience, having been discounted and poorly understood for most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (and even still today it is only beginning to be studied), provides another facet of reality in which there are sharp limitations that must be imaginatively explored so that a better social reality might arise. When characters in dystopian novels feel disconnected from themselves, disconnected from their immediate context, then they not only feel disconnected from the more

---

<sup>33</sup> Since animals are almost extinct, every live animal carries the emotional weight of that childhood first pet.

abstract, shadowy superstructure, they have no possibility of beginning to realize change. Failing to understand that emotions are not merely subjective, but also something that circulate (and are embedded in particular environments) and its flow is contained by how emotions are realized into beliefs and behaviors, is failing to realize that utopian thinking must also encompass how most people go about living their lives. Characters often do not understand the power structure in terms of abstract maps, but in terms of their experience, and how they have come to handle their emotions.

In a dystopian society where emotions are to be kept contained, unarticulated and the sole responsibility of the person feeling them (because, in part, they believe that others' emotional experience is distinct from their own), alienation and helplessness are invariably the dominant atmosphere. The grand changes one might hope to realize stem in large part from the means by which one relates to those in their immediate context. Feeling a sense of connection to others embedded in the same context is the means by which humans grow a desire to engage in utopian thinking. When emotional lives are not articulated, or are articulated in such a way as to discount the validity of another's emotional existence, then the social organism cannot healthily function. So long as emotions are kept locked in individual bodies, they distort the means by which people perceive the world. This is why investigation of sociopolitical realities in dystopian novels and investigation into the means by which utopian thinking is constrained or opened via the practices of that given culture needs to incorporate an understanding of the function of emotional reality in the ways in which people relate to one another.

## Atmosphere as a function of dystopian societies

While theorizing on the utopian impulse has been careful to account for the ways in which utopias can be made static and therefore controlled, contained and separated from a motivation to work towards a better future—as well as how pessimism can also derail the utopian impulse—it has not thoroughly examined and theorized on the ways in which affective economies sustain anti-utopian dominance, or the ways in which dystopian texts can explore the affective nature of social relations to better understand how utopian impulses are subverted and derailed. Awareness of how emotional reality plays out for characters set in a dystopian landscape merits inclusion in interpreting the genre.

Dystopias foreground particular cultural fears and anxieties, situate multiple characters in an emotional relationship to concrete manifestations of those fears, and play out the results. Dystopias foreground the emotional relationships that humans have with powerful cultural, institutional and political players and demonstrate how they color relationships maintained at the domestic level. These foregrounded fears, anxieties and emotional relationships comprise the atmosphere of the dystopian society. The cognitive dissonance and world-building of each novel serve to introduce the reader to the atmosphere evoked by the text. Realization and resistance can be thought of in terms of responding to the atmosphere of the dystopian society. The realization and resistance, whatever form it takes (if it occurs at all), creates a bi-directional circulation of emotion.

Examining the circulation of emotion at play in dystopian novels allows one to confront the fear of utopia that Jameson has diagnosed as part of the postmodern state. In dystopian fiction, a character's emotional reality represents a kind of trajectory of struggle to survive within a dystopian sociopolitical reality that perpetuates its atmosphere of helplessness by

maintaining the belief that emotions are individual and discrete. Atmosphere is impossible to grasp in its entirety. It is always mitigated by subjective experience. Looking at how characters interact with an atmosphere, along with the stories that define and channel that atmosphere allows penetration into the relationship between society and its citizens in order to understand how dystopian societies are reified by how people make choices for their lives.

Brunner, with the blending of news bulletins and chaotic snippets of personal stories from myriad slices of life in this imaginary America, presciently portrays the affective economy that develops between individuals and the state/corporations as shaped by the narratives from the media complex. The media complex attempts to rein in the affective circulation of pessimism regarding the struggle to cope with overpopulation. Through tourism stories of individual liberty in a heavily constrained field, the media emphasize the value of tourism as a means of expanding one's horizon whilst never leaving home. A critical attention to 'regard for personhood' is shifted, in this media story-telling, from the emotional labor of deciding to have children to personalized vacation options. The media goes where Mr. and Mrs. Everywhere want to go, and Mr. and Mrs. Everywhere want to go the places that have been sold to them as desirable. Countries that poorly follow the lead of the nations with power are then punished by how desirable they are as tourist destinations. Desire for a sense of agency, a sense of individuality and a sense of choice are constrained and funneled into the tourist industry.

The fragments of these would-be parents' lives, as various means for circumventing the eugenic/population laws are attempted, also comments on the government's ineffectuality in legislating on postmodern conundrums and the subsequent increasing reliance on fear tactics and espionage. Communication of a satisfactory, or even palatable, national narrative is impossible (and further ravaged by advertising). Rather than acknowledge the citizenry's increasing

disillusionment and rebellion, the government's response is to take out the Yatakangian doctor who has developed a technique to manipulate genetics and his Asian island nation's plan to "optimise" the population into a nation of supermen. The inability to "reason" with its citizenship (because its reasoning techniques rely on emotional manipulation) leads the government to attempt to exert control and regain a sense of power by conceiving of the problem along nationalistic economic lines. It enlists some of the best and brightest citizens not to use their brainpower to envision new solutions, but to violently tamp down on "crises."

Individuals, such as Donald Hogan, acquiesce and follow the will of the state because their sense of alienation, disorientation and lack of a sense of agency make it impossible to envision a means of resisting. Donald goes through with becoming an assassin because his sense of self as nonexistent is perpetuated by the environment of fear and isolation in the country he lives in. He fears facing disquieting knowledge about himself, which leaves him unable to recognize or face disquieting information about the country at large. This fear, this dulled angle of entry into the atmosphere of the country, shows up in all the narratives. Everyone shown making a decision about having children, or about their transition into a job, undergoes a crisis of self-in-relation-to-the-whole, often mediated by a crisis of self, identified by doubt, paralysis, and a conflict between arrogance and fear of failing. The deepening entrenchment experienced occurring between the nation and its citizens leaves individuals exposed and easy pickings for those with a clear agenda and a little bit of power to flash around, as can be seen from Donald's being ensnared by the government, and the popularity of Mr. and Mrs. Everywhere.

The circulation of stories in this society is utterly broken. People are bombarded with advertisements and exhortations by the government in a manner that reinforces an atmosphere of alienation and distrust. The overpopulation crisis is just another point upon which the

government feels it must manipulate its citizenry. Citizens do not feel heard by either each other or the government, so they engage in various forms of rebellion. The angle of entry into the atmosphere is either one of ignoring what is happening, or rebelling in an individualistic manner out of one's own sense of being outraged.<sup>34</sup> Improper understanding of a shared emotional reality helps perpetuate the alienation and pessimism evoked by the government's contributions to the atmosphere of the times.

In the desert island in *We Who Are About To...* there is an opportunity for a fresh start. The characters have the opportunity to create their own narrative, their own atmosphere. They have become separated from the class hierarchy, from governmental narratives of the state and from advertising narratives constraining the definition of happiness. They have the opportunity to genuinely feel a part of the social decision making process. Their inability to face the reality of their survival situation becomes constraining. They cannot face their fear of death, their fear of the unknown, or their fear of the narrative of their lives being potentially meaningless. Power structures become established. Voices are silenced. The atmosphere of hope that the five adults strive to erect is founded on one of fear and the inability to exercise imagination as a group.

Nobody has an "outsider to the system" perspective akin to the sociologist Chad Mulligan, both having an extraordinary capacity for insight into the patterns of relating that are occurring around them. Nobody (the narrator), in this desert island, is given a kind of opportunity to work to realize new systems of relating. She refuses it. After observing that the community's fear of death will compel them to accept the attempt to re-invent the ills of the system they got thrown out of, she establishes herself in a deliberately polemical opposition, to the point where

---

<sup>34</sup> See Gerald L. Clore and Karen Gasper's "Feeling Is Believing: Some Affective Influences on Belief" in *Emotions and Beliefs*. They note that "anger, like happiness, implies that the person's own beliefs are valid" (23). Because the characters are in a Western culture, they are taught to perceive reality in terms of the individual. Therefore, outrage happens at the individual level as a response to government attempts to constrain choice.



they jail her several times. Her angle of entry into the new atmosphere they are creating and the way that the others' fears reinforce her perception of them leave her almost relishing the sense of alienation she creates around herself. She enjoys riling up those in control of reifying the old system with her statements on the futility of their approach to their situation. Her angle is one of bitterness and destruction, and she almost revels in acting in violent opposition to their aims. She makes no attempt to employ rhetoric which might persuade them, she only seeks disruption and the establishment of herself as outside the system.

There are two exceptions to this, which reveal themselves in moments of hesitation on her angle of approaching how she relates to the group and her subsequent killing spree. Both connect to her sense of gender identity. As Nobody is too weak in body to really engage in hard labor (let alone her belief about the need to work so hard), she spends a lot of time with Laurie, and comes to share in the group's tenderness towards her youth, spoilt innocence and carefully shielded ignorance of her blighted future. This leads to her greatest struggle in ending a life—she does not want Laurie to have any awareness of her death as it approaches her from Nobody's gun. Nobody's recollections immediately preceding murdering Laurie are the most troubled we see prior to her meditations whilst dying of starvation. She comes to participate in the group attitude of solicitous tenderness toward the young, but her bitterness regarding the evils of capitalism overcome even this heartfelt feeling.

She also has a more compassionate attitude towards Cassie, but as Cassie is an adult, respected for the skill with which she maneuvers within an imbalanced power structure, Nobody's agony is muted by respect for Cassie's independence. She empathizes with Cassie's plight as a sterile sex worker fervently desirous of motherhood and driven to being skilled at maneuvering within the power structures imposed on her. Because Nobody perceives herself as

understanding how Cassie operates within the atmosphere of both the old and new society, she works to alleviate Cassie's suffering in a way she does not offer to the others. She lets Cassie know about her secret stash of drugs in order to be able to help Cassie relieve some physical pain whilst the group is still attempting to build their little village. This empathy means that Nobody allows her to choose her death. After she has killed everyone, she goes to Cassie and explains the stark reality of their ability to survive on this desert island given the supplies available to them. She then leaves some drugs for Cassie to choose, or not choose, to painlessly overdose on.

Nobody's deeply entrenched bitterness and helplessness in regards to feeling empowered to act on her utopian imagining create the violent demise of the landing party. As she spends the second half speaking into a recorder, readers become invited into the atmosphere of the desert island, but only as judges, only after she has made her choices and seeks to find peace about them. Having spent the entire novel embedded in her angle of entry, having empathized with her so deeply in regards to her compassion towards oppressed groups (Cassie and Laurie), and her love affair, and her blighted hopes for realizing political change, it becomes impossible to make an easy judgment. Russ's use of a small group to represent the entire atmosphere of an interstellar community and its adherents and critiques, along with Nobody's direct address to readers, causes the atmosphere to transition from the page to the reader.

This leads one to myriad potential avenues for praxis in utopian thinking. The group's attempt to recreate the ideology of their home state on the desert island clearly replicates oppressive structures. Yet Nobody's angle of entry onto this building of a particular atmosphere means that she takes the decision out of their hands. This tension leads to fruitful inquiry into the modes and means of perception management in the attempt to cohere a story around a particular group atmosphere. The survivors deserve hope, and are not complete fools for wanting to create

a fantasy to adhere to. What matters is how they can successfully situate themselves inside an affective economy (and sociopolitical environment) that they feel deeply alienated from. They have an opportunity to engage in the practice of utopian thinking but reject it for a false sense of comfort. Nobody's decision to choose the most extreme response in opposition to what she sees as an absurd fantasy invites consideration of the spectrum of choices that lie between the two. The failing of this state, and the brutal honesty with which Nobody recounts it, provide a space for considering how, at the individual level amongst people there are clear emotional relationships with, the false story-telling of the superstructure is recreated.

Deckard, though critical of the flaws of the system, never steps out of it to the same extent as Nobody or Norman House. He feels the atmosphere of the weakened human condition, and participates in the means by which the new community copes—the obsession over animals, a domestic life, and the desire to be good at one's job. His angle on the emotional atmosphere of his culture is much more in line with that of the rest of the population. What is different for Deckard is that he initially does not use the empathy box that most others use on a regular basis, and that he has the opportunity to understand the angle that the androids are coming from about their position in society.

He gains particular insight into the two overlapping yet conflicting atmospheres of humans and androids. Their attempt to manipulate him as the test administrator leads to his insight into their motivations and basic character. He then takes this knowledge and integrates it into his understanding of the system as a whole, hence his new acceptance of the function of the emotion box in the society. As readers experience his experience with the box, they have an opportunity to realize how vital empathy, or the sharing of perspectives amongst a community, is

to creating a healthy, viable atmosphere. Fusing perspectives creates a sense of connectedness to one's community.

Though Deckard never fully rejects the atmosphere of his sociopolitical environment, *Androids* presents a similar didactic message to *We Who Are About To...* as both invite examining the reasoning behind each character's perception of his or her community's narrative. Deckard pierces capitalism's façade on the nature of androids, which leads to his realization about the nature of relating to his fellow humans. Deckard, because his journey enfolds him back into the system, invites consideration of how empathy can be used to combat the alienation, futility and hopelessness that is engendered by a failed state. Nobody, because she deliberately rejects all part of the system, finds herself unable to leave it completely—she hopes that through recording her story, others will take the opportunity to empathetically relate to those who live in ideological opposition to the blindly accepted and reproduced narratives of those in control of the sociopolitical atmosphere.

*Stand on Zanzibar* has a more ambitious goal in regards to its exploration of the atmosphere of the projected future American society he sets up with his 51 snippets in the first chapter. Through exploring so many angles of entry in varying degrees as discussed above, along with the more in-depth examination of Donald Hogan's inability to escape the government's plan for him, Norman's change in life goal and how that plays out for him, and extracts from Chad Mulligan's sociological treatises, this text invites the realization that the means of gaining insight into the atmosphere one is embedded in is in exploring as many angles of entry as possible. Seeking insight into others' perceptions of reality can allow change, as it does for Norman and Masters. As discussed above, the media excerpts create and perpetuate the atmosphere of the novel. Tracking the sheer variety of character response to the dystopian reality shows that the

failed sociopolitical reality comes from both government and media manipulation as well as how individuals fail to think through the limits of their interpretation of their emotional reality. They fail to realize that emotion also has a social function. They fail to realize their own role in perpetuating the atmosphere by making choices that limit their awareness of other people's angles of entry into the social reality.

Subjective experience is also always mitigated by the atmosphere. All of these characters in the novels are oppressed by their atmosphere. Their ability to either comprehend the atmosphere they exist in, or to find a true community with which they can articulate their emotional reality leads to their capacity for realization and resistance. Charting the moves and countermoves between systems and characters provides opportunity for understanding how, when characters don't recognize a shared emotional reality, they fail to engage in the praxis of utopian thinking. Utopian imagining is mitigated by one's emotional reality. Individual emotional reality is constrained by discounting the intersubjective emotional experience of society. When one can become conscious, as Norman and Deckard do, of the relationship between one's individual emotional experience and the group experience, then one can take steps to counter the dominant atmosphere. This realization leads to an opening of ability to recognize the limits of thinking that reify the facades of normalcy that are perpetuated by the circulation of dominant narratives.

## Concluding Evaluation on Relationship between Affect and Dystopian

### Literature

One needs critical distance from an emotion in order to be able to consciously and deliberately shape one's response to the emotional stimuli. Dystopian societies, by overwhelming individuals with a sense of isolation and helplessness, maintain the power structure by disallowing individuals the space needed to develop that critical distance. They also suppress that space by perpetuating the myth that emotions are individual, both at the level of feeling and of responsibility. Emotions are the means by which reality is interpreted. A dominant atmosphere of isolation and helplessness becomes perpetuated then, by people believing that those feelings arise solidly within themselves, as Donald does. Critical distance from an emotion cannot happen in a dystopian society because people do not recognize the limitations of their beliefs about the meaning and function of emotion. Critical distance requires being aware that emotions circulate, emotions originate from outside the body, and that empathetically relating to others removes anti-utopian attitudes and behaviors.

As can be seen in these novels, characters with no critical distance act destructively out of their emotions. Because they are not aware of how the epistemological belief in the individual as discrete affects their interpretive faculties, and because their society allows them no space to feel they have made "naturally" "good" or "moral" decisions, they feel trapped in their isolation. Examining dystopian novels with this lens allows us to take novels one might originally categorize as "anti-utopian" and explore the forces that undermine our sense of Utopian possibility.

The "battle" against the corruption of government and industry occurs not solely at the level of language, but also in how characters relate emotionally to themselves, their immediate

context, and the macro-level. It is a dystopian society for these characters as much because of their sense of self and how they relate to the world as it is the sociopolitical reality around them. Individuals who are socialized into counterproductive modes of social expression have a blunted ability to effectively interpret affective angles, situations and environments, as can be seen in how the characters analyzed here understood and responded to phenomena in their environment.

Dystopias can be understood as an inquiry into culture distinct from any other genre due to the didactic attempt to map how social dreaming is constrained by social systems. The dystopic element lies in the level of futility or senselessness that the novel engenders as a sociopolitical atmosphere, and then how the author melds that feeling to a particular component of his/her cultural moment. These novels attempt to open up the possibility of re-directing the emotional response to its appropriate place, rather than the socialized conventions humans are falsely taught to maintain as natural states of being. Anti-utopian forces need to be examined not only at the cultural level, but in terms of how the domestic, individual level is embedded within that. By building the relationship between a character's actions and their social reality through an examination of their behavior, emotions and operating beliefs, we can adjust interpretative strategies that account for individual agency as it is realized via emotional existence. It is all well and good to identify institutional power structures and to understand how the hegemony keeps itself fat and happy at the macro level. It is another to be able to see how socialized normative beliefs about the self and the self's relationship to the whole contribute to the dystopian novel's of capitalism.

Current scholarship on dystopias falls too far into the trap of understanding humans in terms of their cognitive functioning, their wielding of logic, rationality and intellect, rather than attending to other modes of human calculation and motivation. Humans cannot be understood

solely in terms of their minds, or solely in terms of statistical measurement. They must be understood bodily and affectively. While there is still work to be done in the social sciences in the merging of modes of evidence analysis, it has become clear that the paradigm of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, that of isolating the parts and defining them by how they function in isolation, is not useful in mapping the relationship between alienated citizens and the sociopolitical environments they are embedded in.

An individuality bias controls individually and culturally implicit definitions of ‘emotion.’ This is a distortion that the system takes advantage of in order to maintain hegemonic power structures. Explicit knowledge structures within ‘the human’ as abstract concepts of class, gender and race are easier to examine; interpreting humans in terms of their cognition and behavior as a social group also seems easier, but only because of unquestioned assumptions about the primacy of cognition over emotion in interpreting human behavior. Part of the goal of any scholarship that investigates utopian imagining should strive to marry the individual body and its affective resonances into our understanding of the utopian impulse (particularly as it shows up in dystopian imagining).

Dystopian literature of any tenor cannot be dismissed as anti-utopian or irrelevant to the utopian impulse. Rather, it provides a space to map how affective economies impede or assist utopian imagining and action. The genre is a useful site for exploring how human perception of the world is mediated by emotions and that emotions are mediated by socialized beliefs. Dystopian novels, because they not only examine toxic social landscapes but the individuals that inhabit them, allow readers space to unpack the unproductive mediating social beliefs that shore up the sense of alienation that pervades postmodernity.



## Works Cited

- Ahmed, Sarah. "Affective Economies." *Social Text* 22.2 (Summer 2004), 117-139.
- Amis, Kingsley. *New Maps of Hell: A Survey of Science Fiction*. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1960.
- Baccolini, Rafaella and Tom Moylan, eds. *Dark Horizons: Science Fiction and the Dystopian Imagination*. New York: Routledge, 2003.
- Brennan, Teresa. *The Transmission of Affect*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2004.
- Brunner, John. *Stand on Zanzibar*. New York: Tom Doherty Associates, 1968.
- DeBolt, Joe, ed. *The Happening Worlds of John Brunner*. Port Washington, NY: National University Publication KENNIKAT PRESS, 1975. Book.
- de Courville Nicol, Valerie. *Social Economies of Fear and Desire: Emotional Regulation, Emotion Management and Embodied Autonomy*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011. Print.
- Dick, Philip K. *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*. New York: Del Rey, 1968.
- Eliot, T.S. "The Hollow Men." *Poems: 1909-1925*, Faber & Faber, 1937.
- Galvan, Jill. "Entering the Posthuman Collective in Phillip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*" *Science Fiction Studies* 24.3 (Nov 1997), 413-429.
- Gwaltney, Marilyn. "Androids as a Device for Reflection on Personhood." *Retrofitting Bladerunner: Issues in Ridley K. Scott's Bladerunner and Philip K. Dick's Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*. Ed. Judith Kerman. Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997. 32-52.
- Gunn, James, ed. *Road to Science Fiction Volume 3*. Maryland: Scarecrow Press, Inc, 1979.
- Jameson, Frederick. "Reification and Utopia in Mass Culture." In *Signatures of the Visible*. New York: Routledge, 1990.
- . "The Politics of Utopia." *New Left Review* 25 (January-February 2004). Web.
- Klein, Gerard, D. Suvin & Leila Lecorps. "Discontent in American Science Fiction." *Science Fiction Studies* 4.1 (Nov 1977). *JSTOR*. Web.
- Markus, Hazel R. and Shinobu Kitayama. "Culture and the Self: Implications for Cognition, Emotion, and Motivation." *Psychological Review* 98.2 (1991), 224-253.
- , eds. *Emotion and Culture: Empirical Studies of Mutual Influence*. Washington D.C.: American Psychological Association, 1994.

- Moylan, Tom. *Scraps of the Untainted Sky: Science Fiction, Utopia, Dystopia*. Colorado: Westview Press, 2000.
- Orwell, George. *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. New York: Harcourt, 1949.
- Russ, Joanna. *We Who Are About To...* Boston: Gregg Press, 1975.
- Sargent, Lymon Tower. "Themes in Utopian Fiction Before Wells." *Science Fiction Studies* 3.3 (Nov 1976).
- . "Three Faces of Utopianism Revisited." *Utopian Studies* 5.1 (1994). Web.
- Suvin, Darko. "Estrangement and Cognition." *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction*. Yale University Press, 1979.
- Teslenko, Tatiana. *Feminist Utopian Novels of the 1970s: Joanna Russ & Dorothy Bryant*. New York & London: Routledge, 2003. Print.
- von Scheve, Christian. *Emotion and Social Structures: The Affective Foundations of Social Order*. London and New York: Routledge Press, 2014. Print.

## Works Referenced

- Ahmed, Sarah. "Sociable Happiness." *Emotion, Space and Society* 1.1 (Oct 2008): 10-13.
- Althusser, Louis. "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses: Notes towards an Investigation" *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*. Trans. Ben Brewster [modified Ph.B. 2014] Monthly Review Press, 1971.
- Berlant, Lauren. "Cruel Optimism." *differences* 17.3 (2006): 20-36.
- Canini, Mikko. *The Domination of Fear*. New York: Rodopi, 2010.
- Chiu, Chi-Yue and Ying-Yi Hong. *Social Psychology of Culture*. New York: Psychology Press, 2006.
- Greenland, Colin. *The Entropy Exhibition*. London, Boston, Melbourne and Henley: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1983.
- Gregg, Melissa and Gregory J. Seigworth, eds. *Affect Theory Reader*. London: Duke University Press, 2010.
- Fitting, Peter. "The Concept of Utopia in the Work of Frederic Jameson." *Utopian Studies* 9.2 (1998), 8-17. *JSTOR*.

- Frijda, Nico H., Antony S.R. Manstead, and Sacha Bem, eds. *Emotions and Beliefs: How Feelings Influence Thoughts*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- Harris-Fain, Darren. *Understanding Contemporary American Science Fiction*. Columbia: University of South Carolina, 2005.
- Jacobs, Naomi. "Posthuman Bodies and Agency in Octavia Butler's *Xenogenesis*." *Dark Horizons: Science Fiction and the Dystopian Imagination*. Eds. Rafaella Baccolini and Tom Moylan. New York: Routledge, 2003.
- Kagan, Jerome. *What is Emotion?: History, Measures, and Meanings*. New Haven & London. Yale University Press, 2007.
- Scott, James C. *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*. New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1985.
- Matthews, Gerald, Moshe Zeidner & Richard D. Roberts. *Emotional Intelligence: Science and Myth*. MIT Press Cambridge, 2003.
- Norman, Will. "Nabokov's Dystopia: "Bend Sinister," America and Mass Culture." *Journal of American Studies* 43.1 (Apr 2009): 49-69.
- Roberts, Dorothy E. "Race, Gender, and Genetic Technologies: A New Reproductive Dystopia?" *Signs* 34.4 (Summer 2009).
- Robinson, Iain. "'You just know when the world is about to break apart:' Utopia, Dystopia and New Global Uncertainties in Sarah Hall's *The Carhullan Army*." *Twenty-First Century Fiction: What Happens Now*. Eds. Sian Adiseshiah and Rupert Hilyard. Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.
- Scherer, Klaus, R., and David Sander, eds. *The Oxford Companion to Emotion and the Affective Sciences*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Slusser, George E., Colin Greenland and Eric S. Rabkin, eds. *Storm Warnings: Science Fiction Confronts the Future*. Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1987.
- Stillman, Peter. "Dystopian Visions and Utopian Anticipations: Terry Bisson's "Pirates of the Universe as Critical Dystopia." *Science Fiction Studies* 28.3 (Nov 2001): 365-82.
- . "Dystopian Critiques, Utopian Possibilities, and Human Purposes in Octavia Butler's *Parables*." *Utopian Studies* 14.1 (2003): 15-35.

Tiedens, Larissa Z. and Colin Wayne Leach, eds. *The Social Life of Emotions*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.