Making the Men of Tomorrow: American Science Fiction and the Politics of Masculinity, 1965 – 1974

By

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Abstract

Suggesting that the political diversity of American science fiction during the 1960s and early 1970s constitutes a response to the dominance of social liberalism throughout the 1940s and 1950s, I argue in Making the Men of Tomorrow that the development of new hegemonic masculinities in science fiction is a consequence of political speculation. Focusing on four representative and influential texts from the 1960s and early 1970s, Philip K. Dick’s The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch and Ubik, Robert A. Heinlein’s The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress, and Ursula K. Le Guin’s The Dispossessed, this thesis explores the relationship between different conceptions of hegemonic masculinity and three separate but related political ideologies: the social ethic, market libertarianism, and socialist libertarianism. In the first two chapters in which I discuss Dick’s novels, I argue that Dick interrogates organizational masculinity as part of a larger project that suggests the inevitable infeasibility of both the social ethic and its predecessor, social liberalism. In the next chapter, I shift my attention to Heinlein’s The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress as a way of showing how, unlike Dick, other authors of the 1960s and early 1970s sought to move beyond social liberalism by imagining how new political ideologies, in this case market libertarianism, might change the way men see themselves. Having demonstrated how the libertarian potential of Heinlein’s novel is ultimately undermined by its insistent and uncompromising biological determinism, I then discuss how Le Guin’s The Dispossessed uses the socialist libertarianism of the moon Anarres to suggest a more egalitarian form of masculinity, one that makes possible, to some extent at least, a future in which men might embrace not only the mutual aid of
socialism, but also the primacy of individual rights that is at the heart of all forms of libertarianism and liberalism.
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Introduction

In early 2015 and again in 2016, two science fiction fan groups, the Sad Puppies and Rabid Puppies, organized overlapping internet campaigns1 to purge the annual fan-nominated Hugo Awards ballot of any texts that they believe are symptomatic of “the corruption and ideological rot that is rife within the world of modern science fiction and fantasy” (Day). Objecting to texts such as Ann Leckie’s Ancillary Justice (2013), which won the 2014 Hugo Award for Best Novel and which challenges assumptions about masculinity by showing how an aggressive martial masculinity might develop even in a sexually androgynous culture,2 the Puppies used block voting techniques to game the Hugo nomination process and rid the ballot of any work they deemed “guilty” of “intersectional equalitarianism, racial and gender inclusion, literary pyrotechnics, or professional rabbitology” (Day). Sadly, and much to the dismay of the vast majority of fans involved in organized fandom, these two groups succeeded in their aims and managed to nominate a disproportionately large amount of socially conservative science fiction and fantasy in both years. Although grassroots political activism among other

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1 Even though Sad Puppies such as Brad Torgersen have been vocal in insisting that they “are not Rabid Puppies” and that they are merely “driving on the same freeway” (“We Are Not”), the political objectives of the two groups are identical, in that both the Sad and Rabid Puppies have consistently sought to prevent the nomination of any work by writers whom they term “social justice warriors,” those authors who are, in other words, open to the possibility that science fiction should speculate about more than the future of straight, white, middle-class men.

2 In Ancillary Justice and its sequels, the people of the Radchaai empire are physiologically bisexual, but have completely decoupled biological sex from the concept of gender. One of the effects of this decoupling is the extent to which it reveals just how inherently political and culturally constructed masculinity is. Though they are ostensibly gender-neutral, the Radchaai nevertheless embrace a form of martial masculinity that is effectively made hegemonic by the aggressive and exploitative military annexations that are necessary to drive their economy.
fans ensured that none of the texts nominated won any of the awards in either year, this incident illuminated a truth which even the Puppies must now find difficult to deny; namely, that much American science fiction is and historically has been defined by its commitment to explore, examine, and evaluate the relationships between and among political ideologies and the different forms of identity those ideologies permit and encourage.

Like those voters who helped elect Donald Trump as President of the United States because they believe he will somehow “make America great again” by leading the United States “back to safety, prosperity, and peace” (Trump), the Puppies sought to “make science fiction great again” by restoring the genre to a past state of affairs that never actually existed. According to Brad Torgersen in his announcement of the 2015 Sad Puppy Hugo campaign, science fiction has historically been an apolitical genre that focused on creating “the kind of child-like enjoyment that comes easily and naturally when you don’t have to crawl so far into your brain (or your navel) that you lose sight of the forest for the trees.” Only the “Hyper-Progressive Pissypants Club” of contemporary political authors and fans, Torgersen claims, in their misguided attempt to make science fiction “niche, academic, [and] overtly to the Left in ideology and flavor,” have lost sight of this “visceral, gut-level, swashbuckling fun” that, for him, has always defined the

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3 In both 2015 and 2016, fans attending the World Science Fiction Convention organized a popular movement among themselves and successfully voted for “No Award” in all of the fully rigged categories. In those categories in which the Puppies only managed to nominate a handful of works, Worldcon attendees consistently voted against Puppy-nominated works. In 2015, this meant “No Award” was the winner in five categories, while in 2016, “No Award” won two of the categories.

4 Unsurprisingly, a number of Puppies have publicly declared their support for Trump. Vox Day, for instance, a prominent Rabid Puppy, claims that he supports Trump because he “is the only candidate in either major party whose personal interests are aligned with those of the American public rather than with the interests of the anti-nationalist elite who see America as nothing more than lines on a map and Americans as nothing more than 300 million economic units in the global economy” (“Why I Support”).
genre. And yet, although Torgersen and other Puppies would be loath to admit it, since its beginnings in the pulp magazines of the 1920s and 1930s, American science fiction has *always* been preoccupied with imagining the consequences of political change, even if the way the genre has represented the mechanism of that change has itself changed dramatically over time.

In the early science fiction of the 1920s and 1930s, political change appears at first glance to be the result of technological innovation and scientific progress. Advances in science and technology, such early science fiction would seem to suggest, are what drive political change; they alone are what force societies to become something new. In this sense, the early science fiction of the 1920s and 1930s stands in stark contrast to the utopian tradition of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century that both preceded it and largely merged with it as the twentieth century progressed. In explicitly utopian texts such as Edward Bellamy’s *Looking Backward* (1888) and Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s *Herland* (1915), for example, there is an often unstated yet ubiquitous assumption that science and technology *derive* from political change and that political ideologies are instrumental in determining the course of scientific development. In early examples of science fiction, by contrast, such as E.E. “Doc” Smith and Lee Hawkins Garby’s *The Skylark of Space* (1928), this assumption is often inverted, to the extent that political

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5 Although it is possible to locate science fictional themes in texts as old as the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, science fiction did not appear as a distinct genre until Hugo Gernsback published the first issue of *Amazing Stories* in early 1926. Works written prior to this date that focus on science and technology, such as Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818) and H.G. Well’s *The Time Machine* (1895), are certainly *science fictional*, but they are not *science fiction* in the strict sense, if only because their authors and contemporary readers never identified these texts as such. The reasoning behind such a definition of science fiction is of course somewhat circular, but, given the influence fans of the genre have had on defining it, not without merit. Unlike authors of most others genres of literature, the majority of science fiction writers are responsive to reader feedback and, more often than not, identify as fans themselves. It is this sense of community, as much as the inclusion of science or technology or the future, which defines science fiction as a genre.
changes are framed as the result of advances in science and that science itself is somehow free from political influence. Indeed, as a result of this assumption that science and technology are themselves the drivers of political change, but not subject to the influence of such change, there is remarkably little in the way of any explicit exploration of political ideologies and their consequences throughout the early years of the genre’s existence, though the representation of political change itself is nonetheless present in even the earliest science fiction texts.

It is not until the 1940s and 1950s, with the advent of the “Golden Age,” that authors of science fiction really started “looking backward” to the utopian tradition and began seriously to consider the social implications of a variety of political ideologies. Speculation about the lived or fictionalized experience of political ideologies such as liberalism, socialism, and communism loom large in much of the science fiction from this era and, to a greater extent than would seem apparent to nostalgic Puppies such as Torgersen, is actually what defines much Golden Age science fiction and sets it apart from the science fiction of the preceding decades. Prior to the Golden Age, science fiction, or scientifiction as it was still sometimes called throughout the 1920s and 1930s,

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6 Such an attitude is not especially surprising, given that many early science fiction authors, such as P. Schuyler Miller and E.E. Smith, were scientists by training who firmly believed that science was unique in that it was the only realm of human knowledge free from the taint of politics. If anything, such a view is ironic, if only because “science,” in the larger conceptual sense of the word, only exists in its current form because of its political underpinnings, which inform everything from the ideological assumptions of empirical laboratory practices to science’s increasingly questioned insistence that truth exists independent of human observation. For some philosophers of science such as Bruno Latour, science is such a fundamentally political concept that it exists, to some extent at least, “in order to render ordinary political life impotent through the threat of an incontestable nature” (10).

7 The designation of this period as a “Golden Age” is, of course, a matter of some debate. It exists largely as a result of demographics: as Peter Graham noted in the fanzine Void around 1957, “the Golden Age of science fiction is twelve” and, by the mid-1950s, many baby boomers were indeed around the age of twelve or had been twelve at some point during the preceding decade. Over the next few years, as these twelve-year-olds became writers themselves or remained fans of the genre, they continued to refer to the period of their youth as the “Golden Age.” By the mid-1960s, within fandom at least, the term “Golden Age” was routinely applied to all science fiction published during the 1940s and 1950s.
focused largely on eliciting a “sense of wonder” through technological and scientific marvels. Meditations on political ideologies, when they appear at all in the genre’s earliest works, are very much incidental and a sideshow compared to the wondrous and seemingly inevitable progress of technology and science.  

Yet, as authors of even the “hardest” science fiction from the Golden Age onward readily admit, technology and science alone do not force societies and individuals to change the way they view and interact with the world around them. For such sweeping change to occur, ideas about self and society, about individuals and their relationships with others, must change as well. Ultimately, it is these ideas about social relations and selfhood, ideas that in a political sense constitute ideology, which interest many writers of science fiction, particularly those writing in the 1960s and early 1970s, a period which functions as a sort of conceptual bridge between the “classic” science fiction of the Golden Age and the “contemporary” science fiction of the last four decades. Coming to terms with political ideologies, especially in relation to other ideological categories of identity such as gender, is for many authors from the 1960s and early 1970s central to the larger project of science fiction, to imagining what may or may not come to pass.

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8 An exception to this generalization, it might be argued, is Olaf Stapledon’s *Last and First Men* (1930), which follows the rise and fall of various “human” civilizations deep into the far future. Though Stapledon certainly draws inspiration for his future history from both Hegel and Nietzsche, the novel’s engagement with well-defined political ideologies is still sketchy at best.

9 As will be discussed at length in the next section, “ideology” is a vexed term in that it means different things in different contexts. Here, “political ideology” refers to ideology in its “narrow” sense: a delineated, named, and (at times) defined political philosophy that encompasses the lived or fictionalized experience of that philosophy. Political ideology is thus related to, but not the same as, ideology in its “broad” sense, where the term is used, among other things, to describe the often unacknowledged and unexamined cultural assumptions that determine how individuals evaluate the social world around them.

10 Though gender is inherently ideological in and of itself in the broader sense of the term, it is not ideological in the narrower sense of political ideology, though such “narrow” political ideologies, as this thesis will demonstrate, do indeed inform and help construct the “broad” ideology of any given gender.
For writers such as Philip K. Dick, Robert A. Heinlein, and Ursula K. Le Guin, authors whose meditations on a variety of political ideologies helped define the 1960s and early 1970s as a transitional period within science fiction’s history and whose novels constitute the focus of this thesis, exploring the connections between and among political ideologies and identity is one of the genre’s most important goals and a significant part of what makes science fiction a genuinely speculative, rather than merely extrapolative, genre. In the work of these authors, clearly delineated and often well-defined political ideologies inform the technological advances and scientific development that form the framework within which individuals understand their own sense of identity. In particular, the novels of Dick, Heinlein, and Le Guin speculate about how dominant or competing political ideologies in a given society influence that society’s attitude toward and conception of gender, especially masculinity. Although the work of these writers does occasionally speculate about race, sexuality, and class as well, these other categories of identity receive significantly less attention than gender does, something which creates a sharp distinction between these representative novels of the 1960s and early 1970s and later political science fiction written since the late 1970s, almost all of which tends to emphasize the inherent intersectionality of identity. Instead, the fiction of Dick,

11 Though it could be argued that Ursula K. Le Guin’s *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1969) constitutes an exception to this claim, the novel is actually focused more specifically on the development of its protagonist’s understanding of his own masculinity, despite its apparent focus on the political implications of widespread physical androgyny. Throughout *The Left Hand of Darkness*, the sexuality of the androgyrous Gethenians is simply the background against which Genly Ai discovers the inherent prejudices that inform his own binary sense of masculine identity.

12 The invisibility of race and sexuality, and to a lesser extent class, in the science fiction of Dick, Heinlein, and Le Guin, as well as in that of other writers of the 1960s and early 1970s, is of course itself ideological in the broader sense, in that such categories of identity are dismissed in the work of these authors, with the possible exceptions of that of Heinlein and Le Guin, as either politically irrelevant or insignificant. Indeed, it is not until after Joanna Russ published *The Female Man* in 1975 and Samuel R. Delany published *Trouble on Triton* in 1976 that meditations on race and sexuality became common in science fiction, although Delany’s fiction from the late 1960s, such as *Nova* (1968), also routinely touches on issues of racial and sexual identity.
Heinlein, and Le Guin focuses almost exclusively on the relationship between and among political ideologies and gender, specifically on how assumed or explicit political beliefs affect the masculinity of straight, white men who occupy positions of social privilege. In this sense, the work of Dick, Heinlein, and Le Guin heralds much of the science fiction written in the decades that followed, in that the novels of these writers, like those of contemporary authors such as Ann Leckie and Neal Stephenson, assume that political ideologies necessarily influence and inform the construction of gender. In the fiction of Dick, Heinlein, and Le Guin, in other words, as in that of so many contemporary authors of political science fiction, political ideology and masculinity are intimately intertwined, to the extent that to explore the one necessarily entails an examination of the other. In the texts of these authors, as in those of the writers who followed them in the inherently political genre they helped to define, to understand the effects of political ideology on gendered identity is central to understanding what it is that makes the men of tomorrow.

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_Toward a Morphological Definition of Political Ideology_

Though engagement with political ideologies, as this thesis argues, is a defining feature of science fiction from the 1960s and early 1970s, and such ideologies are indeed the framework within which authors of the period make sense of the masculinity of their

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13 In the final and third part of Stephenson’s _Seveneves_ (2015), humanity in the far future has evolved into seven separate lineages, each of which can trace their genesis back to a single woman who survived the apocalyptic destruction of the moon in the early twenty-first century. Within the novel, the personality traits and political opinions of each of these women, the eponymous “eves” of the title, have given rise to distinct political ideologies which all members of each lineage accept or reject in varying degrees. Just as various political ideologies affect the conceptualization of gender in our world, so too do the political ideologies of each of the eves influence the development of femininity and masculinity in Stephenson’s story of humanity’s near-brush with extinction.
characters, ideology itself is a notoriously difficult concept to define with any precision. Even the task of identifying what is and is not “ideological” in a text can at times pose problems, as identification depends upon the definition of the term being employed. For some theorists, such as Terry Eagleton, whose book *Ideology: An Introduction* is but one of many attempts to tackle this difficult task of definition in the immediate aftermath of the Cold War, “the word ‘ideology’ … is a text, woven of a whole tissue of different conceptual strands” (1). “Traced through by divergent histories” (1), ideology, as Eagleton argues, has always meant different things to different people at different times. One definition, however, that any attempt to define ideology must take into account, is the “traditional” Marxist understanding of ideology as that body of “ideas which help[s] to legitimate a dominant political power” (Eagleton 1).

For many Marxists, especially for those who hew most closely to Marx’s original thoughts on the matter, ideology is an instrument of domination and the primary conceptual tool of the (presumably bourgeois) rulers currently in power. As Eagleton notes, using its ideology

- a dominant power may legitimate itself by *promoting* beliefs and values congenial to it; *naturalizing* and *universalizing* such beliefs so as to render them self-evident and apparently inevitable; *denigrating* ideas which might challenge it; *excluding* rival forms of thought, perhaps by some unspoken but systematic logic; and *obscuring* social reality in ways convenient to itself. (6)

In this sense of the term, ideology is inherently deceptive, both in conception and purpose. Appearing as a set of ingrained cultural attitudes and incontestable political beliefs, ideology is what allows the ruling class to maintain its hegemony, often with the
consent of those being ruled. In his various analyses of the material basis of the dominant class’ power, Marx himself often notes how ideology works to reinforce that power. As he puts it in *The German Ideology*, for example,

> the class which has the means of material production at its disposal, consequently also controls the means of mental production, so that the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are on the whole subject to it. The ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relations, the dominant material relations grasped as ideas … (39)

Domination of the means of production, in other words, is also what makes domination of the mind feasible and, in many cases, inevitable. Ideology, understood as those “false ideas which help to legitimate a dominant political power” (Eagleton 1),¹⁴ is essentially the name Marxism gives to that collection of “ruling ideas” that makes intellectual hegemony possible. Indeed, later Marxist theorists, such as Antonio Gramsci and Louis Althusser, have greatly expanded on this repressive definition of ideology, drawing attention in particular to the apparently consensual nature of bourgeoisie ideological domination. For both, ideology (understood as the monopoly of ideas) is as important to the ruling class as the monopoly of physical force. When such an ideology assumes the role of “common sense,” as Gramsci claims it often does, resistance becomes literally unthinkable.

Despite a lingering appreciation for the political and potentially revolutionary utility of this Marxist definition of ideology, Eagleton is nonetheless quick to point out that the term “ideology,” as it is often used in a broader sense, actually encompasses far

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¹⁴ Emphasis added.
more than just the legitimating beliefs of the ruling class. For Eagleton, as for many other commentators and theorists, ideology is also “the medium in which conscious social actors make sense of their world” (2). Like the air that passes through the lungs of the body politic and which surrounds it on all sides, ideology is vital but usually hidden from view as “the indispensable medium in which individuals live out their relations to a social structure” (Eagleton 2). Without taking into account the various ideologies at play, it is impossible to understand, explain, or challenge this social structure in any meaningful way. Ideology in this broader sense of the term is not simply a tool of conceptual domination; it is also that which makes the power struggles of politics coherent and more than just an assortment of unrelated acts and claims. This is not to say, of course, that all disagreements are ideological, just that disagreements, especially those between competing political and social groups, often include a hidden or unstated ideological dimension.

For Eagleton, “the force of the term ideology lies in its capacity to discriminate between those power struggles which are somehow central to a whole form of social life, and those which are not” (8). As Eagleton notes, “exactly the same piece of language may be ideological in one context and not in another; ideology is a function of the relation of an utterance to its social context” (9). To argue against the purchase of a black car, for instance, because it is difficult to keep clean is, for most people, not an ideologically motivated act; to resist purchasing that same car, however, because the colour black is associated with sin or austerity or rebellion, is. What counts as ideological, in other words, depends on where, why, or how something is said, and not the phrase itself. “A matter of ‘discourse’ rather than ‘language’” (Eagleton 9), ideology
is ultimately “a discursive field in which self-promoting social powers conflict and collide over questions central to the reproduction of social power as a whole” (Eagleton 29) and it is in this sense that ideology is the field upon which the game of politics is played.

Eagleton is not, of course, alone in his attempt to define ideology. For Michael Freeden, a political philosopher who has spent much of his career attempting to determine exactly how political ideologies function and how they relate to each other, “ideology” has a narrower political sense which refers to any well-defined political philosophy used to describe both what shapes the political landscape and what allows individuals navigating that landscape to make sense of the social conflicts that are at the heart of all politics; here, the map very much is the territory. Discussing the concept of ideology in terms of what he characterizes as a “functional approach” (32), Freeden defines political ideology, rather than ideology in Eagleton’s broader sense, as a set of ideas, beliefs, opinions, and values that (1) exhibit a recurring pattern, (2) are held by significant groups, (3) compete over providing and controlling plans for public policy, [and] (4) do so with the aim of justifying, contesting or changing the social and political arrangements and processes of a political community. (32)

Political ideologies, according to Freeden, express what different groups of people with similar interests hope to accomplish in the world; in this regard, they are the conceptual embodiment of political intent. Internally, each political ideology consists of a number of interrelated concepts. Taken on their own, many of these concepts, such as liberty, lack a precise, incontestable definition. Within the context of a specific political ideology,
however, the meaning of these nebulous political concepts becomes much clearer. As Freeden notes, “just as sentences contain words in a particular pattern of interdependence, a pattern that enables us to make sense of the words, so it is with ideologies” (51). The freedom (to pursue profit) of which libertarians speak, for instance, is not the same as the (religious) freedom many conservatives cherish, nor is it the same as the freedom (from poverty) that socialists seek. In each of these situations, the concept of freedom only makes sense, and can only be defined, within its specific ideological context. Though freedom may be central to each of these political ideologies, its precise meaning ultimately hinges on its relationship to other political concepts within each political ideology itself.

In examining the internal structure of political ideologies, Freeden focuses much of his attention on how the arrangement of various political concepts within different political ideologies informs the various conflicts between them. For Freeden, an ideology is like a set of modular units of furniture that can be assembled in many ways (though some ways of arranging them would be too ridiculous to contemplate). Through diverse arrangements of the furniture we can create very different rooms, even by using the same units. That is why identical political concepts can serve as the building blocks of an entire series of disparate ideologies, for the same unit (concept) may have a different role (or meaning) in two separate rooms (or ideologies). (52)

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15 It is precisely this lack of universally agreed-upon definitions of ideological concepts that Orwell laments in “Politics and the English Language” (1946). As he notes, “the words ‘democracy,’ ‘socialism,’ ‘freedom,’ ‘patriotic,’ ‘realistic,’ ‘justice,’ have each of them several different meanings which cannot be reconciled with one another” (467) and, even worse for Orwell, “in the case of a word like ‘democracy,’ not only is there no agreed definition, but the attempt to make one is resisted from all sides” (467). Freeden would likely point out to Orwell that, if he were only to abandon his desire for a universal political language, he might be less upset about the reality of conceptual diversity in political language.
In this model, which Freeden terms a “morphological approach … because it sees the internal structure of ideologies as a vital aspect of their analysis” (51), political concepts are ranked according to their centrality and assume meaning only in relation to one another. Within each political ideology, there is a core of “ineliminable key concepts” (Freeden 61) surrounded by “adjacent and peripheral concepts” (Freeden 62), which “flesh out the core” (Freeden 62) and which are “also historically context-bound and therefore more open to change within the broader framework set by the core concepts” (Freeden 62). When political ideologies come into conflict with each other, it is often the relevant importance of such core, adjacent, and peripheral concepts that is disputed; what is a core concept in one political ideology may very well be peripheral or adjacent in another and vice versa. Even within a single ideological tradition, these core, adjacent, and peripheral concepts are constantly being shuffled around as the political ideology in question develops and spawns new ideological variants.

From a morphological perspective, it is the difference in internal organization of shared political concepts, rather than some fundamental difference in premises, that sets most political ideologies apart both from each other and from their own past and future incarnations. Liberalism, for instance, Freeden suggests,

always placed fundamental concepts such as liberty, individuality, rationality, and progress at its core. Other political concepts such as legitimacy and authority were made to be dependent on accommodating the core ones. The only legitimate government would then be one that respected individual liberty. (51)

In state socialism, by contrast, such as that which dominated much of Eastern Europe throughout the latter half of the twentieth century, liberty assumes an adjacent or even
Peripheral position relative to concepts such as “productivity” and “community.”

Certainly in the Soviet Union during the Great Purge of the 1930s, the Communist Party under Stalin attached very little significance to liberty as a concept, since it threatened the core concept of “community” as defined by Soviet authorities at the time.

As well as differentiating one political ideology from another, the arrangement of political concepts within each political ideology also helps to define those concepts more precisely. In particular, it is this arrangement and ranking of political concepts that ultimately gives concrete meanings to the concepts at each political ideology’s core. As Freeden notes, by arranging concepts according to their relative importance and centrality, “an ideology attempts to end the inevitable contention over concepts by decontesting them, by removing their meanings from contest” (54). Liberty, for example, assumes a definite and (relatively) incontestable meaning for most contemporary, self-identified American liberals because it is the core concept at the heart of liberalism and anyone calling themselves a liberal ought to agree upon what they mean when they demand the liberty to pursue their own life as they see fit.16 In this sense, “by trying to convince us that they are right and that they speak the truth, ideologies become devices for coping with the indeterminacy of meaning” (Freeden 54) and “constitute the necessary space in which political concepts take concrete shape” (Freeden 61).

Ultimately, for Freeden, “an ideology is a wide-ranging structural arrangement that attributes decontested meanings to a range of mutually defining political concepts”

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16 This is not to say, of course, that any group calling themselves liberal will define liberty in the same way as other groups that actually do support liberalism. Examples abound of political parties whose name derives from a historical association with a political ideology they now disavow. The Labour Party in the UK, for example, no longer adheres to a political ideology that in any way resembles socialism, nor is the Liberal Party of British Columbia liberal in any but the most neoliberal sense of the term.
Using this definition, it is possible to discuss the historical development of political ideologies in terms of how they move their conceptual furniture around and how such shifting interior design allows each political ideology to define and redefine the political concepts at its core. All forms of libertarianism, variants of which form the basis for much of the political exploration in 1960s and early 1970s science fiction, could be characterized as descendants of liberalism that have undergone a significant amount of interior renovation. Though different types of libertarianism may superficially resemble the various incarnations of liberalism from which they descend, internally the different strands of libertarianism have granted so much conceptual space to their own decontested and unique understanding of liberty that they are now distinct, if still obviously related, political ideologies. As Freeden observes, “inasmuch as libertarians claim to be members of the liberal family, they expand the liberty theme within a limited ideological space in a manner that analysts of liberalism might judge to be disproportionate, while the other themes are squeezed into a small area” (64). In the more socially conservative strands of contemporary American libertarianism, in particular, core liberal concepts such as “social progress” and “community consensus” have become so peripheral that they have all but disappeared. For this reason, if nothing else, these brands of “libertarianism affor[d] a typical example of a gravitational shift within conventional ideologies that obscures an ideology’s foundational principles by reorganizing the core units of furniture” (Freeden 95). Such forms of libertarianism, in other words, are no longer variants of liberalism because the core, adjacent, and peripheral concepts that define them have realigned and shifted to such an extent that they have become all but unrecognizable to any self-
professed liberal; they have become, instead, something else and something new, as writers such as Heinlein and Le Guin are keen to point out.

Committed as it is to imagining the consequences of new phenomena, American science fiction from the 1960s and early 1970s provides an ideal space in which to explore the internal structure of and conflict between political ideologies and their predecessors. This is because science fiction, as a deliberately and inherently speculative genre, fosters an environment for ideological speculation that attempts to delineate the full contours of any specific political ideology or set of ideologies. This is not to say that science fictional texts are ever fully successful in this endeavour or that writers of science fiction are somehow able to escape fully their own ingrained and inherited ideological assumptions in the broader sense, just that the genre is often a vehicle for quite deliberate speculation about political ideologies that seeks to transcend or challenge the ideological inheritance of both the author and reader. In American science fiction from the 1960s and early 1970s with a significant political bent, a type of fiction which became much more common as the political battles of the “mundane” world of the 1960s crept into that of science fiction, it is thus political ideologies that help authors map the contours of the futures they imagine.

From Dick’s novels of the late 1960s to Heinlein’s *The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress* (1966) and Le Guin’s *The Dispossessed* (1974), the adherents of new political ideologies often come into conflict with those who still hold true to their respective political ideology’s conceptual ancestors. In Dick’s work, for instance, which represents the most thorough interrogation of Golden Age political orthodoxy in 1960s science fiction, there is a pessimistic and exhaustive critique of both social liberalism and the social ethic,
social liberalism’s more explicitly capitalist descendant. Such a critique is necessary, Dick’s novels suggest, because the social ethic is the inevitable political ideology of the future and the inheritor of social liberalism’s former hegemony. Though Dick never rejects the social ethic outright in his fiction, his characters’ lingering attachment to the ideals of social liberalism does make their acceptance of the social ethic difficult to say the least. In the novels of both Heinlein and Le Guin from the same period, by contrast, libertarians (of the market and socialist strands respectively) strive to prove both to themselves and to others that the libertarianism to which they adhere is superior to the social or classical liberalism that preceded it and which still commands the allegiance of a large part of the population. Such works, in other words, are full of ideological conflict on political grounds and it is this sense of conflict that has both defined the 1960s and early 1970s as a period in science fiction’s history, as well as informed virtually all political science fiction that has appeared in subsequent decades.

Unsurprisingly, given the rise of identity-orientated civil rights movements throughout the 1960s and early 1970s, the field of battle upon which this conflict between and among political ideologies takes place is one of identity. Here, as in the real world of American politics outside these novels, political ideology is a large part of what determines attitudes toward such things as race, class, and most importantly for these authors, gender. For the men of Dick’s, Heinlein’s, and Le Guin’s fiction, in particular, it is their political ideologies that determine the shape and definition of their masculinity. For these men, of course, just as for the men of the real world political movements that inspired or were inspired by these stories, political “ideologies are not exact representations of an ideational reality, but symbolic reconstructions of it. They are
based on a collation of fragmented facts and competing values that themselves intervene in that reality” (Freeden 65). It is the precepts of political ideologies, in other words, that govern men’s perceptions in these novels of who they are and what they and those around them might become. In explicitly political American science fiction from this period, just as in the realm of the non-fictional political environments that both Eagleton and Freeden examine, political ideologies are what help men “map the political and social worlds” (Freeden 2) of both their own and others’ manhood. Even if these ideological “maps do not represent an objective, external reality” (Freeden 3), as they rarely (if ever) do, for the men of these representative and influential novels of 1960s and early 1970s science fiction, novels that helped chart the course of science fiction’s speculation about masculinity for decades to come, “the map often becomes the reality itself” (Freeden 65).

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Political Ideology, Masculinity, and Science Fiction

By speculating about the future and then using this fictional future as a sort of imaginative laboratory to test political hypotheses, science fiction is able to reflect back on the effects of political ideology in the present in a way that less conjectural fiction often cannot. As Samuel R. Delany notes in Starboard Wine,17 this seemingly paradoxical blend of speculation and retrospection allows science fiction to “us[e] the future as a narrative convention to present significant distortions of the present” (27).

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17 One of science fiction’s leading lights throughout the 1960s and 1970s and subsequently also one of the genre’s most incisive critics, the essays in Delany’s Starboard Wine use poststructuralist theory to explore a number of misconceptions about the nature and intent of science fiction. At the time of its initial publication in 1984, Starboard Wine was something of a novelty, as academic criticism of the genre had only just begun to make the “poststructuralist turn.”
Gender is of course one of the key cultural sites of such distortions. In science fiction, gender often appears not simply as the natural expression of biological sex, but rather as an inherently political construct that, like political ideologies themselves, is far from immutable. In texts where this is the case, political beliefs about gender likewise reveal themselves to be both constructed from and contingent on the various political ideologies that inform them. This is not to say, of course, that all writers of science fiction seek to self-consciously draw attention to the political nature of gender (authors such as Orson Scott Card are in fact convinced that gender is free from political influence), just that gender is firmly linked to political conviction in a number of important and influential science fiction texts.

Like other sites of potential political transformation, beliefs about gender often change in response to shifts in political ideology. Within science fiction, as in other forms of literary creation, political ideologies inform understandings of gender and cultural attitudes toward it. In this sense, both masculinity and femininity are expressions of a culture’s political preoccupations and, as such, reflect many of that culture’s deep-seated assumptions. Changes to how these genders are perceived are, in turn, inextricably linked to changes in political ideology, and a shift in political ideology is almost always accompanied by a complementary shift in the conceptualization of gender.

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18 A devout Mormon and author of the popular *Ender’s Game* (1985), Card has repeatedly insisted that gender describes an entirely natural state of being, in the sense that he believes gender is determined solely by biology. In a 2012 editorial in the *Rhino Times*, a weekly conservative news magazine based in North Carolina, Card argues that there is not a “shred of science behind the absurd claims about gender and sexuality coming from the Left.” Such an argument, which echoes Card’s earlier claim in a 2008 editorial in the LDS-owned *Deseret News* that by natural design “human beings are part of a long mammalian tradition of heterosexuality,” pits nature, metonymically by way of science, against political ideology. The irony here, of course, is that it is precisely a political and religious ideology, in the form of the Mormon social conservatism, that informs and reinforces Card’s conviction that it is nature rather than any political ideology that defines gender and sexuality.
During the mid-twentieth century, for example, businessmen responded to the increasing
dominance of the social ethic in the American workplace, an ideological derivative of
social liberalism adapted to an explicitly capitalist framework, by changing the way they
thought of themselves as men. Historically in the United States, as R.W. Connell notes
in *Masculinities*, “there has been an important division between forms of masculinity
organized around direct domination (e.g., corporate management, military command) and
forms organized around technical knowledge (e.g., professions, science)” (165). With the
introduction of the social ethic, however, “the latter have challenged the former for
hegemony in the gender order of advanced capitalist societies” (Connell 165).
Subsequently, this challenge gave rise to what Deborah Kerfoot and David Knights in
their discussion of gendered embodiment in managerial work describe as “contemporary
masculine identities [that] are discursively bound up with high levels of purposive-
rational instrumentality characterized by an urge to be in control” (80). By combining
this “purposive-rational instrumentality” prized by the social ethic with older forms of
masculinity preoccupied with controlling others, men embracing this new type of
masculinity created “a certain privileged and pervasive form of masculinity [that] is
characterized by the modern manager whose *raison d’être* is to co-ordinate and control
others in the pursuit of the instrumental goals of production, productivity and profit”
(Kerfoot and Knights 88). In so doing, these men challenged seemingly outmoded
masculine ideals by adapting those same ideals to suit the political ideology of the social

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19 According to William H. Whyte, who first popularized the term in *The Organization Man* (1956), an
influential sociological analysis of the postwar American corporation, the “social ethic” is an explicitly
capitalist reinterpretation of social liberalism that substitutes a specific (business) organization for the
larger political community. For Whyte, the social ethic is effectively a variant of social liberalism in which
work “is dominant. Everything else is subordinate and the executive is unable to compartmentalize his life.
Whatever the segment of it – leisure, home, friends, – he instinctively measures it in terms of how well it
meshes with his work” (146).
ethic to which they now adhered, redefining in the process, at least for themselves, what it is to be masculine.

Since at least the mid-1970s, coinciding with the advent and development of feminist science fiction, there has been significant critical interest in how this political reconceptualization of gender plays itself out within the genre. Drawing on a wide array of feminist insights and the tools of poststructuralist and postmodernist theory, critics such as N. Katherine Hayles have produced incisive analyses that reveal the intersections between political ideology and gender in the works they study. In How We Became Posthuman, for instance, Hayles explores the ways in which the characters of Dick’s novels are a product of his resigned acceptance of the social ethic and the organization culture it supports. Though Hayles does not explicitly mention the social ethic by name, preferring to focus instead on Dick’s attachment to its ideological predecessor, social liberalism, her analysis of femininity in Dick’s fiction from the late 1960s does explore the effects of both the social ethic and the corporation on the representation of women in novels such as Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? (1968) and Ubik (1969). For Hayles, “the interpellation of the individual into market relations so thoroughly defines the characters of these novels that it is impossible to think of the characters apart from the economic institutions into which they are incorporated” (162). Women in these texts, such as Rachael Rosen in Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? and Pat Conley in Ubik, are radically transformed by this interpellation, becoming “schizoid androids” (161) who are “often represented as … bright, cold, [and] emotionally distant” (161) and are

20 Unlike Pat, who is still physiologically human for all her robotic malice, Rachael is an actual android both physically and psychologically. Here, as elsewhere in Dick’s fiction, “the schizoid android represents the coming together of a person who acts like a machine with a literal interpretation of that person as a machine” (Hayles 162).
“characterized by a flattening of affect and an inability to feel empathy” (161). As a result of such interpellation, Hayles argues, this “figure of the android … allows Dick to combine a scathing critique of the politics of incorporation with the psychological complexities of trying to decide who qualifies as an ‘authentic’ human” (162).21 According to Hayles, “gender dynamics is central to these complexities, for when the schizoid woman is brought into close proximity with a male character, he reacts to the androidism in her personality by experiencing a radical instability in the boundaries that define him and his world” (162). Such schizoid women, in other words, are what force the men in Dick’s fiction to re-evaluate, and ultimately despair of, their sense of self in light of the social ethic under which they now labour. This same social ethic is also, Hayles contends, the political ideology responsible for robbing at least one woman in each of Dick’s novels of her humanity and transforming her into a monster “incapable of understanding others as people like herself” (161).22

Although her analysis of Dick’s work builds on other feminist critiques of 1960s and early 1970s American science fiction by showing how political ideologies might influence the representation of femininity, Hayles’ insistence on taking into account the effects of political ideology on masculinity is somewhat unusual in critical work that discusses this particular period in science fiction’s history. To date, a significant amount of feminist scholarly work on mid-twentieth century American science fiction has focused primarily on how various authors, especially those who were themselves

21 Though “incorporation” refers here to physical embodiment, it is an appropriate word to use as Dick examines such embodiment almost exclusively within the context of capitalism and organization life. 22 Not all of the women in Dick’s fiction are unfeeling, inhuman monsters, of course. The character of Anne Hawthorne in The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch, for instance, embodies all the warmth, fidelity, and empathy that the “schizoid android” in this novel, Roni Fugate, appears to lack. For the protagonist Barney Mayerson, reminiscing shortly after their first sexual encounter on the cold sands of Mars, Anne is the only thing in the universe that is “lucid and real, accepting” (152).
influenced by an explicitly feminist understanding of gender relations, have reimagined different kinds of femininity. In at least some of these critical surveys of the feminist utopian tradition, such as Tatiana Teslenko’s *Feminist Utopian Novels of the 1970s*, masculinity is rendered invisible by being obscured behind a conception of patriarchy that is monolithic and internally undifferentiated. This is not to say that no one has examined science fiction from a broader gender or queer studies perspective, (critics such as Sheryl Vint and Stacy Gillis, for example, have noted repeatedly how cyberpunk novels from the 1980s such as William Gibson’s *Neuromancer* (1984) problematically valorize their “console cowboy” protagonists), just that, in *some* feminist criticism of 1960s and early 1970s science fiction, masculinity at times disappears behind conceptions of patriarchy that do not account for how patriarchy itself is always the product of a specific form of masculinity which exists within and is constrained by a particular political context.

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23 While Teslenko’s discussion of the internal political structure of 1970s feminist utopias is both illuminating and multifaceted, her understanding of patriarchy is somewhat problematic, in that her work assumes, as many of the novels she studies also do, that patriarchy means only the “institutionalized oppression of all women by all men” (45). As an oppressive political tool which has the capacity to oppress men as well as women, patriarchy is of course much more complicated than this and to assume otherwise unfortunately prevents the analysis of how different types of masculinity might produce various forms of patriarchy.

24 As Gillis points out in “The (Post)Feminist Politics of Cyberpunk,” in Gibson’s *Neuromancer*, “although bodies interface with technologies to become virtual identities, the hacker body remains constant, masculine and, more crucially, an unproblematised ‘real’” (15). For Vint, who discusses *Neuromancer* at some length in *Bodies of Tomorrow*, this persistence of masculinity in the supposedly disembodied realm of cyberspace is a consequence of the fact that “Cartesian dualism has a misogynistic heritage” (104), one in which “the transcendence of pure mind is a position available to the male subject, while the female subject must remain immanent, absorbing all the limits of materiality that man has cast off in his construction of his own subjectivity” (104).

25 This is not to disparage the feminist critique of science fiction, which rightfully insists, as Veronica Hollinger observes, that it is important to “contes[t] the hegemonic representations of a patriarchal culture that does not recognize its [feminine] ‘others’” (129), just to note that it is surprising how, in some feminist criticism at least, masculinity at times almost becomes invisible, even when it is subject to the same political influences and pressures as the different forms of femininity under consideration.
Perhaps unsurprisingly, critics who approach the science fiction of the early 1960s and early 1970s from something other than a feminist, gender, or queer studies perspective sometimes also appear unaware that shifts in political ideology correspond to shifts in the conceptualization of masculinity. This is especially true of some critics who attempt to map out a broader history of the genre or try to incorporate science fiction into a Marxist understanding of the utopian tradition. Mike Ashley, for example, in his exhaustive and detailed history of magazine science fiction during the 1950s and 1960s, *Transformations: The Story of the Science Fiction Magazines from 1950 to 1970*, touches only lightly on gender and political ideology, focusing instead on a form of biographical criticism that emphasizes how editorial restraints on authors influenced the content and direction of science fiction throughout the period. Though certainly useful for the historical perspective it provides, such historical, or historicizing, criticism often does not adequately recognize the complex relationship between masculinity and political ideology in the material it seeks to understand. Similarly, criticism of 1960s and early 1970s science fiction that examines the genre within the confines of a predominantly Marxist understanding of the utopian tradition also tends to obscure masculinity as a political concept. In Darko Suvin’s *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction*, for instance, which introduced the influential notion of science fiction as “the literature of cognitive estrangement” (15), masculinity and indeed gender itself are hidden behind a curiously ungendered screen of Marxist formalism, one which positions formal literary devices and social class as the only appropriate lenses through which science fiction ought to be understood as a genre. To escape the fact that “SF production has been predominantly
determined and strongly inflected by the capitalist market with its alienating and
degrading tendencies” (1), Suvin argues that science fiction should instead
be defined as a fictional tale determined by the hegemonic literary device of a
locus and/or dramatis personae that (1) are radically or at least significantly
different from the empirical times, places, and characters of “mimetic” or
“naturalist” fiction, but (2) are nonetheless … simultaneously perceived as not
impossible within the cognitive (cosmological and anthropological) norms of the
author’s epoch. (2)

Unfortunately, while Suvin does suggest here that it is necessary to understand science
fiction within its proper anthropological context (a context which may be assumed to
include both gender and political ideologies as integral elements), the notion that political
ideologies influence masculinity is simply absent in Suvin’s analysis, since masculinity is
rendered all but invisible by his attempt to create an all-encompassing Marxist account of
science fiction’s formal features.26

Ultimately, all these critics of 1960s and early 1970s American science fiction
ignore masculinity for one of two reasons: either the focus of the text under consideration
is quite explicitly on women, as in Joanna Russ’ The Female Man (1975), or masculinity
as a concept is obscured within the text in question, made invisible by the position of
privilege that men, including critics themselves, occupy. For masculinity studies
theorists such as Michael Kimmel, this privileged invisibility of men is hardly surprising:
as he notes in The History of Men, “American men have come to think of themselves as

26 Suvin, of course, also pays little attention to how political ideologies might influence femininity. In
Metamorphoses of Science Fiction, gender is simply not a category of identity which responds to the
“cognitive (cosmological and anthropological) norms” about which, Suvin claims, most authors of science
fiction speculate.
genderless, in part because they can afford the luxury of ignoring the centrality of gender” (6). This luxury is available to men precisely because they are powerful, because they claim for themselves both the position of the universal subject and generic human experience. As Kimmel declares in jest echoing the refrain of so many men in the United States, “as a middle-class white man, I have no class, no race, no gender. I’m the generic person!” (5). Being genderless, being generic and universal, is perhaps the most intangible yet very real benefit of what Connell describes in his introduction to the masculinity studies understanding of gender as the “patriarchal dividend,” that “advantage to men as group [made possible] from maintaining an unequal gender order” (Gender 142). Though “individual men may get more of it than others, or less, or none, depending on their location in the social order” (142), the patriarchal dividend grants most men, at the very least, that sense of invisibility that has made the study of men in science fiction both challenging and often neglected. Such invisibility also obscures conflicts among men over what constitutes being masculine, conflicts that are of course themselves politically motivated.

For Connell, as for most other masculinity studies theorists, the study of masculinity is better described as the study of masculinities. As even the briefest informal discussion of what it means to be a man will quickly reveal, there is no such thing as one form of masculinity that applies equally to all men; what counts as “being a man” for one group of men may not be the same for another and vice versa. As Connell observes in Masculinities, “‘masculinity’ is not a coherent object about which a generalizing science can be produced” (67) and “it has become increasingly clear that different masculinities are produced in the same cultural or institutional setting” (36).
Connell further argues that “the concept [of masculinity] is also inherently relational. ‘Masculinity’ does not exist except in contrast with ‘femininity’” (68). Thus, in the sense that Connell understands the term and in the sense that “masculinity” is used throughout this thesis, masculinity is not a monolithic gender, but rather one which is characterized by multiple, different conceptual configurations, configurations which rely on both femininity as well as other masculinities for definition and validation. Though no single one of these masculinities alone can describe for all men what it is to be a man, each form of masculinity does define for the men who subscribe to it what it means to be a certain *kind* of man. In this way, “masculinity” is a metonym for what is actually a plurality of masculinities, each of which defines manhood according to its own particular conception of what constitutes “being masculine.”

Contingent as all these masculinities are upon circumstances specific to the cultural and political environments within which they develop and are experienced, it is perhaps not surprising that masculinities resemble political ideologies in their internal conceptual structure. Like political ideologies, masculinities share core, adjacent, and peripheral concepts, such as “strength,” yet are still distinct from one another by virtue of how each variety of masculinity either arranges those concepts internally or defines them specifically. Often, these different internal arrangements and conceptual definitions hinge on other categories of social and political identity, such as race and class. What might be characterized as American blue-collar masculinity, for instance, differs from American organizational, or professional, masculinity not so much in what concepts are emphasized, but in how those concepts are defined by the men who embrace them. Although both forms of masculinity value strength, each type of masculinity measures
this concept in radically different ways. For a masculine lawyer, for example, strength is likely to be evaluated in terms of intellectual and verbal prowess, while for a worker on a construction site worried about proving himself as a man, any measurement of strength will probably involve feats of physical skill.27 In each case, it is differing definitions of core concepts that produce different yet related understandings of masculinity. For masculinity theorists such as Connell, explaining these differences and mapping the connections between the masculinities they support is at the heart of figuring out what it means to be a man.

Just as it is insufficient for Freeden to simply point out that different political ideologies are distinct from one another, so, for Connell, “to recognize diversities in masculinities is not enough” (37). To do justice to the idea of masculinity and to fully understand what is at stake, Connell argues that “we must also recognize the relations between the different kinds of masculinity: relations of alliance, dominance and subordination” (37). Like the struggles among the political ideologies they structurally resemble, the relationships among different configurations of masculinity are “constructed through practices that exclude and include, that intimidate, exploit, and so on” (37), and it is this sense of conflict between masculinities that, Connell contends, creates “a gender politics within masculinity” (37). More often than not, this political struggle between different masculinities is framed in terms of a single dominant masculinity in opposition to all others. This dominant form of masculinity is, as Connell suggests with a nod toward Gramsci’s notion of political hegemony, “the masculinity that

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27 This example, of course, only includes the evaluation of masculine strength in a specific social context, that of work. There is nothing that precludes either of these men from adhering to or cultivating a completely different conception of masculinity in other parts of their life. There are, after all, many witty construction workers and physically robust lawyers.
occupies the hegemonic position in a given pattern of gender relations” (76). “At any given time,” Connell maintains, “one form of masculinity rather than others is culturally exalted” (77), and such “hegemonic masculinity can be defined as the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women” (77). In other words, the claim of one masculinity to hegemonic status is, especially when combined with unquestioned assumptions about the inherent “fitness” and physical superiority of men, a large part of what guarantees that patriarchy continues to oppress women and that the “defence of the patriarchal order does not require an explicit masculinity politics” (213). Such an assertion of hegemony by one form of masculinity is also what ensures that the masculinities of men who embrace alternative masculine ideals, or who have alternative masculine identities foisted upon them in some way, remain subordinate and unable to share in (as much of) the patriarchal dividend.

Nevertheless, for all its aspirations to “natural” dominance, hegemonic masculinity occupies, as Connell notes, “a position [that is] always contestable” (76). In fact, as Stephen M. Whitehead argues in Men and Masculinities, “what appears a subordinated masculinity in one site always has the potential to be a hegemonic masculinity in another” (84). This is particularly true of situations involving explicit political struggle: when political ideologies collide, their different conceptions of what is hegemonic masculinity also come into conflict with one another. At its most extreme, what constitutes hegemonic masculinity for one political ideology may be completely anathema to another. The hegemonic masculinity of contemporary social conservatives
in the United States, for example, is almost entirely at odds with that of many social
liberals on the left of the political spectrum. Although both groups endorse forms of
hegemonic masculinity that prize concepts such as “stoic resolve” and “taking the
initiative,” they fundamentally disagree on the conditions of life that make it possible for
men to embody these masculine ideals. For the social conservative, both resolve and
initiative are rooted in a sense of cultural heritage and a heteronormative understanding
of family, while for social liberals the realization of these concepts depends on the
acceptance of cultural difference and inclusive support networks that may or may not
involve traditional family structures. For adherents of each political ideology, it is only
their own conception of hegemonic masculinity that is, in fact, hegemonic; competing
masculinities that claim hegemonic status are considered subordinate and instead are
dismissed along with everything else these adherents reject from their opponents’
political ideology. It is for this reason, if nothing else, that Woodrow Wilson as early as
1915 was able to characterize the Republican party of his opponents as “a covert and
refuge for those who are afraid, for those who want to consult their grandfathers about
everything” (62) and that Ann Coulter (a dyed in the wool social conservative if there
ever was one) has more recently been able to claim that “liberals have managed to
eliminate the idea of manly honor. Instead, all they have is womanly indignation” (157).

The definition of what makes a “real” man, it would seem, is often incapable of bridging
this particular political divide.28

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28 There are, of course, exceptions to this rule. Even those who may not have shared his politics, for
example, often held up John F. Kennedy, especially after his assassination, as an example of a strong leader
with “commendable” masculine virility.
In American science fiction, as in the realm of American politics more generally, hegemonic masculinity is likewise defined along political lines. In most texts, perhaps unsurprisingly, such masculinity is also seemingly invisible. This is especially true in earlier science fiction, such as that published during the Golden Age of the 1940s and 1950s. Partly, the invisibility of hegemonic masculinity in Golden Age science fiction is a consequence of the genre’s historical development. As Helen Merrick observes in an article on the genre’s approach toward gender across the decades, “traditionally, sf has been considered a predominantly masculine field which, through its focus on science and technology, ‘naturally’ excludes women and by implication, considerations of gender” (241). Though contemporary science fiction is no longer the “old boys’ club” Merrick describes here, and speculation about the future of gender is as prevalent as any other form of speculation, until the mid-1960s the genre definitely did privilege what might be characterized as traditional areas of masculine interest and concern and often ignored anything to do with gender as a concept. Indeed, as Brian Attebery contends in *Decoding Gender in Science Fiction*, “until the 1960s, gender was one of the elements most often transcribed unthinkingly into SF’s hypothetical worlds” (5). “Even if an author was interested in revising the gender code,” Attebery argues, “the conservatism of a primarily male audience – and the editors, publishers and distributors who were trying to outguess that audience – kept gender exploration to a minimum” (5).

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29 Ann Leckie’s *Ancillary Justice* is an excellent example of a recent text that seamlessly combines the conventions of what has historically been one of science fiction’s most conservative subgenres, space opera, with the radical sensibilities of much feminist science fiction. In the novel, the Radchaai claim not to acknowledge gender as a concept. This often produces a sense of cognitive dissonance, as the Radchaai empire is both authoritarian and expansionist, traits which inevitably invoke some form of martial masculinity for many readers.  

30 Exceptions do, of course, exist. Theodore Sturgeon’s *Venus Plus X* (1960), for example, tells the story of Charlie Johns, a man from the twentieth century who is transported to a future utopia in which all the
writers even developed inherently masculine terminology to label what was, for many at the time, the most scientifically rooted, and therefore definitive, form of science fiction. As Attebery notes in an article on “Science Fiction and the Gender of Knowledge,”

the sf community adopted the language of hard and soft from science at least as early as 1957, when P. Schuyler Miller used the term hard science fiction in a review column of Astounding. The hardness of science is that of the male body – or rather that body socially constructed as the opposite of female pliancy and permeability. (135)

In the Golden Age, it would appear, science fiction was both the domain of men and highly masculinized in its terminology and conventions.31 It is ironic then that, during this period, masculinities, both hegemonic and subordinate, were invisible to writers and fans alike – ironic perhaps, but given the privileged place men occupied within the genre, not all that surprising.

All this began to change in the 1960s, of course, as women entered the field both as fans and authors in ever greater numbers;32 and vocal younger fans and writers started to challenge many of the orthodoxies and assumptions of the earlier Golden Age. A number of older writers who technically came of age during the 1940s and 1950s, such as Heinlein and Dick, along with supportive editors such as Fred Pohl,33 also began to

inhbitants are androgynous and are plagued by few of the problems that affect Johns’ own sexually neurotic and sexist society.

31 The few women who were publishing science fiction during the Golden Age, such as Catherine L. Moore, all hid their gender at the behest of their agents and editors. Moore, for instance, is always billed as C.L. Moore (and never Catherine L. Moore) on the covers of the magazines in which her fiction appears.

32 For a thorough discussion of the impact of women, especially fans, on science fiction as a genre throughout the 1960s and 1970s, see Justine Larbalestier’s The Battle of the Sexes in Science Fiction.

33 Both as an editor and writer, as well as a prominent figure in fandom in his own right, Pohl was integral to expanding the conceptual horizons of science fiction throughout the 1960s. As Gary K. Wolfe observes in an article on the influence of magazine editors such as Pohl on the development of the genre, “when Frederick Pohl assumed the editorship of Galaxy in 1961 – along with that of its lower budget but more
contest the future science fiction had traditionally imagined. Prominent among the many things that both new writers and old stalwarts such as Dick and Heinlein believed the genre had ignored were gender and issues of sexuality. Responding to “A Questionnaire for Professional SF Writers and Editors” circulated by the fanzine Double: Bill in 1969, for example, Dick claims that the greatest historical weakness of science fiction, at least from his perspective as a straight man, is “its inability to explore the subtle, intricate relationships between the sexes” (67). For Dick, concerned as he was with the fragile sense of self that plagues the men who adhere to the social ethic in his fiction, “men, in their relationship with women, get themselves into the most goddamn difficult circumstances, and SF ignores – or is unable to deal with – this fundamental aspect of adult life” (“Questionnaire” 67). Dick is certainly not alone in his belief that, for much of its history up to that point, science fiction had not done an especially good job of representing or speculating about the future of gender relations and, as the 1960s progressed and became the 1970s, more and more writers, including Dick himself, took up the call to arms to change the way the genre imagines gender. In fact, for many writers of this period, and especially for Dick, Heinlein, and Le Guin, imagining the future necessarily entails imagining what might become of gender, particularly hegemonic masculinity, as it navigates the shifts in and struggles among the plethora of political ideologies that contest the orthodoxy of the Golden Age.

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*Golden Age Science Fiction, Masculinity, and the Legacy of Social Liberalism*

popular companion magazine *If* – this sense of impending revolution became even more pronounced” (100).
To understand precisely how political ideology informs the representation of hegemonic masculinity within the fiction of Dick, Heinlein, and Le Guin, it is first necessary briefly to discuss the effectively monolithic political environment in the period of science fiction’s history that immediately precedes the work of these authors in the 1960s and early 1970s: the Golden Age of the 1940s and 1950s. For popular Golden Age writers such as Isaac Asimov and Ray Bradbury, political conflict along ideological lines is something that is both inevitable and expected in any imagined community of the future. In Asimov’s work from this period, for example, the capitalism of the contemporary United States is pitted against both older Western European understandings of feudal order and the communism of post-war Eastern Europe. Unsurprisingly, given Asimov’s staunch commitment to a mid-twentieth-century American understanding of liberalism, free-market capitalism wins every time. In the *Foundation* series (1951), for instance, the merchants of the Foundation triumph time and again over the autocratic feudal lords of the dying Galactic Empire, while in the *Robot* series (1954), Asimov’s Spacers and their carefully planned socialist economies are simply no match for the repressed entrepreneurial spirit of Earth’s multitudes. In Bradbury’s short story collection *The Martian Chronicles* (1950), by contrast, this same free-market capitalism is the subject of considerable ambiguity. Although Bradbury’s fiction still subscribes to capitalism’s valorization of individual initiative, his stories also readily point out its internal contradictions and the suffering that often accompanies its more ruthless application. In “– And the Moon Be Still as Bright,” for example, humanity’s disregard for the environment of Mars and its willingness to “rip it up, rip the skin off, and change it to fit ourselves” (74), more or less guarantees that any colony established on the red
planet is doomed to repeat the mistakes of Earth. Capitalism, here as elsewhere in Bradbury’s work, is both what motivates technological and scientific progress and also what prevents humanity from reaching its full potential as a species. Like the blade of a guillotine once released, it is both effective and unstoppable.

For all that authors from the 1940s and 1950s such as Asimov and Bradbury acknowledge, and sometimes even challenge, the notion that capitalism structures society and determines its conceptual limitations, few ever question the tenets or hegemony of the mid-twentieth-century American understanding of liberalism that informs the capitalist ethos. For Bradbury as for Asimov, liberalism is a political ideology that seeks to balance the interests of individuals against those of the larger community to which they belong. This form of liberalism is very much a product of both time and place; it is, quite specifically, the “social” liberalism of a post-war United States that has largely accepted the Keynesian interventions of the New Deal era and that has turned its back on the “rugged individualism” characteristic of late nineteenth-century manifestations of “classical” liberalism. Individualism, although certainly still important in this post-war social liberalism, is tempered by an acknowledgment that community and the welfare of others do indeed matter. The individual here, rather than being expected to buck against the society to which she or he belongs, is embedded within a community that, at least ideally, provides support and encourages personal growth. Such social liberalism is also a liberalism that rewards “enlightened self-interest” and demands that individuals not harm each other.

To a large extent, the post-war social liberalism of Golden Age writers like Asimov and Bradbury is very much informed, in conceptual outline at least, by the social
liberalism of John Stuart Mill. For Mill, writing in the shadow of mid-nineteenth-century utilitarianism, liberalism is an ideology that prizes individual initiative, while also explicitly acknowledging and respecting the rights of others. Like the classical liberals who preceded him, Mill’s understanding of liberalism centres on the primacy of the individual. As he notes in *On Liberty* (1859),

> the sole end for which mankind are warranted, individually or collectively in interfering with the liberty of action of any of their number, is self-protection [and] the only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others. (80)

The individual, Mill maintains, “cannot rightfully be compelled to do or forbear because it will be better for him to do so, because it will make him happier, because, in the opinions of others, to do so would be wise, or even right” (80). For Mill, such interference in an individual’s affairs is both unnecessary and unwarranted, especially when dictated by “the tyranny of the prevailing opinion and feeling” (76). The ultimate goal of any democratic society, Mill argues, should be instead to protect the freedom of the individual, to ensure that individual “independence is, of right, absolute” (81) and that “over himself, over his own body and mind, the individual is sovereign” (81).

Unlike earlier liberal theorists of the eighteenth and nineteenth century, however, Mill does not advocate *unconditional* individual freedom. Instead, for him, liberty, and the liberalism that safeguards it, is inherently social in character, in that the liberty of the individual can *only* exist against a background of other people’s freedom. For Mill, thinking about liberty entails, necessarily, a discussion about “the nature and limits of the
power which can be legitimately exercised by society over the individual” (73). As such, any committed liberal society, must determine the “limit to the legitimate interference of collective opinion with individual independence” (76). For Mill, societal intervention in an individual’s affairs is only ever justified when an individual’s actions harm others or society as a whole in some tangible and demonstrable manner. As Mill notes, “as soon as any part of a person’s conduct affects prejudicially the interests of others, society has jurisdiction over it, and the question whether the general welfare will or will not be promoted by interfering with it, becomes open to discussion” (139).

Ultimately, it is this attempt to balance the freedom of the individual and the potential harm such freedom may cause others that sets Mill’s social liberalism apart from the classical liberalism of many of his predecessors. For classical liberals such as Adam Smith, unconditional individual sovereignty is what will guarantee, in and of itself, harmonious social relations. As Smith claims in *The Wealth of Nations* (1776), “by pursuing his own interest [the individual] frequently promotes that of the society more effectually than when he really intends to promote it” (350). For Mill, however, to simply assume that unconditional individual liberty will somehow guarantee that the “invisible hand” (349) of the market will, as Smith puts it, ensure that “every individual necessarily labours to render the annual revenue of the society as great as he can” (349) is a dangerous folly indeed. In Mill’s eyes at least, individual freedom is not without its limits and, “for such actions as are prejudicial to the interests of others” (156), he believes that “the individual is accountable, and may be subjected either to social or to legal punishments, if society is of opinion that the one or the other is requisite for its protection” (156).
In the United States from the late nineteenth century to the late 1920s, the classical liberalism of philosophers like Smith, with its absolutist approach to questions of individual freedom, was very much the ideological norm. This changed with the onset of the Great Depression in the early 1930s and the ascension to the presidency of Franklin D. Roosevelt. Coming to power with a clear mandate to rescue an economy poised on the brink of irreversible collapse, Roosevelt offered voters what he characterized upon his 1932 nomination to the leadership of the Democratic Party as a “new deal for the American people.” This New Deal, a series of reforms and initiatives designed to stimulate the economy and reinvigorate politics itself, was central to Roosevelt’s larger political platform for the next twelve years and, indeed, helped define the American political landscape until well into the late 1960s. For Roosevelt and his supporters, the need for the New Deal itself was clear evidence that capitalism of the kind supported by classical liberalism, capitalism that focused exclusively on profit and championed the rights of the individual at the expense of social welfare, was not working and that the emphasis classical liberalism places on the supremacy of the individual was one of the root causes of the Great Depression itself. Such relentlessly individualistic liberalism, Roosevelt and his fellow New Dealers argued, had already resulted in an almost bankrupt nation and could only ever lead to a world in which economic and political inequality were the order of the day.

34 Though much of the economic impetus for the New Deal faded during the prosperous years following the Second World War, the Truman and Eisenhower administrations nevertheless maintained and even expanded a number of New Deal initiatives and programs. In the early 1960s, both Kennedy and Johnson, under the guise of their New Frontiers and Great Society civil rights campaigns, also reaffirmed their commitment to the spirit of the New Deal and its policy of limited government intervention in matters of individual liberty. It was only during Nixon’s tenure as president, in fact, that the New Deal and its legacy began to be both questioned and seriously re-evaluated.
In his first inaugural address, a speech that echoes Mill’s conviction that individuals in their freedom ought to be accountable to the society that supports them, Roosevelt repeatedly rejects and condemns the “antisocial” individualism of classical liberalism and the unrestrained capitalism such a political ideology supports. As Roosevelt notes in this address, “we now realize as we have never realized before our interdependence on each other; that we can not merely take but we must give as well.” Like Mill, Roosevelt is arguing here for a more socially accountable form of individualism, as well as for an understanding of both capitalism and liberalism that, as he notes in his 1941 state of the union address to Congress, continues to ensure “the preservation of civil liberties for all” while also working toward “the ending of special privilege for the few.” Throughout his tenure as president, as he reminds the American public in his final state of the union address in 1944, Roosevelt remained constant in his belief that “true individual freedom cannot exist without economic security and independence.” Though he certainly believes that those “inalienable political rights” (1944 Address) guaranteed to the individual by the Declaration of Independence are vital to the success of American democracy, the safeguarding of such rights with no thought for the welfare of others, Roosevelt maintains, has “proved inadequate to assure us equality in the pursuit of happiness” (1944 Address).

For science fiction writers of the Golden Age such as Isaac Asimov and Ray Bradbury, both of whom came of age during the New Deal era, Roosevelt’s social liberalism defined not just the politics of the present, but also the preferred political ideology of the future. Asimov, in particular, embraced the New Deal understanding of social liberalism wholeheartedly, noting in his 1994 autobiography I. Asimov how,
though he “was only thirteen when Franklin Delano Roosevelt became President” (307), he “was not too young to get an idea of what [Roosevelt] was trying to do” (307). “The older I got,” Asimov claims, “the more liberal I became” (307) and, throughout Roosevelt’s tenure as president, he “disapproved of Roosevelt only when he wasn’t liberal enough” (307). Although he claims that “liberalism began to fade after World War II” (307) and “many blue-collar people, having jobs and perhaps feeling themselves secure, turned conservative” (307), Asimov himself continued to champion social liberalism in virtually all of the fiction he wrote throughout the remaining years of the Roosevelt and Truman administrations.

The first Foundation trilogy in particular, most of which was written during the early 1940s and then revised in the early 1950s, contains some of the most striking examples of Asimov’s social liberalism at work in a fictional context. In Foundation and Empire (1952) and Second Foundation (1953), for instance, Asimov tells the story of the Mule, a psychic mutant whose ability to control the minds of others allows him to destroy the First Foundation and its efforts to restore order to a galaxy on the brink of civil anarchy. The Mule, who first makes his opponents love him before he conquers them, is portrayed as a threat because he does not allow any limits to be placed on his own individual freedom. For the Mule, as for the classical liberals whose political ideology both Asimov and Roosevelt reject, liberty means individual freedom at all costs, regardless of how exercising that freedom might affect other people. Ultimately, it is only through the actions of the Second Foundation, an organization that works behind the scenes to protect the people of the First Foundation, that the Mule is stopped. Promising to offer its own “new deal” in the form of a future, galaxy-spanning welfare state, the
Second Foundation’s successful attempt to curtail the Mule’s freedom is entirely consistent with Roosevelt’s beliefs about what a government must do if it is to safeguard the interests of the people it claims to represent; just as Roosevelt demands that government restrict the freedom of the few to foster the freedom of the many, so too does Asimov’s Second Foundation work to protect individual freedom by making all individuals accountable to others for their actions. In the society imagined by the Second Foundation, as in the nation envisioned if not realized by Roosevelt, there simply is no place for “supermen” like the Mule, for the individual whose liberty can only exist at the expense of other people’s freedom.

By the mid-1950s, largely due to the influence of writers like Asimov, social liberalism had become the defining political ideology of American science fiction. For most authors of the Golden Age, social liberalism and the legacy of the New Deal are like air; they are demonstrably present and tangibly affect the world, but are more often than not invisible to the casual observer. Even in overtly political novels of the period, such as Fred Pohl and Cyril M. Kornbluth’s The Space Merchants (1953),

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social liberalism retains its pride of place and remains the dominant political filter through which the future is imagined and the present criticized. Predictably enough, social liberalism is also the political ideology by which the men of Golden Age science fiction understand themselves as men. For such men, the dictates of social liberalism define a hegemonic masculinity that, like social liberalism more generally, stresses the interdependence of the individual and the community to which he belongs. As such, though this form of

[^35]: Though The Space Merchants is scathing in its critique of transnational capitalism, the novel never takes issue with the social liberalism that both condones and condemns such an economic system. It is almost as if, for the novel’s protagonist Mitch Courtenay at least, the social liberal underpinnings of capitalism are completely obscured.
hegemonic masculinity certainly rewards and encourages individual initiative, it also places limits on the freedom of individual men. In particular, although a man “cannot rightfully be compelled to do or forbear … because it will make him happier, because, in the opinions of others, to do so would be wise, or even right” (Mill 80), men who accept the hegemonic masculinity of social liberalism also acknowledge that they do not have the right to engage in behaviour that “affects prejudicially the interests of others (Mill 139). Asimov’s Mule is thus a monster not only because he violates the tenets of social liberalism, but because in doing so he perverts what it means to be a social liberal man, a man who cares as much about the welfare of the community as he does his own liberty.

Surprisingly, especially given the extent to which it informs the representation of masculinity in almost all American science fiction throughout the 1950s, the social liberalism of the Golden Age has received remarkably little in the way of critical attention. For most critics of science fiction, just as for most fans and writers during the period itself, the hegemonic masculinity of social liberalism is simply taken for granted or is assumed to be the unproblematised background against which science fiction is written and scholarly critique occurs. This is not to say, of course, that no one has noticed the pervasiveness of social liberalism and its hegemonic masculinity throughout 1940s and 1950s science fiction (the work of Roger Luckhurst on the political history of the genre comes to mind here), just that social liberalism’s influence as a political ideology on the later, more explicitly political science fiction of the 1960s and early 1970s has not been fully explored. In particular, few critics to date have mapped out how exactly the orthodoxy of social liberalism in Golden Age science fiction prompted “rebellious” authors in the decades that followed to imagine new political possibilities,
possibilities which in turn helped define new understandings of hegemonic masculinity. In this thesis, by focusing on the work of Dick, Heinlein, and, Le Guin, the three authors whose work in the 1960s and early 1970s shows most clearly the relationship between hegemonic masculinity and alternatives to social liberalism, I intend to reveal just how speculation about political ideology not only allows science fiction to imagine the politics of the future, but also how such speculation ends up defining what it means to be a man of tomorrow.

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*Masculinity and Political Ideology in American Science Fiction of the 1960s and Early 1970s*

In the chapters that follow, I seek to demonstrate how different masculinities, particularly those which Dick, Heinlein, and Le Guin construe as hegemonic within their own text’s specific political context, develop in the light of profound and often revolutionary political change or total political domination. At first glance, most of the novels I discuss do not appear to be overly concerned with the issue of exploring how political conflict or ideological orthodoxy informs competing definitions of hegemonic masculinity. Dick’s *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* and *Ubik*, for example, which I discuss in the second and third chapters respectively, both explore the unintended cultural and economic consequences of social liberalism’s direct descendant, the social ethic, by imagining what future societies dominated by such a political ideology might look like, while Heinlein’s *The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress*, which I analyze in the fourth chapter, appears to be concerned primarily with economic rather than social revolution.
Even Le Guin’s *The Dispossessed*, which I examine in the fifth chapter and which demonstrates an awareness the other novels lack about how different political ideologies affect the development and realization of gender, does not seem on the surface to be particularly invested in the idea of dissecting the politics of hegemonic masculinity. And yet each of these texts *does* reveal, if only inadvertently, just how much is at stake for any definition of hegemonic masculinity when political ideologies collide or when a single political ideology manages to dominate every aspect of society. In these novels, as in so much fiction, what is immediately obvious, the challenge to the social liberalism of the Golden Age by a variety of related political ideologies, is not all that matters; the hidden or obscured, in this case the relationship between these various political ideologies and hegemonic masculinity, is also vitally important and is central to the development of a more nuanced understanding of science fiction as a distinct form of political literature.

In the following discussion, the analysis of Dick’s two novels takes up more space than that of Heinlein and Le Guin’s work combined. This is entirely deliberate, as it is Dick, more than any other writer, who most thoroughly interrogates the relationship between masculinity and political ideology and, in so doing, poses the questions that these two other representative authors of the 1960s and early 1970s attempt to answer in one way or another. In his novels, Dick demonstrates time and again just how much the contradictions and assumptions of social liberalism threaten to tear both it and its adherents apart. In Dick’s fiction, as in Heinlein’s and Le Guin’s, social liberalism is a problematic political ideology because its followers can never live up to their own paradoxical expectations. Those who embrace social liberalism and who try to reconcile the interests of the individual with those of the community, as this political ideology
insists they should, are doomed to perpetual failure because social liberalism itself 
suggests that such interests are, and always will be, at odds with one another. More than 
in that of any other writer, it is in Dick’s fiction that this internal ideological conflict is 
most visible and the crisis it produces most acute. Recognizing the consequences of this 
impossible situation, though never offering an actual solution to it, is quite simply what 
Dick does best and what makes understanding his fiction so central to understanding the 
genre as a whole.

In Dick’s fiction, the crisis of social liberalism is also a crisis of masculinity, in 
that figuring out how to be a man in his novels is integral to determining how also to be a 
successful liberal. The failures of social liberalism as a political ideology, Dick suggests 
in novel after novel, are what make the form of hegemonic masculinity it endorses 
untenable at best and positively destructive at worst. Though Dick agonizes over this 
political crisis of masculinity in his work for well over a decade, in the end, much to the 
dismay of many of his characters, he is unable to seriously entertain or even imagine any 
alternative political ideology other than that of social liberalism’s direct ideological 
descendant, the social ethic, a political ideology that restricts the “community” of social 
liberalism to “organizations” such as the corporation. The “organization men” of his 
fiction are neither market libertarians like Heinlein’s characters, because they yearn too 
much for a political system that encompasses both the individual and the “community” of 
the organization, nor are they socialist libertarians like Le Guin’s Anarresti, because they 
can’t entirely turn their back on the idea that somehow competition between organization 
men is the only real “measure of the man.” Trapped by their limited political imagination 
and stuck in a state of inaction and despair, the men of Dick’s fiction thus continue to
adhere doggedly to the principles of a social liberalism in which even they no longer have any faith and which has been supplanted, in any event, by its own spiritual successor, the social ethic. Although they cannot afford to accept the idea that Mill’s understanding of the liberal social contract actually does help individuals help each other, they nevertheless refuse to look elsewhere and instead pine for a politics that is no longer feasible. As a result of this sense of unresolved political purpose, it is in Dick’s fiction, more than in the work of any other author, that social liberalism and its direct ideological descendants first appear truly bankrupt and the Golden Age assumption of an incontestable form of hegemonic masculinity is finally revealed as the stifling and possibly quite dangerous political illusion it is.

In the ontologically fragile worlds of Dick’s fiction, men’s understanding of their own masculinity hinges primarily on their social and political relationships with other men. For the men of Dick’s novels from the 1960s, all of whom equate the superiors they try to emulate with the organization itself, hegemonic masculinity is a product of the corporations to which they belong and is, more specifically, that form of organizational masculinity which at any given moment their respective organizations endorse and reward. In this sense, organizational masculinity is hegemonic masculinity for Dick, as it is part and parcel of the social ethic to which the men in his novels must subscribe and is a gendered extension of that political ideology which dominates every aspect of the lives they lead. Just as such men are unable to imagine a meaningful life outside of the organization because they cannot see beyond the strictures of the social ethic, so these men cannot conceive of any form of masculinity that does not have their respective organization’s blessing and best interests at heart.
In Chapter 2, starting with a novel that is a product of both religious crisis\(^{36}\) and personal reflection about his own absent father,\(^ {37}\) I argue that *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* (1965) constitutes one of Dick’s most sustained attempts to come to terms with the effects of the social ethic on the masculinity of the men who believe in it. In the novel, Palmer Eldritch’s ruthless business practices and godlike power force protagonists Barney Mayerson and Leo Bulero to re-evaluate this political ideology to which they are initially both so committed. In the process, both men also end up re-examining how the company on whose behalf they labour has shaped and continues to shape their understanding of what it means to be a man. What horrifies these men most about Eldritch, perversely enough for a creature whose profession is surreptitiously invading the dreams of others, is the honesty of this “living entity from intersystem space” (218); unlike Bulero and Mayerson, Eldritch openly embraces and endorses both the social ethic and a form of organizational masculinity that is unabashedly competitive and blatantly covetous. For Bulero, who has always regarded himself as the “father of the firm” and is proud of the solace he believes Perky Pat and Can-D has brought the solar system’s miserable settlers, defining masculinity solely in terms of unvarnished greed is completely at odds with the ethos of the social liberalism that still lies buried beneath the capitalist trappings of the social ethic; while for Mayerson, whose personal

\(^{36}\) It was during the writing of *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* that Dick first became seriously interested in organized religion and started self-identifying as Episcopalian. It was also during this period that Dick suffered from a series of crippling religious visions, culminating in an enormous evil face appearing in the sky above him while he “went, one day, walking down the country road to [his writing] shack” (“Notes” 377). As he himself writes in his notes to “The Days of Perky Pat” (1963), the short story that inspired *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*, “I didn’t really see it, but the face was there, and it was not a human face; it was a vast visage of perfect evil” (377).

\(^{37}\) In the same notes in which he relates the story of the religious vision that helped form the novel, Dick also claims that *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* is at least partly the product of his “yearning for the good father and fear of the evil father, the father who left me” (“Notes” 378). Dick’s father left his mother Dorothy to raise him alone in 1934, when Dick was five years old.
life is basically in shambles as a result of his attempt to live up to men like Bulero, Eldritch is instead the monstrous embodiment of the organizational masculinity to which he himself has long aspired. The frank ambition of this “thing from intersystem space” (203) and Eldritch’s offer that, if he wants to, Mayerson “can share [his] ambitions” (203), ambitions that “make Leo’s look like dirt” (203), repulse Mayerson precisely because in Eldritch he sees the reflection of his own idealized image of himself as an organization man.

If *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* is a comprehensive critique of the relationship between organization culture and hegemonic masculinity, then, as I outline in Chapter 3, *Ubik* (1969) is an extension of that critique into the realm of consumerism and commodification. In both novels, organizational masculinity is defined by the social ethic; in *Ubik*, however, this hegemonic form of masculinity is also contingent on the willingness of organization men to buy into the consumerism that economically supports the companies for which they work. For Joe Chip, an organization man through and through who works for a security company dedicated to preventing psychic corporate espionage, the unstable world of “half-life” into which he is thrust after his death on Luna precipitates a crisis of masculinity. Already intensely insecure about his own manhood due to his vexed relationships with women, Chip has always defined who he is as a man by what he owns and can’t help but see the “regressions” of commodities in half-life

38 Unlike the real world, the technologically mediated half-life to which Chip is relegated after his death is ontologically unstable; within it, objects regress to past forms as their insubstantial, commodified nature is revealed as an illusion that lacks any real substance beyond each commodity’s perceived usefulness and desirability. In this sense, half-life is simply a fictional representation of Plato’s allegory of the cave in *The Republic*. Indeed, for Chip or anyone else trapped there, the regressions of commodities in half-life “weirdly verified a discarded ancient philosophy, that of Plato’s ideal objects, the universals which, in each class, were real” (131). In the world of *Ubik*, which adds a temporal dimension to Plato’s theory about reality, “the past is latent, is submerged, but still there, capable of rising to the surface once the later imprinting unfortunately – and against ordinary experience – vanished” (131).
anything other than a reflection of the impending collapse of his own sense of masculine self-worth. When Chip’s former boss Glen Runciter, a powerful emblem of the self-assured organizational masculinity after which Chip has always yearned, appears in half-life to offer him the übercommodity Ubik as a way to stabilize the half-life world, it is hardly surprising that Chip latches on to this aerosol “guaranteed to restore lost manliness” (142) as a way to shore up his faltering belief in himself as a man who embodies the masculine ideals of the social ethic.

Like so many of the men in Dick’s fiction from the 1960s, Bulero, Mayerson, and Chip are trapped by their understanding of organizational masculinity like prehistoric beasts stuck in a tar pit; no matter how much they might want to redefine what it means to be a man, their struggle just to survive in a future utterly dominated by the social ethic and its masculine ideals ensures that they will never see beyond their own conceptual horizons far enough to imagine what masculinity could become under different political circumstances. As a result of this paralysis, they are doomed to run the risk of becoming what they most despise, like Bulero, to repeat the mistakes of their role models, as Chip hopes to do, or to accept, as Mayerson reluctantly does, that they are not and never will be “true” men. Though the future in which these men live may be one of technological wonders and strange metaphysical realms, it is, more than anything else, one in which the social ethic of the organization so thoroughly pervades all political thought that the definition of hegemonic masculinity is both unchanging and incontestable. For men such as Mayerson who do attempt to reject the organizational masculinity of the social ethic,

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39 It is worth noting, of course, that it is not actually Runciter himself who asks Chip to represent his business interests in half-life. Instead, it is Runciter’s wife Ella who approaches Chip and offers to let Ubik make a man of him. The irony here, that it is a woman who offers Chip the means to restore his manhood, is completely lost on Chip himself. Such irony is, however, typical of Dick’s sly sense of humour.
there is simply no other option than to give up on the affairs of men altogether and accept that he will never be a “real” man.

Although Dick may be the one author from the 1960s who most clearly identifies the inherent tensions that threaten to rip apart the hegemonic masculinities of social liberalism and its descendants, as I argue in Chapter 4, it is Heinlein’s *The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress* (1966) that provides an ideal starting point for examining how writers of the 1960s and early 1970s sought to move beyond, rather than simply lament as Dick does, the definition of hegemonic masculinity endorsed by the political orthodoxy of the Golden Age. In no small part, this is because, at the beginning of his career at least, Heinlein revolved firmly within the orbit of John W. Campbell, the editor of *Astounding Science Fiction*, a magazine that, along with *Fantasy and Science Fiction* and *Galaxy*, helped define the literary aesthetic and conceptual preoccupations of the Golden Age itself. Although hardly socially liberal himself, his own primarily conservative politics being informed by an intractable form of racism, Campbell nevertheless published much science fiction with a decidedly social liberal bent, such as the short stories and novellas that would eventually be collected in Asimov’s *I, Robot* (1950) and *Foundation* novels. Campbell also, most significantly for Heinlein who had become very much disillusioned with the social liberalism of the Golden Age, encouraged at least some of the writers with whom he worked to experiment with other political and religious

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40 According to Mike Ashley, who has written extensively on the role of *Astounding* in defining the Golden Age, Campbell “was proud as a representative of Anglo-Scottish inheritance, and thus his views of white supremacy were dominant” (17n9). An example of this racism appears in a January 1965 editorial in *Analog* in which Campbell urges his magazine’s readers to “stop pretending that ‘all men are born equal’; they aren’t, never were, and never will be” (7). It is only “the social-liberal,” he argues, “who is constantly insisting that it’s educational, economic, and social advantages, and only that, that makes the vast difference” (7); for Campbell, members of different races are simply “born with vastly different potentials, and vastly different motivations” (7).
ideologies. The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress is largely the result of such encouragement, as it challenges the supremacy of social liberalism in earlier Golden Age science fiction, including Heinlein’s own, by speculating about a society that rejects it in favour of market libertarianism, a political ideology that prioritizes and champions the absolute freedom of the individual. In his novel, Heinlein also quite deliberately speculates about the future of masculinity and imagines what might become of it in a world where the will of the individual is paramount and the good of the community depends on the freedom of men, but not women, to do as they please.

Although the lunar revolutionaries of Heinlein’s The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress are more than willing to discard what they see as the outmoded and implausibly altruistic ideals of a social liberalism that has prevented individuals from reaching their full potential, they do not abandon all of the assumptions they have inherited from their political forefathers. In particular, both Professor de la Paz and Mannie, leading ideologue of the Luna Free State and revolutionary cadre respectively, remain firm in their conviction that not only will the fittest survive, only the fittest should survive. Such biological determinism is, of course, a central tenet of early twentieth-century American classical liberalism and one that was incorporated into that political ideology specifically to justify its more ruthless applications to social policy. By guaranteeing that social differences remain entrenched and effectively incontestable, this same biological determinism eventually undermines the ostensible egalitarianism of Heinlein’s market

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41 The most famous and influential of the theologically experimental work that Campbell solicited is, without a doubt, L. Ron Hubbard’s “Dianetics: The Evolution of a Science,” which Campbell published in the May 1950 issue of Astounding. Shortly afterwards, again with the help of Campbell, Hubbard published Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health, a book which ultimately gave rise to the religion of Scientology.
libertarianism. Laying the groundwork for a type of hegemonic masculinity that insists it is only “natural” that men are lords of every living thing that moves upon the Moon, biological determinism constitutes the unassailable conceptual foundation upon which Heinlein’s lunar revolutionaries build their inherently patriarchal interpretation of market libertarianism. In this capacity, it is biological determinism, rather than market libertarianism in and of itself, that allows the men of Heinlein’s Luna to construct a conception of hegemonic masculinity that guarantees the absolute freedom of the “strong” masculine individual and ensures, solely as a consequence of their perceived “weakness,” that women are excluded from any and all positions of political power.

Although biological determinism remained a powerful and often unstated assumption for many writers of science fiction throughout the 1960s and early 1970s,42 not all authors active during this period allow it to influence their beliefs about masculinity or their rejection of social liberalism to the same degree as Heinlein does. Tired of the despair and sense of futility that prevent Dick from ever speculating about “men of a different sort,” but also wary of Heinlein’s attempt to enlist the aid of biological determinism to dress up an intrinsically patriarchal understanding of masculinity in the survivalist camouflage of market libertarianism, Le Guin, as I discuss in Chapter 5, instead uses the utopian framework of The Dispossessed (1974) to re-evaluate the legacy of Golden Age social liberalism and redefine masculinity in explicitly egalitarian terms. Refusing to accept social liberalism as a political ideology because its

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42 Even feminist author Joanna Russ, for example, who claims in the afterword to her story “When It Changed” (1972) to believe that “almost all the characterological sex differences we take for granted are in fact learned and not innate” (260), is not beyond characterizing men in the same story as “apes with human faces” (254) whose physiology all but precludes them from ever treating women as anything other than sexual objects to be used as they see fit.
adherents are often all too willing to agree to the strictures of its descendant, the social ethic, at the first sign of profit (as the men of Dick’s fiction repeatedly demonstrate), Le Guin turns rather to social liberalism’s more radical anti-capitalist cousin, socialist libertarianism. In The Dispossessed, as the novel’s protagonist Shevek repeatedly makes clear to all who ask, socialist libertarianism is a political ideology that suggests the relationship between individuals and the larger community must be one of mutual reciprocity. In contrast to social liberalism and the social ethic, where the interests of the individual often end up pitted against those of the community despite an ostensible commitment to balancing those interests, socialist libertarianism declares that what is in the individual’s best interest is also and always in the best interests of society as a whole. For Shevlek, unlike for the men of Dick’s fiction, who all evaluate potential romantic partners in terms of how they will help them climb the corporate ladder, this means that romantic relationships between men and women are, or should be, “something two people do, not something one person does, or has” (53) and thus are merely “voluntarily

43 As a political ideology, socialist libertarianism is as much informed by the precepts of Marxism as it is by those of both classical and social liberalism. If most forms of Marxism accept the maxim “from each according to his ability, to each according to his need,” then socialist libertarianism emphasizes a decidedly liberal understanding of the individual and freedom when it proclaims, instead, “from each according to his choice, to each according to his need.” In this sense, Mill is something like the political ideology’s favourite uncle; though not directly responsible for the principles and aims of socialist libertarianism, his thought has exerted an undeniable and powerful influence on its development.  

44 Though most authors in the 1940s and 1950s casually dismiss socialism as a viable political ideology, in the late 1930s, prior to the advent of the Golden Age and at the height of the New Deal, a number of soon-to-be-prominent science fiction writers were actively involved in socialist and even communist politics. Members of the Futurians in particular, a New York fan group that counted among its members Asimov, Pohl, and Kornbluth, were especially vocal in their insistence throughout the 1930s that the future be imagined as a place where technology helped guarantee equality. In this sense, although all these authors eventually renounced their socialist past and embraced social liberalism wholeheartedly instead, Le Guin’s interest in an explicitly socialist form of libertarianism marks a return to the early political preoccupations of some of the Golden Age’s most committed social liberals.

45 The principle of mutual reciprocity here is understood as a variant of the “golden rule” that suggests people often do unto others as they would have done unto them, since such behaviour is ultimately self-serving. As currently employed by social psychologists in articles such as Armin Falk and Urs Fischbacher’s “A Theory of Reciprocity,” the concept is effectively synonymous with the anarchist notion of mutualism.
constituted federation[s] like any other” (244). In a society where such relationships are supposed to be equal by definition, hegemonic masculinity simply cannot exist in the same way it does in societies where political ideologies like the social ethic or market libertarianism effectively guarantee the domination of men over women; instead, such masculinity must embrace an explicitly egalitarian understanding of manhood, one that demands heterosexual men\textsuperscript{46} value the independence of women as much as they prize their own sovereignty.

Though the lived experience of Anarres’ experiment in socialist libertarianism certainly helps Shevek formulate his own definition of egalitarian masculinity, it is ultimately his exposure to the injustices of a hegemonic masculinity endorsed by the biological determinism of classical liberalism on the planet Urras that finally forces him to confront the question of what it truly means to be both a man and a socialist libertarian. For the men of the nation A-Io on Urras, as for Heinlein’s revolutionaries, women do not deserve the rights of men because they are “naturally” the weaker sex. It is this conviction, more than anything else, that prompts Shevek’s state-sanctioned guide Saio Pae, in response to Shevek’s question about why there are no women studying at the university where he is a guest lecturer, to confidently declare that women have “no head for abstract thought” (74) and therefore “don’t belong” (74) in higher education. “What women call thinking,” Pae claims, “is done with the uterus” (74) and the “few exceptions” (75) to this rule are “God-awful brainy women with vaginal atrophy” (75). For Shevek, who spends most of his time in A-Io feeling “his existence to be cut off,

\textsuperscript{46} Although there is an openly gay character in \textit{The Dispossessed}, Shevek’s friend Bedap, he is still represented as something of a social outsider whose sexual orientation has excluded him from fatherhood, an experience which appears to be reserved on Anarres for heterosexual men alone.
artificial, among men, always men” (146), such biological determinism is utter nonsense because it simplistically equates difference with inequality. Confronted time and again with the often grotesque consequences of this Ioti biological determinism, Shevek returns to Anarres at the end of the novel even more committed to a form of masculinity that both emphasizes the importance of equality and celebrates the diversity of gendered identity. Although not all Anarresti men necessarily embrace this form of egalitarian masculinity to the extent he does, Shevek firmly believes that this notion of a masculinity that strives to make men and women the equal of each other by granting everyone the right to absolute self-determination is still “an important idea” (345) and one that is, to use the same words he uses to describe the socialist libertarianism that made him, “an idea of freedom, of change, [and] of human solidarity” (345).

Ultimately, what connects the work of Heinlein and Le Guin both to each other and to that of Dick is not its specific politics of masculinity or its vision of what men should strive to become, but rather the general assumption in these novels that it is political ideology that primarily shapes the contours of hegemonic masculinity. Arguing that shifts in political ideology are also responsible for changes in how men define themselves as men, the fiction of each of these authors consistently presents hegemonic masculinity as the product of its particular political environment. Though technological advances and scientific progress may certainly contribute to how men see themselves both now and in days to come, in the work of Dick, Heinlein, and Le Guin, it is political

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47 Responding to a form of hegemonic masculinity that denies their very humanity has prompted some Ioti women, such as the socialite Vea Oiie, to become “so elaborately and ostentatiously a female body that [they] seemed scarcely to be a human being” (213). For Oiie, this is simply a survival strategy; to be heard at all by men who can further her interests, she must first make sure that she fulfills their expectations by appearing undeniably and almost preternaturally attractive.
ideology more than anything else that is at the root of all definitions of what it means to be a man. Challenging either directly or indirectly the insistence in Dick’s novels that the organizational masculinity of the social ethic is inherently unstable yet the only form of hegemonic masculinity possible once social liberalism is no longer dominant, Heinlein and Le Guin use the political experiments of their fiction to reimage the masculine and its politics. In particular, the novels of these authors propose two very different models of masculinity, each of which vies for dominance within the confines of the fictional world in which it exists and each of which has helped to shape the subsequent representation of masculinity within science fiction as a genre.

On the one hand, there is the hegemonic masculinity of Heinlein’s *The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress*, which combines biological determinism and market libertarianism to suggest that only men deserve to be free because only they are strong and fit enough, in some biological sense, to handle the “burden” of individual freedom. In Heinlein’s novel, it is biological determinism that justifies the uncompromising individualism of market libertarianism and, predictably enough, also what determines what it means to be a man. In Le Guin’s *The Dispossessed*, by contrast, an ambiguous utopia that is in many ways an explicitly feminist reply to both the political paralysis of Dick’s fiction and the outright misogyny of Heinlein’s novel, Shevek’s desire for an essentially egalitarian masculinity is an integral part of the socialist libertarianism that defines who he is. To exercise one’s own freedom while respecting the rights and equality of both women and men is, in Shevek’s eyes, precisely what makes him not just a responsible citizen, but also an ethical man. Political ideology in other words, in what would become an accepted truth for authors of later political science fiction, is both what tells the men of
the future who they are and who they might someday become. Whether the biological
determinism and market libertarianism of Heinlein’s The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress or
the socialist libertarianism of Le Guin’s The Dispossessed, in these novels, as in those of
Dick himself, it is political ideology and its underlying assumptions that reveal what the
future might have in store for masculinity and what, in a very real sense, makes the men
of tomorrow.
Chapter 2

“It Looks Into Our Eyes; and It Looks Out of Our Eyes”: Organizational Masculinity and the Social Ethic in Philip K. Dick’s *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*

In all of Philip K. Dick’s fiction from the 1960s, apart from *Clans of the Alphane Moon* (1964)\(^1\) and the occasional short story, management practices and organizational culture define who men are and how they see themselves. In *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* (1965), a novel which constitutes one of Dick’s most incisive critiques of what Hayles calls “the interpellation of the individual into market relations” (162), Dick explores and challenges the masculinity of organization men by extending his speculation about it into the metaphysical realm. By becoming a supernatural entity that is more than human, Palmer Eldritch becomes something for the other men in the novel that is more than an especially successful organization man; he also becomes an organization god, a potent religious symbol of masculine power and privilege. For the other characters, this shift from the grandfatherly paternalism of the “father of the firm” to the divine authority of a phallic deity is monstrous because it makes it impossible to ignore the fragile and fragmentary constitution of the social liberal self in the context of the social ethic’s developing ideological hegemony. Like the environmental holocaust which accompanies it,\(^2\) organizational masculinity haunts the men of this novel just as

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\(^1\) *Clans of the Alphane Moon* is, in many ways, an exception among Dick’s novels from the 1960s. In this bizarre parable of mental illness, Dick imagines a society whose citizens all suffer from distinct, yet related, forms of schizoaffective disorder. Although Dick’s anxiety about organizational masculinity is still present in the novel, it is noticeably subdued.

\(^2\) In the future imagined by Dick in *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*, Earth has become a hellishly hot world caught in the throes of a runaway greenhouse effect akin to that which likely produced Venus’ current atmosphere. “Stuck in New York City in 180 degree heat” (7), if the inhabitants of the city are to
Eldritch does and, as that form of hegemonic masculinity properly belonging to the social ethic, is what is at the heart of Dick’s critique of both social liberalism and the social ethic itself. In *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*, in other words, despite the fact that this is still very much a novel in which most of the characters stubbornly insist it is possible to balance the interests of the individual against those of society, neither social liberalism nor its hegemonic masculinity stand much of a chance. Instead, both quickly collapse in on themselves under the withering, omniscient gaze of the now divine Eldritch, a manager whose complete control of all men suggests a totalizing organizational masculinity so powerful it inevitably restructures reality itself.

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Beginning his career as a science fiction writer at the height of the Golden Age, Philip K. Dick published his first short story, “Beyond Lies the Wub” in 1952, the same year in which Isaac Asimov published *Foundation and Empire*. Like Asimov, who uses the failure of the Mule in *Foundation and Empire* and its sequel *Second Foundation* to argue that the only just society is one in which the rights of the individual are balanced against those of the larger community, “Beyond Lies the Wub” tells the story of what happens when one individual, in this case a starship captain, asserts that his own interests trump those of another, here a sentient, pig-like entity called the Wub. Insisting on killing and eating the Wub despite the fact that its conversational skills and other abilities clearly make it a potentially valuable member of the ship’s crew, Captain Franco is punished when the Wub, a powerful telepath who is “against the idea of hurting” (32),

make it to work without cooking themselves first, they must shelter beneath “antithermal protective shield[s]” (112) while they search the sky for a thermally-protected autonomic jet cab.
possesses him in retribution for the blatant disregard he shows it as an individual. In this sense, “Beyond Lies the Wub” constitutes what is in many respects a typically spirited defence of Golden Age social liberalism, albeit one in which Dick extends the definition of both individual and community to encompass the obviously alien. For Dick in this story, as in the fiction of Asimov and so many other Golden Age authors, social liberalism is the only political ideology which any truly responsible future society will ever embrace, since it alone ensures that all individuals respect the rights of others by letting everyone, as the Wub puts it, “live and let live” (30).

Ironically, Dick’s name rarely appears on lists of prominent writers from the Golden Age largely because of his uncompromising insistence throughout the remainder of the 1950s that science fiction always ought to show why the freedom of the individual is contingent upon the welfare of others. Allying himself throughout the decade with more peripheral magazines such as *Fantastic Universe*, Dick in fact spent most of the 1950s intentionally trying to distance his work from that of most other science fiction authors. He explicitly claims, for example, to have written his short story “The Golden Man” (1954) in response to the prescriptive policies of John W. Campbell at *Astounding*, a magazine which, despite Campbell’s own political views, nevertheless helped define the Golden Age by providing a widely-read forum for speculation about social liberalism. According to Dick, his refusal to publish in *Astounding* hinged on the fact that Campbell always “demanded that the stories he bought deal with … wonderful mutants, and he also insisted that the mutants always be shown as (1) good; and (2) firmly in charge” (“Notes” 412). In response to what he saw as a little more than a “power fantasy” (“Notes” 412) utterly at odds with the precepts of social liberalism, Dick wrote “The Golden Man” in
order to show how "(1) the mutant might not be good, at least good for the rest of mankind, for us ordinaries; and (2) not in charge but sniping at us as a bandit would, a feral mutant who potentially would do us more harm than good" ("Notes" 412). Knowing that "this was specifically the view of psionic mutants that Campbell loathed, and the theme in fiction that he refused to publish" ("Notes" 412), Dick promptly sold the story to one of Astounding’s less prestigious competitors, the magazine *If*. Though this and other sales very likely hindered his career, in the words of Kim Stanley Robinson, it is precisely rebellious and unconventional stories like “The Golden Man” that eventually made Dick “one of the most important writers reacting against Campbellian science fiction” (x), and that also guaranteed that, for Dick at least, the 1950s were very much a "time out of joint."\(^3\)

Unwilling to accept any form of editorial intervention at odds with his own political convictions, Dick’s work in the 1950s in many ways anticipates the concerns that would continue to preoccupy him throughout the next decade, that period of Dick’s career in which he produced most of the novels for which he is best remembered. In particular, though willing to experiment with style and narrative, throughout the 1960s Dick never wavered in his support for social liberalism, even if he did become increasingly critical of this political ideology and its descendants as the decade progressed. As much as anything else, the lonely men and women in Dick’s novels from

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\(^3\) Dick’s last novel of the 1950s, *Time Out of Joint* (1959), follows the adventures of Ragle Gumm, a military strategist who is tricked into believing that he is living in an idealized version of mid-century suburbia. Intended to fool Gumm into continuing his work planning the destruction of others, the façade Dick imagines in this novel is one justified by a society in which the interests of the individual are completely subordinated to the needs of the state. Here, in a situation that is effectively the reverse of "Beyond Lies the Wub," any community which disregards the rights of the individual is as much a danger to society as individuals, such as Captain Franco, who put their own rights ahead of the community to which they belong.
this period are products of social liberalism’s emphasis on the power of individuals to transform, for better or for worse, the environment in which they find themselves. For Dick, as for John Stuart Mill, “over himself, over his own body and mind, the individual is sovereign” (Mill 81). Of course, as Paul Fairfield notes in his discussion of social liberalism in *Moral Selfhood in the Liberal Tradition*, what this means for Dick and other committed social liberals is that the self must be “the possessor of a deep human nature hidden within its innermost recesses, an inner citadel of some description upon which no trespass may be allowed and in virtue of which the person is awarded absolute value” (5). In this sense, for both Dick and Mill, social liberalism is always a “politics of individuality” (Fairfield 24) and a political ideology that assumes the individual is “a fundamentally self-interested and self-determining being capable of fashioning its existence with conscious will and purpose” (Fairfield 16). In this view, since the community’s welfare is always the condition upon which individual freedom exists, society must be protected because it is in fact little more than “a contingent and fragile structure held together by no unifying element stronger than the shared self-interest of an assortment of individuals with varying ends” (Fairfield 5).

Though it certainly comforts them with the conviction that they are, or should be, masters of their own fate, it is the individualism of social liberalism that also isolates and alienates Dick’s characters. This is largely because, as fervently as he believes in the principles of social liberalism, Dick is also adamant that reality itself is fundamentally a social construct, rather than something that exists independently of those observing it. In an essay from the late 1970s, for instance, an essay in which he reflects on the philosophical concepts that have always informed his fiction, Dick identifies two
questions absolutely central to his writing: “‘what is reality?’ and ‘what constitutes the authentic human being?’” (“How to Build” 260). By the 1960s, though he had always been interested in such metaphysical quandaries, Dick had begun to interrogate these two fundamental questions obsessively. Claiming in a 1964 letter to James Blish to be “weaned on the school of young post World War II Japanese writers at the French Department of the Tokyo University” (Dick Selected 78), Dick’s writing throughout the decade relies on “a variety of human viewpoints, a sort of several monad percept-system intertwined structure in which the ‘reality’ is always … subjective, and varying with each character” (Dick Selected 78). As such, many of Dick’s novels from the 1960s employ an omniscient narrator whose focus constantly shifts from one character to the next. In *The Man in the High Castle* (1962), for example, Dick simultaneously tracks the thoughts of a number of radically different characters as they attempt to come to terms with a book that uses the history of our world to contradict the fictional history of their own imagined world. Eventually, as each of these characters starts to suspect that reality is not what it seems, this suspicion begins to undermine their faith in social liberalism as well.

Paradoxically, by emphasizing the social construction of reality, Dick prevents his characters from ever achieving that sense of individuality which social liberalism suggests is “a domain of agency on which authority may not encroach without violating the dignity of persons as rational and individuated beings” (Fairfield 4). In other words, Dick’s unrelenting insistence that reality is an inherently unstable social construct complicates and compromises social liberalism’s promise of self-determination. Time

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4 In *The Twisted Worlds of Philip K. Dick: A Reading of Twenty Ontologically Uncertain Novels*, Umberto Rossi points out that Dick’s claim about being inspired by Japanese fiction is unlikely and that the “several monad percept-system intertwined structure” of his fiction owes a debt to the Modernist novels of James Joyce and John Dos Passos instead.
and again, the pressures of a fundamentally constructed reality define and limit the choices and actions available to Dick’s characters. Unsurprisingly, this conflict between a social liberal understanding of subjectivity and the malleability of reality itself has consistently intrigued critics of Dick’s fiction. In Philip K. Dick: Exhilaration and Terror of the Postmodern, for example, Christopher Palmer claims that “the conditions of [Dick’s] novels reflect an extreme, literal-minded liberalism: society is no more than a collection of individuals, monads, the world no more than an accumulation of objects” (37). This “extreme, literal-minded liberalism,” argues Palmer, forces Dick to “enact the historical tragedy of liberalism” (38), a tragedy that portrays “postmodern society as a threat to the liberal humanist individual” (24). For the men and women of Dick’s novels, the individualism of social liberalism is thus a mixed blessing: what it gives with one hand, it takes away with the other, emphasizing individual autonomy to such a degree that, absurdly, that same autonomy becomes impossible. The autonomous self of social liberalism simply cannot, it seems, deny the fragile reality of the fractured postmodern world in which it finds itself, thereby creating that atmosphere of irreconcilable existential angst that haunts so many of Dick’s novels and stories from the 1960s.

In postmodern terms, the future Dick imagines is always one in which “late capitalism” is the prevailing economic and cultural paradigm within which the “tragedy”

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5 Here as elsewhere, Palmer conflates humanism with both classical and social liberalism. This is understandable, of course, given that the three overlap in a number of significant ways, not least of which is their shared emphasis on individual autonomy. Like classical and social liberalism, of course, humanism suggests, in the words of Tony Davies, “a universal capacity to think of yourself, in a fundamental way, as an individual” (16). In this chapter, I treat social liberalism as the political expression of humanism, as humanism is the philosophy that informs social liberalism as a political ideology. While the humanist need not be a social liberal (many are, in fact, classical liberals or even libertarians of one kind or another), the social liberal is always to some extent a humanist. Dick’s humanism, in this sense, is the fertile philosophical ground from which his political convictions spring.

6 Like the postmodernism within which it is understood, “late capitalism” is a concept that derives from Marxism. The “late” in “late capitalism,” of course, refers to the “late stage” of capitalism, where
of social liberalism occurs. In the context of Dick’s fiction, “late capitalism” is, to use the definition of Frederic Jameson who popularized the term in *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*,

the sense that something has changed, that things are different, that we have gone through a transformation of the life world which is somehow decisive but incomparable with the older convulsions of modernization and industrialization, less perceptible and dramatic, somehow, but more permanent precisely because more thoroughgoing and all-pervasive. (Jameson xxi)

Indeed, this feeling that “something has changed,” that the economic and cultural are no longer what they once were, pervades virtually all of Dick’s work from the 1960s. For the anguished men and women of Dick’s novels and stories, it is the stress of late capitalism, the stress of knowing that “things are different” but being unable to define just how, that is what makes social liberalism start to seem untenable as a political ideology. Unfortunately for Dick’s characters, social liberalism and its descendants are the *only* political ideologies on the table, a situation which ensures that any crisis of identity quickly become both inevitable and impossible to resolve.

Ultimately, it is Dick’s struggle to come to terms with gender, particularly the masculinity of his multiple protagonists, that reveals the full extent of his futile attempt to combine the always autonomous individual of social liberalism with the fundamentally fractured subject of postmodernism. In her short but thought-provoking article on “Masculinity in the Novels of Philip K. Dick,” Valerie Holliday points toward this impossible situation when she claims that “the quintessential Dick character is the
capitalism is understood in the Marxist sense as being but one ideological phase of humanity’s progress through history.
paradigm of masculine subjectivity in crisis: he is uncertain in his job, his interpersonal relationships, and in his own sense of himself” (280), and indeed, Dick’s male protagonists, compared to their counterparts in many other works of 1960s science fiction, are tortured and confused individuals painfully aware of their masculine identity. Subjecting the unwilling male protagonists of his stories to monstrous fantasies of masculine power, Dick’s “deconstruction of masculinity,” as Holliday suggests, “is far more than just casual” (294), as in Dick’s fiction, the dashing space trader must always analyze his own motives ad nauseam before going out to conquer the universe and get the girl. For Holliday, this means that “Dick’s most meaningful representations of subjectivity are almost exclusively of a masculine subject in crisis” (280). Although she is somewhat vague about the connection between them, this crisis of masculine subjectivity also plays a crucial role in “Dick’s larger critique of American hegemony” (Holliday 280), a hegemony that is as much the product of social liberalism as it is the workplace in which social liberalism as a political ideology is put to the test.

Certainly for the men of Dick’s novels, the politics of masculinity cannot be separated from work, and work cannot be separated from the politics of masculinity. This is hardly surprising, given that in the United States work and masculinity often exist in a symbiotic relationship in which one defines the other. As Chris Haywood and Máirtín Mac an Ghaill point out in their introduction to masculinity studies as a field of sociological interest, “what we understand as masculinity impacts on what we classify or typify as work” (21). In this sense, the politics of work are the politics of masculinity, since, as Deborah Kerfoot and David Knights note in their study of masculine embodiment in managerial work, “contemporary masculine identities are discursively
bound up with high levels of purposive-rational instrumentality characterized by an urge to be in control” (80). “By displacing non-instrumental modes of being,” Kerfoot and Knights suggest that such “masculinity denies or discounts the possibility of alternatives that are not preoccupied with control: control becomes the way of relating to others” (91). For the male characters of Dick’s novels in the 1960s, work, particularly the work of management, offers a sense of control that promises to make them feel like successful men, since, just as for the real-world managers Stephen M. Whitehead discusses in *Men and Masculinities*, “management offers most masculine subjects a seductive and powerful identity validation, in that it speaks directly to what it means to be a ‘successful man’; purposeful, rational, competitive, ruthless, strong-minded and controlling” (Whitehead 132). In Dick’s fiction, as in the world that exists outside it, management thus “is a primary vehicle for the otherwise contingent and unstable subject to achieve a sense of self, to be grounded and located in the social world” (Whitehead 124). By managing other people, especially other men, Dick’s masculine characters ultimately hope to alleviate some of the anxiety that the recognition of postmodern subjectivity brings about in their social liberal context. In many ways, these men desperately want to believe that the “purposive-rational instrumentality” of managerial masculinity will help them re-establish that feeling of self-control so central to the autonomous individualism of social liberalism, even if their “compulsive and unending” (Kerfoot and Knights 83) pursuit of masculine power leaves them “forever trapped in a striving to be in control” (Kerfoot and Knights 80).

Throughout the 1950s, a number of books captured the interest of an American public curious about the sociological implications of these controlling managers and their
management practices. Among the most successful of these were David Riesman’s *The Lonely Crowd* (1950), C. Wright Mills’ *White Collar: The American Middle Classes* (1951), and William H. Whyte’s *The Organization Man* (1956). Whyte’s book, by far the most popular and accessible of the three, profoundly influenced the public’s perception of both management and the political culture within which it operates.

According to Whyte, large corporations only truly began to dominate American business in the years following World War II. These corporations, unlike their predecessors in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, are characterized by their support of what Whyte calls the “social ethic,”

> the gist [of which] can be paraphrased thus: Man exists as a unit of society. Of himself, he is isolated, meaningless; only as he collaborates with others does he become worth while, for by sublimating himself in the group, he helps produce a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts. There should be, then, no conflicts between man and society. (7)

According to Whyte, this social ethic, with its emphasis on cooperation and the subordination of one’s own interests to that of the group’s, is effectively a new ideological variant of social liberalism, albeit one that restricts the definition of “community” to include only the organization itself and, to a lesser extent, its customers or clients. This social ethic, Whyte contends, has in turn also created a new type of man, the “organization man.” These organization men (and Whyte only ever talks about men), unlike the classical liberal entrepreneurs who preceded them, are proud of their position within the organization, as “they are the ones of our middle class who have left home, spiritually as well as physically, to take the vows of organization life, and it is they who
are the mind and soul of our great self-perpetuating institutions” (Whyte 3). As such, it is these organization men who are also, according to Whyte, the men of the future – and it is upon them that all hope rests.

Like the managers of Dick’s novels, the executives who lead this new organized version of humanity are all men who define themselves by and through their work. Work, as Whyte notes, utterly dominates the lives of these men: “everything else is subordinate and the executive is unable to compartmentalize his life. Whatever the segment of it – leisure, home, friends, – he instinctively measures it in terms of how well it meshes with his work” (146). For both the managers of Dick’s fiction and the executives of Whyte’s study, work is quite literally the measure of the man, as for such a man, work is life: “we have, in sum, a man who is so completely involved in his work that he cannot distinguish between work and the rest of his life – and is happy that he cannot” (Whyte 150). Thus, even when “work is a tyranny,” as it certainly is for many of Dick’s most memorable characters, “it is a self-imposed tyranny” (Whyte 151). Though Whyte claims that “of all the organization men the true executive is the one who remains most suspicious of The Organization” (151), the suspicions of these “true” executives only ever become manifest, in both Whyte’s study and Dick’s novels, as a vague dissatisfaction with contemporary postmodern life, as a feeling that “something has changed” (Jameson xxi) for the worse and that now “things are different” (Jameson xxi). The individual initiative so prized, at least theoretically, by the classical liberalism of pre-War companies, as well as the sense of boundless autonomy which accompanies that political ideology’s promise of unrestrained individual freedom, has drifted away from
the male organization executive, leaving work and the social ethic itself as his only consolations.

While not all of Dick’s male characters are organization men in the strictest sense, the organization itself and the social ethic are present in almost every one of his novels from the 1960s and are the backdrop against which the men of Dick’s fiction must play their parts. For Jack Bohlen of *Martian Time-Slip* (1964), for example, the organization appears in the form of Arnie Kott and his powerful Water Workers’ Union, an almost feudal corporation that controls water distribution on arid Mars. Though Bohlen himself is by no means an organization man, he must come to terms with how organizations like the Water Workers Union and its terrifyingly banal descendant, the AM-WEB housing development, impact his perception of both who he is and what he will someday become. For Bohlen and Manfred Steiner, a troubled boy whose mysterious form of autism allows him to slip through time and see the future, AM-WEB and other anonymous corporations threaten the very foundations of autonomous, social liberal selfhood: for both Bohlen and Manfred, AM-WEB “waited to be all those who walked above, or had ever walked above; it waited to be everyone and everything” (175). In this sense, AM-WEB is the ultimate manifestation of Whyte’s organization and its social ethic – bland, yet terrifying in its immensity, this monument to the social ethic strips those who interact with it of their individuality outside the organization, of much of what they thought made them who they are as individuals. Instead, they are thrust into a future in which all individuals have been subsumed by the organization: “at a broken window of the [AM-WEB] building, Manfred drew a round face with eyes, nose, a turned-down, despairing mouth. Someone within the building, gazing out silently and hopelessly, as if trapped within”
(127). Though this round face in the window certainly represents Manfred’s own fears, it is also a blended composite of all those individuals whom the social ethic of the organization seeks to absorb. Indeed, far from being a place where all men become brothers,\(^7\) AM-WEB instead promises only to make all men equal in the dismal conformity of the social ethic.

Not all the characters in *Martian Time-Slip*, of course, fear the organization and its social ethic as much as Manfred and Bohlen. By contrast, committed organization men like Arnie Kott, men who thrive in the bureaucratic wasteland of organizations like the Water Workers’ Union and AM-WEB, instead try to bolster their own self-confidence by exploiting those aspects of the organization that demand obedience from subordinates. For male executives like Kott, this quest for power is intimately connected to masculinity itself, the ability to control others being, for these men, the sign of a successfully realized masculine identity. As a result, the organizational masculinity of such men is effectively the same as that which Kerfoot and Knights suggest is “a certain privileged and pervasive form of masculinity [that] is characterized by the modern manager whose *raison d’être* is to co-ordinate and control others in the pursuit of the instrumental goals of production, productivity and profit” (88). For Kott, like so many of Dick’s managers, the organization is simply a means of confirming their own masculine potency, as it reassures these men that they are still in control of themselves by giving them the opportunity to control the lives of others. Accordingly, the managers in Dick’s novels often offer to protect the interests of their subordinate male employees. This paternalism, as David L.

\(^7\) AM-WEB, Dick notes, is a German acronym for “Alle Menschen werden Brüder” (all men will be brothers), a bitterly ironic allusion to Friedrich Schiller’s “An die Freude” (1786), or “Ode to Joy,” a poem that equates the most sublime variety of joy with the political unity of humanity.
Collinson and Jeff Hearn observe in “Naming Men as Men: Implications for Work, Organization and Management,” is characteristic of many male managers anxious about their own manhood and is “a specifically masculine discourse of control that draws on the familial metaphor of the ‘rule of the father’ who is authoritative, benevolent, self-disciplined and wise” (157). In the end, the paternalism of managers like Kott and other “fathers of the firm” intimidates men like Bohlen precisely because it forces them to question the legitimacy of their own masculine identity, an identity they’ve always believed is rooted in the supposedly inviolate autonomy of the social liberal self.

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Building on the implied critique of organizational masculinity in novels like *Martian Time-Slip, The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* is a complicated meditation on masculinity, political ideology, and metaphysics which tells the story of two men, an employer and his employee, who try to prevent what seems to be a malevolent alien from enslaving humanity. At the time of its publication in early 1965, reception of the novel, although generally favourable, was mixed. Judith Merril’s review of the book for the June 1965 issue of *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*, for instance, captures many readers’ typically ambivalent response to *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*. While she praises the novel for its “riotous profusion of ideas, enough for a dozen novels, or one really good one” (Merril 75), Merril also laments that these ideas are “unsorted, frequently incomplemented, [and] seldom even clearly stated” (75). 8 Echoing Merril’s

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8 Elsewhere in her review, Merril humorously suggests that “Phil Dick is, one might say, the best writer s-f has produced, on every third Tuesday” (75).
sentiments, Yogi Borel, contributor of an August 1967 article to the sercon\(^9\) fanzine \textit{Riverside Quarterly}, notes that “Mr. Dick’s expressionism … is not new – but in our domain the technique was not used by any important writer before him” (73).

Unfortunately, for Borel, this “expressionism,” or conceptual experimentation, points more toward “the technical and imaginative backwardness of science-fiction” (73) than to any truly radical innovation. Other reviewers were somewhat more generous in their evaluation of the novel. For Richard Gordon, writing in the April 1966 issue of the British fanzine \textit{Zenith Speculation}, \textit{The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch} is evidence of fanzine editor and author “Ted White’s contention that Dick is America’s answer to [J.G.] Ballard” (16), as the novel is “more gloriously incomprehensible in parts than even [Ballard’s 1964 short story collection] \textit{The Terminal Beach}” (Gordon 17). Despite their disagreements, in the end all three of these reviewers do agree on one thing: for better or for worse, the unorthodoxy of Dick’s \textit{The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch} suggests a vision of the future far removed from the conceptual preoccupations of the Golden Age.

Although aware his fans and detractors focused most of their attention on the novel’s unusual treatment of reality and hallucinogenic drugs\(^{10}\), for Dick himself, \textit{The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch} is much more than just a fascinating if flawed experimental text; it is also the product of a particularly difficult time in his life, a terrifying period during which he began to question the value of both religion and the

\(^9\) A sercon fanzine is one in which “serious and constructive” criticism takes precedence over more personal matters, such as fannish in-jokes and caricatures of prominent or controversial fans.

\(^{10}\) Throughout the 1960s, Dick often used fanzines to gauge the popular (or at least fannish) response to his books. At times, he would even respond to individual reviews of his work, usually with a letter to be published in the next issue, but occasionally with an article of his own. In December of 1967, for instance, Dick wrote a letter to Leland Sapiro, the editor of \textit{Riverside Quarterly}, thanking him for publishing Borel’s review of \textit{The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch}. According to Dick, Borel “is the first really to tackle” (\textit{Selected} 227) the religious symbolism that Dick feels is central to understanding the novel.
ethics it supports. Written during a few months of feverish productivity in 1963, the novel is one which Dick claims “came out of the most intense anguish possible” (“Notes to Perky Pat” 377), “during a great crisis in [his] religious beliefs” (“Self-Portrait” 17). According to notes he later wrote for “The Days of Perky Pat” (1963), the short story upon which the book is based, Dick began writing the novel after witnessing a horrific hallucination: “I went, one day, walking down the country road to my shack, looking forward to eight hours of writing, in total isolation from all other humans, and I looked up at the sky and saw a face. I didn’t really see it, but the face was there, and it was not a human face; it was a vast visage of perfect evil” (377). Indeed, this vision of “perfect evil,” of an evil which the titular Palmer Eldritch embodies, was such a traumatic experience for Dick that “when the galleys came from Doubleday” (“Self-Portrait” 17), he “couldn’t correct them because [he] could not bear to read the text” (“Self-Portrait” 17). In this sense, *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* is Dick’s attempt to come to terms with the evil in his own life by imagining the possibility of evil in its most absolute and general sense. Palmer Eldritch, a man possessed by a malicious “entity from intersystem space” (*Stigmata* 218), is thus a manifestation of what Dick calls “absolute evil as personified in the form of a ‘human’” (“Self-Portrait” 17) and, ultimately for Dick at least, the incarnation of a “curse that hangs over all life” (*Selected* 228).

Despite Dick’s insistence that *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* is merely a reflection of his own personal struggle with religion and morality, the novel is in fact much more than that; it is, instead, primarily a critique of corporate power and of the evil inherent in the masculine “person” the corporation legally becomes. Here as elsewhere, the corporation is a social and commercial *body*, a metaphorical conglomerate accorded
legal protections comparable to those otherwise reserved for individual human beings. “Incorporated” by shareholders who have a financial stake in its economic well-being, this corporate body is a pseudo-human entity endowed with rights and responsibilities assumed to belong to human individuals alone. Developed first in the late middle ages and early modern period as a way to protect groups of people working together toward some common economic goal, the corporation eventually became a defining and integral part of free-market capitalism, that form of “laissez faire” capitalism which suggests the economy functions best if individual agents are allowed to pursue their own interests in an environment of unrestrained commercial competition. Like the classical liberalism and social ethic that so often justify it, such free-market capitalism also assumes that all individual agents, including corporations, are fundamentally autonomous, since individuals must always decide for themselves how they will or will not participate in the larger economic system. Though Dick values this idea of the autonomous self that underpins the capitalist system, he does take issue, as do many social liberals, with society’s willingness to accord similar provisions of autonomy to the corporation. As a result, _The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch_ refuses to buy into the notion of corporate selfhood, since for Dick, as for many other critics of capitalism, there are simply too many similarities between the corporation and certain “troubling” individuals with whom the corporation shares legal protection.

In _The Corporation_ (2004), Joel Bakan claims that “the corporation is an institutional reflection of the principles of laissez faire capitalism” (161). Unlike the social liberalism with which it is often in conflict, a political ideology which by definition includes a detailed list of ethical precepts, such laissez-faire capitalism promotes only one
ethical imperative: accumulate capital. It is this moral commandment, and this moral commandment alone, that governs the behaviour of the corporation. For Bakan as for Dick, this limited ethical viewpoint effectively transforms the corporation, that “institutional reflection” of free-market capitalism, into a creature whose behaviour makes it monstrous. For Bakan, this monstrosity is akin to that of the psychopath, of the psychologically deranged individual who is incapable of feeling empathy for other people. Like the psychopath, the modern corporation simply cannot empathize with others, whether other organizations or individual human beings, since it too is “purely self-interested, incapable of concern for others, amoral, and without conscience” (Bakan 134). By law, as Bakan points out, such institutional psychopaths “have only one duty: to promote their own and their owners’ interests. They have no capacity, and their executives no authority, to act out of a genuine sense of responsibility to society, to avoid causing harm to people and the environment, or to work to advance the public good in ways that are unrelated to their own self-interest” (109). Indeed, just like their psychopathic human counterparts, “the corporation is singularly self-interested and unable to feel genuine concern for others in any context” (Bakan 56). Only its own economic interests, which may or may not align with the interests of society as a whole, ever concern the corporation or bother its corporate “conscience.”

One aspect of the corporation that Bakan does not discuss, but that The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch makes abundantly clear, is the corporation’s inherently masculine character. Such an oversight is somewhat surprising, as discussions about successful corporate behaviour almost always invoke comparisons to, and the language of, organizational masculinity and the social ethic. Corporations, for example, must be
“strong” and “aggressive” if they are ever to “survive” in a “competitive” marketplace. To this end, they must “pursue” their economic goals in a “rational” manner by “objectively” evaluating the latest “scientific” research available. By contrast, comparisons to, and the language of, traditional forms of femininity (or at least those denigrated femininities that organizational masculinity seeks to subjugate) describe the corporation’s economic failures: only the “weak” corporation, after all, ever “opens itself up” to economic exploitation or takes competition “lying down.” For Stephen M. Whitehead and other theorists of organizational masculinity, this gendering of the corporation reflects the “masculinism” of most, if not all, contemporary corporations. Within the corporation, Whitehead suggests, such masculinism “pervade[s] organizational cultur[e], locating women and notions of femininity as the ‘Other’ and, thus, marginal” (126). In other words, though both the corporation and its psychopathic human counterparts are willing to succeed at any cost to the other people around them, it is only the corporation that does so by *specifically* marginalizing and feminizing anyone who fails to live up to the domineering masculinist ideals that govern the corporation’s definition of economic success.

Having recently returned from a successful interstellar business trip to the Prox system endowed with almost supernatural powers of persuasion, Palmer Eldritch is a threat to both of the novel’s protagonists, Leo Bulero and his employee Barney Mayerson, because he embodies and individualizes both the corporation itself and the organizational masculinity it encourages. For both Bulero and Mayerson, Eldritch is more than just another organization executive riding his way to the top of the corporate pyramid; he is also a Satanic monster who, like the corporation itself, will stop at nothing
to achieve his ends. Increasingly aware of their own role in creating and sustaining the
social ethic that informs Eldritch’s psychopathic masculine identity, Bulero and
Mayerson struggle to come to terms with the ways in which they too embrace a system of
corporate ethics and organizational masculinity that Eldritch makes increasingly
repulsive as the novel progresses. Though both organization men themselves, Bulero and
Mayerson are utterly terrified of this semi-divine corporate raider not because he is a
menace to their business interests, but because of the disturbing truths he reveals to these
men about themselves. Recognizing their own reflections in Eldritch, both Bulero and
Mayerson begin to question the model of organizational masculinity to which they have
subscribed all their lives. In this way, Eldritch threatens much more than Bulero and
Mayerson’s substantial economic stake in the lucrative Martian narcotics trade; he also
challenges how they see themselves as men of business and threatens to undermine the
very foundation of their masculine identity.

Prior to Eldritch’s sudden reappearance, Bulero is the solar system’s most
powerful and successful businessman. Supplying the settlers of Earth’s interplanetary
colonies with Can-D, a powerful hallucinogenic drug, his company, Perky Pat Layouts,
also provides the miniaturized props and dolls necessary for Can-D to work properly. By
focusing on these props, or “mins,” users of Can-D are able to conjure up a shared
fantasy of Earth and escape the bleak realities of colonial life.11 As Bulero himself notes,

11 As Dick points out in his notes to “The Days of Perky Pat” (1963), the idea for Perky Pat and her
boyfriend Walt “came to [him] in one lightning-swift flash when [he] saw [his] children playing with
Barbie dolls” (377). For Dick, “these anatomically super-developed dolls were not intended for the use of
children” (“Notes” 377), since they represented to him the futility of adult desire more than they did the
fulfillment of childhood longing. As he jokes, “I had visions of Barbie coming into my bedroom at night
and saying, ‘I need a mink coat.’ Or, even worse, ‘Hey, big fellow... want to take a drive to Vegas in my
Jaguar XKE?’” (“Notes” 377). In effect, Barbie here is the embodiment of all that Dick himself cannot
have and, as such, is a symbol of all that is denied to him as the impoverished writer “who was terribly
lonely [and] shut up by [himself] in [his writing] shack all day” (“Notes” 377).
“for settlers on a howling, gale-swept moon, huddled at the bottom of a hovel against frozen methane crystals and things, [Can-D] was something else again; Perky Pat and her layout were an entree back to the world [the colonists] had been born to” (24). As such, the success of Can-D, Perky Pat, and her boyfriend Walt reveal just how important the corporation and its products are to the settlers of these bleak, UN-sponsored worlds and moons. As Richard Hnatt, the husband of Mayerson’s ex-wife Emily, observes, “the doll had conquered man as man at the same time had conquered the planets of the Sol system” (10) and indeed, for Martian colonists like Sam Regan, the simulated life that Can-D allows is the only life worth living. Although he might occasionally scoff at the “spirituality” (41) of his fellow tenant Fran Schein, Regan basically agrees with her theological assessment of the Perky Pat experience, in that, for both of them, it is true that they “lose [their] fleshly bodies, [their] corporeality, as they say. And put on imperishable bodies instead, for a time anyhow” (41). For these colonists, Perky Pat, Walt, and Can-D together form a corporate counterpart to the holy trinity of Christianity, as it is only through these three saleable sacraments of a quite explicit “opium of the people” that they are able to “affirm the miracle of translation – the near-sacred moment in which the miniature artifacts of the layout no longer merely represented Earth but became Earth” (37).

For all that Bulero prides himself on helping these unwilling expatriates of Earth, many settlers despise the extent to which Perky Pat Layouts controls their lives and mediates their experience of the divine. Regan, for instance, though “a believer” (37), dislikes how Can-D and Perky Pat control his every action and desire, resenting in particular that they have made his topside garden, the ostensible raison d’être for his life
on Mars, little more than “rows of jagged leaves, all of which were to some extent shredded and devoured by microscopic native pests” (39). His simulated life as Walt while “translated” (40), Regan knows, offers him little besides the shallow dreams of consumerism, since possessing Walt’s “Jaguar XXB sports ship with a flat-out velocity of fifteen thousand miles an hour” (43) never lets him escape the knowledge that, once the Can-D wears off, he must always return “to the hovel, to the pit in which we twist and cringe like worms in a paper bag, huddled away from the daylight” (48). Indeed, “incorporating” himself into the consumer fantasy of Walt in this way forces Regan to give up any claim to an autonomous existence. Walt, Regan reluctantly admits to himself, defines who he is and what he can become, since “in no way,” Regan thinks in a particularly bitter moment, “were they free” (50). Such, however, is the sacrifice that Bulero and his company demand for the sense of spiritual, commodified comfort they provide to those lost in the dark night of the Martian desert.

Knowing that he holds the key to millions of people’s happiness gives Bulero an almost unshakeable sense of confidence, as power for Bulero is always the power to control other people. Reflecting on his own success, Bulero recalls how “he had, by manufacturing the Perky Pat layouts and raising and distributing the lichen-base for the final packaged product Can-D, made life bearable for over one million unwilling expatriates from Terra” (24). Unsurprisingly, it is this connection that Bulero makes, between the control he exerts over the solar system and his success as a man of business, that is also at the heart of his own understanding of masculinity. As Michael Kaufman claims in “Men, Feminism, and Men’s Contradictory Experiences of Power,” “much of what we associate with masculinity hinges on a man’s capacity to exercise power and
control” (59). Noting this link between organizational masculinity and control, Kerfoot and Knights further suggest that, for managers like Bulero, the “corporation provides a legitimate outlet for masculine preoccupations with conquest and control” (83). In this sense, Perky Pat Layouts is most certainly Bulero’s “outlet,” as it is his distribution of Perky Pat layouts and the potent Can-D to the Martian colonists that gives meaning to his own life. Though he has no interest in using these products to translate himself, Can-D and Perky Pat define in this way who Bulero is, both as an manager and as a man, insofar as by dominating and controlling the lives of others, he is able to reassure himself time and again that he is the man he wants to be.

Like most ambitious organization men weaned on the dictates of the social ethic, Bulero’s desire to control others encompasses more than just the consumers of his company’s products; he also feels the need to control the lives of those fellow employees with whom he interacts on a daily basis. Women, in particular, whom Bulero sees only as either threatening rivals or sexual objects procured for his own amusement, arouse his domineering instincts more than anyone else in the organization. For Bulero, any woman is dangerous who has an agenda that is not subordinate to his own. As such, it is hardly surprising when Bulero accuses Roni Fugate, a young designer of miniatures working for his firm who pressures him into going to Mars to save Mayerson, of trying to usurp both his and Mayerson’s positions: Roni is, after all, a capable woman with goals of her own, goals that, in Bulero’s eyes at least, make her “insatiably ambitious” (183). Besides his conviction that such women desire only to “twist [men] like hot little bits of thermoplastic” (183), Roni also troubles Bulero because she forces him to acknowledge the socially constructed nature of his own masculinity, since, though biologically female,
Roni insists on assuming an organizational masculinity comparable to his own. For some critics of masculinity, such as Jack Halberstam, it is this biologically independent aspect of gender that actually defines masculinity itself. According to Halberstam, masculinity only “becomes legible as masculinity where and when it leaves the white male middle-class body” (2). Neither biological sex, in other words, nor race, nor class defines the essence of masculinity, including the organizational masculinity of the social ethic. Roni, who in some sense recognizes this, threatens Bulero by adopting what Halberstam calls “female masculinity,” thereby making transparent the origins of his own masculine identity. Like Bulero’s other employee Mayerson, Roni is effectively a “man on the up and up,” an ambitious young (wo)man seeking to further her own career by pledging her allegiance to the inherently masculinist interests of the corporation.

To compensate for the threat that women like Roni represent to him, Bulero repeatedly dehumanizes the other women in his life, transforming them from living human beings into animated things subject to his every whim. Like the Perky Pat dolls he sells to the miserable settlers of Earth’s colonies, most women both inside and outside the organization are mere playthings for Bulero, objects he believes were designed solely to satisfy his lust. Bulero’s attitude toward his former mistresses, for example, many of whom began their “careers” as his personal secretary, reveals the extent to which he objectifies these women. While trying to resolve a conflict with Mayerson, it occurs to Bulero at one point that “he could smooth matters by making available to Barney one of his discarded – but still serviceable – former mistresses” (21). As far as Bulero is concerned, “there’s an infinite supply [of women]; they’re not like early U.S. postage stamps or the truffle skins we use as money” (21). By reducing his mistresses to
essentially disposable objects, Bulero is thus able to reassure himself that women like Fugate will never actually threaten him, at least not at the fundamental level of his own masculine identity. Such blatant misogyny is, of course, entirely in accord with Bulero’s belief that the social ethic, like Gayle Rubin’s “sex/gender system,” is “a systematic social apparatus which takes up females as raw materials and fashions domesticated women as products” (Rubin 158). And, indeed, it is only when he is surrounded by women whom he believes are subordinate to his will, women whom he has in some sense both domesticated and commodified, that Bulero ever feels like a man in absolute control.

In contrast to the hostility that characterizes Bulero’s interactions with Roni Fugate, Bulero’s relationship with Mayerson, his employee and protégé, has a warm, almost paternal aspect to it which reveals just how much he values the company of other men. Unlike his attitude toward Fugate, who like Mayerson is one of Perky Pat Layouts’ up-and-coming mid-level managers, Bulero’s attitude toward his male protégé is that of a professional mentor, of a father who is helping to guide his son through the wilderness of the social ethic. According to David L. Collinson and Jeff Hearn, patriarchal paternalism of the kind Bulero exhibits here is typical of the modern male organization manager. By acting like the father of the firm, men like Bulero hope to “eschew coercion and seek to exercise power by emphasizing the moral basis of cooperation, the protective nature of authority, the importance of personal trust relations and the need for employees both to

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12 As Rubin notes in “The Traffic in Women: Notes on the ‘Political Economy’ of Sex” (1975), the “‘sex/gender system’ is the set of arrangements by which a society transforms biological sexuality into products of human activity, and in which these transformed sexual needs are satisfied” (159). By definition ideological in the broader sense, what makes this concept interesting is that the sex/gender system is not attached to any one ideology, but is instead a central feature of most “political economies,” including those structured by social liberalism and its descendant the social ethic.
invest voluntarily in their work task and to identify with the company” (Collinson and Hearn 157). In effect, this false fatherhood helps Bulero maintain his power over Mayerson while absolving him of any moral complications that such an inherently unequal relationship might entail. In fact, it is this often tense dynamic that plays out between figures like Bulero and Mayerson, between men whom Dick himself calls the “big” and “little” protagonists, that essentially drives the plot of all Dick’s fiction from the 1960s, including *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*.14

Exploring this notion of the big and little protagonist in more detail than Dick himself ever does, Valerie Holliday claims that “the relation between Dick’s big and little protagonists is always constructed around class distinctions” (283). She further suggests that

> The little protagonist is described as such not because he is a minor character – in fact, he is almost always the main character or hero – but rather because he is always inferior to the big protagonist within the character relations that are inscribed in the narrative. He is in fact usually the hero of the novel. In spite of his hero status, the little protagonist always finds himself answering to a man to whom he is subordinate. (283)

In *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*, Mayerson is very much the little protagonist and Bulero very much the big. The strong homosocial bond that develops between these two characters helps each of them define who they are. For Bulero, a man who feels

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13 Dick uses these terms himself, for instance, in a 1967 outline for an unwritten novel, *Joe Protagoras Is Alive and Living on Earth*.
14 Most of Dick’s later work from the 1970s and 1980s either refashions the relationship between the big and little protagonist into something completely different or discards the paradigm altogether. In *VALIS* (1981), for example, the two protagonists, Philip. K. Dick and Horselover Fat, are actually one and the same person and, as such, are both big and little protagonist simultaneously.
confident that he controls Perky Pat Layouts inside and out, mentoring Mayerson is an exercise in self-validation; it reassures him that he still holds all the cards. Mayerson’s relationship with Bulero, on the other hand, is what helps him determine who he is and who he will eventually become as a man of business. Bulero, as his metaphorical corporate father, is a figure whom Mayerson must both rebel against and emulate in order to discover who he really is as a man.

Mayerson’s understanding of masculinity, like Bulero’s, is intimately connected to the development of his career. Having spent most of his life working his way up the corporate ladder, Mayerson believes that success on the job means success as a man. At the beginning of the novel, though his rise toward the heights of the organization has not been easy, Mayerson is already the “top Pre-Fash consultant” (117) at Perky Pat Layouts. To get to this point in his career, Mayerson has both imitated and struggled against his employer, Bulero. For Mayerson, Bulero is the embodiment of masculine achievement, his leadership of P.P. Layouts a testimony to his “capacity to exercise power and control” (Kaufman 59). Bulero’s success, however, also makes Mayerson bitterly jealous, his attitude toward Bulero’s orbiting harem, Winnie-ther-Pooh Acres, revealing in particular just how much he resents the prospect of spending his life on a quickly overheating Earth; instead of running from thermal shield to thermal shield while his boss languishes with his mistresses in the cool sky above, he too wants to “live like Leo Bulero; instead of being stuck in New York City in 180 degree heat” (7). For Mayerson, Winnie-ther-Pooh Acres is thus an emblem of both material success and masculine prowess, a “satellite of love” that is as much a symbol of Bulero’s business acumen as it is his flippant attitude toward women.
Like so many organization men who occupy the dominant position in a homosocial relationship, Bulero takes every opportunity to emasculate Mayerson while nevertheless supporting his attempts to imitate him. Throughout the early chapters, for example, Bulero encourages Mayerson to make Roni Fugate his mistress, if only because he relishes the idea that “Barney with his Miss Rondinella Fugate [would be a] small-time replica of Leo Bulero and [his secretary] Miss Jurgens” (25). 15 If nothing else, knowing that Mayerson might emulate him in this way suggests to Bulero that he has some measure of control over both his own and Mayerson’s life. Predictably, Bulero becomes nervous when Mayerson starts to show signs of his own unscrupulous ambition. Anxious to ensure that Mayerson knows he is only a “Pre-Fash boy” (123), Bulero has no problem commanding an upset, and potentially troublesome, Mayerson to “speak up … so you can cry on my shoulder” (19); “tell me what it is,” Bulero demands, “and I’ll hold your hand” (19). Here as elsewhere, Bulero treats Mayerson like a small boy in order to remind him of his subordinate role as his “father’s” figurative “son.” Prior to Palmer Eldritch’s return from Prox, it is this pattern of paternal domination and submission that largely determines how Mayerson and Bulero relate to one another and, indeed, it is only after the unexpected reappearance of this monstrosity from “the vast expanses between Sol and Proxima” (186) that both men begin to re-evaluate the nature of their relationship.

“Gray and bony, well over six feet tall, with swinging arms and a peculiarly rapid gait” (162), Eldritch is an eerie and intimidating figure whose face has “a ravaged quality

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15 Bulero fully expects that Pia Jurgens, as the “new girl who had joined the secretary pool” (22), will soon become his mistress. All he needs to do, he believes, is “find a pretext by which to transfer her to Winnie-the-Pooh Acres” (22).
… as if [he] at some time or other had fed off himself, devoured perhaps with gusto the superfluous portions of his own body” (162). “Welded to his jaws” (162), Eldritch’s “enormous steel teeth” (162) suggest an insatiable appetite, while an artificial arm provides him with “a specialized variety of interchangeable hands” (162). “From the standpoint of the natural-born body” (162), Eldritch is also blind, following “a deliberate acid-throwing attack by persons unknown” (162). “Brazilian oculists” (162), however, have replaced his eyes with “Jensen luxvid artificial-type” (230) lenses that allow Eldritch to survey the universe around him by means of “a permanent horizontal slot running from edge to edge” (162). These physical disfigurements, the “artificial arm, stainless steel teeth [and] gaunt, hollowed-out gray face with Jensen eyes” (192), are of course the titular three stigmata that sooner or later manifest themselves in everyone Eldritch touches. They are also, as symbols of Eldritch’s corporate psychopathy, portents of the sinister and totalizing organizational masculinity that Eldritch, in the eyes of Bulero and Mayerson, eventually comes to embody.

A hybrid entity composed of human, machine, and alien parts, Eldritch is by definition a cyborg, a representation of what Donna Haraway characterizes in her “Cyborg Manifesto” (1985) as the “disassembled and reassembled, postmodern collective and personal self” (2284). Like Haraway’s cyborg, Eldritch is “resolutely committed to partiality, irony, intimacy, and perversity” (2270); he delights, for instance, in the confusion caused by the unexpected appearance of his three stigmata on the bodies of other people. Unlike Haraway’s cyborg, however, who at least offers the prospect of freedom within the strictures of late capitalism and the social ethic, Eldritch is no symbol of liberation from systemic political oppression. Indeed, he is quite the opposite. Rather
than dreaming of a “powerful infidel heteroglossia” (Haraway 2299) that would bring people together in a new understanding and celebration of individual difference, Eldritch instead seeks to force his own terrifying “common language” (Haraway 2299) of conformity on the rest of humanity. Eldritch’s influence over other people is so pervasive, in fact, that he actually starts to transform them physically. Anyone who meets Eldritch eventually begins to manifest one or more of his deformities, becoming little more than “replicas, extensions of the man” (184). In the end, this violent and totalizing interpenetration of subjectivity is so complete that all differences between individuals as individuals disappear forever, leaving behind only the homogenous uniformity of Eldritch and his three stigmata.

Upon his return to the Solar System, Eldritch immediately begins setting up a network to distribute and produce Chew-Z, a hallucinogenic fungus native to the Prox system. Superficially at least, Chew-Z resembles Can-D, the drug Bulero and Mayerson sell in conjunction with Perky Pat and her layouts. Its effects, however, differ in one key respect: unlike Can-D, which allows a group of people to share a mutual hallucination, Chew-Z traps users in a prison of their own illusions. By isolating the users of Chew-Z, often in dreams of a past that Eldritch alone controls, Chew-Z emphasizes the true extent to which both the organization and the social ethic make all people, even those seemingly outside the organization itself, who they are. In this sense, Chew-Z acts as a sort metaphorical antidote to its users’ engrained sense of individualism, countering the apparent choice that Can-D offers with an explicit recognition of the fact that the social

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16 For Haraway, the cyborg is, in stark contrast to Eldritch, at least potentially a figure of political (especially feminist) emancipation, “a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction” (2269) who “dream[s] not of a common language, but of a powerful infidel heteroglossia” (2299).
ethic has much if not everything to do with determining the limits of individual autonomy. For settlers like Sam Regan, committed social liberals who believe they exist outside the corporate sphere, the revelations of Chew-Z are thus deeply unsettling, since Eldritch’s intervention in each new Chew-Z user’s experience disrupts the individuality and consensus of social liberalism by forcing these same settlers to accept that they themselves are not ultimately responsible for the design and development of their own hallucinatory life. Though both Chew-Z and Can-D “incorporate” such colonists into the larger commercial structures responsible for their distribution, it is only Chew-Z that candidly reveals the fragility of the “autonomous” self in a society increasingly dominated by the social ethic.

A firm believer in the social ethic who nonetheless retains a lingering attachment to the social liberalism from which it descends, Bulero likewise cannot afford to ignore the challenge to his political convictions that Eldritch and his drug represent. For many of the novel’s critics, however, the conflict which occurs between Bulero and Eldritch is not framed in terms of either social liberalism or the social ethic; instead, *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* is merely a parable about the dangers of consumer capitalism. Kim Stanley Robinson in his analysis of *The Novels of Philip K. Dick*, for instance, claims that Bulero’s attempt to resist Eldritch allows the novel to become “a story of consumption and resistance to it” (60). By shifting the struggle between Eldritch and Bulero to “the wasteland setting of Mars” (63), Robinson argues that the novel makes “American business looks like insanity” (63) and that “personal relationships look fragile, and often meaningless” (63). Robinson further claims that “Eldritch is clearly a ‘mad
capitalist” (61) and that “the alien that invaded him during his voyages represents the spirit of capitalism” (61) as a political ideology in and of itself. Building on Robinson’s analysis, but recognizing its lack of political nuance, N. Katherine Hayles in How We Became Posthuman suggests instead that Eldritch’s unscrupulous and totalizing approach to business is more than simply an expression of capitalism gone mad; it also constitutes a challenge to the autonomous subject at the heart of social liberalism. As Hayles notes, “the eternity delivered here [by Eldritch] is precisely not the apotheosis of the liberal autonomous subject capable of free thought and action but is the subject as pawn in a capitalist’s game, imprisoned for eons in a universe that a terrifying and menacing alien other has created to increase his profits” (170). After all, in “an illusory world in which [he] holds the key positions as god” (Stigmata 176) and in which the social ethic reigns supreme, it is only Eldritch, the capitalist running the game, who is capable of determining what people may do.

Although neither Hayles nor Robinson explicitly make such a claim, Eldritch specifically embodies the spirit of the corporation, capitalism’s chief institutional representative in the novel. Like the contemporary corporations discussed by Joel Bakan, Eldritch is a “singularly self-interested” (Bakan 56) psychopath “seeking to remake real people in [his own] image” (Bakan 135). Eldritch’s attempt to incorporate the users of Chew-Z into his own corporate understanding of selfhood is monstrous, for Bulero at

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17 Robinson borrows this term from Darko Suvin. Suvin, in his early analysis of the novel in “P.K. Dick's Opus: Artifice as Refuge and World View (Introductory Reflections),” compares the capitalist Eldritch to the “mad scientists” of early science fiction.

18 Curiously, Hayles does not distinguish between different types of liberalism in How We Became Posthuman; instead, she treats liberalism as a monolithic political ideology between whose variants, such as classical liberalism and social liberalism, there is no meaningful distinction. That being said, her analysis of Dick’s fiction clearly hinges on an understanding of liberalism as social liberalism, rather than on any other form of liberal ideology.
least, because it challenges a political notion that Bulero holds very dear indeed: the idea that individuals such as himself are fundamentally autonomous and self-determining within the confines of the organization or community to which they belong. Eldritch’s ability to invade the dreams of others suggests that this self of the social ethic is neither as inviolate nor as independent of outside influence as Bulero would like to believe. In fact, Eldritch’s manipulation of the psychic lives of other people reveals to Bulero just how often, as Paul Fairfield notes in his critique of liberal selfhood, individuals “are always situated within particular lifeworlds and traditions, [how] they are always participants in practices and a way of life which precede them, [and how] they are speakers of a particular language and view the world through a particular categorical framework” (98). Eldritch, in other words, makes Bulero uncomfortable precisely because he illustrates, with a sense of irony characteristic of all postmodernist critiques of autonomous subjectivity, the extent to which products like Can-D and Perky Pat shape the “categorical framework” of those who consume them and at the same time deprive customers of the chance to determine their own “way of life.” For Bulero, Eldritch is a monster not simply because he is a financial threat, but because he shows Bulero just how his own organizational masculinity and belief in the social ethic have helped create a universe in which everyone is governed by the products of corporations like his own Perky Pat Layouts.

Upon meeting each other for the first time, Eldritch surreptitiously gives Bulero a large dose of Chew-Z. In the surreal scenes that follow, Eldritch reveals to Bulero just how powerful he is. As Bulero soon realizes, every time someone ingests Chew-Z they go to a “different subjective world” (92). Able to manipulate every aspect of the user’s
experience, Eldritch is “the owner of these worlds” (192). If he wants, he “can kick over the scenery, manifest himself [and] push things in any direction he chooses” (192).

“Eternal [and] outside of time” (192), Eldritch “can even enter a world,” like the one he forces Bulero to inhabit, “in which he’s dead” (192). Unlike Can-D, these hallucinations of Chew-Z require virtually no time at all. As Eldritch himself tells Bulero, “when we return to our former bodies … you’ll find that no time has passed. We could stay here fifty years and it’d be the same” (87). “A flicker of the eyelids” (87), as Eldritch notes, is all the time required for Chew-Z to have its full effect. Subjectively, however, this “split second” (87) hallucination could take an eternity, since Eldritch uses the temporal flexibility of the Chew-Z to assume complete control of the user’s perception of reality while they are under the drug’s influence. If he so chooses, Eldritch can thus lock users away forever in a prison of their own mind, thereby ensuring that even men like Bulero, men who desperately want to believe that they too are free, can ultimately do nothing but tremble impotently before this singularly liberated god of capital.

Despite feeling threatened, Bulero is nonetheless initially tempted by the possibility of total market penetration that Eldritch’s hallucinations seem to offer the willing organization man. In large part, this is because Eldritch’s ability to manipulate hallucinations would allow Bulero to manage his customers in ways that he can only dream about. Convinced by an imaginary staircase he creates to flee from a hallucination of Eldritch as a little girl that he has “at least a limited power in this universe” (95), Bulero at first attempts to imitate Eldritch by restructuring the world in which he finds himself. Troubled as he is by Roni Fugate’s assertive presence in his office, Bulero tries to punish her by transforming her into an old woman. This test of his abilities, however,
goes terribly wrong. Expecting to see a shrivelled and powerless old woman, Bulero instead faces a “head, sunken at the cheeks, with eyes like dead spots of soft, inert white slime” (95). Reappearing in the form of the little girl Monica, Eldritch explains to Bulero that since Roni is “only is going to live to be seventy” (96), his attempt to make her a hundred years old has instead resurrected a corpse that has already “been dead thirty years” (96). Faced with the fact that his decision has “conjured this monstrosity into being” (96) and emasculated by the inflexible will of what appears to be a small girl, Bulero is forced to accept that his desire to control others, especially women, has potentially horrifying consequences. Bulero’s lust for control, in other words, could turn him into a creature like Eldritch himself, into a corporate psychopath far removed from the benevolent image of the corporate executive Bulero himself has always cherished.

Having seemingly escaped Eldritch’s hallucinatory grasp,¹⁹ Bulero quickly organizes a campaign against this deformed embodiment of the psychopathic corporation. Distancing himself from the unfettered capitalism and destruction of the autonomous self that Eldritch represents, Bulero transforms himself into an altruistic protector of humanity. Returning to the precepts of social liberalism that still exist to some extent at the heart of his understanding of the social ethic, Bulero declares that he hopes “not just to save [himself,] but everyone in the system” (108). According to Bulero, what humanity needs is “a guild of Protectors” (229), an organization of prominent businessmen like himself who are capable of stopping Eldritch from turning the solar system into “a plain of dead things that have become nothing more than random

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¹⁹ As is typical in Dick’s fiction of the 1960s, it is unclear in the novel where hallucinations begin and reality (again) begins. Though Bulero believes he has escaped Eldritch’s hallucinatory control by this point, there is a very real possibility that he has not and that, for the rest of the novel, he actually remains trapped in Eldritch’s nightmare of manipulated solipsism.
Bulero to validate and justify his own more compassionate understanding of the social ethic’s definition of organizational masculinity. In this sense, Bulero turns his back forever on models of organizational masculinity that, like Eldritch’s, encourage absolute dominance and utter subordination; instead, though his identity continues to alternate between that of socially responsible protector and entrepreneurial vulture, Bulero fully embraces a paternalism that emphasizes leadership and the bonds that bind people together, an attitude of fatherly benevolence that Eldritch, in his denunciation of the social liberal roots of the social ethic, rejects wholeheartedly.

Upon realizing that he and Eldritch share, at least initially, a monstrous desire to control the lives of others, Bulero hastily modifies his understanding of what it means to be a successful corporate executive and organization man. Shifting attention away from his ability to turn a profit for P.P. Layouts, Bulero instead stresses his empathetic nature, his capacity to acknowledge other subjective viewpoints as neither more nor less privileged than his own.\(^\text{20}\) For Bulero, empathy quickly becomes both what makes him human and what distinguishes him from Eldritch. In Bulero’s eyes, Eldritch is an alien and a monster precisely because he cannot feel empathy for others; like Bakan’s corporation, Eldritch’s only way of relating to other people is to overwhelm them with his own version of reality. Bulero’s sudden respect for empathy also helps justify his decision to become a “Protector” of humanity. Like John Stuart Mill, that arch-theorist of social liberalism and grandfather of the social ethic, Bulero professes to believe that

\(^{20}\) Empathy, of course, plays a central role in virtually every one of Dick’s novels from the 1960s. In *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968), for example, the lack of empathy is what distinguishes androids from humans. For Dick, as for Bulero, empathy is both what makes humanity human and is what is at the core of both social liberalism and, to a lesser extent, the social ethic.
“the sole end for which mankind are warranted, individually or collectively, in interfering with the liberty of action of any of their number, is self-protection” (Mill 80). For both Bulero and Mill, “the only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others” (Mill 80). According to Bulero, Eldritch’s complete lack of empathy transforms him into what Mill condemns as a “nuisance to other people” (Mill 121), a psychopathic threat, in other words, to the assumed and cherished freedom of the self. By choosing to resist Eldritch in the name of all humanity, Bulero is thus able to convince himself that he is actually protecting the rightful liberty of all the solar system’s inhabitants, and not just safeguarding his own extensive financial interest in P.P. Layouts (though he is, of course, doing that as well).

To protect humanity from Eldritch, and to prevent this psychopathic reflection of the organization from ever becoming a serious threat to Perky Pat Layouts, Bulero enlists the help of Mayerson, his most trusted employee and business confidant. Feeling guilty about his decision not to rescue Bulero from Eldritch earlier in the novel, Mayerson reluctantly agrees to take a large dose of Chew-Z as part of Bulero’s plan to discredit Eldritch. For Mayerson, as for Bulero, the experience of Chew-Z is “absolutely not like a dream” (176); it is, rather, “more like being in hell” (176), like being trapped in a place where the pains of the past are “recurrent and unyielding” (176). For Mayerson, the past is particularly distressing because his memories of it all revolve around the disintegration of his marriage prior to becoming the head Pre-Fash consultant for New York. When Mayerson’s wife Emily became pregnant illegally, he divorced her in order not to jeopardize his career at P.P. Layouts. Having “never got over” (12) his marriage to
Emily, Mayerson experiences a hallucinatory world of the past while under the effects of Chew-Z which compels him to re-examine the link between his career and his divorce. In retrospect, though Mayerson considers the part of his life that he spent with Emily “the only really good period” (115) and the only time he “was genuinely happy” (115), he now understands that he could not tolerate how she “saw through the self-justifying delusions that [he] erected to obscure the reality inside” (113). In the end, Emily’s ability to reveal the lies he told himself “just made [him] more eager to get rid of her” (113). Though this realization comes far too late to help him in any way, Chew-Z does allow Mayerson to “reconstruct the past as it ought to have been” (176), an experience which in turn forces him to acknowledge just how much his attempt to imitate the organizational masculinity of Bulero has actually cost him.

Immediately before ingesting the toxin that will falsely link Chew-Z to epilepsy and presumably end Eldritch’s interstellar career, Mayerson reflects on how the time “had come for him to poison himself so that an economic monopoly could be kept alive, a sprawling, interplan empire from which he now derived nothing” (161). For Mayerson, as for so many men in the hypercompetitive environment of the corporation, work is an arena in which masculinity is constantly contested, a place where, according to Stephen M. Whitehead, “men’s sense of masculine self may be constantly reaffirmed [yet] is also subject to scrutiny and question” (125). For men like Mayerson, as Whitehead suggests in his discussion of organizational masculinity,

there is a comfort in th[e] act [of working], for so long as the man sustains his undivided attention on work, he is avoiding looking into his life and values – and the costs his actions incur for him and others. Moreover, his sense of power and
potency becomes reified in the workplace, whatever impotencies might exist for him outside it. (128)

By revealing how his attempt to become the consummate organization man has ruined his marriage to Emily, Eldritch forces Mayerson to assess the negative impact work has had on his life. The failure of his marriage and his present misery, Mayerson realizes while plotting Eldritch’s downfall, both stem from this attempt to equate success at work with success in life. Although at first glance it might seem odd that Eldritch gives Mayerson this opportunity to reassess his own obsession with work, given that Eldritch himself is the embodiment of the psychopathic corporation, it is hardly surprising. Mayerson, after all, represents a threat to Eldritch’s own totalizing organizational masculinity, in that he, like Bulero, is a masculine rival within the corporate sphere who refuses to subordinate himself to Eldritch’s will. Eldritch, therefore, feels that he has no choice but to emasculate Mayerson by doing everything in his power to force Mayerson out of the company which made him the man he is. Making it seem to Mayerson as though it is his own decision to reject the organization and its demands on men is, of course, just another flourish typical of the manipulative Eldritch.

Aware now that it was always his attempt to imitate Bulero’s confident sense of organizational masculinity that made his marriage to Emily intolerable, Mayerson takes a second, almost suicidal, dose of Chew-Z soon after regaining consciousness. In despair, Mayerson asks Eldritch if he will transform him into an inanimate object, into a part of the world “no longer conscious of the passage of time” (199). Eldritch, however, gives Mayerson something else. Preparing himself for the long eternity that he will spend as a plaque on his office wall, Mayerson is surprised when he looks down at himself and
realizes just how he has changed. Instead of the mahogany and brass of the plaque he expects to become, Mayerson now has the body of Eldritch himself. His left hand, like Eldritch’s, is now “pink, pale, [and] made of flesh” (200), while his right is “bright, glowing, [and] spotless in its mechanical perfection” (200). By offering him his own body, Eldritch effectively gives Mayerson a chance to experience what, prior to his recent epiphany, he has worked toward for most of his career: a position of influence and power unrivaled in the solar system. As Mayerson soon realizes, though, Eldritch’s “gift” is hardly a charitable one. Incorporated into Eldritch’s body the moment before Bulero is supposed to kill him in a future space battle, Mayerson now understands that, to Eldritch and all other “true” organization men, he and everyone else are little more than sacrificial lambs waiting to be brought to slaughter, fodder for the capitalist machine the social ethic inevitably creates.

As the inverted epitome of social liberalism and the logical outcome of the social ethic, Eldritch is a psychopathic god of the organization who will let nothing prevent him from protecting his investment in himself. Brought back at the last moment from the brink of his hallucinatory annihilation by his old boss Bulero, Mayerson comments on how Eldritch, “that thing, which we know only in its Terran body, wanted to substitute me at the instant of its destruction; instead of God dying for man, as we once had, we faced – for a moment – a superior – the superior power asking us to perish for it” (220). The unrestrained and selfish ambition that Eldritch embodies here, ambition that Mayerson had always respected and admired in Bulero, is thus finally revealed to him as little more than cruel and pitiless greed. Ashamed of himself and the life he has led, Mayerson feels he must reject the merciless capitalist ethos that he now believes is
always implied by the social ethic. Explaining to Bulero his decision to remain on Mars, Mayerson tells him that he will “live here … as a colonist” (210) and that he will “work on [his] garden up top and [do] whatever else they do” (210). Unlike Bulero, who attempts to recast himself as the benevolent capitalist protecting humanity’s right to self-determination, Mayerson eventually rejects both the social ethic and the organizational masculinity it supports. To this end, by the novel’s conclusion, Mayerson wants only to till the bare Martian soil and to try to become at last a man whose sense of self rests on something other than how he can best serve the organization. Though he admits there might ultimately be no “such thing as salvation” (225), Mayerson may nevertheless, as Eldritch himself notes, “gradually, over the years, recover” (224) from his lengthy acquaintance with a political ideology and masculinity that have made him “an unclean thing” (222).21

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A monstrous exaggeration of the supermen who repeatedly terrorize the committed social liberals of Golden Age science fiction, Eldritch is an organization god who reveals, through the controlled hallucinations of Chew-Z, the fragility of the presumed autonomous self of the social ethic. By making this fragility obvious, Eldritch in turn exposes the impossibility of the social ethic ever fostering a masculinity that encourages both individual initiative and the sacrifice of the individual’s wishes to those

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21 Toward the very end of the novel, Mayerson encounters a telepathic “jackal-creature” on Mars that tries to eat him. Shortly before the animal reaches him, however, it veers sharply away and pronounces him an “unclean thing” (222). For the jackal-creature at least, Mayerson can never escape the taint of the organization he hopes to leave behind; there is and will always be, according to this telepathic predator, “something intolerably wrong with [him]” (222).
of an organization or community whose collective interests outweigh those of the individual self. As Mayerson realizes, however, Eldritch is only the logical endpoint of a political ideology that is already dominant and incontestable; and, indeed, after seeing parts of Eldritch manifest themselves in the bodies of other people, Mayerson becomes convinced that there is, in fact, a part of Eldritch in all organization men who adhere to the social ethic, including both Bulero and himself. The three stigmata that appear on those Eldritch has touched, Mayerson suspects, merely point to the “perception of the actual, of their unqualified situation; not just his but all of theirs together” (177), since Eldritch, who looks both “into [their] eyes” and “out of [their] eyes” (219), is little more than a warped but plausible reflection of the psychopathic corporations to which so many organization men belong. Eldritch terrifies Mayerson and Bulero, therefore, precisely because he is the ultimate embodiment of a totalizing and selfish organizational masculinity that is, if nothing else, a symbol of just how far the social ethic might diverge from its social liberal origins if given half a chance. “What we have here,” after all, as Bulero laments before going to Mars to confront Eldritch and rescue Mayerson, “is not an invasion of Earth by Proxmen” (184); instead, “it’s Palmer Eldritch who’s everywhere, growing and growing like a mad weed” (184), a weed that threatens to choke off the social liberal roots from which the social ethic has sprung.

For Dick himself, who appears not to fully understand the extent to which his novel is a critique of the social ethic, *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* “depicts relative good attempting to combat absolute evil” (*Selected* 227). For him, as he notes in a 1967 letter to the editor of *Riverside Quarterly*, the book simply demonstrates how “relative good – good as we know it here in the compromised state – is able to survive
even a direct assault by the power of evil” (*Selected* 228). This reading of the novel, while valid, unfortunately does not do justice to the complexity of the work. For one thing, Dick’s reading denies that *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* is primarily political in nature, an aspect of the text that has led David Golumbia to describe the novel as, among other things, “a critique of capitalism and of ideological manipulation; of the idea that there is one Truth which can, as it were by stipulation, be forced upon all who hear it” (96). Bulero, for example, is more than just the “tender, gruff, warm, human, loving man” (“Notes to Perky Pat” 378) that Dick insists is fighting against the “absolute evil” of Eldritch; he is also a morally complicated figure in his own right, a man who “within the critical structure of the novel … is not at all unambiguous or free from the general forces and ideas which seem under critical scrutiny” (Golumbia 96). In particular, though Golumbia and most other critics of Dick rarely acknowledge it, Bulero is a figure whose understanding of what it means to a be a successful man is caught between the competing dictates of the social ethic: on the one hand, Bulero fancies himself a man who helps others in order to help himself; while at the same time, he nevertheless envies the unlimited power the organization seems to offer ambitious men like Eldritch. In the end, it is Bulero’s desire to embrace an emphatically *empathetic* form of organizational masculinity that determines how he responds to the challenge Eldritch represents. Indeed, it is Bulero’s own understanding of masculinity, of what it means to be a “good” man, that ultimately forces him to refer the social ethic *back* to the social liberalism that ostensibly still informs it, thereby restricting his own definition of organizational masculinity to one that *explicitly* allows for empathetic relationships with other people. Though he might not reject the social ethic and its organizational
masculinity outright as Mayerson does, such a reinterpretation of what it means to be a man does imply that, for Bulero if not for Dick, masculinity and political ideology are at the very heart of *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*.

Although Dick may be reluctant to suggest in his own assessments of the book that it is masculinity and political ideology, rather than evil, that are the central preoccupations of the novel, in his notes to “The Days of Perky Pat,” he does recall how writing *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* constituted his own very personal attempt to come to terms with the memory of his long-absent father:

> In 1963 I was reliving the original isolation I had experienced upon the loss of my father, and the horror and fear expressed in the novel are not fictional sentiments ground out to interest the reader; they come from the deepest part of me: yearning for the good father and fear of the evil father, the father who left me. (378)

As Dick indicates here, masculinity is in fact a constant source of anxiety throughout the novel and indeed, once they realize the harm they have caused themselves and others by trying to become “successful” organization men like Eldritch, both Bulero and Mayerson reject or at least modify the organizational masculinity of the social ethic that formerly governed their behaviour. For Bulero, coming to terms with organizational masculinity necessitates becoming the empathetic “good” father, both to the employees of his own firm and to humanity as a whole. For Mayerson, by contrast, who is forced to choose between accepting a man like Bulero as his “father” or forsaking the social ethic and its organizational masculinity altogether, there exists no other option than to drop out of the capitalist system entirely and, in his exile, attempt to rediscover some of what social liberalism says about what it means to be a man. By the end of the novel, regardless of
the separate paths they each resolve to take in the aftermath of Eldritch’s revelations, both Bulero and Mayerson are haunted by the potentially monstrous moral cost of the social ethic, just as they remain physically haunted by the three stigmata of Palmer Eldritch and his organizational masculinity.
Chapter 3

“They Go as I Say, They Do as I Tell Them”: Consumer Capitalism and the Theology of Organizational Masculinity in Philip K. Dick’s Ubik

Like The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch before it, Ubik is a novel which speculates about a future in which the social ethic and its organizational masculinity permeate social relations so thoroughly that it is impossible for the men of the novel to imagine anything beyond what they already believe makes a successful organization man. Complicating Dick’s earlier analysis of organizational masculinity in The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch, Ubik suggests that, if they are to be successful, organization men must also buy into the larger economic system that supports the companies for which they work. Equating the accumulation of commercial products with a successfully realized organizational masculinity, the men of Ubik are as much consumers of capital as they are managers of it; for them, the only “good” organization man is one who is also able to demonstrate that he is a conspicuous consumer of capitalism’s “goods.” In this sense, far from being simply, as fanzine editor Richard Geis puts it, “one of THOSE [Dick novels] ... engrossing, unputdownable, fascinating, [and] baffling” (30),¹ Ubik is a poignant political satire in the form of a metaphysical puzzle, and one that constitutes an implied critique of the complex ideological relationship between the organizational masculinity of the social ethic and the demands of consumer capitalism at the end of the 1960s.

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¹ Capitalization in the original.
Responding to fannish criticism about the complexity of *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*, Dick claims in a letter published in the May 1967 issue of the fanzine *Yandro* that his “novels are mere adventures” (19).² Having recently read Robert Coulson’s critical assessment of his novel in this popular fanzine, Dick was uncomfortable with Coulson’s attempt to “assign[n] a deep and subtle Meaning” (“Letter” 19) to *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*. “There is,” Dick maintains, “no hidden meaning in my work” (“Letter” 19). “What I do, when I write a book,” Dick declares, “is consider certain persons and a particular background, and explore the evolution of the relationship which the characters began to develop vis-à-vis that background” (“Letter” 19). According to Dick, Coulson’s criticisms of *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* are therefore misguided at best: “your various negative responses to my work,” Dick says, “are making the same mistake that some of those who champion and defend my work are doing” (“Letter” 19). After all, as Dick proudly proclaims in the argot of the late 1960s counterculture, “my books are Happenings, not symbol” (“Letter” 20). For all his protestations, however, Dick is mistaken about the interpretative possibilities of his fiction. In *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*, as in virtually every one of his many novels from the late 1960s, the suggestion of some “deep and subtle Meaning” does indeed lurk behind a screen of pervasive paranoia and political intrigue.

It is for this reason that Dick’s fiction in the latter part of the decade quickly became associated with the New Wave, a transatlantic literary movement within 1960s and early 1970s science fiction that sought to challenge the conceptual and stylistic

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² *Yandro*, a fanzine that won the Hugo in 1965 and was nominated for the Best Fanzine award another nine times, was one of the most widely read fanzines throughout the 1960s.
conventions of the Golden Age. Though never a phenomenon that was embraced by American authors to the extent it was by their British counterparts, the New Wave nevertheless exerted a profound influence on American science fiction generally and on Dick’s work in particular. The sense of paralysis that grips Mayerson and Bulero in *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*, for example, is akin to, if not necessarily inspired by, the same dogged pessimism that haunts the fiction of the British New Wave; just as in Brian Aldiss’ *Hothouse* (1962) and J.G. Ballard’s *The Crystal World* (1966), Dick imagines an invariably bleak vision of the future peopled by intensely disenfranchised characters, a future in which the political landscape is essentially static and unchanging. As Dick himself reluctantly notes in a 1968 letter about *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* to his editor Larry Ashmead at Doubleday, “I may have broken the mould with that one; it may be my transition to the ‘new waving’” (*Selected* 229).

For Kim Stanley Robinson, as for most other critics who have followed him, Dick’s novels of the late 1960s do more, however, than simply embrace the New Wave; they also constitute an “assault on generic conventions [that] was more radical than the New Wave’s ever became” (Robinson 84). This bold assertion, that Dick’s novels are more innovative than an entire movement dedicated to experimental science fiction, reflects the unique position of Dick’s work within the genre at the time. Unlike that of most other writers during this period, who tend to identify their fiction either as a part of or firmly in opposition to the New Wave, Dick’s novels of the late 1960s quite

3 In both Aldiss’ and Ballard’s novels, the landscape is literally unchanging as well as conceptually static. In *Hothouse*, for example, Aldiss imagines a future in which humanity has devolved into more primitive forms at the mercy of the gargantuan, carnivorous plants that now dominate the planet; while in *The Crystal World*, Ballard charts one man’s attempt to come to terms with the spread of a crystalline plague that halts all life – and change – in its tracks. This rejection of the social and scientific progress promised by the social liberalism of Golden Age science fiction, as well as a focus on psychology instead of technology, is a large part of what makes both texts classic examples of the British New Wave.
deliberately straddle the boundary between Golden Age and New Wave science fiction. While his conceptual twists mirror those of even the strangest J.G. Ballard novel, the corporate setting of his novels would have been familiar to any reader of satirical science fiction from the 1950s, such as Fredrick Pohl and C.M. Kornbluth’s *The Space Merchants* (1953). Like Pohl and Kornbluth, Dick uses the conventions of Golden Age science fiction to criticize both corporate culture and American consumer capitalism more generally. At the same time, like Ballard and other New Wave writers, Dick routinely questions the social liberalism that lies at the heart of almost all Golden Age science fiction, as well as frequently incorporating counter-cultural elements into his work, such as the hallucinogenic drugs Can-D and Chew-Z. In this sense, as a writer whose career began in the Golden Age but only came to fruition during the New Wave of the 1960s, Dick’s fiction pushes the boundaries of what science fiction is and could become, of what is and is not possible in a future that is radically different, yet always strangely familiar.

To a large extent, as Robinson observes, Dick’s success at negotiating the divide between the New Wave and the Golden Age rests precisely on the fact that, certainly more so than any of his New Wave contemporaries, Dick’s “fictional worlds reflect our own in a tendentious way” (x). To this end, as Robinson notes, Dick’s novels “make

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4 Richard Gordon, a British fan of Dick’s fiction and enthusiastic supporter of the New Wave, notes in the fanzine *Zenith Speculation* that Dick “could out-Ballard Ballard if he were he so inclined” (17), a sentiment shared, no doubt, by many of Dick’s fans across the Atlantic.

5 Unlike so much Golden Age fiction, where the present is simply dressed up in the robes of the future, most New Wave fiction goes to great lengths to imagine a future that has few connections to the present day. Unfortunately, although this *can* still produce that sense of “cognitive estrangement” that is the defining feature of science fiction, more often than not it simply transforms New Wave science fiction into science fantasy instead. A prominent example of this kind of “apparent” New Wave science fiction is Delany’s *The Einstein Intersection* (1967), a novel which delves so deeply into allegory and myth that it leaves actual speculation about the real world far behind.
explicit structures and processes that are implicit in the infrastructure of our present world” (x). First published by Doubleday in 1969, *Ubik* is one such novel that quite plainly reveals the connections between the real world and the universes imagined by science fiction. Shifting its attention partly away from the lives of organization men *within* the organization that is the primary focus of *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*, *Ubik* also explores the broader social and political consequences of consuming the organization’s advertising and products. In this sense, the novel extends the critique of organizational masculinity in *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* by demonstrating how, once organizational masculinity becomes hegemonic for men inside the organization, such masculinity reinforces and validates the demands of consumer capitalism in society at large. In this way, *Ubik* is not only about how the social ethic governs the masculinity of organization men, but also reveals how the social ethic and organizational masculinity are part and parcel of the consumer capitalism which drives the economic growth and development of the organization itself.

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Set primarily in the cryogenic environment of half-life, a form of technologically-mediated afterlife in which the dead continue to lead some semblance of their former lives, *Ubik* uses Plato’s philosophical suppositions to deconstruct reality and force the reader to question the authenticity of its characters. Behind every object, Plato and *Ubik* suggest, there exists an ideal, abstract form of that object. A television, for example, though physically different from a radio, is similar to it in that they are both capable of receiving and broadcasting entertainment. Televisions and radios, in this sense, are
merely different instances of the same thing; only technological advances and historical
development separate them from each other. As one of the “dead” characters in *Ubik*
puts it, in half-life

the form TV set had been a template imposed as a successor to other templates,
like the procession of frames in a movie sequence. Prior forms … must carry on
an invisible, residual life in every object. The past is latent, is submerged, but still
there, capable of rising to the surface once the later imprinting unfortunately – and
against ordinary experience – vanished. (131)

In the “full life” of reality, of course, the ideal Platonic form of an object is always
hidden, since the forward movement of history determines its present manifestation. In
the ontologically unstable cold-pac of half-life, however, this historical process breaks
down and objects, specifically commodities, begin to regress more or less sporadically to
earlier forms.⁶ This radical restructuring of the world, one that uses Platonic idealism to
reveal just how alienated and “immaterial” commodities often are in the eyes of
consumers, forces the novel’s characters to question both the reality they have always
known and the capitalist social ethic that structures their understanding of that reality. It
also prompts at least some of the organization men in the novel to try to come to terms
with who they are both as men and consumers.

The primary psi-tester for Runciter Associates, a security corporation that
specializes in neutralizing the threat posed to businesses and individuals by telepaths and
other mutants with psionic talents, Joe Chip is one of two organization men in *Ubik* who

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⁶ In many ways, half-life is simply a fictional representation of Plato’s allegory of the cave in Book VII of *The Republic*. As one of the characters notes, the regressions of commodities in half-life “weirdly verified a discarded ancient philosophy, that of Plato’s ideal objects, the universals which, in each class, were real” (131).
must figure out who he is if he is ever to understand what is happening to him in half-life.

Though his position pays well and he enjoys his work, like Mayerson in *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*, Chip is nevertheless miserable. His relationships with women, in particular, are fraught with difficulties, since women, for Chip, are little more than objects to be bought and sold; like the “multiplex FM tuner” (134) in his apartment, they are products which must be purchased and displayed in front of others. Unsurprisingly, Chip’s attitude toward these products, whether state-of-the-art television or fellow human beings, reveals how he sees himself as a man. In fact, it is this connection, between consumable goods and masculine identity, that becomes increasingly apparent as Chip’s world begins to fragment and the objects in it lose their identity. For Chip, it seems, there is a price attached to everything, including the woman sleeping in his bed.

In the rapidly regressing half-life of *Ubik*, Chip’s insecure sense of masculinity soon becomes painfully obvious. Having always defined his manhood in terms of the merchandise he consumes and the organization he serves, Chip desperately tries to rediscover the quickly vanishing economics of the regressing half-life world. Following clues left by his still-living employer, Glen Runciter, Chip searches for Ubik, a substance that promises to restore the rapidly disintegrating universe in which he finds himself. Ultimately, this desperate attempt to salvage what is left of the products around him forces Chip to restructure and revise his understanding of the world and himself. Imitating the confident, masculine posturing of his boss Runciter, an organization man and consumer par excellence, Chip attempts to change the way he relates to reality by reimagining himself as the man he has always wanted to be. Investing Ubik with powers
above and beyond that of any other product in half-life, Chip uses this miracle in a spray can to convince himself that he is still a “real” man and that his organizational masculinity is still “authentic.” The illusion of control that Ubik gives Chip, control which he associates with Runciter and his success in business, thus allows him to ignore the vicious cycle of consumption and desire that dictates his every action. By the end of the novel, Ubik has become, for Chip, the ultimate commodity in a world where reality itself is quickly selling out, and the only thing that can resurrect his flagging manhood.

Just as it does for the Martian settlers in *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*, consumerism governs every aspect of Chip’s perception of reality. This consumerism is implicitly challenged, however, even if Chip himself fails to recognize it, the moment the half-life world begins to lose shape and the objects in it start to regress. Early academic criticism of the novel, such as Peter Fitting’s “Ubik: The Deconstruction of Bourgeois SF,” focuses in particular on this link between the disintegration of reality and its implied critique of capitalism. For Fitting, by “lay[ing] bare the principal ways that science fiction can be used for ideological ends” (149), *Ubik* “explode[s] and transcend[s] the science-fiction genre and the ‘representational novel’ of which it is a part” (149), while simultaneously “looking towards a future freed from the restraints it has exposed” (149). In this way, *Ubik* “acts as a critique of the ideological presuppositions of the science-fiction genre” (150), presuppositions that Fitting suggests are disrupted by the breakdown of reality within half-life. The regression of objects, Fitting contends, helps liberate Chip politically because it reveals the pervasive commodity fetishism that dominated his perception while he was still alive. Fitting even goes so far as to claim that Ubik, as a product, is “the embodiment of exchange value” (154) and “a universal equivalent …
which can represent or replace any other commodity” (154). This representation of Ubik
as some sort of commodity of commodities, Fitting argues, ultimately forces the reader
“out of familiar reading habits while drawing … attention to the role of the novel as a
form of manipulation” (156). By “deliberate[ly] mislabelling” (Fitting 154) the
commodities in Chip’s world and by granting übercommodity status to Ubik, the novel is
therefore able, in Fitting’s opinion, to expose and subvert “the commercial contract at the
basis of the traditional novel” (154), freeing both Chip and the reader from what Fitting
sees as the monolithic tyranny of capitalism.

Not all critics of *Ubik*, of course, read the novel as Fitting does simply as a tale of
emancipation from capitalism. In “Towards a Theory of Paranoia: The Science Fiction of
Philip K. Dick,” for example, Carl Freedman claims that *Ubik*’s emphasis on commodity
fetishism also reflects Dick’s paranoia and pessimism about the possibility of individual
agency. As Freedman notes, “commodities for Dick are frequently ‘alive’ in a more than
metaphorical sense, for they are shown to participate in the paradigmatically ‘human’
exchanges of linguistic and sexual intercourse” (11). For Freedman, this “entry into
animation” (11) allows the commodities of Chip’s world to “foreground their role as
exchange-values by verbally (and not too politely) demanding money before each act of
use” (11). According to Freedman, the rude and demanding coffee machine Chip
encounters at Zürich Field terrifies him not so much because of the prematurely clotted
cream it gives him, but because of the way the machine highlights the contractual
obligation between itself and him.\(^7\) This tendency toward simultaneous commodification

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\(^7\) Chip’s suspicion here, that the commodities and machines of his world are somehow alive and potentially hostile, appears again and again in Dick’s fiction from this period and indeed constitutes a central motif in his fiction throughout the 1960s. In “Man, Android, and Machine” (1976), for instance, an essay in which he reflects back on *Ubik* at some length, Dick declares that “the greatest change growing across our world
and animation, Freedman suggests, is directly responsible for Chip’s paranoia, since paranoia like Chip’s, Freedman claims, is “no mere aberration but is structurally crucial to the way that we, as ordinary subjects of bourgeois hegemony, represent ourselves to ourselves and embark on the Cartesian project of acquiring empiricist knowledge” (10).

“If Dick’s protagonists tend to be paranoid,” he observes, “there is always much for them to be paranoid about. For they live in a world dominated by commodities and conspiracies; which is to say, a world not wholly unlike our own” (12). Ubik, the only thing that Chip believes can save his world, is itself the product of a shadowy conspiracy that involves both his boss Runciter and Runciter’s recently deceased wife. In this topsy-turvy reality where dead wives still speak, Chip must be paranoid if he ever hopes to obtain a lifetime supply of this miraculous aerosol that promises to help him find, once again, his own sense of individual agency.

For all that they might differ in their opinions about the novel’s ultimate emancipatory potential, both these critics do agree that any implied critique of capitalism in Ubik occurs primarily in the simulated world of half-life. Predictably for Dick, who constructs the hallucinations in The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch in a somewhat similar fashion, this simulated world is even more commodified than the real world the characters of the novel have left behind. Just as the layouts of Perky Pat do in that earlier novel, the commodities of this imaginary world dominate the (half-)lives of Chip and his companions, despite the fact they have no material basis and therefore can only ever possess exchange value. Unfortunately for Chip, as Runciter makes clear while trying to

these days is probably the momentum of the living toward reification, and at the same time a reciprocal entry into animation by the mechanical” (212). Machines in other words, for Dick as for Chip, are becoming more like humans, just as humans are becoming more like machines.

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communicate with him through an advertisement on television (ads being the one language that Chip is sure to understand), “world deterioration” (127) of half-life’s ghostly commodities “is a normal experience of many half-lifers, especially in the early stages when ties to the real reality are still very strong. A sort of lingering universe is retained as a residual charge, experienced as a pseudo environment but highly unstable and unsupported by any ergic substructure” (127). To stop this world deterioration and prevent the commodities he prizes so much from vanishing altogether, Chip learns he must obtain cans of “new, more-powerful-than-ever Ubik” (127). Capable of resurrecting both Chip and the world around him, Ubik thus becomes an emblem of the real that Chip must buy into before he can restore “real reality” itself and, in the words of Freedman, is that übercommodity that alone in half-life is the “ultimate and universal commodity and the symbol of the ubiquity of the commodity structure” (“Towards” 14).

Unstable realities, such as those generated by the consumers of Chew-Z in The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch or the half-lifers of Ubik, are of course, as Dick himself freely admits, a common feature of Dick’s fiction throughout the 1960s. In “How to Build a Universe That Doesn’t Fall Apart Two Days Later” (1978), for instance, Dick declares, “I like to build universes that fall apart. I like to see them come unglued, and I like to see how the characters in the novels cope with this problem” (262). According to critics such as Scott Durham, by wrecking universes Dick reveals the inherent instability of a thoroughly commodified universe and connects this instability to the “death” of the subject. In “P.K. Dick: From the Death of the Subject to a Theology of Late Capitalism,” Durham uses Fredric Jameson’s concept of “late capitalism” to discuss the death of the subject in a number of Dick’s novels, including Ubik. According to
Durham, “Dick links his narrative phenomenology of the subject-in-dissolution to the logic of late capitalism, which forcibly dissolves previously autonomous spheres into the capitalist process” (179). The rapidly disintegrating commodities of half-life, in other words, forcibly emphasize for Durham the pervasive nature of late capitalism within a postmodern context; while the end of autonomous subjectivity that Chip experiences in half-life reveals to him in the starkest terms possible, Durham suggests, the empty promises of late capitalism and its consumerism. In this sense, Chip’s reality begins to collapse not simply because he is now dead, but because the products around him finally reveal the elusive desire that is the only thing that gives his life meaning.

In an article attempting to reconcile these earlier critiques of the novel with the representation of media, drugs, and schizophrenia in Dick’s writing, Anthony Enns suggests that, “by linking technology with the collapse of the liberal humanist tradition,” Dick’s fiction invites critical readings that strongly support postmodern technoculture theories” (68). Ubik, like The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch, is no exception to Enns’ observation here, and indeed Scott Bukatman, in Terminal Identity: The Virtual Subject in Postmodern Science Fiction, discusses Ubik in precisely the technoculture terms Enns identifies. Drawing on Guy Debord’s situationist manifesto, The Society of the Spectacle (1967), Bukatman extends earlier postmodern analyses of Dick’s work by incorporating them into what is clearly a “spectacular” understanding of science fiction as a genre. For Bukatman, paranoia is an indication of the extent to which the spectacle, as the mechanism by which the postmodern operates, is undermined in Dick’s writing. As

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8 Unsurprisingly, Enns neither distinguishes between different varieties of liberalism nor does he treat liberalism and humanism as separate ideologies in and of themselves. For him, as for so many other critics, Dick’s fiction is simply a reaction to the collapse of a monolithic and internally undifferentiated “liberal humanism.”
Bukatman notes, “the paranoid sensibility of Philip K. Dick, in dozens of science fiction novels and stories, explores the alienation that results from seeing through the spectacle. The spectacle pervades Dick’s universe as a benign and effective mode of control; the spectacle constitutes the parameters of reality for the citizen” (48). This ability to “see through the spectacle” of postmodernity subjects Dick’s male protagonists in turn to what Bukatman calls “crises of subjectivity; crises which begin when the categories of the real and the rational begin to dissolve their boundaries” (48). In *Ubik*, Bukatman argues, “Dick challenges the spectacle by foregrounding the quest for elusive meaning” (55), as “Chip has been privileged to look upon the final level, what might actually comprise real reality, the Reality Studio where reality is staged” (94). In this regard, *Ubik* is the Reality Studio’s most spectacular product, a commodity that “confirms one’s relation to and position in the world … by constructing a temporary state of pseudo-satisfaction which lasts only until the can is empty or the next commercial is viewed” (Bukatman 97). As such, “*Ubik* becomes,” for Bukatman, “the work of commodity fetishism, featuring a product whose function is only to sustain the illusion of coherence” (97). In the sense that Jean Baudrillard (a significant influence on Bukatman) uses the term, *Ubik* thus captures the essence of “simulation,” of the model that precedes and governs all facts.9

For Dick, both simulation and simulacra are the inevitable result of rampant commodification, and human simulacra, or androids, feature especially prominently in a number of his novels from the 1960s, including *Ubik*. “Within the universe,” Dick fears,

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9 Baudrillard claims, in *Simulacra and Simulation* (1981), that “simulation is characterized by a precession of the model, of all models based on the merest fact” (16). Models, of course, are inherently political in nature, in that they, like political ideologies, dictate what should be, rather than what is.
there exist fierce cold things, which I have given the name “machines” to. Their behaviour frightens me, especially when it imitates human behavior so well that I get the uncomfortable sense that these things are trying to pass themselves off as humans but are not. I call them “androids,” which is my own way of using that word. (“Man, Android” 211)

As Dick makes clear in this essay, the android is clearly a metaphorical figure, in that it is not the result of “a sincere attempt to create in the laboratory a human being” (“Man, Android” 211), but rather “a thing somehow generated to deceive us in a cruel way, to cause us to think it to be one of ourselves” (“Man, Android” 211). As such, “their handshake is the grip of death, and their smile has the coldness of the grave” (“Man, Android” 211). Despite how much these simulacra repulse him, these metaphorically artificial human beings nonetheless also fascinate Dick. If nothing else, the possibility of androids suggests to him the existence of whole economies of illusion. In “How to Build a Universe That Doesn’t Fall Apart Two Days Later,” for example, Dick claims that fake realities will create fake humans. Or, fake humans will generate fake realities and then sell them to other humans, turning them, eventually, into forgeries of themselves. So we wind up with fake humans inventing fake realities and then peddling them to other fake humans. It is just a very large version of Disneyland. You can have the Pirate Ride or the Lincoln Simulacrum or Mr. Toad’s Wild Ride – you can have all of them, but none is true. (264)

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10 Just as it did on Ray Bradbury before him and Umberto Eco after, Disneyland had a profound influence on Dick’s philosophical speculation. The Lincoln simulacrum in both *We Can Build You* (1972) and *Martian Time-Slip*, for instance, bears an uncanny resemblance to the Mr. Lincoln robot in the original Hall of Presidents at Disneyland.
For Dick, the android is thus the product of a world so thoroughly commodified that humanity itself is now for sale. In such a world, of which the half-life in *Ubik* is certainly an example, reality quickly breaks down, and it is therefore hardly surprising that Chip is often unable to distinguish the true human being from the imposter. In Chip’s world, as in the Tiki Room at Disneyland, the artificial and the “dead” are as real as, and fundamentally indistinguishable from, the organic and the “living.”

Fearing that his own humanity is as illusory as the world around him, Chip becomes worried that he himself might be turning into an android. While daydreaming about his colleague Wendy Wright, for instance, a woman whom he desires intensely, Chip suddenly notices that near her he became aware of the physical mechanisms which kept him alive; within him machinery, pipes and valves and gas-compressors and fan belts had to chug away at a losing task, a labor ultimately doomed. Seeing her face, he discovered that his own consisted of a garish mask; noticing her body made him feel like a low-class windup toy. (59)

The reason Chip imagines himself as an automaton here is that his fantasies about Wright all involve him purchasing her somehow. Relating to others exclusively in terms of their commercial value, Chip always equates both himself and others with the living.

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11 Intrigued in particular by the fake animals of Adventureland, Dick at one point humorously speculates about the effects of sabotaging Disneyland by substituting real animals for fake ones: in Disneyland there are fake birds worked by electric motors that emit caws and shrieks as you pass by them. Suppose some night all of us sneaked into the park with real birds and substituted them for the artificial ones. Imagine the horror the Disneyland officials would feel when they discovered the cruel hoax. Real birds! And perhaps someday even real hippos and lions! Consternation. The park being cunningly transformed from the unreal to the real, by sinister forces. For instance, suppose the Matterhorn turned into a genuine snow-covered mountain? What if the entire place, by a miracle of God’s power and wisdom, was changed, in a moment, in the blink of an eye, into something incorruptible? They would have to close down. (“How to Build” 264)
commodities of the half-life world, such as the litigious coffee machine he encounters in the Zürich airport. In the end, he comes to believe that Wright is human only because she refuses to accept his economic understanding of intimate relationships. Though this refusal arouses Chip, it is not enough for him to pursue her wholeheartedly. In fact, Wright scares Chip because he believes that, as a “real” woman, she cannot be bought or sold. Only female androids, human products who are sold on the open market, can ever satisfy this man who sees himself as a “low-class windup toy.”

Like the “halfpound can of authentic Kenya coffee” (23) that he buys on a drunken whim, Chip eventually becomes romantically involved with Pat Conley, a woman who, in stark contrast to Wendy Wright, is fully aware of what she represents to committed organization men like Chip. Foregrounding the essentially commercial nature of their relationship in their first meeting, Pat informs Chip that he is “a little, debt-stricken, ineffective bureaucrat who can’t even scrape together enough coins to pay his door to let him out of his apt” (32). Presenting herself to him as a symbol of what he desires but cannot necessarily afford, Pat then uses Chip’s inability to manage his own finances to secure a place for herself at Runciter Associates. Giving him money to help him pay “what must be virtually the entire month’s rent” (34), Pat notes that she “consider[s] [Chip’s apartment hers] as of now” (34) and asks, bluntly, “when can I move my things in here?” (34). With a flourish worthy of Palmer Eldritch humiliating Mayerson, Pat emasculates Chip in this moment by forcing him to acknowledge that he has, in effect, been bought by the object of his own desire. By doing so, Pat not only ensures that she becomes Chip’s mistress, but also that, as an organization “man” herself, she is able to better serve the organization of psi-entrepreneur Ray Hollis by infiltrating
Runciter’s company on his rival’s behalf. In this way, Pat’s candid, mercenary behaviour reveals her to be just what both Chip and Dick himself most fear, a cruel and calculating android clothed in the body of a pretty, dark-haired girl.\footnote{In a sense, the “caveat emptor” (25) tattoo on Pat’s “bare, dark forearm” (25) is a warning of her merciless android nature; after all, she is explicitly using the surface of her body to tell men like Chip that, if they try to buy her, they ought to be wary of what they might get in return.}

As Hayles notes in *How We Became Posthuman*, Pat is like many of the women in Dick’s novels, in that, as a “schizoid android” (162), she is stuck “at the center of [the] extraordinarily complex traffic between [the] cultural, scientific, and psychological implications of cybernetics” (161). Frequently taking the form of a dark-haired girl, this “schizoid android represents the coming together of a person who acts like a machine with a literal interpretation of that person as a machine” (Hayles 162). “Typically gendered female,” Hayles claims, “[the schizoid android] is often represented as a bright, cold, emotionally distant woman. She is characterized by a flattening of affect and an inability to feel empathy, incapable of understanding others as people like herself” (161). In *Ubik*, Pat is without a doubt one of these schizoid androids. Her cruelty, a result of the android’s lack of empathy, destructures and reorganizes Chip’s understanding of reality, facilitating at the same time Dick’s analysis of consumer capitalism and organizational masculinity. As Hayles notes,

the figure of the android allows Dick to combine a scathing critique of the politics of incorporation with the psychological complexities of trying to decide who qualifies as an ‘authentic’ human. Gender dynamics is central to these complexities, for when the schizoid woman is brought into close proximity with a
male character, he reacts to the androidism in her personality by experiencing a radical instability in the boundaries that define him and his world. (162)

As such, Chip’s reality begins to disintegrate, and the boundaries of his world blur, only after he meets Pat, the feminine embodiment of android cruelty. Dangerous yet seductive, Pat thus symbolizes the dehumanizing temptation of the consumerist and patriarchal desire that simultaneously attracts and repulses Chip throughout the novel.

In a sense, Pat Conley is an explicitly feminine counterpart to Palmer Eldritch, in that, like the drug-induced, directed solipsism of Eldritch, her ability to alter the present by changing what happened in the past gives her a terrifying advantage over the other characters in the novel. Already in firm economic control of their relationship, Pat uses the threat of her unique form of time-travel to subjugate Chip to her will. Physically attracted to this “slim and copper-skinned” (24) woman with “large dark eyes” (24), Chip finds it difficult to resist Pat, even though her sexual power over him, power that guarantees his submission, frightens him because it emasculates him at the same time that it endows Pat with a sense of masculine entitlement. Eventually adopting gendered identities that are the exact opposite of the heteronormative relationship between Runciter and his wife, or indeed between both Bulero and Mayerson and the women with whom they interact, Chip becomes more passive and subdued as the novel progresses, while Pat embraces an increasingly aggressive and domineering attitude toward him. In the end, Chip begins to resent this role reversal and Pat’s very existence. For Chip, this is because, as for Donna Haraway, “to be feminized means to be made extremely vulnerable; able to be disassembled, reassembled, [and] exploited as a reserve labor force; … [to] lea[d] an existence that always borders on being obscene, out of place, and
reducible to sex” (2287). Beaten down and subjected to the will of a real man’s (wo)man, Chip is given by Pat a taste of what being a “woman” means, and this lesson is not something Chip, whose entire understanding of manhood hinges on being in control, can tolerate. Unable to free himself, and thereby reclaim the autonomy he considers rightfully his as an organization man, Chip therefore reimagines Pat as a monster who, like Palmer Eldritch, is a threat to the independence and masculinity of all organization men.

Like Mayerson, and typically for the insecure organization men of Dick’s fiction, Chip exudes a sense of hopelessness and despair, believing himself “doomed in the classic sense” (92). Eager to make someone else responsible for his misery, Chip of course blames Pat, the woman he fears “will move in and destroy [him]” (92). In Philip K. Dick: Exhilaration and Terror of the Postmodern, Christopher Palmer links Chip’s despair here to his mounting sense of sexual impotence. Unable to cultivate a sexually satisfying relationship with Pat, Chip feels intensely and acutely emasculated. This sense of emasculation ultimately stems, as Palmer argues, from Chip’s failed “advances,” both sexually toward Pat and physically within the rapidly regressing world around him.

Echoing Fredric Jameson’s discussion of historicity in Postmodernism, Palmer further notes that “SF is a strongly kinetic form: it is very concerned with journeying, moving outwards, opening out, travelling towards or in search of wonder” (50). “From the perspective of Ubik,” however, “the whole tradition of SF, from Verne and Wells to

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13 In Postmodernism, Jameson defines historicity as “a relationship to the present which somehow defamiliarizes it and allows us that distance from immediacy which is at length characterized as a historical perspective” (284). Science fiction, he suggests, is one of the few genres “capable of restoring life and feeling to this only intermittently functioning organ that is our capacity to organize and live time historically” (284).
Clarke, Benford and Gibson, seems to share an optimism about freedom of movement through space; the movement is now stalled, the optimism shrivelled” (Palmer 56). Like “a bird caught in cobwebs” (92), Chip feels trapped both physically and emotionally in his relationship with Pat; he cannot move away from her, nor can he get any closer. Pat’s presence in Chip’s life thus prevents him from taking control of the horrific situation in which he has found himself, since in their half-dead relationship, Chip “can imagine and desire … but he cannot actually move or act” (Palmer 58). Understandably, this greatly disturbs him as authority and self-determination are, for men such as Chip, two of the defining features of organizational masculinity.

In Chip’s world, as in The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch, personal relationships are defined almost exclusively in economic terms. As Hayles notes, “the interpellation of the individual into market relations so thoroughly defines the characters [of Ubik] that it is impossible to think of the characters apart from the economic institutions into which they are incorporated” (162). Ultimately, it is this economic foundation that makes Chip’s relationship with Pat so unbearably stressful for him. For Chip, economic power, such as that which Pat possesses over him, is synonymous with both masculine authority and the autonomy of the individual. Fiscally bound to Pat and at the mercy of a disintegrating universe for which he believes she is also responsible, Chip fears that he has lost control of his life and has therefore failed as a man. To remedy this situation, he turns to his boss Runciter, a man who, unlike Chip, is still very much in control both of his own life and the lives of his employees. Embodying a powerful and enigmatic model of organizational masculinity, as the only character in the novel who isn’t dead, Runciter occupies a privileged position outside the rapidly
receding universe of half-life. Though such a position of power and influence could very well make Runciter a monster like Eldritch, in Chip’s eyes at least, it transforms him instead into a religious idol, into a messiah who will eventually rescue all organization men from the clutches of ambitious and unscrupulous women like Pat.

In sharp contrast to Mayerson and Bulero’s reaction to Eldritch, Chip is not at all horrified by Runciter’s ability to influence and change the lives of his employees in half-life. In fact, unlike both Bulero and Mayerson, Chip welcomes Runciter’s seeming omniscience. Fearing that his relationship with Pat has destroyed his manhood (and possibly the universe itself), Chip is looking for a saviour when he discovers that Runciter is actually still alive. While Chip himself was alive, of course, Runciter’s aura of economic and masculine authority drew Chip toward him like a moth to a flame. Now that Chip is dead, this flame becomes a blazing searchlight, dragging Chip inexorably toward it. According to Chip, Runciter is a “man greater than all of us put together” (85) and “the most life-loving, full-living man [he has] ever met” (84). The mere thought of “a man that vital … and vitalic” (79), “wakened into half-life activity one hour a month [and] deteriorating, weakening, growing dim” (79), upsets Chip terribly. To a large extent, Chip’s despair at the prospect of Runciter’s death (rather than his own) stems from his belief that Runciter is, in many ways, the perfect organization man. Feared yet respected by both his subordinates and rivals, Runciter’s authority and confidence powerfully attract Chip because they are attributes of that strong organizational masculine identity he himself wishes he possessed. Unlike Chip, whose own financial ineptitude subjects him to the will of Pat and precludes him from ever possessing the commodities and women he desires, Runciter not only possesses the products other men
want, but also controls their distribution, at least in half-life. It therefore comes as no surprise, to Chip at least, that Runciter alone also holds a monopoly on Ubik, on the only commodity Chip believes will ever make him a “real” man again.

Ubik, that commodity of commodities and product of products, eventually comes to define every aspect of Chip and Runciter’s relationship. For Chip, Ubik is of course much more than just the can of hairspray or deodorant that it superficially resembles; a potent “reality support” (127) that stops “world-deterioration of th[e] regressive type” (127) dead in its tracks, Ubik is also the only thing capable of restoring a semblance of consumerist normalcy to Chip’s life. Throughout the book, there are “ads” for Ubik at the beginning of each chapter. These ads claim that Ubik will render similar products obsolete regardless of what they are, as Ubik itself is the ultimate consumer commodity. The final ad for Ubik, however, differs from those that precede it, in that it is distinctly theological in tone as well. More than simply the right product for any occasion, Ubik declares itself responsible for creating the world and everything in it:

I am Ubik. Before the universe was, I am. I made the suns. I made the worlds. I created the lives and the places they inhabit; I move them here, I put them there. They go as I say, they do as I tell them. I am the word and my name is never spoken, the name which no one knows. I am called Ubik, but that is not my name. I am. I shall always be. (215)

This speech, a direct allusion to the beginning of the Gospel of John, identifies Ubik as the capitalist equivalent of the Logos, of God’s commercial word made flesh. In his study of religion in Dick’s works, Pink Beams of Light from the God in the Gutter, Gabriel McKee suggests that this religious aspect of Ubik is central to understanding the
novel and that “analyses that neglect to look beyond a socio-political meaning are limited at best” (25). Indeed, in “How to Build a Universe That Doesn’t Fall Apart Two Days Later,” Dick himself supports a theological reading of *Ubik* when he notes that “it is obvious … who and what Ubik is; it specifically says that it is the word, which is to say, the Logos” (277). For Chip, lost in a world that is rapidly losing its conceptual coherence, Ubik is more therefore than just a symbol of ultimate commodification; it is also a ubiquitous manifestation of the God of organization life himself.

Speculating along similar theological lines, Runciter claims while discussing the possibility of reincarnation with his own half-dead wife Ella that “half-life … ha[s] made theologians out of all of them” (14). It has not, however, radically changed how the undead citizens of this brave new world view their own spiritual salvation. In many ways, the new capitalist theology of Ubik is remarkable because it is so similar to older, patriarchal Christian traditions. Like the God of the Old and New Testament, Ubik is a distinctly masculine entity, a “father of products” who embodies the generative principles of capitalist industry. Runciter, in his capacity as the sole retailer of Ubik in half-life, is the chief evangelist for this upstart idol of consumerism. He is, however, more than just a mere priest of this God that takes the body of an aerosol can; like Christ, he is also the only legitimate means by which to gain access to the divine. In “Man, Android, and Machine” (1976), Dick even goes so far as to claim for Runciter a form of generative power often associated with the Christian saviour:

> What melts the ice and snow covering the characters in *Ubik*, and which halts the cooling off of their lives, the entropy that they feel, is the voice of Mr. Runciter, their former employer, calling to them. The voice of Mr. Runciter is none other
than that same voice that each bulb and seed and root in the ground, our ground,
in our wintertime, hears. It hears: “Wake up! Sleepers awake!” (217)

Like Jesus, in other words, Runciter is the embodiment of the generative principle itself and, as such, a deity who is able to create reality by virtue of sheer, radical, masculine will. Feeling “like an ineffectual moth, fluttering at the windowpane of reality” (129), Chip quickly substitutes Runciter for Christ, recasting him as his own personal saviour, a saviour that is now the Son of Commerce instead of the Son of Man. Eager to imitate him, and by doing so gain some of his divine masculine power, Chip thus becomes Runciter’s most faithful follower and, by the end of the novel, is very much the disciple whom Runciter loves most.

Although Runciter’s powers are somewhat more limited, he is easily as ambitious as Palmer Eldritch, his monstrous forefather in Dick’s earlier novel. Despite the obvious parallels, however, Chip does not fear Runciter as Mayerson and Bulero fear Eldritch. Instead, Chip worships at the altar of Runciter of his own free will, largely because, in contrast to that other divine father of the firm, Runciter offers to reinforce, rather than destroy, Chip’s understanding of what it means to be a successful organization man. The embodiment of an organizational masculinity that *Ubik* portrays as positive without qualification, Runciter highlights, for Chip, only the generative, productive aspects of consumer capitalism rather than the all-consuming desire it creates in those bound to it. By ignoring the destructive possibilities of consumerism and choosing to imitate Runciter without reservation, Chip is able to convince himself he is once again reclaiming that sense of agency that is at the heart of organizational masculinity, and that he is thereby assuming an active role in his own salvation. Determined to reinvent himself at any cost
and become a “real” man again, Chip embraces his attempt to imitate Runciter wholeheartedly and, as a consequence, finally resolves to confront Pat, that seemingly satanic force he is eager to blame for the regressive disintegration of the fallen half-life world around him.

From the moment he realizes that something is wrong, Chip assumes without question that Pat is using her anti-psi ability to change the past in order to distort and control his perception of reality. According to Chip, Pat is “a polymorphic, perverse agency which likes to watch. An infantile, retarded entity which enjoys what’s happening” (178). “Descend[ing] step by step into what is deranged and foul” (178), Chip fears that Pat is dragging him further and further “into the world of the tomb” (178).14 “The thing we call Pat” (178), Chip claims as he adopts his employer’s sense of masculine entitlement, is the opposite of Runciter; she is, according to Chip, a deranged demi-god and “malicious force … letting us scamper and twitter like debrained mice” (71). Keen to blame this woman whom he believes has made his life so miserable, Chip thus readily assumes Pat is responsible for his current predicament. He soon discovers, however, that all is not as it seems in the shadowy world of half-life. Though Pat herself may think she is destroying Chip’s world, and certainly does nothing to dispel his suspicions, she is as much of a victim as Chip is. The real culprit, as Chip learns in a plot twist typical of Dick’s fiction, is in fact not a woman at all, but another insecure man like himself.

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14 This notion of the “tomb world,” a place of maximum entropy in which time has stopped, appears frequently in Dick’s novels from the 1960s. For example, the possibility of escaping the “world of the tomb” (Ubik 178), of reversing the “form-destroying process of entropy” (Do Androids 98), is what tempts so many humans to adopt the fictional religion of Mercerism in Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?
Taunted by Pat, who at this point still believes she is in charge of the situation, Chip climbs his hotel’s stairs for what seems like the last time. Upon reaching his room, however, where the oblivion of the tomb world appears to be his only option, Chip discovers Runciter waiting for him. Spraying Chip with Ubik, Runciter temporarily restores Chip’s health and, in the discussion that follows, Chip discovers that it is not actually Pat who is responsible for his crumbling and fragmented sense of reality. Instead, as Chip realizes while reflecting on the existential teasing to which he and the others have been subjected, it is Jory, a boy whose “cruel, unformed, peculiar personality … would fit in with what we’re experiencing, the capricious contradictory happenings” (189). Appearing before Chip as an effeminate teenager, Jory embodies all of Chip’s fears about his own masculinity. A sort of psychic vampire, Jory dominates his victims in half-life by slowly and surreptitiously draining them of their remaining life, rather than subjecting them to an “honest” demonstration of his will as a good organization man would. “It’s hard to explain,” Jory tells Chip,

but I’ve been doing it a long time to lots of half-life people. I eat their life, what remains of it. There’s very little in each person, so I need a lot of them. I used to wait until they had been in half-life awhile, but now I have to have them immediately. If I’m going to be able to live myself. If you come close to me and listen – I’ll hold my mouth open – you can hear their voices. (196)

By lurking in the shadows in this way and exploiting Chip’s misogynistic attitude toward the women in his life, Jory has managed to convince him that it was Pat who was trying to kill him: “I didn’t worry about the reversion,” Jory says, because “I knew you’d figure it was Pat Conley. It would seem like her talent because it’s sort of like what her talent
does. I thought maybe the rest of you would kill her. I would enjoy that” (198). As Hayles notes, Pat is thus “revealed as a mere façade” (185), as a false monster feeding only on Chip’s misogyny and ignorance; it is Jory, rather, this “figure that sees but gives no assistance, offers no hand, that is the android” (Dick “Man, Android” 226). If Runciter is the Christ of organization men, imposing his will on reality by selling his wares to satisfied customers, then Jory is his android opposite, an effeminate Satan destroying the world and consuming its inhabitants merely to appease his own insatiable appetite for new human “products.”

Ultimately, though not unexpectedly, Ubik is the only thing that can prevent Jory from destroying the half-life world in which Chip must now live. Unfortunately, as he learns from a pharmacist in a regressed drugstore, Ubik is exceedingly “dear” (165) and costs much more than a pathological spendthrift like Chip could ever manage to save. Runciter, however, knowing of Chip’s “problem regarding money” (205), offers him a “free, lifetime supply” (205) of this miraculous aerosol spray. Meeting with Runciter’s chief sales agent in the half-life world, his dead wife Ella, Chip soon finds out just how much this consumer’s dream will cost him. Ella, who will shortly leave half-life for the “smoky red light” (206) of reincarnation, approaches Chip because she is looking for a substitute for herself:

I have a very selfish, practical reason for assisting you, Mr. Chip; I want you to replace me. I want to have someone whom Glen can ask for advice and assistance, whom he can lean on. You will be ideal; you’ll be doing in half-life what you did in full-life. So, in a sense, I’m not motivated by noble sentiments; I saved you from Jory for a good common-sense reason. (206)
The deal Ella offers Chip here, in other words, will require him to subordinate himself to Runciter’s will and replace Ella as Runciter’s faithful wife. For Chip, this relationship with Runciter proves entirely satisfactory, as any alternative, perhaps surprisingly for a man who wants nothing more than to prove to himself that he is in total control of the world around him, remains elusive, if not completely inconceivable.

In the end, in what is the novel’s final irony, Chip must effectively emasculate himself if he is ever to resist the monstrous antithesis to organizational masculinity that Jory represents. Anxious to convince himself that he is not simply a replacement for Runciter’s soon-to-be-fully-dead wife and that he too is “a positive-thinking, powerful man … who has worked his way step by step to the top” (97), Chip deludes himself into thinking that he is Runciter’s business partner and that they are now equals. In this sense, it is Chip’s subordination to Runciter that is, in his own eyes at least, his greatest achievement as an organization man. For the deluded Chip, Ubik is indeed “a beneficent aid to mankind when sedulously employed as indicated” (142) because it does appear to be “guaranteed to restore lost manliness” (142); it is also, of course, the one product that Runciter uses, finally and irrevocably, to ensure that Chip is little more than a privileged customer of his own organization. Unlike Mayerson, who rejects the organization and its masculinity in their entirety, or Bulero, who returns to the social liberal roots of the social ethic to redefine his own understanding of manhood, Chip allows himself to be willingly consumed by the organizational masculinity of another man, a man whom he enthusiastically accepts as the one true God of all organization men.

15 Although Ella appears to have at one time been “the co-owner of Runciter Associates” (11) and Runciter still routinely asks her advice on “major policy-planning decisions” (13), her position within the organization is consultative rather than managerial. In the end, it is always up to Runciter to decide what the company will and will not do; Ella is merely his advisor.
According to Dick, reality ultimately depends on the observer because “the kosmos is not as it appears to be” (“How to Build” 277). Writing in 1978, Dick suggests that “what [the universe] probably is, at its deepest level, is exactly that which the human being is at his deepest level – call it mind or soul, it is something unitary that lives and thinks, and only appears to be plural and material” (“How to Build” 277). Working at this time on VALIS (1981), a novel that is even more explicitly theological than either The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch or Ubik, Dick believes that “much of this view [of reality] reaches us through the Logos doctrine regarding Christ. The Logos was both that which thought and the thing that it thought: thinker and thought together” (“How to Build” 277). Certainly the exaggerated caricatures of organization men that haunt Dick’s novels throughout the 1960s, figures such as Palmer Eldritch and Glen Runciter, are like the Logos, in that they are capable of creating and manipulating the lived experience of reality both for themselves and others. And indeed for Dick, as Gabriel McKee notes, such a religious interpretation of reality is often “more valuable than more secular, political analyses” (26), even if it is actually the complicated masculinity of these gods of the organization that provokes the crises of masculine identity that Dick uses in his novels to deconstruct and analyze both political ideology and reality itself.

For Dick, as for Whyte, understanding the organization man and his social ethic is important because “it is from their ranks that are coming most of the first and second echelons of our leadership, and it is their values which will set the American temper” (Whyte 3). Unlike Whyte, however, for whom masculinity is invisible, Dick
acknowledges in his fiction the extent to which masculinity structures the lives of men in the organization. Like Kerfoot and Knights, Dick’s novels explicitly recognize that “masculinity and management are at once mutually embedded and reproductive of one another” (Kerfoot and Knights 92). How men manage themselves and the people around them, in other words, defines in these texts how such men come to terms with what it means to be a man. For the men of the organization in Ubik and The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch, the masculine self thus “acquires the status of a project to be worked upon, policed for weaknesses, fought against, pushed and honed to meet the refinements of the ideal – this in spite of the often very real sensation of fear, weakness, or failure to live up to the image of the masculine ideal” (Kerfoot and Knights 92). For the men of these novels, this “project” is part of the often painful process of realizing the masculine self, a process that, as Christopher Forth notes in his survey of Masculinity in the Modern West, “typically … involves some degree of physical or symbolic violence” (2).

Mayerson, for instance, can only escape the organization that has ensnared him by condemning himself to a life of pointless toil in the barren Martian sand; while Chip, by contrast, must delude himself into becoming Runciter’s humble servant, so that he might inherit at least some of his boss’ seemingly unlimited power over other men. In both cases, paradoxically, these men must surrender part of what formerly made them who they are as men if they ever to reclaim the right to call themselves men once more.

In The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch and Ubik, as a consequence of this paradoxical and fundamentally unresolvable dilemma, the social ethic and its organizational masculinity have become immutable facts about the world, both now and in the future. No matter how much anything else might change, from technology to
fashion, these novels suggest that this political ideology and its masculinity will always persist, intact and uncontested. Throughout all the permutations of plot and character in Dick’s novels, one message is therefore clear: the future belongs to organizations and the men who work for them. Although the organizational masculinity supported by these organizations will, according to Dick, ultimately destroy the fragile bonds that bind humanity together, alienating men from each other as they all vie for dominance, it is nonetheless the only game in town. As such, all of these men, from executives like Bulero and Runciter to managers like Mayerson and Chip, must eventually come to accept this state of affairs, even if they sometimes buck against the control of the companies for which they work. Dissatisfied as they sometimes are with their lives, the protagonists of Dick’s novels are simply incapable of resisting the organization in any meaningful way because they cannot imagine any political ideology that does not somehow sanction and encourage the organizational masculinity of the social ethic. In this sense, the men in Dick’s novels are no different than those found in Asimov’s *Foundation* series or so much other 1950s science fiction; like their Golden Age counterparts, who all acknowledge the inherent “rightness” of social liberalism and its hegemonic masculinity, Dick’s managers and executives ensure, through either fatalistic resignation or enthusiastic acceptance, the inevitable triumph of organizational masculinity, itself simply a descendant of the hegemonic masculinity of social liberalism adapted to the requirements of organization life. Although Dick certainly questions organizational masculinity and thoroughly explores its negative effects, novels such as *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* and *Ubik* ultimately reaffirm the hegemony of this heir to the earlier hegemonic masculinity of the Golden Age. In the end, despite all
of Dick’s conceptual experimentation and attempts to redefine what constitutes science fiction, both the social ethic and its organizational masculinity remain entrenched and irrefutable.
Chapter 4

“Could Say Our Customs Are Natural Laws”: Biological Determinism, Market Libertarianism, and the Politics of Masculine Strength in Robert A. Heinlein’s *The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress*

Responding to the same contradictions inherent in social liberalism that prevent the men of *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* and *Ubik* from ever being able to realize a form of masculinity other than the one dictated by the social ethic, Robert A. Heinlein’s *The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress* (1966) attempts to imagine what a society informed by the principles of market libertarianism, a descendant of classical liberalism, might look like. In the novel, Heinlein’s protagonists carefully examine the rationale for, and potential outcomes of, a self-proclaimed market libertarian revolution, one which they constantly promote by pointing out the strengths of their political ideology and eagerly anticipating the objections of their critics. Ultimately, however, it is the unshakeable faith of these same revolutionaries in biological determinism, itself a core concept also inherited from classical liberalism, that ensures genuine market libertarianism never really develops on the Moon. Instead, biological determinism encourages the rebels of Luna to favour powerful masculine personalities at the expense of even the limited egalitarianism that, by definition, makes market libertarianism an ideological descendant of classical liberalism. This blindness to masculine political privilege is, of course, a direct consequence of the fact that, for the “Loonies” of *The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress*, “fitness” is a function of physical, moral, and intellectual strength, and strength itself is considered to be a quality that is somehow essentially and
exclusively masculine. In the end, it is this exclusionary masculinity of biological
determinism that undermines the revolutionaries’ concerted effort to create a true market
libertarian society, as such biological determinism guarantees that only a handful of men
obsessed with their own masculine potency are ever deemed fit enough to rule the “Free”
State of Luna.

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Although social liberalism largely retained its hegemony over American science
fiction until well into the 1960s, by the middle of the decade, in response to the perceived
stasis of the genre, an increasing number of authors had begun to challenge the
dominance of this Golden Age political legacy. Unlike Philip K. Dick, however, whose
sustained interrogation throughout the 1960s offered in place of social liberalism only its
equally fraught ideological descendant, the social ethic, these writers demanded that
science fiction explore strange, new political worlds to see just how alternative political
ideologies would change new life and new civilizations.¹ Linked at the time in both
fanzine “letters of comment”² and magazine review columns to the sort of political

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¹ Although the Star Trek of the 1960s is to some extent defined by its willingness to speculate about the possibilities of novel political environments, its protagonists, like their counterparts in the Golden Age science fiction that inspired the show, always come to the conclusion that social liberalism is the only basis for a truly just government. The Federation’s “prime directive,” in fact, which forbids unsolicited interference with alien cultures, is explicitly informed by the ethics of social liberalism, as it attempts to limit the harm powerful individuals such as Captain Kirk can inflict upon the alien communities they visit in their travels.

² Fanzines, being very much non-profit ventures that rely on the goodwill of their readership for their success, have always encouraged their readers to submit their thoughts in “letters of comment,” almost all of which are diligently published toward the end of each issue. Prior to the advent of widespread electronic communication and the internet, such letters of comment were often the only means by which fans communicated with each other outside of science fiction conventions. As such, until the 1980s, when print fanzines began to disappear as they were replaced by a variety of electronic fannish media, letters of comment were one of the few ways that fans could publicly share their thoughts about the politics of any new science fiction they happened to come across.
speculation that had become increasingly common in all areas of American popular
culture, the fiction of New Wave authors such as Harlan Ellison and Samuel R. Delany
effectively stripped science fiction of its former political assumptions and made the genre
an ideal space for the examination of political ideologies other than social liberalism.\(^3\)
Despite the interventions of these New Wave upstarts, however, it is in the work of
Heinlein, himself a stalwart of the Golden Age, that the late 1960s most memorable and
systematic, if not entirely persuasive, denunciations of social liberalism and its
descendants are found. In *The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress*, in particular, a novel that
builds on Heinlein’s earlier attempts to disrupt the unquestioned political precepts of
Golden Age science fiction, Heinlein proposes an alternative to social liberalism that, to
the novel’s characters at least, offers a potential solution to that political ideology’s
seemingly intractable problem of how to balance the freedom of the individual against
the welfare of the community to which that individual belongs. Ultimately amounting to
a wholesale rejection of the Golden Age conviction that a “healthy” future society is one
that is able to safeguard the interests of both individuals and the larger community, *The
Moon Is a Harsh Mistress* tells the story of a lunar revolution in which social liberalism is
abandoned in its entirety and is replaced instead by market libertarianism, a political
ideology which insists that the freedom of at least *some* individuals can be bought at the
expense of that of everyone else.

\(^3\) Examples of political speculation abound in both authors’ fiction from the 1960s. Ellison’s ““Repent, Harlequin!” Said the Ticktockman” (1965) for instance, imagines a society in which the strictures of the social ethic have been taken to such an extreme that even being late for work is a crime potentially punishable by death. Delany’s *Nova* (1968), on the other hand, though not as clearly an example of political speculation, is nevertheless a novel in which classical liberalism has returned with such a vengeance to the galaxy that it has made the capitalist plutocracy of the United States at the end of the nineteenth century seem restrained by comparison.
While most critics have focused on just two novels from Heinlein’s career during this period, *Starship Troopers* (1959) and *Stranger in a Strange Land* (1961), it is *The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress* that constitutes his most cogent and explicit rejection of the social liberalism that dominated the Golden Age. First published as a serial in the magazine *Worlds of If* in 1965 and then republished by Putnam as a novel in 1966, *The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress* charts the course of a violent rebellion against Earth by convict transportees and their descendants living on a penal colony on the Moon. To date, critics of the novel such as Neil Easterbrook and Warren G. Rochelle have focused largely on how biological determinism defines and constrains both the conception of gender and the utopian potential of Heinlein’s lunar society. As Easterbrook notes in “State, Heterotopia: The Political Imagination in Heinlein, Le Guin, and Delany,” for instance, Heinlein’s “emplotment of utopian political discourse assumes the narrative structure of nineteenth-century social theory developed from misreading evolutionary science” (51). Illustrating how the author “draw[s] heavily on Darwin’s natural selection” (51), Easterbrook suggests that Heinlein uses biological determinism to ensure that gender, especially masculinity, can only be understood in terms of evolutionary theory. Noting how the novel equates a somewhat idiosyncratic understanding of biological fitness with masculinity, and masculinity itself with a sense of political entitlement, Easterbrook argues that *The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress* relies on biological determinism to exclude women systematically from the politics of the Moon, thereby making them at best “mere metonyms for men” (50) who “end up more dominated than ever before by a subtle reinscription of authority” (51).
Despite the thoroughness with which he analyzes the intrinsic sexism of Heinlein’s biological determinism, Easterbrook does not discuss the extent to which market libertarianism, or “rational anarchism” as Heinlein prefers to call it, is itself linked as a political ideology both to biological determinism and to the exclusively masculine political culture that Heinlein imagines in his novel. Indeed, it is biological determinism, a core concept of the classical liberalism that fell out of favour in American politics after the advent of the New Deal, that is at the heart of the novel’s own particular interpretation of market libertarianism. At least in the sense that novel presents it, such biological determinism is basically an application of the concept of evolution to the realm of politics, with the added caveat that not only will the fittest survive, only they should survive. Throughout The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress, it is this underlying assumption about the “truth” of biological determinism that bolsters and informs the stated political ideology of market libertarianism to which the lunar revolutionaries subscribe. Predictably, given that the basic ethical maxim of all such forms of social Darwinism is the idea that “might is always right,” it is this same biological determinism, as a core concept of Loonie market libertarianism, that also constitutes the basis for the novel’s

\[4\] The distinction between anarchism and libertarianism is notoriously fuzzy, as both political ideologies take the freedom of the individual as their starting point. As Easterbrook himself notes in his chapter on “Libertarianism and Anarchism” in The Oxford Handbook of Science Fiction, “the terms ‘anarchism’ and ‘libertarianism’ remain frustratingly overdetermined – they are used synonymously or not, pejoratively or not, consistently or not” (550). By using the term “rational anarchism,” The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress attempts to link what is properly termed market libertarianism (if only because the notion of a “free” market is so central to its definition and it clearly descends from American classical liberalism) to an anarchist political tradition that carries connotations of radical and often violent direct action.

\[5\] Though the “nature vs nurture” debate continues to haunt the social sciences and humanities, there are few contemporary scientists and theorists who would argue, as the revolutionaries in The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress do, that nature always trumps nurture. An exception to this might be found on the fringes of evolutionary psychology, where it has been suggested by researchers such as Randy Thornhill and Craig T. Palmer that sexual violence such as rape is motivated solely by biological imperatives, or is perhaps a by-product of such imperatives. Obviously, such a view is problematic, not least because it completely dismisses all non-sexual motivations for rape and strips the act of its intentionality, thereby absolving the attacker of any responsibility for the crime they have committed.
development of a hegemonic masculinity that is both elitist and fundamentally exclusionary.

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A key figure within science fiction who first rose to prominence in the early 1940s, Heinlein began his writing career at the very beginning of the Golden Age, publishing his first short story, “Life-Line,” in the August 1939 issue of John W. Campbell’s Astounding Science Fiction. Over the next two decades, Heinlein wrote a number of well-received short stories and novellas, many of which, including “Universe” (1941) and the “The Green Hills of Earth” (1947), are now considered Golden Age classics. Technically literate, humorous, and informed by the time he spent as a naval engineer in the military during the 1930s, Heinlein’s stories from this period, despite their varied settings, all combine speculation about science and technology with fully developed characters of the sort that Campbell insisted upon. Heinlein’s popular juvenile novels, written for Scribner between 1947 and 1958, are typical examples of his fiction during this period, in that they all feature ingenious young adults in exotic situations who use their own intellect, rather than relying on technological wonders, to solve complicated, scientific problems. Until the late 1950s, however, this emphasis on action and pragmatic problem-solving tends to obscure the political assumptions of Heinlein’s novels and only the occasional protagonist, such as Matt Dodson in Space Cadet (1948), ever attempts to

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6 According to Asimov in his introduction to a retrospective Astounding anthology, Campbell “demolished the stock characters who had filled [science fiction]; eradicated the penny-dreadful plots; extirpated the Sunday-supplement science. In a phrase, he blotted out the purple of pulp” (ix). Heinlein, being perhaps Campbell’s most devoted disciple throughout the 1940s, is no doubt one of those who benefitted from Campbell’s insistence that, in the words of Asimov, “science-fiction writers understand science and understand people” (ix).
examine the political structure of the society in which the scientific problems they must solve exist. With the publication of *Starship Troopers* in 1959, however, all of this began to change, as the novel plunged its unsuspecting readers into the realm of sophisticated political debate.

Spurred on perhaps by the experimental work throughout the 1950s of contemporaries such as Theodore Sturgeon and Philip José Farmer, Heinlein’s fiction throughout the late 1950s and early 1960s is marked by an increasing tendency toward political experimentation. *Starship Troopers*, originally intended as a juvenile aimed at younger readers but rejected by Heinlein’s publisher Scribner due to its “adult” themes, represents the specific point at which Heinlein’s science fiction becomes explicitly political in nature. Recounting the adventures of Johnnie Rico, a soldier coming-of-age in the Terran Federation’s space-based Mobile Infantry, *Starship Troopers* tells the story of Earth’s war with the Bugs, an alien species intent on conquering humanity and expanding throughout the galaxy. Though Rico is certainly committed to defeating this extraterrestrial menace, he does not join the military solely to help defend humanity; he enlists, instead, in order to gain full rights as a citizen of the Terran Federation. In this vision of the future, in glaring contrast to that of much of the Golden Age science fiction which preceded it, including some of Heinlein’s own, individual freedom is only

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7 Throughout the 1950s, both Sturgeon and Farmer experimented in their work with the representation of sexuality. The fiction of Farmer, in particular, although it still very much subscribes to the Golden Age orthodoxy of social liberalism, pushes the boundaries of what constitutes the sexual and the romantic. In the story “Mother” (1953), for example, Farmer imagines an alien that literally consumes its lover, a human male, in order to mate. By the standards of most 1950s science fiction, this kind of speculation about romantic relationships is unusual to say the least.

8 Although Heinlein’s Golden Age fiction does speculate to some extent about different political ideologies, it almost always contains within it the seeds of social liberalism that Heinlein’s novels in the 1960s would later come to reject so roundly. The genetic utopia envisioned by *Beyond This Horizon* (1942), for instance, is still based on the social liberal notion that, in order for the individual to thrive, the community as a whole must be protected as well.
available to those who have served the state, either militarily or through some form of
difficult civil service. In *Starship Troopers*, liberty is not a given as it is in science
fiction still grounded in social liberalism; instead, it is a right that must be earned.

Rejecting the New Deal and its political legacy in their entirety, *Starship
Troopers* is a direct challenge to the social liberalism that still dominated the science
fiction of so many of Heinlein’s contemporaries in the late 1950s. In the words of Major
Reid, Rico’s History and Moral Philosophy teacher at Officer Candidate School and one
of the novel’s many unabashed political mouthpieces, “the unlimited democracies [of the
twentieth century] were unstable because their citizens were not responsible for the
fashion in which they exerted their sovereign authority” (193). By granting individual
sovereignty to everyone at the outset, Reid argues, the welfare of society as a whole was
neglected, as “no attempt was made to determine whether a voter was socially
responsible to the extent of his literally unlimited authority” (194). To remedy this
situation, the Terran Federation of Heinlein’s novel has limited the franchise to veterans
only; they, and they alone, are accorded full democratic rights and granted complete
individual liberty. As Lieutenant Colonel Jean V. Dubois tells a young, impressionable
Rico in his high school History and Moral Philosophy class, in the Terran Federation, in
stark contrast to the United States that preceded it, “liberty is never unalienable; it must
be redeemed regularly with the blood of patriots or it always vanishes” (126). For
Dubois, as for Reid, service to the nation is a precondition of individual freedom; the
latter simply cannot, and should not in his opinion, exist without the former. In this view,
social liberalism is a failure because it assumes it is possible to balance the liberty of the
individual against the welfare of others without first forcibly impressing upon individuals
just how much their freedom depends on the wellbeing of the community that supports it. “Since sovereign franchise,” as Major Reid notes, “is the ultimate in human authority, we insure that all who wield it accept the ultimate in social responsibility – we require each person who wishes to exert control over the state to wager his own life – and lose it, if need be – to save the life of the state” (194). Ultimately it is only the soldier, the novel suggests, as the one who “accepts personal responsibility for the safety of the body politic of which he is a member” (27), who fully appreciates the liberty that society makes possible for the individual; “the civilian does not” (27).  

In the wake of the positive if controversy-laden reception *Starship Troopers* received, Heinlein continued his efforts to intervene politically in the genre throughout the following decade. If *Starship Troopers* dismisses social liberalism on the grounds that it grants individuals complete freedom without first ensuring that they are fully accountable to the society to which they belong, then Heinlein’s novels from the 1960s suggest, in seeming contradiction, that mid-twentieth-century American social

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9 Even though *Starship Troopers* never once directly refers to any fascist political theory, many of Major Reid and Lieutenant Colonel Dubois’ pronouncements, especially about the failings of “the unlimited democracies” (193) of the twentieth century, would not be out of place in a manifesto like Mussolini’s “Doctrine of Fascism” (1932). Like Reid and Dubois, Mussolini also “rejects the absurd conventional lie of political equalitarianism” (23) and resolutely believes that unlimited “democracy is a kingless regime infested by many kings who are sometimes more exclusive, tyrannical, and destructive than one, even if he be a tyrant” (22).

10 Although *Starship Troopers* won the 1960 Hugo and was soon recognized by most fans as a classic of the genre, the novel nonetheless prompted a number of often vitriolic debates in prominent fanzines. Perhaps most memorable is the almost two-year discussion of the book in *Proceedings of the Institute of Twenty-First Century Studies*, a fanzine that circulated exclusively among professional science fiction authors.

11 It is worth noting that “in seeming contradiction” is, in some ways, a fundamental feature of all of Heinlein’s work from the 1960s. If nothing else, Heinlein’s novels from this period all contradict each other to some extent and appear to delight in that contradiction. While an “ironic” reading of *The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress* and Heinlein’s other novels is not one that is pursued here, such a reading is not without merit and, indeed, is what is at the heart of Delany’s assessment of Heinlein’s oeuvre in *Starboard Wine*. As Delany notes in his discussion of Heinlein’s *Glory Road* (1963), Heinlein’s authorial “voice” is one “that carries a high degree of joyous abandon, and must seduce anyone who wonders how such enterprises as SF novels get done. ‘Look!’ it seems to say, if not sing. ‘This is no more serious than a feather, nor will it ever be!’” (21).
liberalism is problematic primarily because it does not value the individual enough. Social liberalism, novels such as *Stranger in a Strange Land* and *Farnham's Freehold* (1964) suggest, is simply too concerned with guaranteeing the well-being of others at the expense of the individual. In these novels, such concern ultimately harms society because it threatens to rob individuals of the motivation they need to “better themselves” and, in so doing, stifles the entrepreneurial spirit these texts claim is at the heart of America’s cultural and political dominance. Constructing an environment in which individual initiative is rewarded rather than constrained by concerns for the welfare of others, each of these novels speculates, either directly through the words of its characters or indirectly through the action of the story itself, about alternative societies that are rooted firmly in the soil of biological determinism. As a result, the strong always survive in these texts, while the weak always perish. Indeed, both the opinionated Jubal Harshaw in *Stranger in a Strange Land* and the fiercely anti-communist Hugh Farnham in *Farnham's Freehold* succeed only because they are forceful and resilient individuals, intellectually if not also physically. They are also, unsurprisingly, distinctly masculine figures, since, in Heinlein’s fiction of the 1960s, the strong and free individual is also, necessarily, a man.

At the beginning of *The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress*, itself a political if not literal sequel to *Farnham’s Freehold*, Luna is a penal colony for petty criminals and banished

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12 Though widely regarded as Heinlein’s misguided attempt to satirize the kind of belief system that produces the overt racism associated with white supremacy, *Farnham’s Freehold* is also the first of Heinlein’s novels to explore market libertarianism as a political ideology. Hugh Farnham, the novel’s protagonist and patriarch of a family mysteriously transported to the far future by a nuclear apocalypse, is very much a committed market libertarian in the sense that he firmly believes individuals can only be truly free in the complete absence of governmental authority. Fortunately for Hugh, there is no functioning government at all for a large part of the novel, allowing Hugh to use his family to test the limits of his own “will to power.”
political agitators. Little more than a lawless dumping ground for Earth, the Moon is
governed by a Warden who is more of an administrator than he is a governor. With no
form of judicial authority and no laws other than the harsh laws of nature, the Warden’s
only responsibility is to ensure that Luna’s farmers and convicts send the grain they grow
down the gravity well to Earth in a timely manner. Despite this lack of legal oversight,
the Moon’s prisoners and native-born citizens are by no means free to do whatever they
please. Instead, a complex set of popular customs, which develops from what the
inhabitants of the Moon believe are biological imperatives, strictly regulates social
behaviour. These customs control commerce and marriage, dictating what the people of
Luna can and cannot do with their lives. According to Manuel Garcia O’Kelly, a born
Loonie and one of the novel’s most committed revolutionaries, customs “are self-
enforcing because are simply way things have to be, conditions being what they are.
Could say our customs are natural laws because are way people have to behave to stay
alive” (163).13 For Mannie, these customs are an expression of nature’s will, a will that
determines who is fit to survive and who is not. Those who refuse to respect the customs
of their neighbours soon find themselves “breathing [the] vacuum” (165) of Luna’s
unforgiving natural environment and indeed, for Mannie, “if a man is killed, either he had
it coming and everybody knows it – usual case – or his friends will take care of it by
eliminating man who did it. Either way, no problem” (166). As Philip Smith observes in
an early attempt to tease apart the politics of evolutionary theory in Heinlein’s fiction,
this strong strain of biological determinism “combines a grim, Hobbesian vision of the
nature of man together with a reductive and tautologically self-justifying belief in the

13 Like most of the Moon’s “cobbers,” Mannie uses the brusque, abbreviated slang popular on Luna.
survival of the fittest through natural selection. In Heinlein’s political fantasies, as in his version of biology, the fittest survive because they are the fittest” (138). On Luna in other words, it is swift death sentences themselves, as well as the customs that morally justify them, that ensure the “breed improves,” since only the fittest individuals survive long enough to produce the next generation of Loonies.

For Mannie and the other leaders of the lunar revolution like Professor de la Paz, biological determinism is the unacknowledged conceptual basis for “rational anarchism,” the specific political ideology the Loonies claim to support. Although none of the revolutionaries ever refers to it as such, rational anarchism is, for all intents and purposes, indistinguishable from market libertarianism as a political ideology. At their core, both political ideologies focus on the “natural” and primarily economic right of individuals to compete against each other and, in the words of market libertarian activist David Boaz, also support “the view that each person has the right to live his life in any way he chooses so long as he respects the equal rights of others” (2).14 Though this conception of individual freedom may appear superficially similar to that promoted by Mill and Roosevelt, at least as developed by economists such as Milton Friedman throughout the 1950s and 1960s, market libertarianism is in fact an explicit rejection of a social liberalism that, in Friedman’s eyes, is “associated with a readiness to rely primarily on the state rather than on private voluntary arrangements to achieve objectives regarded as desirable” (5). To this end, less government is always better government for market

14 Like Mannie, for whom property is the measure of social and political success, Boaz understands “equal rights” here to mean more specifically “equal private property rights.” According to Boaz, private property rights ensure that “order will emerge without central direction” (41), since “private property rights mean that lines of authority are clear and that specific people will reap either the benefits or the costs of their actions” (150).
libertarians, since, as Friedman argues in *Capitalism and Freedom* (1962), “the scope of government must be limited, [as] its major function must be to protect our freedom both from the enemies outside our gates and from our fellow-citizens” (2). In contrast to social liberals in other words, who generally regard government as the means by which individuals are protected from exploitative predation and empowered as individuals, market libertarians suggest instead that government, by its very nature, is the tool that the unscrupulous use to violate the rights of other individuals. For Boaz, for instance, “all human relationships should be voluntary; the only actions that should be forbidden by law are those that involve the initiation of force against those who have not themselves used force – actions like murder, rape, robbery, kidnapping, and fraud” (2). In this view, if government is to exist at all, then it should work *only* to protect the already existing freedom of individuals, instead of trying to violate the rights of individuals through “unnecessary” forms of coercion such as taxation and social welfare. For Friedman, governments are likewise a necessary evil, only permitted to exist at all because “the basic functions of government in a free society [are] to provide a means whereby we can modify the rules, to mediate differences among us on the meaning of the rules, and to enforce compliance with the rules on the part of those few who would otherwise not play the game” (25). Attempts to foster individual freedom in any way that prevents unrestrained competition, such as through equal opportunity legislation, are for market

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15 Historically, market libertarians have always been reluctant to acknowledge the existence of systemic privilege, as it undermines their belief that all individuals are, regardless of socio-economic circumstance, always and already free. This belief that individuals are “condemned to be free” in the existentialist sense is simply not compatible with the opposite conviction, widespread among social liberals and their ideological descendants, that systemic pressures, such as racism and class, do in fact make many individuals less free than others.
libertarians such as Friedman and Boaz, as for the rational anarchists of Luna, nothing short of an abridgement of the individual’s inviolable right to total self-determination.

In *The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress*, it is these principles of market libertarianism that are at the heart of Professor de la Paz’s understanding of “rational anarchism.” Self-proclaimed ideologue of the revolution and very much its true leader, the Professor draws on the classical liberalism of figures such as Thomas Jefferson to support his conviction that “concepts such as ‘state’ and ‘society’ and ‘government’ have no existence save as physically exemplified in the acts of self-responsible individuals” (84). “It is,” for the Professor, “impossible to shift blame, share blame, [or] distribute blame ... as blame, guilt, [and] responsibility are matters taking place inside human beings singly and nowhere else” (84). As such, the Professor believes that the individual is solely responsible for his or her every action and is also at the centre of all political process. The interests of the individual, as a result, must always take priority over the interests of the group, as groups, at least for the Professor, are nothing more than an assortment of individuals who happen to share something in common. On the Professor’s Luna, as a consequence of this view and entirely in accord with the precepts of market libertarianism as it understood by writers such as Boaz, “individuals do not emerge from community; [rather], community emerges from individuals” (Boaz 131). When conflicts do inevitably occur between the individuals that make up these communities, Heinlein’s revolutionaries are convinced that the free market and the free market alone will sort everything out, and that the individual’s right to (economic) self-determination must always take precedence, even at the expense of others’ welfare.16

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16 It is worth noting that, on Luna, the “free market” also includes the judicial system, as participants in any trial must purchase the services of both judge and jury. Those who are unable to pay for these services or
Rallying behind the slogan “there ain’t no such thing as a free lunch,” or “TANSTAAFL” (162), the Professor and his ragtag crew of like-minded revolutionaries repeatedly stress the economic dimension of their individualist politics. Like Friedman and Boaz, the Professor and Mannie firmly believe that “anything free costs twice as much in long run or turns out worthless” (162) and that governmentally-sanctioned economic monopolies, such as the Earth-based Lunar Authority that controls the Moon prior to the revolution, represent nothing less than the first step down “the road to serfdom.”

Remembering his childhood, for instance, Mannie recalls how he and his fellow citizens had always felt like slaves and how “nothing could be done about it” (31). “True,” he continues, “we weren’t bought and sold – but as long as Authority held monopoly over what we had to have and what we could sell to buy it, we were slaves” (31). Equating economic bondage in this way with political repression, Mannie and others like him hope that a free market, “liberated” from Authority control, will radically change not only the material conditions of life, but also open up the possibility of biological determinism functioning on Luna as “nature intended.” As Rafeeq McGiveron notes in his article on the tension between Heinlein’s social Darwinism and internationalism, revolutionaries such as Mannie and the Professor do not want the citizens of their proposed market libertarian republic to suffer under a “government [that] either unduly restrict[s] the clever or aid[s] the less able,” believing instead “that individuals should be free to succeed or fail on their own” (53). Indeed, the lunar

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17 Friedrich Hayek, an economist whose defence of classical liberalism helped inspire the development of market libertarianism, first popularized this phrase in *The Road to Serfdom* (1944), a book which emphasizes the similarities between collectivization and government-sanctioned monopoly.
revolutionaries see economic competition itself as the primary mechanism of biological
determinism and, as such, the only thing that does, and should, regulate social
interactions between individuals.

Although market libertarianism and biological determinism both imply a certain
amount of egalitarianism,\textsuperscript{18} entrenched attitudes on the Moon toward gender relations and
the place of women in society ensure that, in practice, not all Loonies are equal to each
other. Mannie, for example, whose beliefs are presented as typical of the majority of
Loonies, believes that lunar society places more value on women than the older societies
of Earth do. Musing over the gender imbalance established during the early years of the
penal colony’s history, Mannie notes that “women are scarce and call tune … and you are
surrounded by two million men who see to it you dance to that tune. You have no choice,
she has all choice” (164). “Even today,” Mannie declares, “with almost as many women
in Luna as men, I’m too much old-timer to be rude to a woman no matter what – they
have so much of what we have none of” (26). For Mannie, the women of the Moon,
especially those of his family, are the most valuable part of his life and the one thing that
makes the often brutal lunar existence pleasurable and worth living.\textsuperscript{19}

Despite Mannie’s profession of undying devotion to the female half of the
population here, the language he uses nonetheless betrays the underlying sexist attitudes
that govern his actual behaviour toward women. For Mannie, women are valuable and
essential commodities, since they are objects to be bought and sold, either through lavish

\textsuperscript{18} Though market libertarianism and biological determinism both guarantee everyone the right to compete
with each other as equals, neither assures its adherents that they will actually have the opportunity to
compete on a level playing field. In this sense, the game is rigged to favour those who already occupy a
position of strength or privilege.

\textsuperscript{19} Like so many workers on the Moon, Mannie was maimed in the course of his duties and “lost [h]is wing”
(26) in a mining accident. He now has “a dozen [mechanical] left arms, each specialized, plus one that
feels and looks like flesh” (15).
displays of wealth or spectacular shows of gallantry. Revealing his true feelings, Mannie explains how, “when thing is scarce, price goes up. Women are scarce; aren’t enough to go around – that makes them most valuable thing in Luna, more precious than ice or air, as men without women don’t care whether they stay alive or not” (164). In Mannie’s opinion, the men of the Moon must “dance to th[e] tune” of women in order to make their lives worthwhile. According to Easterbrook, this sense of chivalry reinforces patriarchal courtship rituals, rituals that let “Heinlein configur[e] women’s rights as exclusively sexual” (50) and prevent them from participating in the political sphere. Like those who ignore the Moon’s other “customs,” men who fail to respect the “value” of women are subject to prompt elimination, the Loonies’ polite euphemism for execution. Stu, for example, an aristocratic visitor from Earth and an early supporter of the revolution, is almost forced to “breathe vacuum” (163) for flirtatious behaviour that does not adequately recognize a woman’s “right” to be protected by gallant men. Treated as valuable, biological commodities in short supply, the women on Luna are defended by a brutal set of rigid, social customs that punish those men too weak to abide by them. In Mannie’s own, chilling words, “Loonies had learned there never were enough women to go around. Slow learners died” (118).

To adapt to the chronic shortage of women at the time of the Moon’s settlement, while at the same time preserving their sense of heterosexual identity, the men of Luna have devised a variety of complex marriage arrangements to regulate lunar sexual relationships, including clan marriages, line marriages, and polygynous marriages involving multiple husbands associated with one wife. Line marriages, in which the founding couple are remarried multiple times to partners of both sexes, are especially
popular on the Moon, as they provide a sense of family stability that spans generations. As Mannie fondly recalls, his own “marriage [is] nearly a hundred years old [and] dates back to Johnson City and first transportees – twenty-one links, nine alive today, never a divorce” (42). Seeking, as always, to use what appears to be biological necessity to support his own understanding of market libertarianism, Professor de la Paz sums up the social and economic benefits of line marriage while on Earth promoting the lunar cause:

Line marriage is the strongest possible device for conserving capital and insuring the welfare of children – the two basic societal functions for marriage everywhere – in an environment in which there is no security, neither for capital nor for children, other than that devised by individuals. Somehow human beings always cope with their environments. Line marriage is a remarkably successful invention to that end. (262)

Those who choose to “opt” for such a biologically-ordained marriage, Mannie and the Professor claim, can rest assured that they will be supported by others, whom they will equally support, until the end of their days, as in line marriages no child is supposed to be left uncared for and no spouse left unloved. Interestingly, especially given Heinlein’s reputation by this point in his career as a writer who was more than willing to explore the possibilities of alternative sexual arrangements,20 such marriages also serve to reinforce heterosexuality as the norm. As Warren G. Rochelle bluntly puts in his analysis of

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20 Heinlein’s *Stranger in a Strange Land* is often credited as the first science fiction novel to explore polyamory both as part of an alternative sexual identity and as a lifestyle in and of itself. Those who identify as polyamorous within fandom, in particular, tend to point to Heinlein’s novel as a watershed work, as it helped to raise awareness about polyamory, understood as any committed sexual relationship involving multiple partners, at a time when such alternative sexual arrangements were still not talked about openly. Polyamory is now, of course, fairly common within science fiction fandom, and polyamorist activism and advocacy are both associated with and widely accepted by many fannish communities.
bisexuality in Heinlein’s fiction, “line marriage, clan and group marriage, and polyandry are presented as ways of dealing with ... excess males; homosexuality is not” (53).

Unsurprisingly, given that they are the product of a form of chivalrous market libertarianism that subjugates women by elevating them to the status of a scarce commodity, line marriages and other lunar forms of group marriage benefit men in practice far more than they do women. Mannie’s line marriage, for instance, is named after its founding father, a figure revered by the other spouses long after he is dead. Any current husband in the marriage also has the right, with a single vote, to cancel any marriage negotiations that do not suit his taste. As Mum, the most senior wife in Mannie’s marriage, proudly proclaims, “we have always felt that our husbands should have a veto” (217). Although Mannie’s wives are permitted to suggest potential husbands, they themselves are not allowed to oppose potential wives favoured by a majority of the marriage group. Unlike their husbands who hold the power of veto, a wife must persuade more than half of her spouses to vote against any new female candidate. Ultimately, this deeply ingrained and seemingly incontestable institutionalization of masculine entitlement within marriage encourages husbands such as Mannie to think of line marriage both as an extension of their own individual personality and as means to guarantee their personal legacy. As Mannie tells a curious, Earth-born Stu, “a good line marriage is immortal; expect mine to outlast me at least a thousand years – and is why shan’t mind dying when time comes; best part of me will go on living” (261). In this way, line marriage is Mannie’s key to symbolic immortality and, unlike conventional monogamous marriages, the longevity of a line marriage helps Mannie preserve those features of his identity that he believes make him who he is as a
man. In the end, like so many of the Moon’s customs dictated by apparent biological necessity, line marriage is but another way of assuring men of their own individual worth.

Outside the domestic sphere, predictably, it is also the interests of the masculine individual that inform every aspect of the revolutionary political ideology that Professor de la Paz and Mannie promote. The men of the Moon, a group drawn from every corner of the globe, support the revolution because they feel that Earth is violating their individual rights as men. Required by the Federated Nations to sell the products of their labour at prices significantly lower than they would fetch on a hypothetical free market, Loonie men feel that Earth is both robbing and emasculating them. Drawing historical parallels with the events that led up to the American Revolution in the eighteenth century, an event steeped in tales of manly defiance, Loonies such as Mannie and the Professor experience Earth’s behaviour toward the Moon as a personal insult to their manhood. While discussing his political views with Wyoming Knott, the novel’s only central female character and an early member of the revolutionary conspiracy, the Professor explains his own understanding of personal freedom in terms that suggest each man really is an island whose welfare is ultimately independent from, rather than contingent on, the welfare of other men. As he proudly declares to Knott, “I am free, no matter what rules surround me. If I find them tolerable, I tolerate them; if I find them too obnoxious, I break them. I am free because I know that I alone am morally responsible for everything I do” (85). Like so many lunar men who have lived in a culture without any formal laws or public judiciary for many years, the Professor refuses to accept any form of authority above his own conscience and sense of morality. This emphasis on the right to individual self-determination, however, is not one that he believes extends to women.
In seeming confirmation of this, female revolutionaries such as Knott, as Easterbrook notes, “quickly fad[e] to subservience” (47) almost immediately after the fighting begins, humbly accepting thereafter their position under strong men like Mannie. Knott herself even goes so far as to “opt” in to Mannie’s line marriage (with, of course, the blessing of the Professor). This, of course, effectively subordinates Knott to Mannie’s will and prevents her from participating in any further revolutionary activity that does not involve organizing parades of attractive young women up and down in front of the revolution’s Second Defense Gunners – as a form of “paramilitary” encouragement (298).

Although young, powerful men like Mannie tend to dominate both the women and the political culture of the Moon, lunar society does not necessarily exclude older or physically weaker men from obtaining positions of political influence. Professor de la Paz, for example, an aging revolutionary whose fragile heart can barely tolerate the trip he takes to Earth, eventually becomes the most powerful political figure in the newly formed Luna Free State. Eloquent and enthusiastic, the Professor uses any means necessary to develop the suitably strong masculine image that is such an integral part of lunar politics. Early in the novel, for example, Mannie introduces the Professor to one of the story’s most unusual characters, the playful and rebellious supercomputer, Mike. Seeing an opportunity to expand his somewhat limited sphere of political influence, the Professor uses Mike to project an enhanced image of lunar hegemonic masculinity, an image that is free from the ravages of age and full of manly vigour and confidence. Taking advantage of Mike’s formidable multimedia skills, the Professor crafts an entirely fictional leader for the revolution, the poet and passionate patriot, Adam Selene. Steadfast and resolved in times of trouble, Selene is little more than an idealized
masculine projection of the Professor himself, a puppet that hides the Professor’s infirmities and makes him instead the very image of the strong hegemonic masculinity endorsed by the market libertarianism and biological determinism of Luna’s revolutionaries. By the end of the novel, Mike has changed beyond all recognition, as the “birth” of Adam Selene effectively transforms Mike into a mere receptacle for the Professor’s own political beliefs and ambitions; gone forever, it would seem, is that “mixture of unsophisticated baby and wise old man” (16) that so endeared this living computer to Mannie prior to the revolution.

Ultimately, as a result of Mannie’s and the Professor’s insistence that biological determinism is at the root of market libertarianism and that, as such, market libertarianism justifies a particularly brutal politics of masculine strength, the Moon’s populist revolution is eventually transformed into an elitist dictatorship dominated by a few charismatic men that completely excludes women. Refashioning himself as a benevolent dictator whose word is law and whose will is unopposed, the Professor effectively turns his back on all the egalitarian principles he once claimed were an integral part of rational anarchism, his own brand of market libertarianism. Illustrating this apparent change of heart is a conversation the Professor has with Mannie about the cult of personality that begins to spring up around him and his surrogate, Adam Selene, a conversation in which the Professor qualifies his political convictions by defining precisely who can break the rules as he does. “In each age,” the Professor maintains, it is necessary to adapt to the popular mythology. At one time kings were anointed by Deity, so the problem was to see to it that Deity anointed the right candidate. In this age the myth is the “will of the people” ... but the problem
changes only superficially. Comrade Adam and I have had long discussions about how to determine the will of the people. (284)

Only a man like the Professor, in other words, a “great” and strong man with a sound moral conscience formed by the rigours of Luna’s harsh natural environment, is fit to appoint the Moon’s new leaders and to direct the populist “will of the people.” In this society, where might is always right, strength of will and individual initiative are the only things that determine the extent of each individual’s authority over others. In practice, of course, this triumph of the will can only ever lead to a dictatorship of the strong over the weak, and to a form of tyranny in which liberty will only ever be an illusion perpetrated by those whose Nietzschean and intrinsically masculine will to power grants them access to true individual freedom.21

In the end, despite their eventual liberation from Earth, the Loonies never truly realize their utopian vision of a society governed solely by the precepts of market libertarianism. Instead of encouraging the citizens of the Free State to move toward what Friedman describes in Capitalism and Freedom as a “society based on free discussion” (111), the leaders of the lunar revolution, unable to reconcile their sense of social and economic justice with their admiration of strong-willed, exceptional men, become tyrannical demagogues as authoritarian and ruthless as any previous Warden of the Lunar Authority. In this way, by reinforcing the political status quo of the Moon instead of

21 Like Nietzsche, a proponent of biological determinism if there ever was one, both the Professor and Mannie believe that “life itself is essentially appropriation, injury, conquest of the strange and weak, suppression, severity, obtrusion of peculiar forms, incorporation, and at the least, putting it mildest, exploitation” (Beyond Good and Evil). For them, as for Nietzsche, such exploitation “does not belong to a depraved, or imperfect and primitive society; it belongs to the nature of the living being as a primary organic function; it is a consequence of the intrinsic Will to Power, which is precisely the Will to Life” (Beyond Good and Evil). To deny the strong individual the right to exercise this will to power is, in the Professor and Mannie’s eyes as well as Nietzsche’s, to endorse instead a “Will to the Denial of life [and] a principle of dissolution and decay” (Beyond Good and Evil).
genuinely challenging it, the Professor and his cabal of supporters ultimately betray the revolution they worked to make possible. Buttressed by their faith in biological determinism and in the inherent “fitness” of men who embrace its hegemonic masculine ideal, the Professor and his fellow revolutionaries insist that market libertarianism, as a political ideology, must emphasize the individual importance of the strong man above all else. At the beginning of the novel, when market libertarianism’s promise of free competition still makes it seem like a viable egalitarian alternative to the unstable social liberalism of Earth, revolutionary lunar women like Wyoming Knott freely speak their minds whenever they feel like it; or, as Mannie brusquely notes, “women talk when they want to. Or don’t” (43). By the time the Professor has assumed control of the state, however, and his biological determinism has ensured that the lunar variety of market libertarianism only benefits strong men, Knott has become, like her co-wife Lenore, a “sensible fem [who] knows when to keep quiet” (366), much to the delight of revolutionaries like Mannie who now believe without any trace of cognitive dissonance both in their own absolute masculine freedom and in the complete subjugation of women.

In The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress, it would seem, it is biological determinism that prevents even the limited possibility of gender equality that market libertarianism offers its proponents, as the individual freedom guaranteed to every man on the Moon by the Professor’s rational anarchism simply does not extend to women, all of whom are deemed too inherently “weak” to be allowed to participate in Luna’s politics of masculine strength.

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Despite the failure of Heinlein’s novel to imagine what a truly egalitarian market libertarian society might look like in practice, *The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress* has nevertheless extensively influenced the development of the broader libertarian movement in the United States. Just as Ayn Rand’s *Anthem* (1938) had done for the generation before, Heinlein’s novel served as a call to arms to libertarian activists, as it appeared to show what was possible in a libertarian society to many of those who were active in the American libertarian movement when the book was published. Indeed, *The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress* had such an impact on the American libertarian movement at the time that, shortly after the Libertarian Party was formally established in 1971 in Heinlein’s hometown of Colorado Springs, “there ain’t no such thing as a free lunch,” was chosen as the party’s official slogan. Friedman himself, by the mid-1970s revered by many in the movement as its chief ideologue in a way not dissimilar to the Professor, also paid homage to the novel when he used *There’s No Such Thing as a Free Lunch* for the title of his 1975 collection of *Newsweek* articles on market libertarian economics. As a result of these developments, *The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress* quickly came to be regarded as the market libertarian novel and, in so doing, helped ensure that libertarianism more generally in the United States is often linked, much to the dismay of socialist libertarians, to Heinlein’s particular vision of *market* libertarianism. Self-professed Tea Party libertarians such as Rand Paul, for instance, are very much market libertarians in the same way that the revolutionaries of Heinlein’s Luna are, in that both believe that the free market alone is the mechanism by which biological determinism, and hence libertarianism itself, operates. Whether or not contemporary American market
libertarians like Paul ever acknowledge the conceptual debt they owe Heinlein and science fiction itself is, of course, another matter altogether.\textsuperscript{22}
Chapter 5

“The Idea of Anarchism, Made Flesh”: Socialist Libertarianism, Classical Liberalism, and the Politics of Masculinity in Ursula K. Le Guin’s *The Dispossessed*

Just as *The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress* helped shaped the conception of libertarianism in the political consciousness of the United States, so too did the novel profoundly influence the subsequent development of science fiction as a genre. Indeed, though it was by no means the first work of science fiction to explore libertarian ideals,¹ the publication and enthusiastic reception of Heinlein’s novel facilitated the creation of an entirely new subgenre, now commonly referred to simply as “libertarian science fiction.” Though some science fiction of this sort, such as Jerry Pournelle and Larry Niven’s *Lucifer’s Hammer* (1977), promotes an understanding of market libertarianism governed by biological determinism as Heinlein does, not all libertarian science fiction written in the shadow of *The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress* adheres to that novel’s unrelenting insistence on the inevitability of biological inequality. Some libertarian novels, in fact, such as Ursula K. Le Guin’s *The Dispossessed* (1974), reject biological determinism outright and try to imagine how individualism and equal opportunity for both women and men might, instead, become the core concepts of a different kind of libertarianism, one which is informed as much by socialism and social liberalism as it is by classical liberalism. In *The Dispossessed*, in stark contrast to Heinlein’s novel, the liberty of individuals is not contingent upon the strength of those individuals or their

¹ In almost every state-dominated dystopia, from George Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) to Suzanne Collins’ *The Hunger Games* (2008), as well as in all of Ayn Rand’s fiction, it is libertarianism of one kind or another that is the implied, if not explicit, answer to tyranny.
success in an inherently Darwinian free market; instead, it is mutual aid and a willingness to try always to act in the best interests of the group that ultimately helps individuals safeguard the absolute freedom of both themselves and everyone else. As such, for Shevek and his fellow Odonians in *The Dispossessed*, it is working together, rather than working against one another, that creates the possibility of a new egalitarian form of masculinity, one which, in theory at least, challenges the concept of hegemonic masculinity itself and ensures that all individuals can exercise the liberty promised them by the explicitly socialist libertarianism of the “anarchist” moon of Anarres.2

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By the early 1970s, although writers such as Dick and Heinlein continued to publish increasingly experimental work throughout the decade, the New Wave as an innovative movement with which authors and readers self-identified was finished. Michael Moorcock’s *New Worlds* magazine, the British voice of New Wave sensibility that had battered American and British audiences alike throughout the late 1960s with manifesto after manifesto about the need for a reinvigorated genre of “speculative fiction,” ceased publication in April 1970 due to financial difficulties,3 while the lengthy sequel to Harlan Ellison’s *Dangerous Visions* (1967), *Again, Dangerous Visions* (1972), received but a fraction of the fanfare that had greeted the publication of Ellison’s earlier New Wave anthology. Readers and writers in both the United States and Britain, it

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2 Throughout the following discussion, socialist libertarianism will be used in such a way that makes it effectively synonymous with anarchism as the term is used in the novel. This is because the political ideology of Anarres is, as *The Dispossessed* repeatedly reminds the reader, one that emphasizes both individual initiative and communal welfare. As such, socialist libertarianism is a more precise term than anarchism, in that, like social liberalism, its name identifies both of these equally important political goals.

3 Although New Worlds limped on in one form or another until 1979, its existence as a regularly published professional magazine ended with issue 200 in April 1970.
seemed, had grown tired of the “new thing” and were now looking elsewhere. The place, or “no-place,” to which many turned their attention was utopia. In contrast to the majority of writing from the 1960s, writing that more often than not emphasizes humanity’s capacity for depravity,⁴ the early 1970s saw a veritable explosion of optimistic science fiction that strives, quite self-consciously, to imagine a better world. Not since the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, in fact, with the publication of works such as Edward Bellamy’s *Looking Backward* (1888) and Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s *Herland* (1915), had there been so much popular interest in fiction that demands humanity fashion for both men and women a new and better tomorrow. From the self-reliant women of the planet Whileaway in Joanna Russ’ “When It Changed” (1972) to the pragmatic socialist libertarians on the moon Anarres in Le Guin’s *The Dispossessed*, American science fiction throughout the early 1970s is peopled by individuals and groups who dare to dream of places where humanity is free of its prejudices and of futures in which injustice and inequality, if not entirely absent, at least no longer determine the limits of what is possible.

Writing in the shadow of both the New Wave’s ingrained pessimism and more than half a century of dystopian skepticism, utopian fiction of the early 1970s is characterized by its insistence that utopia, if it is ever realistically to be achieved or even imagined, must be dynamic rather than static in nature. According to Tom Moylan in *Demand the Impossible*, this emphasis on the dynamism of utopia, on utopia’s ability and

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⁴ Although *The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress* might appear to be an exception to this claim, it isn’t, since the novel only repositions depravity as humanity’s greatest strength. This is because “depravity,” if understood as each individual’s willingness to exploit others, is the mechanism by which biological determinism operates, and is thereby also the means by which market libertarianism, according to the novel, must function.
willingness to adapt to the desires and circumstances of its inhabitants instead of the other way around, is what defines the utopian impulse of so much science fiction in the early part of the decade. For Moylan, the utopias of the early 1970s are, first and foremost, “critical utopias” whose “rejection of hierarchy and domination and the celebration of emancipatory ways of being” (12) ensures that, unlike the largely static utopian visions of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, they do not become “brave new worlds” in which meaningful change and freedom no longer exist. Just as George Orwell does in Nineteen Eighty-Four (1949), the writers of these critical utopias recoil in horror from a world of unchanging political perfection, from a world in which “orthodoxy means not thinking – not needing to think” (Orwell 56), and dissatisfaction of any kind constitutes an intolerable form of dissent.

Although the utopias of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and those of the early 1970s both emphasize the equality and justice of the societies they imagine, writers of these latter-day utopias are justifiably wary of the social and political perfection that earlier utopian texts often imply. An example of this sort of stultifying perfection can be found in Gilman’s Herland, a novel that is arguably the first feminist utopia to attract and retain a wide readership. In Herland, which tells the story of three men who discover a “lost” land inhabited only by women, the fecundity of a parthenogenetic femininity⁵ constitutes the basis for a political ideology in which the concept of motherhood dictates the limits of all social and economic relationships. As the male narrator Vandyck Jennings notes, “every woman of [in Herland] placed

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⁵ Like “some rather high forms of insect life in which it occurs” (73), the women of Herland reproduce asexually by means of parthenogenesis. As they proudly inform their bewildered male visitors, “we are mothers – all of us – but there are no fathers” (73).
motherhood not only higher than other duties, but so far higher that there were no other duties, one might almost say” (158). “All their wide mutual love,” he observes in admiration, “all the subtle interplay of mutual friendship and service, the urge of progressive thought and invention, the deepest religious emotion, every feeling and every act was related to this great central Power, to the River of Life pouring through them” (158). Motherhood, in other words, is all that matters for the women of Herland, since it alone is what defines all other aspects of the human experience. Though such an emphasis on motherhood certainly marks a refreshing departure from the obsession with fatherhood that is at the heart of traditional Western culture, it nevertheless creates a society that is potentially as terrifying as one in which the father rules supreme. In the state of Herland, for instance, motherhood “is only undertaken once, by the majority of the population” (95); “those held unfit are not allowed even that” (95). Though the women of Herland all appear to find this form of “negative eugenics” (95) both satisfactory and somehow morally edifying, it leaves no room whatsoever for any exploration of femininity or conceptions of motherhood that are odds with the will of the majority. In this sense, the society of Herland is as much a potential dystopia as it is a utopia, since for any woman who might disagree with her peers, there is no option to define femininity or motherhood in anything but the terms of “The New Motherhood” (157) of those who rule Herland with the iron tenderness of uncompromising fanatics.

Ultimately, it was not until the early 1970s that science fiction once again became an arena for feminist discussion and debate.⁶ As Helen Merrick observes in her brief

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⁶ There are of course exceptions to this observation. Catherine L. Moore’s “No Woman Born” (1944), for instance, tells the story of a talented and beautiful actress who, having died in a fire, is reborn in the body of a robot. Although the men who help resurrect her body and career fear that she is somehow less than the woman she once was, in a moment of rare Golden Age feminist insight, this feminine robot herself realizes
overview of the New Wave and its impact on later science fiction, “the sf community in the 1970s experienced a surge of feminist activity that amounted to a full-scale consciousness-raising, encompassing the reclamation of earlier writers, the development of a distinctly feminist sf criticism, and the consolidation of a feminist fan community” (108). Reacting to the often subtle (and not so subtle) misogyny in texts such as Dick’s *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* and Heinlein’s *The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress*, and inspired by the earlier feminist critique in Gilman’s *Herland*, this new community of both authors and fans adopted feminism as a way to “reconfigure[e] the aesthetic freedoms attendant on the (male) sexual revolution embraced by the New Wave” (Merrick 108).

Utopia, as a space in which new understandings of gender and sexuality might develop, appeared once more to many writers of the period as a promising site for this explicitly feminist reconfiguration of the genre. As Tatiana Teslenko argues, however, these architects of feminist utopia in the early 1970s “were moving toward an open-endedness that sought to overcome the tendency toward monological stagnation that … had long haunted patriarchal utopia” (7). They were, in other words, embracing a form of *critical utopia* that emphasizes the ways in which “utopian worlds are not perfect because feminism rejects utopian blueprints that maintain petrified hierarchies of social and cultural patriarchy” (Teslenko 65). For these authors, unlike for Gilman, utopias are thus inherently fluid political constructs, expansive spaces in which identity, especially feminine identity, *must* have conceptual room if it is ever to develop to its full potential.

Joanna Russ’ short story “When It Changed” is a typical example of a feminist utopia from this period that seeks to escape the “phallocratic constraints” (Teslenko 37) that she is now more than human, that she has become a “superhuman” (Moore 299) that “rises perfect and renewed from its own ashes” (Moore 299).
that have historically been placed on so much of the utopian tradition. First published in 1972 in Ellison’s *Again, Dangerous Visions*, “When It Changed” tells the story of how men from Earth re-establish contact with the previously forgotten colony planet of Whileaway. Inhabited exclusively by women since they “lost [the male] half [of their] population” (255) in an unspecified plague hundreds of years in the past, Whileaway is a place where women have learned to live and love on their own. Having discovered how to reproduce using a sophisticated form of parthenogenesis that “merge[s] the ova” (257) of two women together, the female inhabitants of Whileaway live in a society which fully realizes Russ’ belief that “almost all the characterological sex differences we take for granted are in fact learned and not innate” (260). In this culture, traditional forms of femininity no longer have any purchase because gender itself no longer exists in any meaningful sense. On Whileaway, women constitute the only gender and, as such, are simply people, no more and no less: they have political beliefs for which they fight and romantic partners whom they love. This social and political complexity, along with the suggestion of a society fundamentally more free than that within which Russ herself writes, makes Whileaway a critical utopia that avoids the stifling stasis of Gilman’s *Herland*. The arrival of men from Earth, however, men who firmly believe that “there is only half a species here” (258), disrupts this social dynamic and forces the people of Whileaway to become but women once more. This reintroduction of gender relations, and the potential for sexism it creates, encourages the residents of Whileaway to reassess the merits of their own society and, in a move characteristic of critical utopias, determine what makes this planet of women, for all its flaws, ultimately a better place than the world of the men who threaten to destroy it. In contrast to the women of *Herland*, who
always have a glib answer ready for why their society is superior to all others, the women of Russ’ Whileaway are not afraid to examine their own beliefs about gender and identity, even when such an examination has the potential to deny the very concept of non-gendered personhood by which these people live their lives.

Russ’ critical re-evaluation and defence of femininity in “When It Changed” is by no means unique and, indeed, such explorations of how different forms of femininity might develop if freed from patriarchal constraints constitute the conceptual focus of most feminist utopias from the early 1970s. Recognizing and appreciating these new types of femininity is not, however, all that is at stake for writers of these critical visions of feminist liberation; for many, understanding the sheer diversity of gendered identity, more broadly, is equally compelling and necessary. Ursula K. Le Guin, in particular, often imagines worlds in which both femininity and masculinity have been radically transformed. For Le Guin, a veteran of the genre who first made her mark on the field in the late 1960s, to examine femininity without also thoroughly exploring masculinity, as happens in “When It Changed,” is neither desirable nor constructive. As the critical utopia of Anarres in The Dispossessed makes clear, it is as important to interrogate existing forms of masculinity and suggest new ways of being masculine as it is to discover and reclaim the feminine. Although The Dispossessed remains, like Russ’ story, firmly committed both to feminist ideals and to imagining spaces where women are free of the burdens of patriarchy, its exploration of socialist libertarianism also enables it to

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7 Unlike the female protagonists of this story, who all clearly possess their own complex thoughts and feelings, the men who visit Whileaway are portrayed as being “monomaniac[s]” (256) who, in addition to being “muscle[ed] like bulls” (259), are incapable of both empathy and critical political thought. They are, in this sense, villainous foils whose only purpose is to reintroduce the women of Whileaway to the possibility of patriarchal oppression.
deconstruct and analyze the hegemonic forms of masculinity that make patriarchy possible in the first place. In this way, *The Dispossessed* envisions a critical utopia in which women and men have not only tried to cast off the chains of patriarchy and its political ideologies, but have also learned of what stuff these chains and their makers are made.

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Published originally in May 1974, *The Dispossessed* solidified Le Guin’s reputation as both a feminist critic and utopian theorist. When the novel first appeared, fans and contemporary reviewers alike enthusiastically welcomed this seemingly plausible vision of a working socialist libertarian society. Richard Geis, for instance, an avid fan of Dick and formerly one of the New Wave’s most ardent American supporters, boldly declares in the November 1974 issue of the fanzine *The Alien Critic* that Le Guin’s “people are real, Anarres and Urras are real, their different societies are real, fully-fleshed, operative, with flaws and warts” (36). This “magnificent job of creation,” he hopes, “will spark speculations, controversies, deep personal thought, admiration, perhaps even hatred, for years” (Geis 35). Professional reviewers, such as P. Schuyler Miller, also found the novel enthralling. Despite his generally hostile attitude toward the New Wave, a movement with which Le Guin had always been loosely associated, Miller nevertheless proclaims in his January 1975 review that *The Dispossessed* is “a demonstration of the falsity of the claim that a novel of character is out of place in

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8 Although Le Guin never formally declared herself part of the New Wave, her interest in pushing the boundaries of science fiction, especially in terms of the genre’s treatment of gender and sexuality, nonetheless makes her, like Dick, one of the movement’s most significant “fellow travellers.”
science fiction” (171). Like Geis, Miller expects *The Dispossessed* “to be read for a long
time, and for many reasons” (172). “Every reader,” he tells the subscribers of *Analog*, a
magazine usually critical of Le Guin’s brand of “soft” science fiction,9 “will find
something different in it every time he takes [the novel] up. Perhaps it doesn’t present an
illusion of life after all. Perhaps it reflects the truth of life and the place of man” (172).
Such praise, coming as it does from a reviewer and a magazine that deliberately ignored
almost every other feminist utopia written during the early 1970s, is high praise indeed
and suggests the broad appeal of Le Guin’s realist style, even when such a style is used to
mask provocative and potentially unsettling political speculation.

A subversive parable wrapped in a cloak of conventional realism, *The
Dispossessed* frames its interrogation of masculinity in terms of what Le Guin and her
characters identify simply as anarchism, but what might more accurately be described as
socialist libertarianism. Influenced perhaps by the same radical egalitarianism that
inspired real-world communes such as Twin Oaks in Virginia,10 the socialist
libertarianism of Le Guin’s Anarres is as much socialist as it is libertarian and
antiauthoritarian and, indeed, the society of this new world, situated on a barren but
habitable moon, embraces both the uncompromising individualism of all forms of
libertarianism and the socialist principle of mutual aid. Such a combination produces a

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9 “Soft” science fiction, as opposed to the “hard” variety, is that form of science fiction that focuses
primarily on social and political issues, sometimes, though not always, at the expense of rigorous scientific
speculation. Historically, as noted in the introduction to this thesis, “soft” science fiction has been
feminized within discourse about the genre, despite the fact that many of science fiction’s “softest” writers,
such as Dick, nonetheless subscribe to “hard” forms of hegemonic masculinity that ensure the subjugation
of women.

10 The Twin Oaks Community, an attempt to realize the utopian blueprint laid out by B.F. Skinner in
*Walden Two* (1948), is one of the late 1960s most successful intentional communities. Founded in 1967 in
Louisa County, Virginia, Twin Oaks flourished in the 1970s and, as of this writing, is still going strong,
albeit with far fewer residents than it had during its heyday in the early 1980s.
society remarkably similar, in terms of the conception of gender that governs the behaviour of its inhabitants, to that envisioned by “classical” anarchists of the early twentieth century such as Emma Goldman. The Anarresti attitude toward gender relations, for instance, echoes Goldman’s belief that relationships between men and women reflect the dominant political ideology of the society in which such relationships exist. On anarchist Anarres, heterosexual relationships, as “something two people do, not something one person does, or has” (53), are explicitly egalitarian; like any partnership on this world where all are free to do as they please so long as they don’t profit at another’s expense, these relationships are “voluntarily constituted federation[s] like any other” (244). Within such relationships, there is thus little room for any kind of hegemonic masculinity that seeks to subjugate rather than cooperate. Consequently, at least for most Anarresti, such domineering forms of masculinity have become impotent relics of the past.

In *The Dispossessed*, Le Guin tells the story of Shevek, a physicist from the moon Anarres who must travel to the capitalist nation of A-Io on the world of Urras in order to disseminate the results of his research in theoretical physics. With his commitment to both the autonomy and equality of all individuals, Shevek is an example of the “new man” that critical utopia demands. Unlike the market libertarians of Heinlein’s Luna or the organization men of Dick’s fiction, Shevek completely rejects capitalism and the domination it always seems to entail. For Shevek, as for nineteenth-century anarchists such as Peter Kropotkin and Mikhail Bakunin, individuals are only truly free when their minds and bodies are not for sale, when, instead, they give themselves to others freely and without reservation. In contrast to the men of Dick’s fiction, Shevek has no fear of
losing himself to any monolithic capitalist corporation because he outright refuses to accept the legitimacy of any organization that threatens, in any way, to undermine the individual’s right to absolute self-determination.11 Like any good socialist libertarian, Shevek only gives and receives; he does not buy the labour of others, nor does he sell his own services. This uncompromising combination of mutual aid and individualism likewise informs Shevek’s understanding of his own masculinity. For Shevek, hegemonic forms of masculinity that subjugate others are, like the world of the marketplace that so often props up such masculinities, simply not an option. Instead, as Shevek firmly believes and as the lived experience of many of his relationships with other men and women in the novel suggests, to embrace the masculine fully is only possible in an equal partnership with other people that explicitly recognizes the inherent and incontestable value of each individual involved. Just as the socialist libertarianism of Anarres demands that each individual respect the rights and freedom of every other individual, so too does Shevek insist that men respect the rights and freedom of both women and other men. For Shevek, it is always mutual respect and cooperation, rather than fierce competition and cavalier disregard, that define masculinity.

Shevek is not, of course, the first character in Le Guin’s fiction to attempt to come to terms with the broader political implications of being masculine. In *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1969), her last novel published in the 1960s, Le Guin also endeavours to show how gender, especially masculinity, influences political systems and the political ideologies that support them. In *The Left Hand of Darkness*, Le Guin gives an account of what happens when two cultures, one with a clearly delineated understanding of gender

11 In this respect, Shevek is not all that dissimilar to Heinlein’s Professor de la Paz. Unlike the Professor, however, Shevek also grants this ideal of absolute self-determination to people other than himself.
and one without any concept of either sex or gender, meet for the first time. Sent by the Ekumen to re-establish contact with the lost Hainish colony planet of Gethen,\textsuperscript{12} Genly Ai is a man from Earth trying to make sense of a world where neither masculinity nor femininity exist. For much of the novel, like the men who come back to Whileaway, Genly simply refuses to accept that the Gethenians are different in any way and that they do not understand gender as he does; instead, Genly assigns to everyone he meets, from the “King” of Karhide to his “landlady” in Erhenrang, either a masculine or feminine identity, an identity which then determines his treatment of that person. It is not until near the novel’s end, after his escape with the Gethenian Estraven from the political oppression of the authoritarian state of Orgoreyn, that Genly is finally able to admit to himself that the Gethenians’ genderless existence does indeed constitute a valid form of human identity. Prior to this point, he “had rejected [Estraven]” (\textit{Left} 266) and “refused him his own reality” (\textit{Left} 266).\textsuperscript{13} Genly “had not wanted,” he ultimately realizes, “to give [his] trust, [his] friendship to a man who was a woman, a woman who was a man” (\textit{Left} 267). For Genly, until this moment of realization, gender is \textit{the} category that defines people. He has so far failed in his task to make meaningful contact with the inhabitants of Gethen precisely because he has denied the validity of their identity and has instead projected on them his own understanding of gender. Until now the politics of Gethen’s various states and factions were inscrutable to Genly because, for him, politics

\textsuperscript{12} Like \textit{The Dispossessed}, \textit{The Left Hand of Darkness} is part of Le Guin’s Hainish Cycle. The worlds of this universe are bound together in a loose socialist libertarian federation known as the Ekumen, which is in turn organized, but not ruled, by its eldest member species, the Hainish. As the First Mobile to the planet, Genly is sent to convince the Gethenians that it is in their best interest to join the Ekumen.

\textsuperscript{13} As Russ and other critics including Le Guin herself have noted, Genly continues to “call a hermaphrodite ‘he’” (Russ “When It Changed” 262) even after he has supposedly seen the errors of his ways. If anything, the use of such pronouns shows just how deeply ingrained gender is in Genly’s way of thinking; even when he consciously denies it, Genly still assumes that Estraven is, in fact, a man.
was an exclusively masculine realm. Once Genly is able to see beyond the binary of masculinity and femininity, as, arguably, he can by the end of the novel, Gethen’s inhabitants appear to him as they truly are, as people rather than as perversions that threaten to shake the foundations of his own masculine identity.

Although *The Left Hand of Darkness* is perhaps the most obvious example of Le Guin’s fiction which attempts to disrupt conventional understandings of masculinity, and certainly the novel that has to date received the most critical attention, its focus on masculinity is mostly incidental. What is in question in the novel is not Genly’s masculinity *per se*, but rather the validity of a binary system of gender which is more the product of culture than it is the expression of sexual difference. In *The Dispossessed*, by contrast, where binary gender remains largely uncontested, it is the ideological underpinnings of masculinity (and to a lesser extent femininity) that are the subject of unflinching and deliberate critical scrutiny. In fact, Shevek’s interrogation of his own masculinity is a direct consequence of his political beliefs. Like most Anarresti, Shevek considers himself a committed anarchist. For him, as for Emma Goldman, “the sole legitimate purpose of society is to serve the needs and advance the aspiration of the individual” (Goldman “The Individual” 123). As Lucien van der Walt and Michael Schmidt note in their history of anarchist and syndicalist thought, this late nineteenth-century form of individualist anarchism is actually “a *libertarian* type of socialism” (6), a socialism that refuses to sanction the authoritarian state and instead suggests that “individual freedom and individuality are extremely important, and are best developed in a context of democracy and equality” (van der Walt and Schmidt 6). As L. Susan Brown observes in her discussion of Goldman’s latent feminism, such strands of socialist
libertarian thought insist “it is up to individuals to decide, voluntarily, how best to live and work together” (128). “It is not something,” she argues, “imposed on them from above, or dictated by the majority” (128). Shevek, who firmly believes there ought to be “no controlling center, no capital, no establishment for the self-perpetuating machinery of bureaucracy and the dominance drive of individuals seeking to become captains, bosses, [and] chiefs of state” (95), would no doubt wholeheartedly endorse this ideal of a socialist society that both rejects the coercive power of government and “affirm[s] a commitment to the primacy of individual freedom” (Brown 2).

Certainly on the bleak and arid moon of Anarres where “existence is its own justification” (261) and “need is right” (261), it is the voluntary commitments and promises of individuals that are of paramount importance. For Odo, the Urrasti analogue of Goldman whose writings inspired the original settlement of Anarres and to whose philosophy Shevek steadfastly adheres, such promises and commitments are central to the Anarresti “experiment in nonauthoritarian communism” (342). As Shevek recalls upon the birth of his first child,

the validity of the promise, even promise of indefinite term, was deep in the grain of Odo’s thinking; though it might seem that her insistence on freedom to change would invalidate the idea of promise or vow, in fact the freedom made the promise meaningful. A promise is a direction taken, a self-limitation of choice. As Odo pointed out, if no direction is taken, if one goes nowhere, no change will occur. (244)

Unlike the coercive commercial contracts that determine the parameters of human relationships in the novels of Dick and Heinlein, this “self-limitation of choice” is by
definition voluntary. For Odo and her disciple Shevek, being able to keep one’s word is the first step on the road to a truly libertarian form of socialism. On Anarres, for instance, all those who participate in the office of Production and Distribution Coordination (PDC) make a promise to their fellow citizens not to abuse the privileges of temporarily assumed power. “Selected by lot” (168) and given only “four years as a Listing” (168), the implied but very real promise of these volunteer administrators ensures, at least in theory, that “they do not govern persons” (76) and that Anarres continues to “have no law but the single principle of mutual aid between individuals” (301). Unfortunately, as Shevek himself is only too aware, not all of the PDC’s coordinators are willing to keep the promises they have made.

On Anarres, as in all societies that claim to balance the rights of the individual against those of the greater good, public opinion is a powerful force. As Shevek’s close friend Bedap notes, in this society built on the promise of each individual to respect the autonomy of others, “the only security we have is our neighbors’ approval” (363). “Anarchist,” Bedap argues, “can break a law and hope to get away unpunished, but you can’t ‘break’ a custom; it’s the framework of your life with other people” (363). The problem, as Shevek realizes when he attempts to publish a theory of physics that flies in the face of currently accepted scientific thinking, is that the social customs of Anarres have become “laws of conventional behavior” (331), laws that the majority of Anarresti no longer recognize as such “because they’re part of our thinking” (331). For Shevek, this tyranny of the majority is tantamount to a betrayal of the revolution, to a rejection of the promise of mutual aid upon which Anarres was originally founded. Echoing the concerns of
Emma Goldman in “Minorities Versus Majorities” (1910) and “The Individual, Society and the State” (1914), ¹⁴ Shevek complains that

> We’ve been saying, more and more often, you must work with the others, you must accept the rule of the majority. But any rule is tyranny. The duty of the individual is to accept *no* rule, to be the initiator of his own acts, to be responsible. Only if he does so will the society live, and change, and adapt, and survive. We are not subjects of a State founded upon law, but members of a society founded upon revolution. (359)

Majority rule, so central both to social liberalism and to authoritarian forms of socialism, is thus unacceptable to Shevek. For him, to *insist* upon consensus, as Sabul does when he persuades the other members of the PDC to block the publication of Shevek’s book, is to accept the tyranny of the majority and acknowledge, as Bedap claims, that Anarres does indeed have an “unadmitted, inadmissible government that rules the Odonian society by stifling the individual mind” (165).

For many critics of *The Dispossessed*, this betrayal of Anarres’ revolutionary promise is a sign of the novel’s failure to represent socialist libertarianism as the basis of a practical political system. Mark Tunick, for example, extending a critique that began with Fredric Jameson’s 1975 article “World Reduction in Le Guin,” is quick to point out that “as a utopia, or a vision of a society to which we ought to aspire, Anarres leaves much to be desired” (Tunick 129). “On Anarres,” Tunick argues,

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¹⁴ Like Shevek and Bedap, Goldman is wary of public opinion and the power it can assume in a society without formal laws. In “The Individual, Society and the State,” for example, she warns that “more pernicious than the power of a dictator is that of a class; the most terrible – the tyranny of a majority” (121). Likewise, in “Minorities Versus Majorities,” she claims, “always, at every period, the few were the banner bearers of a great idea, of liberating effort. Not so the mass, the leaden weight of which does not let it move” (83).
individuality has been preserved by hypocrisy, by the emergence of subtle and unacknowledged forms of privacy and possessiveness, just as the need in a community for order has been met on this anarchic world, to an unfortunate and excessive degree, by the emergence of subtle, noninstitutional forms of social coercion. (140)

According to Tony Burns in *Political Theory, Science Fiction, and Utopian Literature*, this “hypocrisy” ultimately stems from Le Guin’s own divided political loyalties. Drawing inspiration from György Lukács’ analysis of Walter Scott’s fiction in *The Historical Novel* (1937), Burns maintains that “it is Le Guin the creative writer and novelist whose outlook might be said to be in some sense politically conservative, whereas it is the other Le Guin, the political activist, whose beliefs might be said to be critical of existing society” (7). For Burns, in other words, it is the conservatism of the novel’s realistic style that prevents it from ever realizing the radical politics the book appears to profess. For him, there is “a decidedly conservative dimension to Le Guin’s writing, and perhaps even her philosophical outlook more generally” (3). For some of the novel’s harsher critics, such as Tom Moylan, Le Guin’s reluctance to embrace a more stylistically adventurous approach to *The Dispossessed* actually undermines the novel’s entire utopian project and makes its representation of Anarres little more than “a strategic containment zone” (104). For these critics, the revolution is not betrayed by anyone on Anarres; instead, it is betrayed by the novel itself.

Ironically, this eagerness to condemn *The Dispossessed* for its failure to fully realize a “true” socialist libertarian utopia all too often obscures the critique of conventional gender relations that lies at the heart of the novel. Indeed, despite its
obvious treatment of gender issues, only a few commentators ever address the novel’s representation of femininity and masculinity. In his introduction to the essay collection *The New Utopian Politics of Ursula K. Le Guin’s The Dispossessed*, for example, Laurence Davis admits that, “although our treatment of the subject matter is the most sustained and comprehensive to date, there are important aspects of it – such as the gender and sexual politics of the novel – that merit more intensive consideration” (xxi).

One of these “important aspects” is the quite explicit reformulation in *The Dispossessed* of a more inclusive understanding of citizenship. Historically, of course, as Stefan Dudink, Karen Hagemann, and Anna Clark note in their preface to *Representing Masculinity: Male Citizenship in Modern Western Culture*, “the notion of citizenship that was constructed in the age of democratic revolutions presented modern citizenship as both universal and male, as at once abstract and concretely gendered” (ix). In *The Dispossessed*, by contrast, citizenship among the Anarresti neither implies such universal masculinity nor excludes femininity. On Anarres, women frequently challenge this ideal of the masculine citizen by performing work and occupying political positions traditionally reserved in other societies for men. For these women, “the equation of political citizenship with masculinity” (Dudink, Hagemann, and Clark ix) belongs only to the patriarchal past and the nations of Urras; it is certainly no longer “quietly assumed” among them (Dudink, Hagemann, and Clark ix).

The inclusive concept of citizenship on Anarres, one that encompasses both the femininity and masculinity of those who endorse it, is of course very much at odds with the “rugged” individualism that informs earlier attempts within science fiction to imagine a working “anarchist” society, such as that of Heinlein’s *The Moon is a Harsh Mistress*. 
In Heinlein’s novel, as Donna Glee Williams notes in her essay comparing these two anarchist moons, anarchism “might be described as ‘masculine,’ individualist, libertarian, [and] laissez-faire capitalist” (165). On Le Guin’s moon, on the other hand, anarchism is “feminist, communal, [and] centrally coordinated” (Williams 165). On Heinlein’s Luna, where market libertarianism ensures that only the socially “fittest” individuals survive, it is “the impossibility of community that makes self-responsibility necessary” (Williams 167). On socialist libertarian Anarres, by contrast, “the strongest … are those who are most social” (220) and, by extension, most involved in the community. What ultimately distinguishes these two very different strands of anarchist or libertarian thought is the Loonies’ firm belief in, and the rejection among most Anarchisti of, a rugged individualism that places the interests of the “masculine” individual above those of the “feminine” group. For such Anarchisti, as for Emma Goldman, this “‘rugged individualism’ … is only a masked attempt to repress and defeat the individual and his individuality” (Goldman “The Individual” 112). More often than not, this inherently masculine understanding of individualism “has meant,” as it does on Heinlein’s Luna, “all the ‘individualism’ for the masters, while the people are regimented into a slave caste to serve a handful of self-seeking ‘supermen’” (Goldman “The Individual” 112). On Anarres, where most people are willing to recognize that they “have only one another” (220) and where the word “individual” refers always to both women and men, “there is no strength to be gained from hurting one another” (220). Instead, men and women must learn to cooperate, expressing their own sense of individuality in such a way that it

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15 In “The Individual, Society and the State,” Goldman makes a distinction between “individualism,” which she associates with the rugged individualism of capitalism and classical liberalism, and “individuality,” which she claims “is the liberty to be, to do; in short, the liberty of actual and active opportunity” (121).
neither interferes with nor seeks to deny the individuality of others. If they are ever to live up to their society’s promise of mutual aid and respect, these women and men must embrace each other’s individualism in a way that is both more flexible than it is rugged and more understanding than it is competitive.

In matters of sexuality, the practical consequences of a cooperative rather than masculine individualism quickly become clear. On Anarres, individuals involved in sexual relationships are bound to each other only by respect for one another’s autonomy. Unlike the line marriages of Heinlein’s Free State of Luna, which privilege the rugged individualism of men and which are as much about business as they are romance, such relationships have no economic dimension for the Anarresti. For Shevek, in particular, “between a man and a woman there is what they want there to be between them” (218) and nothing else. Though individuals here are certainly as committed to their romantic partners as conventionally married couples are to each other, commitment on this socialist libertarian moon implies neither economic dependence nor domination; on Anarres, no one owns anyone else nor does any one individual guarantee the future economic wellbeing of another. By “removing opportunities for domination and exploitation” (117), as Dan Sabia argues in his analysis of the tensions between the individual and the community in The Dispossessed, such an arrangement “encourage[s] more libertarian and egalitarian social relationships and habits” (117), creating as it does so “sexual relations and partnerships … as varied, and as temporary or permanent, as individuals wish them to be” (117). On Anarres, as in the anarchist society imagined by Mikhail Bakunin in his “Revolutionary Catechism” (1866), individuals always “have the right to unite and separate as they please” (Bakunin 93) without fear of either social or
financial bankruptcy. For the Anarresti, as for Bakunin, “the union of a man and a
woman must be free, for a free choice is the indispensable condition for moral sincerity”
(Bakunin 94).

Between Shevek and his romantic partner Takver, this union takes the form of an explicit recognition of each other’s autonomy. “Like planets circling blindly, quietly, in the flood of sunlight, about the common center of gravity” (322), Takver and Shevek swing around each other’s individuality, “circling [one another] endlessly” (322) on complementary orbits of mutual respect and shared regard. Though they both commit themselves wholly to each other, as completely as the planets pledge themselves to the gravity of the sun, their relationship is nevertheless a “voluntarily constituted federation” (244) rather than a marriage in any conventional sense: “so long as it worked, it worked, and if it didn’t work it stopped being. It was not an institution but a function. It had no sanction but that of private conscience” (244). This functional approach to love leads both Takver and Shevek to conceive of their partnership as a process, rather than a static alliance. Like individuals themselves, their partnership is always evolving, always changing. For Takver, as for Shevek, there simply “was no end. There was process: process was all. You could go in a promising direction or you could go wrong, but you did not set out with the expectation of ever stopping anywhere. All responsibilities, all commitments thus understood took on substance and duration” (334). Just as the promise so central to Odo’s socialist libertarianism is strengthened by the respect of one individual for another, so Takver and Shevek’s relationship is given “substance and duration” by their recognition of each other’s autonomy. This common interest in the individuality of the other, as Everett L. Hamner suggests in his examination of the
novel’s scientific metaphors, ensures that “both parties remain subjects orbiting a common center, rather than one party becoming a mere satellite of the other” (223). Though Anarres might still orbit Urras, and though the Anarresti might still to some degree measure their achievements by Urrasti standards, neither Shevek nor Takver seek to become the other’s satellite; instead, like binary stars, they orbit a “common center of gravity” that is, in this human cosmos, the radiance of each other’s independence.

For the most part, although there certainly are exceptions, relationships between and among men on Anarres are also characterized by their emphasis on equality. Attitudes toward sexual orientation, for example, reflect the majority of the population’s willingness to embrace a more inclusive form of individualism. Homosexuality, for instance, is merely one sexual choice among many; on Anarres, it is neither stigmatized nor considered exceptional. For Anarresti men such as Shevek, there simply is “no law, no limit, no penalty, no punishment, no disapproval applied to any sexual practice of any kind, except the rape of a child or woman” (245). In fact, “the only social limit imposed on sexual activity,” Shevek maintains, is “the mild one of pressure in favor of privacy, a kind of modesty imposed by the communality of life” (245). Given the widespread acceptance of such beliefs on Anarres, homophobia is rare indeed; for Shevek in particular, it is practically unthinkable. For him, as for many Anarresti, sex is merely part of the toolbox of friendship; if necessary, it can be used to repair relationships both between men and women and between men and other men.

When Shevek meets a vulnerable and downtrodden Bedap for the first time after many years of separation, it is sex that allows them to reconnect and re-establish the old bonds that once bound them together. Although Shevek is “pretty definitely
heterosexual” (172) and Bedap is “pretty definitely homosexual” (172), Shevek is more than willing to temporarily suspend his own sexual desires once he realizes that “the sexual element of [their friendship] meant a great deal to Bedap, [and] was, to him, a true consummation” (172). Though there is “no strong sexual desire on either side to make the connection last” (172), sex, Shevek believes, is nevertheless vital to renewing their relationship, since it tells a self-conscious and suffering Bedap, in a way that words cannot, that Shevek both respects him and accepts him for who he is as an individual and a man. “They had,” as Shevek observes, “simply reasserted trust” (172). Unlike the men of Heinlein’s Luna, whose fierce sexual competition over women contributes to their sense of masculine entitlement and isolates them from one another, Shevek and Bedap meet as equals, as friends whose relationship, at once sexual and social, is one of compromise and mutual respect.

Although the open-minded attitude of men like Shevek would seem to ensure equality in all matters sexual, relationships on Anarres are in fact fraught with contradiction. Critics such as Carl Freedman, for example, argue that Le Guin’s almost exclusive focus on Takver and Shevek’s partnership, by emphasizing monogamy and failing to explore the variety of sexual practices that the socialist libertarianism of Anarres would presumably inspire, tacitly implies that heterosexual monogamy is the only path to social and sexual fulfilment. As Freedman notes in *Critical Theory and Science Fiction*, though marriage in the earthly sense can hardly exist in a world without laws or patriarchy, Odonianism does subtly encourage (though it does not prescribe) monogamy; and the happiest Anarresti seem to be those who choose
“partnerships,” long-term mutual commitments with, however, no legal or economic significance. (117)

For Freedman, this emphasis on the benefits of such partnerships suggests that monogamy is actually the preferred form of sexual expression on Anarres, a suggestion that undermines the novel’s self-professed commitment to the sexual plurality true socialist libertarianism would seem to demand. For Moylan, this focus on monogamy in *The Dispossessed* also “betray[s] a privileging of male and heterosexual superiority” (102). Of particular concern, in Moylan’s eyes, is Takver’s willingness to sacrifice her own goals in order to make Shevek’s ambitions a reality. By doing so, she “is reduced to the role of the ‘good woman’ behind the ‘great man’” (Moylan 111). Like the women of Heinlein’s Luna, Takver’s own dreams fall by the wayside as she “bears the children, cares for them through famine and revolution, [and] keeps the home fires burning and her own body warm for the man who is off saving the world” (Moylan 111). Indeed, even Le Guin herself in an interview with Freedman has suggested that her “anarchists are not as free from sexual inhibitions and confusions as Emma Goldman and others expected” (168), if only because they too at times reinforce rather than contest the heterosexist norms of those whose political ideologies of domination they claim to reject.16

Although Takver and Shevek’s relationship is by no means the partnership of equals it appears to be at first, like Shevek’s sexual and social friendship with Bedap, it is

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16 Samuel R. Delany, simultaneously one of Le Guin’s most tireless promoters and fiercest critics, certainly agrees with this assessment of the novel. For Delany, though Shevek’s sexual relationship with Bedap certainly does imply the possibility of more egalitarian sexual relations between and among men, *The Dispossessed* also endorses a subtle form of homophobia. In particular, Le Guin’s suggestion toward the end of the novel that Bedap “must change his life” (371) if he ever wishes to experience fatherhood is, as Delany notes in “To Read *The Dispossessed*” (1978) “both coy and pious (already an ugly combination)” (152). “Belong[ing] to a gay fathers group” (151) himself at the time he first read the novel, such homophobia is all the more offensive to Delany because it is precisely that “reading of the text [that] is not the one Le Guin intended” (152).
still one in which mutual respect plays a large part. Such a claim cannot be made of Shevek’s purely professional relationship with Sabul, his colleague at the Central Institute of the Sciences in Abbenay. The Physics Federation’s liaison to the PDC, Sabul uses his “temporary” position of power to profit at the expense of others. When Shevek comes to Sabul with a paper he wants to publish in an Urrasti journal, for example, Sabul refuses to recommend it to the PDC press for publication because Shevek’s theory is, in his opinion, “intellectual excrement” (116). This is not, of course, the real reason that Sabul refuses to endorse the article; like other semi-permanent members of the PDC, Sabul recognizes that, in the economy of reputation that public opinion has created on Anarres, he can profit from the work of others. Sabul therefore demands, as a condition of the paper’s publication, that he be listed as co-author, even though he had no part whatsoever in the manuscript’s creation and had, in fact, “ceased to be a functioning physicist years ago” (117).

Building “his high reputation … on expropriations from other minds” (117), Sabul appreciates in a way that the young and still somewhat naïve Shevek cannot that “power inheres in a center” (58) and that this center is the PDC. Still a believer in a society that refuses to acknowledge the power of one individual over another, Shevek chafes under Sabul’s very real domination:

they had bargained, he and Sabul, bargained like profiteers. It had not been a battle, but a sale. You give me this and I’ll give you that. Refuse me and I’ll refuse you. Sold? Sold! Shevek’s career, like the existence of his society, depended on the continuance of a fundamental, unadmitted profit contract. Not a
relationship of mutual aid and solidarity, but an exploitative relationship; not organic, but mechanical. (117)

As this lament makes clear, Sabul is now Shevek’s boss and their relationship, like any founded on a “profit contract,” is one in which one man dominates the other. Insisting that he receive credit where no credit is due effectively allows Sabul to exploit the labour of Shevek’s mind and recast their relationship in economic terms. By forcing him to acknowledge his “contribution” to the article, Sabul is thus able to make Shevek, in the words of the latter’s old teacher Mitis, “his man” (58). Such behaviour, of course, reintroduces a form of commercial masculinity akin to that found on Heinlein’s Luna or among Dick’s organization men: one that measures the success of a man in terms of how profitably he uses his fellows. Men like Shevek, who are unwilling to accept both this new commercial form of masculinity and the unacknowledged economy of public opinion that supports it, must therefore look elsewhere if they are to keep Odo’s dream of a world without masters alive.

Formed at least in part as a response to the unscrupulous behaviour of men like Sabul, the Syndicate of Initiative is Shevek and his friends’ answer to the establishment of an implicitly patriarchal economics of reputation on Anarres. Designed to bypass the increasingly protectionist and reactionary restrictions of the PDC, the Syndicate of Initiative’s first act is to publish an unabridged version of Shevek’s *Principles of*  

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17 For Shevek, a native speaker of Pravic, the artificially constructed language of Anarres, Mitis’ use of “his” in “his man” is somewhat shocking because it flies in the face of the moon’s communal ethic. As Shevek observes, the singular forms of the possessive pronoun in Pravic were used mostly for emphasis; idiom avoided them. Little children might say “my mother,” but very soon they learned to say “the mother.” Instead of “my hand hurts,” it was “the hand hurts me,” and so on; to say “this one is mine and that’s yours” in Pravic, one said, “I use this one and you use that.” Mitis’s statement, “You will be his man,” had a strange sound to it. (58)
Simultaneity, a book which in its original “edited” form also listed Sabul as its co-author. Though certainly important, the publication of this book is not the Syndicate’s chief accomplishment: what constitutes its most significant political achievement is, rather, its resolve to send Shevek himself to the nation of A-Io on Urras. Eager to visit this country of “profiteers” (356) and “propertarians” (76) ever since he realized that he was without peers on Anarres in the field of physics, Shevek’s decision to leave the moon of his birth is as much the result of his political convictions as it is his intellectual curiosity. As Shevek explains during the especially heated debate in the PDC that follows his proposal to send himself to Urras, going to this forbidden planet is, for him, “a matter of the individual’s right; a kind of test of it, in fact” (356). In his eyes, “to forbid [such a journey] now would be an assumption of authority by the PDC, an abridgment of the right of the Odonian individual to initiate action harmless to others” (357). In other words, by not allowing him to leave, and at some point freely return, the PDC would be openly admitting that they now consider themselves the sole legitimate government of Anarres. As Shevek and Takver both realize while discussing the possibility and implications of Shevek’s trip, to not go would also ensure that men such as Sabul, men who are willing to buy and sell the reputations of both themselves and others to get what they want, would become dominant in the new Anarresti “state.” For individuals as committed to the equality of socialist libertarianism as Shevek and Takver are, the prospect of a world where everything comes with “Sabul-strings attached” (376) is

18 Interestingly, it is Shevek’s own mother Rulag who argues most vociferously against his visit to A-Io on Urras. In the end, Rulag’s opposition to his plan only hardens Shevek’s resolve, since he sees his mother’s decision to leave his father during his childhood as somehow constituting an abandonment of him, and is therefore happy to thwart her now that he has the chance. It is thus ironic that, by leaving Takver and his own two children behind, Shevek is willing and eager to do exactly the same thing Rulag did to him.
morally repugnant to say the least. If he is to “help keep the Revolution alive” (376) on Anarres by preventing men like Sabul from using the economy of reputation to gain a political foothold, then, they both reluctantly agree, Shevek must, as Takver puts it, “asser[t] his right to self-determination” (376) and travel to a nation on a planet where men rule absolutely.19

In A-Io, as Shevek quickly discovers, inequality is the ideal rather than, as on Anarres, the unforeseen and unfortunate consequence of a socialist libertarian society grown complacent. Combining the technological prowess and optimism of the United States during the 1960s with the social and economic disparities of the late nineteenth-century Gilded Age, A-Io is a capitalist state with a lengthy history of classical liberalism that endorses systemic oppression. In A-Io, as Shevek notes somewhat bitterly, “there is nothing you can do that profit does not enter into, and fear of loss, and the wish for power” (346); for a true Odonian such as Shevek, there is simply “no way to act rightly, with a clear heart, on Urras” (346). Even at Ieu Eun University, where faculty meet on supposedly equal terms, “you cannot say good morning without knowing which of you is ‘superior’ to the other, or trying to prove it” (346). This “basic moral assumption” (208), that it is “not mutual aid, but mutual aggression” (208) that ought to govern relationships between individuals, shocks Shevek and renders “the operations of capitalism … as meaningless to him as the rites of a primitive religion, as barbaric, as elaborate, and as

19 Ironically, Shevek’s and Takver’s use of the terms “test” and “assert” here does raise the spectre of that “rugged individualism” of classical liberalism and market libertarianism that they otherwise abhor. In effect, they are both arguing that the Anarresti have grown too “soft” in their commitment to socialist libertarianism and that, if this commitment is ever to be renewed, Anarres must send a strong man such as Shevek to Urras as its emissary. If he goes to Urras, in other words, both Takver and Shevek assume that socialist libertarianism will be sorely tested yet ultimately reaffirmed in Shevek’s own person, and that this manly triumph over adversity will somehow justify and renew the political principles upon which Anarres was originally founded.
unnecessary” (130). Convinced by one of his Ioti colleagues to go shopping on Saemtenevia Prospect, an “elegant retail street” (131) in A-Io’s capital Nio Esseia, Shevek’s first practical encounter with the “primitive religion” of capitalism is a horrifying experience indeed. In a moment that recalls Marxist critiques of commodification, critiques with which both Goldman and Bakunin for the most part agree, Shevek observes that “all the people in all the shops were either buyers or sellers” (132) and that “they had no relation to the things [they bought] but that of possession” (132). Unlike on Anarres, where people take pride in the products they produce themselves, in A-Io creators are soon parted from their creations and, in fact, have no interest in them beyond their potential exchange value. For the Ioti, as for the Loonies of The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress and the organization men of Ubik, commodity is king and everything has a price attached. Perhaps most disturbingly for Shevek, these commodities also include women.

In A-Io, women are both revered and despised. On the one hand, as Shevek’s government-sanctioned chaperone Saio Pae proclaims, “a beautiful, virtuous woman … is an inspiration to us – the most precious thing on earth” (75). Yet this same man firmly believes, with equal conviction, that woman have “no head for abstract thought” (73) and that the “few exceptions [are] God-awful brainy women with vaginal atrophy” (74). As Shevek later comes to appreciate, “this is chivalry” (147), that set of customs by which men insult women with praise. Like the women of the Renaissance about whom Virginia Woolf20 speculates in A Room of One’s Own (1929), the women of A-Io, at least for

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20 Woolf has been, in more ways than one, a major influence on Le Guin’s writing. In her essay “Science Fiction and Mrs. Brown” (1976), for example, Le Guin uses Woolf’s own “Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown” (1923) to ask whether or not it is “advisable or desirable that the science fiction writer be also a novelist of character” (112). Typically for Le Guin, the answer to this question is both “yes” and “no.”
chivalrous men like Pae, are a paradox embodied, beings worshipped and scorned in equal measure. As Woolf makes clear in a passage that could very well be a description of the women of A-Io, but that also simplifies Early Modern gender relations,

imaginatively she is of the highest importance; practically she is completely insignificant. She pervades poetry from cover to cover; she is all but absent from history. She dominates the lives of kings and conquerors in fiction; in fact she was the slave of any boy whose parents forced a ring upon her finger. Some of the most inspired words, some of the most profound thoughts in literature fall from her lips; in real life she could hardly read, could scarcely spell, and was the property of her husband. (53)

For Ioti men, just as for the Renaissance misogynists Woolf imagines, women are not people but merely pretty things to be bought and sold. Such men, Shevek soon realizes, know “no relation but possession” (75) to the women in their lives and are, ironically, “possessed” (75) themselves by the idea of owning another human being. For them, women are like the glittering merchandise of Saemtenevia Prospect; they are “inspirational” trinkets to be displayed on pedestals, pedestals which ultimately are prisons as well.

By denying women ownership of their own bodies, the Ioti embrace a gendered distinction between public and private space as inflexible as any that existed in the

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21 As the contributors to Virginia Woolf: Reading the Renaissance discuss at length, Woolf’s depiction of the Renaissance as a period when women universally had no agency whatsoever while men had almost unlimited power is somewhat simplified. Here it is hardly surprising, of course, since Woolf intended the lectures that eventually became A Room of One’s Own to be a call-to-arms rather than a scrupulously accurate history of women’s writing. Delivered to female scholars at two of Cambridge’s women’s colleges in October 1928, Woolf hoped her lectures would emphasize just how damaging systemic discrimination against women has been historically, even if that discrimination wasn’t always as absolute as she makes it out to be.
nineteenth century or the Early Modern period. The university at which Shevek teaches, for example, admits “no women at all” (129). Though they are allowed to marry if they so choose, “married professors usually lived during the five class days of the seven-day week in bachelor quarters on campus, going home only on weekends” (129). According to the university’s administrators, women would be a distraction and, in this public sanctuary of men, “nothing distracted” (129). For Shevek, a man committed to sexual diversity, this absence of women is itself distracting. Feeling “his existence to be cut off, artificial, among men, always men [and] lacking the tension and attraction of the sexual difference” (146), Shevek yearns for the company of women. Fortunately, one of his colleagues at Ieu Eun invites Shevek to accompany him home to meet his wife and children. Though this fellow physicist, Damaere Oiie, seems at first reluctant to share his private life with Shevek, at home Oiie is radically transformed. As Shevek is pleased to discover, “Oiie was a changed man at home. The secretive look left his face, and he did not drawl when he spoke. His family treated him with respect, but there was mutuality in the respect” (147). As Shevek has already “heard a good deal of Oiie’s views on women” (147), some of which he finds shockingly misogynist, he is “surprised to see that [Oiie] treated his wife with courtesy, even delicacy” (147). Although Shevek’s newfound fondness for Oiie prompts him to dismiss his initial conclusion that, again, “this is chivalry” (147), such a thing is precisely what he discovers at work in Oiie’s home. Though Oiie is indeed, as Shevek claims, “fond of his wife and trust[s] her” (147), he can only ever express this affection and trust in private. Like the doctor Shevek meets on the freighter to Urras, Oiie’s attitude toward his wife Sewa reflects the fact that his chivalrous thoughts “never seemed to be able to go in a straight line” (16). To treat Sewa
as an equal in public, to become the “simple, brotherly kind of man” (147) Shevek imagines Oiie to be at home, is simply not possible for this man who is also, paradoxically, convinced that the best thing for women is to “keep ’em in their place” (74).

Chivalry, those paradoxical expectations that allow Oiie to dote on his wife while at the same time refusing her rights comparable to his own, is of course a logical consequence of A-Io’s masculinist classical liberalism. According to Arthur Brittan, who uses the concept in *Masculinity and Power* to help explain and deconstruct the internal political logic of patriarchy, “masculinism is the ideology that justifies and naturalizes male domination” (4). In the state of A-Io, as in the Free State of Heinlein’s Luna, masculinism thus “provides the underpinning for a particular way of organizing gender relationships which separates biology from culture and ensures the political domination of men and the subordination of women” (Brittan 15). For Ioti men like Oiie, it is therefore biology itself that excludes women from the world of politics. In the eyes of such men, just as for their Loonie counterparts, women are inherently frail creatures whose fragility and weakness “naturally” prevents them from participating in the political arena. Like all proponents of biological determinism, Oiie “accepts without question the sexual division of labour” (Brittan 4), a division that “sanctions the political and dominant role of men in the public and private spheres” (Brittan 4). For Shevek, who comes from a world where women perform as much physical labour as men do, such an assumption of biological inferiority, and the political exclusion it entails, is utter nonsense. Responding to his doctor Kimoe’s assertion that “men are physically stronger” (17) than women, Shevek claims that, although “men maybe work faster” (17) than their
female counterparts, it is “women [who] work longer” (17) and who are, in his opinion, actually the stronger sex. Shevek even goes so far as to admit to Kimoe that “often [he] ha[s] wished [he] was as tough as a woman” (17). To men who earnestly believe that biology is destiny and that “what women call thinking is done with the uterus” (73), such sentiments are shocking indeed and suggest to them, more than anything else, that Shevek really is the “First Man from the Moon” (20).

The more time Shevek spends in A-Io, the more apparent it becomes to him just how much masculinism informs Ioti culture. Without a doubt, the most enthusiastic supporter of Ioti masculinism is Atro, the old physicist who championed Shevek’s *Principles of Simultaneity* when the book first appeared in its edited form on Urras. An aristocrat by birth who despises the classical liberalism that has succeeded the historical feudalism of A-Io, Atro is admired by Shevek for his “genuine contempt for both money and power” (141) and, initially at least, Shevek “feel[s] closer to him than to anyone else he ha[s] met on Urras” (141). This sense of kinship, however, is threatened by Atro’s fervent belief in both biological determinism and martial masculinity. According to Atro, “the law of existence is struggle – competition – elimination of the weak – a ruthless war for survival” (143). As Neil Easterbrook points out, these convictions “bea[r] remarkable similarity” (56) to those of Heinlein’s Professor de la Paz, as both men “invoke[e] an evolutionary analogy” to render their beliefs “natural and just” (56). For Atro, just as for the Professor, the best evidence for this “law of existence” is to be found in “the worth of warfare as the breeder of courage and manliness and the weeder-out of the unfit” (305). In Atro’s eyes, the conduct of men during war is what defines truly successful, and therefore hegemonic, masculinity. Such a belief, as John Tosh argues in “Hegemonic
Masculinity and the History of Gender,” is not at all unique historically as “masculinity has often furnished governing elites with a powerful rhetoric for dignifying the political order” (50). In fact, as Tosh observes, “in many societies which exclude women from any formal political role, political virtue [is] conceptualised in masculine terms, in a discourse which reflects hegemonic conventions and practices” (50). Like the discourse of chivalry that dictates Oiie’s attitude toward his wife, this older hegemonic masculinity of “blood and steel” (Le Guin 287) also “justifies and naturalizes male domination” (Brittan 4), in this case by suggesting that the behaviour of men on the battlefield somehow proves their political “fitness.” The women of A-Io, who are not permitted to join the Ioti military, are of course unable to prove their political worth in this way, just as they are also not able to do so using the forums of academia and commerce. Instead, like Wyoming Knott in The Moon is a Harsh Mistress, they must learn “when to keep quiet” (Heinlein 366) and trust that the men who swear to protect them will also agree to speak on their behalf.

Although women such as Sewa appear to accept the claim that men do indeed have the right to represent their interests, not all Ioti women are content with this arrangement. Oiie’s sister Vea, for example, tells Shevek that she only acknowledges the authority of men, so that she might assume control of her own life. Like Sewa, Vea adopts what James W. Messerschmidt and others have described as “emphasized femininity,” that “form of femininity that is practiced in a complimentary, compliant, and accommodating subordinate relationship with hegemonic masculinity” (Messerschmidt 206). By adopting this emphasized femininity, Vea believes, women are able “do exactly as they like” (214); in her eyes, women such as herself actually “run the men” (215) and
the state they control, their emphasized femininity making it possible to do so without having “to get their hands dirty, or wear brass helmets, or stand about shouting in the Directorate” (214). In a society in which she will always be “a thing owned, bought, [and] sold” (215), however, Vea’s claims of emancipation are more illusory than they are empowering. Instead of granting her the political control she craves, emphasized femininity has in fact made Vea a slave, one “so elaborately and ostentatiously a female body that she seemed scarcely to be a human being” (213). Though she may indeed be able to influence the men in her life and affect their decisions, Vea’s emphasized femininity ultimately ensures that she remains permanently objectified. Her sense of power is thus an illusion precisely because she must always submit, at least in public, to the “higher” power of men and the hegemonic masculinity, be it chivalric or martial, that they adopt.

Disgusted by the apparent willingness of both men and women in the Ioti upper class to embrace the inequality of masculinism, Shevek flees Ieu Eun University in the hopes of finding, among the revolutionary underground of downtrodden Nioti in Nio Esseia, something akin to the equality of socialist libertarianism he knows from Anarres. To Shevek, who is eagerly assisted by a number of disenfranchised Nioti, such equality and a principled commitment to mutual aid does indeed appear to exist; like the Anarresti, the Nioti, it seems, are the kind of “people who might help each other” (294).

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22 In the novel’s most horrifying scene, Shevek himself forgets that Vea is actually a human being and attempts to rape her. Though he ultimately fails to recognize his actions for what they are and considers the whole incident merely a drunken indiscretion, this dehumanizing act is emblematic of the inequality between men and women that Ioti masculinism demands. Attempting to rape Vea allows Shevek to assert his temporarily assumed Ioti “right” to dominate her and possess her as other men do. Her resistance to this assault only “excite[s] him” (230) further because, to an intoxicated Shevek who has forgotten his own socialist libertarian ideals, such resistance is proof that Vea does not really respect him as she does other men in A-Io. Rape, Shevek drunkenly believes in this moment that dramatizes the humiliating power of masculinism, will ensure that he receives what he feels Vea owes him.
Even among these rebels, however, masculinism still dominates the lives of women. Though they certainly have more of a public voice than their upper-class counterparts, women who participate in this ragtag coalition of “syndicalists [and] libertarians” (295) are silenced more often than they are listened to. Siro, for instance, who at first appears to be a leader of the rebellion, is quickly dismissed the moment she publicly disagrees with Tuio Maedda, the man truly in charge; to Maedda, Siro is simply “the girl” (295) who must do his bidding. Although Shevek himself appears to be oblivious to it, Siro’s eventual acquiescence to Maedda’s demands is reminiscent of both Sewa and Vea’s acceptance of masculine supremacy. For Siro, as for Sewa and Vea, the word of a man, of any man, is the final word. Perhaps more than anything else, it is for this reason that Shevek can only ever return to Anarres with “hands [that] were empty, as they had always been” (387). Although he does indeed foil the exploitative plans of the Ioti state and, through the *deus ex machina* of Hain and Terra, publishes his General Temporal Theory in such a way that it is freely available to all, Shevek never actually challenges the masculinism of A-Io in any meaningful way. He leaves the Ioti just as he found them, living in a nation in which the rule of half the population by the other is an accepted fact of life. Though they may occasionally “strik[e] against power” (342), the Nioti rebels never actually contest the power of the masculinism that informs and structures the classical liberalism of the Ioti state. Not even Shevek, whom Maedda describes at one point as “the idea of anarchism, made flesh” (295), can help them cast off these chains. For both the Ioti and Nioti, the inequality of masculinism is merely the way of all flesh, the way things have been, are, and will always be.

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Historically, utopias describe not only the perfect society, but also the education of those who stumble upon them. More often than not, as in *Herland* and *The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress*, these soon-to-be-enlightened outsiders are privileged young men whose visit to utopia opens their eyes to the injustices of the world they left behind. In *The Dispossessed*, Le Guin turns this traditional utopian narrative on its head by sending Shevek away from utopia. Rather than making one of the Ioti travel to Anarres, where she or he would presumably learn how mutual aid and individual initiative together make a just society at least theoretically possible, the novel instead sends Shevek to Urras, to the state of A-Io, where he discovers that “there is nothing you can do that profit does not enter into” (346) and equality between individuals is impossible. Though it is not quite as dystopian as the world of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Urras is also not, as the Terran ambassador Keng believes, “the world that comes as close as any could to Paradise” (347). For Shevek, who has just sought asylum in the Terran embassy because his life is in danger after the failed rebellion in Nio Esseia, the main lesson of Urras’ “beautiful wrapping of blue sky and meadows and forests and great cities” (347) is that it hides “a black cellar full of dust, and a dead man” (347). By the time he finally leaves the planet,

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23 *In The Moon is a Harsh Mistress*, for instance, Stuart Rene LaJoie is a self-styled “Poet-Traveler-Soldier of Fortune” (160) from Earth who comes to Luna seeking adventure and excitement. On his first day there, Stu almost gets more than he bargained for when he openly declares his romantic interest in a woman he has just met. “Not having common sense to learn local customs before stirring around” (161), Stu is very nearly executed by a posse of men because he does not know that, on Luna, women rather than men decide who will and will not flirt with them. Fortunately, Mannie happens to be passing by and agrees to act as Stu’s judge, ultimately persuading the ad-hoc jury he sets up not to “eliminate” (160) this stranger “not used to our ways” (161). Recognizing that Stu’s ignorance might get him into further trouble, the good Samaritan Mannie subsequently becomes the young adventurer’s self-appointed teacher and guide to the lunar vision of a market libertarian utopia. As the novel progresses, Stu learns from Mannie and the Professor what, in their opinion, makes the Moon a more just society than the one from which he originally came. By the time Stu eventually returns to his native Earth, he is an enthusiastic convert to the political ideology of market libertarianism and one of the newly established Luna Free State’s most eager advocates.
Shevek has learned only that Urras is a place where a man can have his hand “shot off because he held it out to others” (347). For someone who has “been brought up in a culture that relie[s] deliberately and constantly on human solidarity [and] mutual aid” (204), Urras is most definitely not, as Keng maintains, “the kindliest, most various, [and] most beautiful of all the inhabited worlds” (347); for Shevek at least, it is instead a kind of “Hell” (347).

Of the many lessons in domination this Hell teaches Shevek, few distress him more than that which exposes the link between the inequality of masculinism and the injustices of classical liberalism. In A-Io, masculinism expresses the political convictions of the men who endorse it, men who firmly believe that “you cannot say good morning without knowing which of you is ‘superior’ to the other, or trying to prove it” (346). When this unequal conversation occurs between Ioti men and women, the outcome is both predictable and depressing: women are always inferior in the eyes of the men with whom they speak. Even women like Vea, women who at first glance appear to be in control their own lives, are in the end forced to accept that, for Ioti men, they are merely disposable goods available to the highest bidder. The men of A-Io, men who seek only to possess women as they do everything else in this capitalist state, are simply not interested in discovering the human beings they have so thoroughly “wrapped up in cotton in a box in a wrapping in a carton in a plastic film” (343). For these men, women are toys and status symbols rather than genuine human beings; they certainly have no value in and of themselves.

For Anarresti men such as Shevek who still believe in mutual respect between men and women and who attempt to live their lives according to that belief, this Ioti
masculinism is abhorrent precisely because it denies women the right to self-determination, a right that is central to the socialist libertarian understanding of what it means to be a man. For Shevek, socialist libertarianism encourages a type of masculinity that explicitly and insistently recognizes the value and autonomy of each and every individual, including women. Ultimately, this egalitarian masculinity reaffirms a utopian commitment to the promise of Odo’s anarchism, since unlike the masculinism of A-Io it grants the right of self-determination to everyone equally. On Anarres, despite the privileging of heterosexual monogamy that still haunts sexual relationships and the emerging commercial masculinity of men like Sabul, such egalitarian masculinity, it would seem, at least stands a chance. Although equality between Anarresti men and women may at times be as ambiguous as the critical utopia within which such equality exists, it is, Shevek argues, a political ideal toward which it is still worth striving. Like the socialist libertarianism of Anarres itself, egalitarian masculinity is thus an “idea of freedom, of change, [and] of human solidarity” (345), and something that will always be “an important idea” (345), even when it is not fully realized.
Chapter 6
Conclusion

Throughout chapters which alternate between Anarres and Urras, The Dispossessed repeatedly stresses how different perspectives influence the way people evaluate both their own political beliefs and those of everyone else around them. To illustrate this point metaphorically, the novel describes the wall that encloses the Port of Anarres and that also serves as the border between Urras and its socialist libertarian moon. “Like all walls,” The Dispossessed notes, “it was ambiguous, two-faced. What was inside it and what was outside it depended upon which side of it you were on” (1). What is important here is not that the wall divides two very different worlds from each other, but rather that it is only a small thing, “an idea of boundary” (1), that separates two societies that, even though they disagree politically with each other at the most basic level, nevertheless have much in common. Different understandings of masculinity across social liberalism, the social ethic, and socialist libertarianism are likewise separated by only a small amount of hotly contested conceptual space. The masculinity of men such as Shevek, men who build their understanding of a fundamentally egalitarian masculinity on the foundations of socialist libertarianism’s twin ideals of individual initiative and communal welfare, could very well serve as a model for men who subscribe to the similar, if more flexible and at times compromised, ideals of social liberalism and the social ethic. Even without the radical political and cultural restructuring that socialist libertarianism by definition demands, striving toward such an egalitarian form of masculinity might still offer much to men such as Mayerson who have rejected both the
social ethic and social liberalism, and yet feel like they have nowhere else to turn politically. In this sense, Le Guin’s novel suggests that the social liberalism of the Golden Age was at least a step in the right direction, even if Dick’s ultimate transformation of it into the social ethic is as misguided as Heinlein’s rejection of social liberalism in favour of a market libertarianism informed by an unshakeable belief in biological determinism. If nothing else, argues *The Dispossessed*, the egalitarian masculinity of Shevek and his fellow Anarresti does imply that Mill’s vision of a just society is at least *possible* for the imagined men of tomorrow, and that such a future might indeed be one in which, “over himself, over his own body and mind, the individual is sovereign” (Mill 81).

In light of this suggestion, that a balance might exist between the rights of the individual and the larger community, many American authors of science fiction continued to examine the relationship between masculine sovereignty and communal welfare throughout the late 1970s. Responding to the changing circumstances and political preoccupations of this later period, these authors often framed their speculation about masculinity in terms that were mostly invisible to their predecessors (and sometimes themselves) in the 1960s and early 1970s. In particular, writers such as Samuel R. Delany explore the relationship between masculinity and politics through an explicitly *intersectional* lens, focusing their attention not just on how masculinity and political ideology interact, but also on how other categories of identity inform that relationship. For these authors, masculinity is an inherently multifaceted thing, in that it is influenced not only by political ideologies, but also by categories of identity such as sexuality, which are in turn affected both by political ideologies and masculinity itself.
The result of this intersectional speculation is, of course, more complex than the meditations on masculinity and political ideology that preceded it, if only because masculinity is no longer privileged as the sole category of identity that is influenced by any given political ideology.

Conceived in part as a response to *The Dispossessed,* Delany’s *Trouble on Triton* (1976) suggests that different sexual orientations might create, within the same overarching political context, very different conceptions of masculinity. Like *The Dispossessed,* *Trouble on Triton* explores the fate of masculinity in an explicitly socialist libertarian society; unlike Anarres, however, the society of the Outer Satellites is far from heteronormative. Though egalitarianism is still at the heart of gender identity on Neptune’s Triton, the sheer sexual diversity of the inhabitants of this “ambiguous heterotopia” makes any single form of masculinity impossible, since the “right” way of being masculine for any man or woman on this moon is almost never the same for another. In fact, much of the novel focuses on the disastrous consequences of one man, Bron, attempting to impose his own inherently heterosexist understanding of manhood on

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1 Though Delany claims that “*Triton* was basically finished before [he] became aware of Le Guin’s novel” (“Second Interview” 322), he also acknowledges that he added the subtitle “an ambiguous heterotopia” to the novel’s title in “an attempt to put the two novels clearly into a dialogue [he] already felt was implied” (“Second Interview” 322).

2 Borrowing the term from Michel Foucault, whose *Order of Things* (1970) is quoted at length in one of the novel’s two appendices, Delany uses the concept of heterotopia as a dynamic alternative to the stasis of utopia. Whereas “utopias afford consolation … even though the road to them is chimerical” (Foucault xix), “heterotopias are disturbing, probably because they make it impossible to name this and that, because they shatter or tangle common names” (Foucault xix). As Foucault notes in “Of Other Spaces,” “the heterotopia is capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible” (25). The possibility of such mutually inclusive political juxtaposition stands in stark contrast, of course, to the monolithic political space that defines all “classic” utopias and that, to some extent at least, also exists on Le Guin’s critical utopia of Anarres.

3 On Triton, gender is mostly detached from biological sex, in the sense that masculine and feminine characteristics are attributed to men, women, and everybody else without any attention paid to the physiological sex of the individual in question. Throughout the novel, this sense of detachment has given rise to phenomena that, in a more essentialist society, would seem somewhat peculiar. Obviously masculine names such as Brian, for instance, are routinely adopted by women, especially those from Mars, a planet on which women now occupy the same hegemonic position of power that men on Earth used to.
others, all of whom allow him to try (and fail) because their own political convictions
demand they let him do so. For Bron, who is uncomfortable with “the division we use
out here of humanity into forty or fifty basic sexes” (99), each of which is also divided
into “four homophilic” (99) and five “heterophilic” (99) subcategories of sexual
orientation, Triton’s plurality of sexes and sexualities is a source of misery rather than
emancipatory liberation. He resents, in particular, that “all you have to do is know what
you want” (99) to be happy and that everyone can get together in “a mutually beneficial
alliance where you and they, and your Labrador retriever, if she's what it takes to get you
off, can all meet one another on a footing of cooperation, mutual benefit, and respect”
(100). What he desires, instead, is the perceived “solidity” of heteronormative sexual
relationships, specifically those of a past in which he imagines “men were all strong and
women were all weak” (254). Attempting to resurrect this situation of heterosexist
inequality, Bron does something that, ironically, is only possible because the socialist
libertarianism that structures his society permits it: he becomes a woman.

As a woman, Bron believes that she must “relinquish certain rights” (233) in order
to reassure heterosexual men, men whom she imagines are just as miserable as she used
to be, that they are in control of everything around them. To a large extent, Bron’s
eagerness to submit to masculine authority here is a reflection of her own firm
conviction, one formed while she was still a man of course, that society “need[s] that
particularly male aloneness [of men], if only for the ingenuity it breeds, so that the rest of
the species can survive” (216). Unfortunately, as Bron soon discovers, she herself can
never fully relinquish her rights as a woman because at no point does she ever really
conceive of herself as anything other than a man who just happens to have donned the
raiment of a woman’s body. As she laments to Brian, her female therapist, “I just don’t feel like a woman. I mean all the time, every minute, a complete and whole woman” (250). As Brian points out, this is hardly surprising, since Bron, “though … as real a woman as possible, [is] in another sense … a woman created by a man – specifically by the man you were” (251). Trapped chasing a form of hegemonic masculinity all claims to which she must renounce before her pursuit can begin, Bron’s understanding of her own masculinity thus puts her in an impossible situation, a situation that only exists because it is endorsed by the very socialist libertarianism she despises. In the end, all Bron can do is complain that “here I am, on Triton, and again I am lost in some hopeless tangle of confusion, trouble, and distress” (277). That this “hopeless tangle” is all the result of Bron’s attempt to use her own femininity to reinstate a form of hegemonic masculinity that seeks to subjugate rather than cooperate with others, as all other forms of masculinity on Triton do, is of course completely lost on this woman who truly believes that “what gives the species the only value it has are men … particularly those men who can do what I did” (231).

As Trouble on Triton makes clear, imagining the men of tomorrow continued to be a fraught and difficult exercise throughout the remainder of the 1970s. As the late 1970s became the 1980s, and the 1980s became the 1990s and so on, the challenges involved in representing masculinity in American science fiction have remained, though they have changed somewhat in that they now routinely also include an attempt to come to terms with, as Bron does, those other categories of identity, such as sexuality, that Dick, Heinlein, and Le Guin tend to neglect or downplay in their fiction from the 1960s and early 1970s. For all that, it is still political ideology that is ultimately at the heart of
what informs the representation of masculinity within the genre, and it is still social liberalism and its descendents, in particular, as well as the variants of libertarianism to which the dominance of these political ideologies gave rise, that form the political background against which men discover who they are as men in more recent American science fiction. To this day, the political ideologies discussed in this thesis continue to exert an influence on the representation of masculinity in American science fiction, from the “console cowboys” of William Gibson’s *Neuromancer* (1984), who yearn for the communal consolations of social liberal masculinity as they struggle to survive in a world where neoliberalism precludes all relationships that aren’t beneficial in a strictly economic sense, to the expansionistic Radchaai of Ann Leckie’s *Ancillary Justice* (2013), who modify the organizational masculinity of the social ethic to suit the managerial feudalism of their ostensibly ungendered society. As early examples of the full extent to which political ideologies such as social liberalism, the social ethic, and different types of libertarianism are integral to men’s understanding of themselves as men, the fiction of Dick, Heinlein, and Le Guin thus constitutes an important historical pivot upon which turns the later representation of men in the genre. In this way, just as they demonstrate how the political orthodoxy of the Golden Age determined the limits of what men could become in the science fiction of the 1940s and 1950s, so the novels of Dick, Heinlein, and Le Guin from the 1960s and early 1970s also reveal just how political ideology might

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4 Although the Radchaai *profess* not to recognize gender as a concept, their behaviour toward both each other and those outside the Radch suggests that they actually embrace a fairly brutal form of organizational masculinity. Justifying their behaviour by calling upon the precepts of an eclectic managerial feudalism which emphasizes the political importance of “justice, propriety, and benefit,” the ruling class of the Radchaai alone decide for their clients and subjects what is just, what is proper, and what will benefit both their own society and the cultures they subjugate through their ceaseless wars of “annexation.” In this way, despite their claims to be a society without men, those Radchaai who manage the empire nevertheless embrace a type of organizational masculinity that is as uncompromising and ruthless, if not as omniscient, as that of Palmer Eldritch.
continue to make the men of tomorrow in American science fiction from the late 1970s to the present.
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