The Female Voice in Dystopian Literature

An Annotated Bibliography

Armbruster, Jane. “Memory and Politics — A Reflection on *The Handmaid's Tale*.” *Social Justice*, vol. 17, no. 3, 1990, pp. 146-152. *JSTOR*, http://www.jstor.org/stable/29766564. Accessed: 12-05-2017. Acknowledging this as a “personal reflection,” Armbruster makes the claim that Gilead (the totalitarian society in *The Handmaid’s Tale*) actually exists today—that the novel is an allegorical depiction of contemporary society. She details a number of contemporary social issues, such as war, consumerism, racism, and the exploitation of natural resources, claiming that they mirror the social / political decay described in the novel. Armbruster reads Atwood’s novel as a warning, and points to the distinctly feminine qualities of memory and feeling demonstrated by the protagonist as the best solutions to these problems.

Atwood. Margaret. *The Handmaid’s Tale*. Random House, 1986. Atwood’s classic dystopian novel presents a dark vision of life in the Republic of Gilead, an oppressive theocracy where biblical principles ostensibly guide and direct social and political life. A central theme developed throughout the novel is a critique of religious fundamentalism and the excesses of religious power. In a world where human fertility has diminished to a threatening degree, fertile women are forced to function as handmaids—a subjugated social class based on the Genesis account of Rachel, who gives her handmaiden to Jacob so that she could bear children “upon her knees.” All women in the patriarchal Gilead are trapped in submissive roles in the rigid social class structure: wives, Marthas, Ecowives, Handmaids, etc. Handmaidens have one function in society—to conceive and bear children for the Commanders, the male leaders of the republic; they are described as “walking wombs.” Offred (“the handmaiden of Fred), the protagonist, narrates her story, which shifts back and forth between the present and her remembered life before the catastrophic establishment of Gilead. Atwood also develops themes that highlight the power of language and the significance of female relationships. Women are not allowed to read or write in Gilead, thus they are denied a voice in both the private and political spheres. Despite this, the protagonist (and other female characters), manage to use their limited access to each other and modes of communication in order to participate in the dangerous underground resistance, “Mayday.” In addition to dystopia, Atwood skillfully blends a number of literary genres in this novel, including satire, palimpsest, and political allegory. The epilogue, “Historical Notes,” takes a unique perspective on Offred’s narrative two hundred years in the future; it reveals the details of an academic conference devoted to the anthropological / linguistic study of the long past Republic of Gilead. Sadly, echoes of the same racist and misogynist tendencies remain in place.

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---. *Oryx and Crake*. Random House, 2003. Atwood’s post-apocalyptic novel, the first in her MaddAddam trilogy, presents the bleak portrayal of a world destroyed by the obsessive excesses of genetic manipulation. The protagonist, Snowman (whose birth name is Jimmy), believes himself to be the last surviving human on earth. The JUVE virus, developed and intentionally spread across the earth by Crake, Snowman’s friend and fellow scientist, has apparently eliminated human life on earth. Prior to the destruction, Crake creates a race of genetically adapted beings he calls “Crakers” which he believes will result in a new, superior age of mankind. As the virus spreads with calculating efficiency, Crake orchestrates his own death and that of Oryx, who was commissioned to teach and train the Crakers. He assures Snowman’s survival and charges him with the care and protection of this innocent new race. The tragic and misbegotten consequences of scientific experimentation unleashed and promoted by corporate greed is a central theme in this novel. Additionally, the dangers inherent in mistaking virtual experiences with authentic human encounters is a key theme Atwood develops, as the young Crake and Snowman become so immersed in violent computer games, online pornography, and graphic live streaming videos, that they become sensitized to depictions of human pain and suffering, and even question the “reality” of such images. In particular, the game “Extincathon,” managed by the elusive grand master, MaddAddam, who advocates destructive, subversive acts designed to destroy earth’s social / corporate framework, becomes a primary influence in Crake’s scientific experiments. Notably, Crake hires only Extincathon grand masters to assist him in his most secret endeavors. The necessity of human interaction is another theme present in the novel, as Snowman’s loneliness and isolation drive him almost to insanity. Atwood concludes the novel with an allusion to *Robinson Crusoe* as Snowman discovers a human footprint and hears human voices, and sets out to discover what may be other survivors.

Booker, M. Keith. *The Dystopian Influence in Modern Literature: Fiction as Social Criticism*. Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1994. A brief history of utopian fiction serves as a foundation for Booker’s comprehensive study of the development of the dystopian literary tradition. He focuses on a characteristic he identifies in both genres—a critique of some type of existing social / political system. He emphasizes that the shift to more and more dystopian fiction in the twentieth century demonstrates a reaction to such increasingly horrific events as the two World Wars, and the Nazi and Stalinist regimes. Thus, he avoids literary criticism, and instead, engages in a reading of selected works as social criticism. Booker asserts a similarity between dystopian fiction and the works of social critics like Nietzsche, Freud, and Bakhtin. Three key works of the early twentieth century: Zamyatin’s *We*, Huxley’s *Brave New World*, and Orwell’s *1984* are examined in detail as critiques of either bourgeois or totalitarian societies. He moves on to explore similar issues associated with important post World War II works like Vonnegut’s *Player Piano* and Bradbury’s *Fahrenheit 451*. He concludes the study with an examination of selected postmodern dystopian novels, including Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale* and Pynchon’s *Vineland*. Booker identifies defamiliarization as the central technique in dystopian fiction, wherein the author creates a society removed in time and space from his / her contemporary world; thus, allowing for an impartial examination of the social / political problems that exist in that contemporary world.

Burdekin, Katharine. *Swastika Night*. 1937. The Feminist Press, 1985. Often compared to *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, which was published twelve years after Burdekin’s novel, *Swastika Night* envisions a world where Hitler and the Nazi regime were victorious. The novel is set seven hundred years afterward in a futuristic feudal society wherein a totalitarian, male-dominant ideology governs Western Europe (the Americas, Asia, and Australia are similarly governed by a totalitarian Japanese Imperial state). Inferior groups and races have been effectively eliminated, and a small group of remaining Christians are incessantly persecuted. Women are demeaned and treated like livestock; their only purpose is reproduction. As a result, homosexuality becomes the normal demonstration of romantic love, and copulation with females becomes a disgusting, but necessary act. Ironically, the book opens with a decline in the birth of females, which threatens the future of the race, and signals an alarm that the ruling “Knights” of the German empire are ill-prepared to handle. A religious-like mythology that worships Hitler as a god-like character is central to the culture. He is depicted as blond, seven feet tall, and a super-warrior who was not born of woman, but sprung miraculously from the head of God. Central to Burdekin’s narrative is the suppression and modification of historical truth, a traditional aspect of dystopian literature. In addition to Hitler’s biography, the entire social / political history of his time has been altered to fit the purposes of the Nazi ideology and mythology. The Englishman, Alfred’s discovery of a secret book written during Hitler’s lifetime that presents a factual history creates a complication that drives the remainder of the plot, as all he knows to be true is summarily challenged. Knowledge and possession of this book, which denounces the Nazi reconstruction of history, is life threatening, another typical dystopian characteristic. Alfred ultimately assumes what is arguably the most dangerous role in his society, once he accepts the commission to guard and protect the book during his lifetime. Alfred’s confrontation with and acceptance of the truth moves him to view his newborn daughter in a different light. He breaks with custom to hold her and name her; he even forges a plan to help raise her and “make a new kind of human being.” His plan is thwarted as he dies protecting the secret book, and his last thoughts register a hope for her future. Burdekin’s novel is significant in that it seems to have forecasted the potential of fascist horror before Hitler’s regime achieved the fullness of its power and scope in Europe.

Butler, Octavia. *Parable of the Sower*. Grand Central, 1993. Society in Butler’s dystopian world—2024 in Southern California—is near collapse due to a series of environmental disasters forged by global warming and the central government’s abdication of its stewardship to corporate conglomerates. Natural resources, like water, are extremely scarce and expensive. Class distinctions are rigid; those who can, live in walled communities they must maintain and secure on their own, as public services like police and fire protection are either expensive or nonexistent. Danger from vicious gangs and packs of feral dogs present a constant threat to those living inside the communities. Lauren Olamina, the protagonist, who lives in the Robledo community, is a “sharer;” she possesses the power of hyperempathy, which compels her to feel and experience whatever pain and suffering she witnesses. This quality, at times, inhibits her ability to respond to potentially dangerous situations. Her father, a university professor and Christian minister, trains the family and community in survival skills, including the use of firearms. Central to this novel is the protagonist’s grappling with, and her ultimate rejection of her traditional Christian faith. Lauren cannot rationalize the physical and social deterioration of her world with traditional Christianity’s message. Her observations of the physical world and social environment lead her to develop a personal philosophy: “God is change,” and humans must accept that adapting to change is essential not only to survive, but to live with purpose. She ultimately names her philosophy “Earthseed,” and concludes that mankind’s destiny is to leave the earth to forge a new life on other planets, to “take root among the stars.” When her entire family is killed, Lauren sets out on a journey away from the city to establish an Earthseed community that she ultimately names “Acorn”; she gathers a diverse group of followers along the way. Butler, an African American woman, creates here a rare and noteworthy example of the dystopian novel whose protagonist is also an African American woman.

Cavalcanti, Ildney. “Utopias Of /f Language in Contemporary Feminist Literary Dystopias” *Utopian Studies*, vol. 11, no. 2, 2000, pp. 152-180. *JSTOR,* http://www.jstor.org/stable/ 20718180. Accessed 13 Feb. 2015. Cavalcanti asserts that the tension present in most feminist dystopian fiction results from certain types of linguistic struggle. She grounds her study in the “verbal hygiene” theory of sociolinguist, Deborah Cameron, which examines the human impulse to improve, regulate, and control language. Acknowledging that this theory is not exclusively applied to gender power struggles relating to language, Cavalcanti, however uses aspects of it as a template for analyzing linguistic practices prevalent in feminist dystopian literature. She structures her analysis of selected works published in the 1980s— Lisa Tuttle’s short story, “The Cure,” Suzette Elgin’s *Native Tongue* and *The Judas Rose*, and Margaret Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale*—by examining each according to Cameron’s three central tenets: identity, agency, and authority. Notably, she analyzes *The Handmaid’s Tale’s* focus on the power (authority) of linguistic conventions, particularly as it emanates from the patriarchal hierarchy in Atwood’s dystopian novel.

Dunning, Stephen. “Margaret Atwood’s *Oryx and Crake*: The Terror of the Therapeutic.” *Canadian Literature,* vol. 186, Autumn 2005, pp. 86-102. *JSTOR*, http://www.jstor.org/stable/41319888. Accessed: 12 May 2017. Dunning reads Atwood’s novel as a stinging critique of the excesses of contemporary science, that bereft of any connection to what he terms “sacred cultural narratives,” results in a compromised human identity and a skewed concept of normalcy. In the novel, decades of unrestrained scientific and technological advancement coupled with unchecked population growth have destroyed the environment and threaten the quality of human life on the planet. Dunning describes the character Crake, a brilliant scientist, as the prime agent of a “radical therapy” that he concludes is the only logical solution to the degraded and decimated condition of the world in which he lives. Unhindered by any traditional code of ethics, Crake’s logical solution to the problem is to destroy all of humanity, save one, and replace them with a genetically altered race of beings—the Crakers—to populate the earth. Using Freudian language to describe Crake’s therapeutic approach, Dunning maintains that Crake determines that destruction of the “embattled human ego” by eliminating homo sapiens is the only solution to earth’s environmental crisis. Dunning asserts that Atwood’s emphasis on irony is central to her critique. Despite Crake’s assurance that the Crakers were created without the capacity for philosophical thought or questioning, Snowman, the lone human survivor commissioned to oversee the Crakers, is bombarded by questions from them about their origins. Ironically, he satisfies their curiosity by constructing a mythology of sacred stories. Dunning insists that Atwood extends her ironic critique by creating characters that suggest the Christian trinity that science summarily displaced. Crake evokes the father / creator, Snowman the sacrificial son, and Oryx the feminine Paraclete-like spirit. Dunning interprets Atwood’s central message to be this: without sacred narrative, humanity is compromised.

Finigan, Theo. “‘Into the Memory Hole’: Totalitarianism and Mal d’Archive in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *The Handmaid’s Tale*.” *Science Fiction Studies*, vol. 38, no. 3, November 2011, pp. 435-459. JSTOR, http://www.jstor.org/stable186/10.5621/sciefictstud.38.3.0435. Accessed: 12 May 2017. Finigan identifies the totalitarian domination of time, memory, and history as key thematic threads in Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale*. In both novels, the protagonists’ temporal experiences are fragmented and shattered by incessant control and surveillance of every waking moment. Consequently, personal memory and historical time are challenged and intentionally erased. Grounding his argument in the works of Jacques Derrida, Finigan, claims that the protagonists’ journals in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *The Handmaid’s Tale* exemplify the concept of “archive fever” in that they function as corrected records of the propagandist manipulation of history in their respective totalitarian states. In both novels, the controlling power of the state illustrate Derrida’s “detestable revisionisms” as they seek to rewrite the history of the past to align it with the present political / religious ideology. The paradox of the archive, according to Derrida, is that the very place assigned to store and protect something for memory, can actually result in loss and forgetfulness. Finigan likens this phenomenon to the “Appendix” in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and the “Historical Notes” in The *Handmaid’s Tale*; both archival texts are recovered in a distant future, but the power of their testimony is lost to the future audience.

Fitting, Peter. “A Short History of Utopian Studies.” *Science-Fiction Studies*, vol. 36, no. 1, Mar. 2009, pp. 121-131. *JSTOR*, http://www.jstor.org/stable/25475211. Accessed 17 Feb. 2015. Fitting launches into his study with a reference to the revival of utopian literature in the 1960s, asserting that the phenomenon resulted from social upheaval, particularly in the English-speaking world. The appeal, he declares, is a literature that provides a venue for imagining alternatives to an “inadequate present.” His purpose is to trace the development of utopian literary scholarship that came to flourish in the latter twentieth century. He identifies the earliest genre studies (late eighteenth century) in the introductions and prefaces of collected “Imaginary Voyages.” By the mid-nineteenth century, studies of utopian writing drew connections between the social movements in Europe and the works of Plato and Thomas More. In the early twentieth century, with an emphasis on “social thought,” the margins were often blurred between the consideration of literary and non-literary works in utopian studies, as in Joyce Hertzler’s *The History of Utopian Thought* (1923). Fitting points to the emergence of anthologies of utopian literature in the mid-twentieth century, as indicative of the establishment of a utopian canon, which naturally resulted in an increase in research and scholarship devoted to the genre by such noted scholars as Lyman Tower Sargent and Darko Suvin. He concludes with a brief outline of dystopian scholarship which has increased since the 1980s as more dystopian literature emerged as the result of “a changing, enclosing, social reality.”

Grace, Dominick M. “*The Handmaid's Tale*: ‘Historical Notes’ and Documentary Subversion.” *Science Fiction Studies*, vol. 25, no. 3, Nov. 1998, pp. 481-494. *JSTOR*, http://www.jstor.org/stable/4240726. 12 May 2017. Grace asserts that the presence of Atwood’s epilogue, “Historical Notes,” demonstrates her premise that *The Handmaid’s Tale* clearly deviates from the standard message present in most dystopian fiction. Contrary to documentary standards, the “Historical Notes” do not validate the accuracy of the protagonist’s account; instead, the veracity of the narrative is further called into question by academic “experts” of the future. Typically, dystopian literature offers, through implication, a hopeful utopian alternative to the dark reality of the narrative’s environment. Instead, Grace maintains, the addition of the “Historical Notes” which reveals that echoes of the same socio-political discrimination and inequities continue to exist in the future world of the year 2195, demonstrates “degrees of dystopia” rather than an idealistic alternative. Examining the epilogue through the lens of two theories of historical representation, Grace concludes that it demonstrates an essentialist view of history, as the reality of oppression appears inevitable.

Hansot, Elizabeth. “Selves, Survival, and Resistance in *The Handmaid's Tale.*” *Utopian Studies*, vol. 5, no. 2, 1994, pp. 56-69. *JSTOR*, http://www.jstor.org/stable/20719313. Accessed: 12 May 2017. Hansot analyzes the concept of resistance as demonstrated in Atwood’s novel; she uses James Scott’s theoretical template to examine the socially constructed types of communication that exist in the novel. Her analysis is grounded in two key terms: “public transcript,” which denotes the formal communication / relations that exist between elite and subordinate groups, and “hidden transcript,” which denotes communication that occurs privately, beyond the knowledge and attention of the other group. Hidden transcripts comment in a variety of ways upon the content of public transcripts. Hidden (illicit) communication flourishes between and within the various classes (wives, Marthas, handmaids, etc.). Even the generals and commanders, via their attendance at the brothel known as Jezebel’s, engage in a hidden transcript that flouts the puritanical public code. Additionally, Hansot claims that the protagonist, Offred, resists in part by constructing and nurturing elements of “self” from remembered experiences in the past. Even though Offred admits that many of her memories are “reconstructions,” because all undercut the “official” history of the dystopian society, Hansot identifies them as resistance.

James, P. D. *The Children of Men*. Random House, 1992. The specter of human extinction drives the action in James’s dystopian novel. Set in England the year 2021, humankind grapples with the inexplicable diminishment of human fertility, as the last recorded birth on earth occurred in 1995, a year designated “Omega.” Chaos engulfs most of the nations on earth; England alone maintains a tenuous order under the rule of the despotic Warden of England, Xan Lyppiatt. The protagonist, Theo Faron, Xan’s cousin, exists in a sort of apathetic, sleep-walking state until he encounters Julian and her small group of dissidents, called the “Five Fishes.” They seek his help in appealing to the Warden to end several state-supported initiatives that violate human rights. These initiatives include the brutal Isle of Wight Penal Colony, the mistreatment of “Sojourners”—an immigrant labor force, and the Quietus—the ostensibly voluntary, institutionalized ritual of group suicide of the elderly. Theo half-heartedly agrees to intercede for the group after witnessing a Quietus, which was revealed to be far from voluntary. The novel climaxes with the discovery that Julian is pregnant; the knowledge that Xan will do whatever is necessary to seize the mother and child and exploit then to promote his own interests, motivates Theo to devote his energies whole-heartedly to their protection. A frantic flight into the countryside ensues; the journey is riddled with danger as they are tracked by Xan’s Grenadiers and secret police and attacked by a vicious band of “Painted Faces”—renegade Omegas (members of the youngest generation). Only Theo and Julian survive. The child is born in a scene that echoes the biblical nativity of Christ. The novel ends ambiguously as Theo kills Xan and removes the Coronation Ring (emblematic of British power and divine authority) from the Warden’s finger to place it on his own. James develops themes of survival and power, typical of the dystopian genre, in her novel. Most significant, however, is her development of a central theme of religious faith; she consistently implies that the waning / loss of traditional religious faith and practice contributes to the hopeless dystopian atmosphere of England in the era of Omega. Churches are all but empty, liturgy has been watered down, and charlatan evangelists preach “New Age” and “Gospel of Prosperity” messages on the street. Christian imagery and biblical allusions abound in the novel to support this theme. A few examples include: the title (from Psalm 90), the major divisions of the novel are titled “Omega” and “Alpha,” (Revelation 22), and a member of Xan’s council recites a “Nunc Dimittas” (Luke 2) when he sees Julian’s newborn infant. It is not the absence of any sort of generic religion that threatens humankind in James’s novel, but most specifically, the loss of traditional Christianity that contributes to the dystopian environment.

Jones, Libby Falk. “Breaking Silences in Feminist Dystopias.” *Utopian Studies*, vol.1, no. 3, 1991, pp. 7-11. *Academic Search Complete*, Accessed 16 May 2016. Acknowledging that the objectification and repression of women is a dominant element in contemporary feminist dystopias, Jones identifies silence as a central metaphor in most of these works. She examines the silencing of women in two novels: Jean Auel’s *Clan of the Cave Bear* and Margaret Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale*. In both novels, women must seek a male permission to speak. Jones highlights the silencing of women’s voices in in Atwood’s novel due to the fact they are no longer allowed to read or write, and are notably objectified in the loss of their names. However, in both novels, women find ways to resist and break their silence. Silence, Jones asserts, can signify potential, and she reads these dystopias as venues for calling attention to the validity of women’s voices and the necessity of protecting them.

Ketterer, David. “Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*: A Contextual Dystopia.” *Science Fiction Studies*, vol. 16, no. 2, July 1989, pp. 209-217. *JSTOR*, http://www.jstor.org/stable/4239936. Accessed: 12 May 2017. Ketterer claims that *The Handmaid’s Tale* represents a deviation from traditional dystopian literature. He terms this variant the “Contextual Dystopia.” Traditional dystopias emphasize the preceding historical context which caused the dystopia; Ketterer asserts that the contextual dystopia couples historical context with successive historical development. He points to the concluding “Historical Notes” section of *The Handmaid’s Tale* as an example of this characteristic of the genre. He notes that this narrative approach necessitates a cyclical, rather than a linear conception of time (and history). Thus, two hundred years after the protagonist’s narrative, developed in the body proper of the novel, Atwood presents, in the epilogue titled “Historical Notes,” a world where sexist attitudes continue. The implication is that another repressive Gilead could easily evolve in the absence of human vigilance.

Laflen, Angela. “There's a Shock in This Seeing": The Problem of the Image in *The Handmaid's Tale* and *Oryx and Crake*.” *American Studies*, vol. 54, no. 1, 2009, pp. 99-120. *JSTOR*, http://www.jstor.org/stable/41158414. Accessed: 12 May 2017. Laflen argues that these two novels reflect Atwood’s developing views regarding the power of the visual image in contemporary society. She maintains that a warning of the dehumanizing consequences of the increasing lack of distinction between reality and the visual image becomes more overt in *Oryx and Crake*, which was published eighteen years after *The Handmaid’s Tale*. In the first novel, the image (the signifier) is directly related to its referent, and is used to effect political control of the populace. Nearly twenty years later, Atwood depicts a visual culture in *Oryx and Crake* where society is dominated by the signifier, but the referent has all but vanished. Additionally, Laflen examines the concept of sight using James Elkin’s theory of “seeing” to discuss the physiological and psychological blindness both protagonists exhibit as they fail to recognize signs of the inevitable collapse of their respective worlds. She employs Foucault’s and Debord’s theories of surveillance and spectacle to explain the power of visual culture to effect social control in both novels.

Mandel, Emily St. John. *Station Eleven*. Random House, 2014. Mandel’s post-apocalyptic novel examines the interconnected lives of a group of characters who fall to or are impacted by the Georgia flu pandemic that decimates most of the human population. The narrative continually shifts from the year twenty after the apocalyptic pandemic to each character’s past; the chronology of individual lives intersects in various ways that seem to imply that fate, rather than chance drives the action. The nature of their encounters range from the ordinary to the momentous; all are connected in some way to the character Arthur Leander, a famous actor, who dies while performing in a production of *King Lear* on the night that the Georgia virus takes its first wave of victims. Jeevan Chaudhary, a former paparazzi who stalked Arthur and his wives, has become a paramedic and attempts to save Arthur when he collapses on stage. Jeevan manages to escape contracting the flu, and is ultimately found living an isolated life on the fringes of one of the post-apocalyptic communities. Miranda Carroll, Arthur’s first wife, and author of the graphic novel, *Station Eleven*, succumbs to the flu while traveling in Malaysia. Clark Thompson, Arthur’s close friend, escapes the flu, as, en route to Arthur’s funeral, the plane he (and Arthur’s second wife and child) are traveling in is redirected to the remote Severn airport. Clark remains in the airport permanently where he creates and manages the Museum of Civilization to educate generations born after the apocalypse. Kirsten Raymonde, a child actor on stage the night Arthur dies, also survives the pandemic, and ultimately links up with a band of traveling actors and musicians who perform Shakespearean plays in an area that was once the Great Lakes region of the United States. Just prior to his death, Arthur gives copies of *Station Eleven* to Kirsten and his son, Tyler. Within a couple of years, Tyler and his mother leave the airport in the company of a radical religious cult; he emerges in year twenty as the menacing cult leader, “The Prophet.” In the violent, climactic scene between The Prophet and Kirsten at the Severn airport, The Prophet dies quoting from *Station Eleven*. The graphic novel also held meaning for Kirsten, thus, she leaves a fragment of her copy in the Museum of Civilization when she departs the airport to rejoin the troupe. The graphic novel, *Station Eleven*, chronicles the history of a broken-down earth-simulated space station whose inhabitants are split between those who wish to return to an alien controlled earth and those, led by Dr. Eleven, whose wish to remain. The fictional text of the graphic novel emerges as a metaphor that parallels the contrasting emotions of acceptance and nostalgia experienced by the survivors in Mandel’s post-apocalyptic world. Her novel is unique in its detailed focus on the interrelationships between the characters, rather than their efforts to survive in a collapsed world, which is traditional to the genre.

McKay, George. “Metapropaganda: Self-Reading Dystopian Fiction: Burdekin’s *Swastika Night* and Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four*” *Science-Fiction Studies*, vol. 21, no. 3, Nov. 1994, pp. 302-314. *JSTOR*, http://www.jstor.org/stable/4240368. Accessed 22 Nov. 2016. McKay examines the significance of fictional political texts that figure in both Burdekin’s and Orwell’s dystopian novels. He relies heavily on Michael Wilding’s theory of “dialectical tension” which identifies the existence of both ideological and formal political struggles in the novels and the political texts that the protagonists encounter within each of these novels. Both protagonists read secret, forbidden texts that serve to reveal historical truth. McKay focusses on the act of reading itself, and the “intra” and “extra” textual readers—the characters within the narrative who read the forbidden texts as well as the readers of Burdekin’s and Orwell’s narratives. He asserts that the very processes of “self-reading” create an energy that results in a questioning on the part of the reader(s) as to the nature of textual fact itself.

Miller, Jim. “Post-Apocalyptic Hoping: Octavia Butler's Dystopian/Utopian Vision.” *Science-Fiction Studies*, vol. 25, no. 2, pp. 336-360. JSTOR, http://www.jstor.org/stable/4240705. Accessed: 12-05-2017. Grounding his argument in the theories of Jenny Wolmark and Marleen Barr, Miller maintains that Octavia Butler’s contribution to the tradition of feminist utopian writing is unique. As an African American woman working within a genre dominated by white women, Miller asserts that she embeds within her work a critique of various assumptions present in traditional feminist utopian writing. He describes her work as “utopian pessimism,” that encourages readers to confront and question dystopian elements in contemporary society. Miller correlates Fredric Jameson’s concept of “cognitive mapping” to *The Parable of the Sower*, as Butler skillfully draws the reader into the reality of the protagonist’s disintegrated urban environment in which class and gender oppression exist at all socio-political levels of society. He points out that capitalistic manipulation of power at the local, national, and international levels is graphically mapped in this novel. The protagonist’s vision of an Earthseed community, Miller declares, is Butler’s signal that hope can exist in a Post-utopian world.

Pagetti, Carlo. Trans. by Clara Mucci, RMP and Maria R. Philmus. “In the Year of Our Lord Hitler 720: Katharine Burdekin’s *Swastika Night*.” *Science-Fiction Studies*, vol. 17, no. 3, Nov. 1990, pp. 360-369. *JSTOR,* http://www.jstor.org/stable/4240012. Accessed 22 Nov. 2016. Analyzing theme in Burdekin’s *Swastika Night*, Pagetti identifies the search for knowledge as the central theme in the novel. In Burdekin’s nightmare vision of a dystopian world where Hitler was victorious, a false history has been entrenched for seven hundred years. Pagetti claims that the protagonist’s exploration of the past (the author’s present), which is critical to his understanding of historical truth, essentially lays the foundation for Burdekin’s appeal for society to embrace pacifism and reject violence. He asserts that Burdekin forces the reader to confront present (1930s) history’s plausible relationship to a dark dystopian future.

Sargent, Lyman Tower. “The Three Faces of Utopianism Revisited.” *Utopian Studies*, vol. 5, no. 1, 1994, pp. 1-37. *JSTOR*, http://www.jstor.org/stable/20719246. Accessed 17 Feb. 2015. A pioneer in utopian scholarship, Sargent presents here a revised version of an earlier work. He engages in a detailed exploration of the various manifestations and expressions of utopianism, identifying three basic forms: utopian literature, communitarianism (intentional / communal societies), and utopian social theory (social origins of thought systems, anti-utopianism, etc.), An extensive definition of multiple types of literary utopias are outlined and discussed—notably the “negative utopia, or dystopia” and the “critical utopia.” The “defining characteristic” of dystopia, Sargent asserts, is its warning that something must be done to avoid catastrophe in the future. He traces the utopian literary tradition from its inception in the myths of antiquity (arcadias, earthly paradises, etc.), categorizing them as “body utopias” (rooted in sensual gratification)—gifts from the gods or nature which require no human effort or labor. He identifies a second category of literary utopia as the “city utopia” (based on human contrivance) as exemplified in Plato’s *Republic* and Thomas More’s *Utopia.* Sargent concludes by declaring that the “utopian impulse—that essential need to dream of a better life” is at the core of the utopian tradition which reflects the essential human desire for order, unity, and simplicity.

Snyder, Katherine V. “‘Time to Go’: The Post-Apocalyptic and the Post-Traumatic in Margaret Atwood’s *Oryx and Crake.*” *Studies in the Novel*, vol. 43, no. 4, Winter 2011, pp. 470-489. *JSTOR*, http://www.jstor.org/stable/41319888. Accessed: 12 May 2017. The concept of time ceases to exist in Atwood’s post-apocalyptic novel; thus, reducing the protagonist’s engagement with temporality to simply “before” or “after” the apocalypse—a condition that causes him considerable anxiety. Snyder parallels contemporary trauma theory to the condition of the protagonist in Atwood’s novel. She asserts that the “doubled temporality” of the trauma victim who must labor to understand the present via its relationship to a painful past event, is echoed in dystopian fiction’s attempt to reveal some truth about the present as it relates to a potentially painful future. In both instances, the reality of the here and now must contend with potential losses connected to either the past or the future. Snyder contends that this phenomenon exemplifies the “dialectic between despair and hopefulness” that is characteristic of the view of the future communicated in Atwood’s novel.

Stillman, Peter G. “Dystopian Critiques, Utopian Possibilities, and Human Purposes in Octavia Butler’s Parables.” *Utopian Studies*, vol. 14, no. 1, 2003, pp. 15-35. *JSTOR*, http://www. jstor.org./stable/20718544. Accessed 4 May 2017. Stillman engages in a detailed reading / analysis of Butler’s two dystopian novels: *The Parable of the Sower* and *The Parable of the Talents*. He interprets the author’s purpose as a warning of near-future social / political catastrophe coupled with a proposed potential solution, creating what the critic Jim Miller terms “dystopian optimism.” Describing the religious vision of Butler’s protagonist as a “post secular” and “post humanist” way of life, Stillman emphasizes its central tenet that “God is Change.” As the narrative is presented in the voice of the protagonist via her diary entries, Stillman claims that her own self-conscious self-reflection opens the way for readers of the novel to also formulate questions about their own social situations. The value of these dystopian narratives, Stillman declares, is Butler’s suggestion that the solution to the potential for a dystopian future may be found only in human cooperation and acceptance of the inevitability of change.

Stillman, Peter G. and S. Anne Johnson. “Identity, Complicity, and Resistance in *The Handmaid's Tale.*” *Utopian Studies*, vol. 5, no. 2, 1994, pp. 70-86. *JSTOR,* http://www.jstor.org/stable/20719314. Accessed: 12 May 2017. The authors advocate for a close reading of this dystopia, as its central message, they assert, is a call for continued social / political vigilance. They claim the typical critical approach which focusses on the macro-level elements of the socio-political organization of the Gileadean patriarchy misses the central meaning conveyed in the novel. Instead, they analyze details from Offred’s personal, subjective narrative as integral to the development of key thematic elements: identity, resistance, and complicity which support their thesis—that gains acquired in female equality can easily be lost if they are taken for granted. Stillman and Johnson point to the novel’s dedication—to Perry Miller, the author’s Harvard professor, an expert on the Puritan era, and to Mary Webster, an ancestor convicted of witchcraft—which underscores, they believe, Atwood’s warning.

Zaki, Hoda M. “Utopia, Dystopia, and Ideology in the Science Fiction of Octavia Butler.” *Science-Fiction Studies*, vol. 17, no. 2, 1990, pp. 239-251. *JSTOR*, http://www.jstor.org/stable/4239994. Accessed: 12 May 2017. Zaki identifies the melding of utopian and dystopian elements in Butler’s works and examines her unique contribution as an African American woman to this literary tradition. Relying on the work of Soren Baggeson, Zaki claims that Butler’s work encompasses two types of pessimism: utopian and dystopian. Utopian pessimism is the result of historical forces; dystopian pessimism is deterministically inevitable. Although gender issues are not central to Butler’s novels, Zaki notes that she develops female characters that encounter and struggle with issues apparent in many post 1970s feminist works; however, Zaki asserts that Butler’s work stands apart in her depiction of societies that are racially and culturally diverse. This distinction, Zaki notes, serves as a subtle indictment of the claim that contemporary feminist dystopias “speak for all women.”