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Burdekin's Utopian Visions: A Study of Four Interwar Texts

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Abstract

This thesis is an exploration of four of Katharine Burdekin's utopian texts from the interwar period. Each text offers a unique perspective on the genre. The earliest text considered is *The Rebel Passion* (1929), Burdekin's first utopian text and the only one that shows the representation of a truly positive society. In contrast, her later novel *Swastika Night* (1937), written on the cusp of the Second World War, is a dystopian nightmare set hundreds of years in the future, envisioning a society under the rule of a Nazi Empire. The third novel explored is *The End of this Day's Business* (written in 1935 but published for the first time in 1989) a sex-role reversal utopia that explores gender inequality through the reversal of traditional gender roles: women rule and men are subservient. Finally, *Proud Man* (1934) is an intriguing tale of an androgynous character from a utopian reality who visits England in the 1930s.

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Introduction

This thesis explores four utopian texts penned by the interwar writer Katharine Burdekin an author who fell into literary obscurity for over forty years until she was rediscovered by the critic Daphne Patai in the 1980s. Patai was researching utopian texts and discovered that several novels written under the name Murray Constantine were actually attributable to Burdekin. This led to the re-publication of two Constantine novels: *Swastika Night* (first published in 1937 and re-published in 1985) and *Proud Man* (first published in 1934 and re-published in 1993). Further, *The End of this Day's Business*, written in 1935, was published for the first time in 1989. One reason for choosing to explore these three novels, as well as the 1929 text *The Rebel Passion*, is that they each offer very different visions of utopian realities. Each text is written in the utopian tradition but all four are unique in terms of subject matter and utopian perspective. One novel is a positive utopia, another is a dystopian tale, the third text belongs to the category of sex-role reversal utopia, and the final utopian text is an experimental work, with distinctly modernist overtones. In addition, the interest in looking at Burdekin's work also arises from the need to reinforce the value of her work. The re-publication of the texts mentioned above reignited interest in Burdekin's utopian visions but this attention has been limited in comparison with the significance of her work. Furthermore, critical attention has tended to focus primarily on *Swastika Night* and while this novel is deserving of notice it has unfortunately meant that her other novels have been largely overlooked. This is an omission that this thesis attempts to remedy.

This introductory chapter starts with an overview of the four main chapters of the thesis, each dedicated to one of the utopian texts referred to above, before moving on to outline

contextual background information on Burdekin's life and works. It is also necessary to devote space to attempt to provide a definition of the term 'utopia' in order to understand the specific history and conventions of the genre that Burdekin was attracted towards again and again. This includes a consideration of the various sub-categories of the genre, for example eutopia (the positive utopia) and dystopia, and defining what is meant by the literary utopia, as opposed to the practical utopia and utopian social dreaming. Furthermore, an attempt will be made to clarify what characterises the literary utopia by looking at purpose, form, characteristics and themes. Following on from this will be an overview of the specific history of women writing utopian fiction and the section ends with an outline of the important themes, including gender and sexuality, which are pertinent to each of the selected texts.

Overview of the Thesis

Chapter one explores *The Rebel Passion* (1929), Burdekin's only positive utopian text. It is an intriguing tale that not only features the image of a utopian society but charts the centuries leading up to the creation of it. Historical conflicts of class and gender are described and reformulated in a better reality in the future society. Elements of this new society show the influence of social and political theories of Burdekin's own time, such as the Guild Socialist movement and the work of the sexologists. For example, the re-imagining of utopian gendered identity can clearly be traced to the work of sexologists, such as Karl Heinrich Ulrichs. In addition, the way that humanity is shown to be progressing forward over hundreds of years has obvious links with Darwin and the theory of evolution. Unfortunately, there are also some problematic issues that arise from the perspective of the twenty-first century reader. The theory of eugenics, which

was considered more positively pre-World War Two, is now often treated with some repugnancy and this section of the novel makes for difficult reading.

Swastika Night is the focus of chapter two. It is a relatively short book, but nevertheless packed full of thought-provoking ideas about gender, genre, and fascism. It is Burdekin's only dystopian text and contains strains of hopelessness and despair absent from her other, earlier, utopias. It was the first of her novels to be re-published and has subsequently received the most attention from critics. There is something about it, particularly the emphasis on the themes of women and fascism, which engages the imagination. The novel is first considered in the way it represents a specific, constructed idea of masculine and feminine identity: male gendered identity in the novel is an aggressive soldier-type; female identity is reduced to the function of a breeding animal. Next, ideas about genre are explored and the text is compared with other dystopian texts, such as George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949). The subject of fascism is an important part of the story and elements of fascism in the novel are considered alongside the historical context of the rise of the Nazi regime in the interwar period. The chapter ends with an exploration of criticisms of the Christian religion.

The third chapter in the thesis looks at Burdekin's sex-role reversal tale *The End of this Day's Business*. It is a puzzle trying to place this novel in the utopian tradition since it resists easy identification with either the positive utopia or the dystopian genre. On the one hand, it shows the representation of a peaceful society in which poverty is eradicated. However, all of this comes at the cost of the subjection of men. The reversal of the traditional roles of men and women in society is used to highlight gender inequality. Further, the novel is heavily influenced by psychoanalysis and

psychoanalytic theories. Burdekin cleverly uses theories by psychoanalysts, such as Freud, to offer new perspectives on male and female gender identity.

Finally, the subject of chapter four is Burdekin's experimental tale *Proud Man*. In this novel the utopian society is never seen; instead a visitor from another society is described as visiting Britain in the 1930s. The focus here is not on a better society but on the individuals that live in that society. Many utopian texts imagine what the infrastructure of a future society will look like but in this novel Burdekin chooses to explore ideas about what the people of the future will be like. This novel is considered in terms of the way Burdekin uses the utopian genre to explore ideas about identity: looking at ideas about what it means to be human and what it means to be a gendered being.

Life and Works

Katharine Burdekin was a private person and material regarding her life is limited. The information provided below has been gained from a variety of different sources. The first sources of information are the various writings by Patai, including essays on Burdekin and her work and forewords and afterwords in Burdekin's re-published texts. Patai gained valuable insight into the life of the author when she contacted Burdekin's family during her own research. Patai's early research on Burdekin situated her as the leading authority on Burdekin and meant that she has oft been cited in essays and articles on this author (Russell, 1991: Pagetti, 1990: Sussex, 1997: Williams, 1999). Another source of information on Burdekin comes from Glenn Horowitz Bookseller, who is responsible for an archive containing a collection of various works by Burdekin. This includes twenty-three manuscripts, including a number of unpublished texts, five

short stories, two plays, two poems, and various related items. Access to the archive is limited, since it is held in New York, but summaries of the unpublished texts held in the archive provide some usefulness. Another source of valuable information is biographical background about the family from the Minack Theatre. This theatre was established and run by Burdekin's sister, Rowena Cade, and continues to be under the management of the family today. Finally, Burdekin's extended family, contacted through the theatre, was an additional source of information in gathering facts about her life. Information, collected primarily through a phone conversation, as well as a selection of photographs, was provided by the general manager of the theatre, Michael Smith. Smith is married to a descendent of the Burdekin family; his wife, Romana, a trustee of the theatre, is also Katharine Burdekin's granddaughter and Rowena Cade was her great aunt.

Katharine Burdekin was born Katharine Penelope Cade in 1886. She was the youngest of four children, having two brothers and one sister: Morris, Alan, and Rowena. She was raised in Spondon, Derbyshire, an area where her ancestors had previously lived for around three hundred years (Minack Theatre, 2011). Her great great grandfather was Joseph Wright, a famous painter from the industrial revolution (Minack Theatre, 2011). Her father owned a cotton mill in Spondon and the family could be categorised as belonging to the upper-middle-class. When her father retired in 1906 the family moved to Cheltenham, where her uncle was headmaster at Cheltenham College Junior School (Minack Theatre, 2011). Her father, James Cade, bought the family home 'Ellerslie', a town house that had once been owned by Sir Walter Scott (Minack Theatre, 2011).

Katharine was first educated at home by a governess and then subsequently, from 1907 to 1913, she was a 'day' student with her sister at Cheltenham Ladies' College (Minack

Theatre, 2011). This was in contrast to her brothers, who stayed as boarders at Cheltenham College. Morris and Alan proceeded to go to Oxford University and although the young Katharine would have liked to have followed in their footsteps her parents would not allow it (Patai, 1989: 162). It can be speculated that this is perhaps one of the reasons why the subject of women's education appears frequently in her novels. In her work she keenly stresses the importance of equality of opportunity in educating boys and girls. As a consequence of her brothers going to Oxford Katharine was to meet, and later marry, Beaufort Burdekin, a classmate of her older brother. He was originally from Australia and was studying to be a barrister at Oxford (Patai, 1989: 162).

The First World War was to have a significant impact on Burdekin's life. Beaufort and Alan, Burdekin's brother, served as soldiers and Burdekin herself worked as a member of the Voluntary Aid Detachment (VAD) organisation during this time. In 1915 Beaufort was temporarily at home, invalided from war service in France, and the couple took the opportunity to marry. When her new husband returned to war service Katharine served in the VAD at an army hospital in Cheltenham (Patai, 1985). Members of the VAD were trained volunteers who were specifically meant to work in a medical context and could be attached to either the 'British Red Cross, the Order of St John or the Territorial Forces Association' (Bowser, 2003: iii). VAD members who worked with the ambulance services were more likely to be involved in 'driving, portorage and mechanical repairs' (Bowser, 2003: iv). Burdekin, working in an army hospital, was probably assigned work involving 'cleaning, cooking and elementary nursing' (Bowser, 2003: iv). In conversation with the family it was revealed that at this time Burdekin's brother, Alan, suffering from shell shock, was invalided and subsequently diagnosed with schizophrenia (Smith, 2007). He was institutionalised for the rest of his life.

Perhaps it was her time spent as a member of the VAD, as well as the experience of her brother during the war, which influenced some of her later pacifist writings, in particular the novel *Quiet Ways* (1930). The protagonist of this novel is a VAD nurse who forms a relationship with a traumatised soldier.

After the war Katharine and Beaufort settled down and had two children, two girls, Katharine Jayne born in 1917, and Helen Eugenie in 1920 (Glenn Horowitz Bookseller, 2011). The family moved to Sydney in 1920 but it was less than two years later when the marriage came to an end and Katharine returned with the two girls to England. She settled near her mother and sister in Cornwall, where the two women had set up house after Katharine's father had died (Minack Theatre, 2011). Rowena Cade, Katharine's sister, had, from an early age, showed an interest in the theatre, performing in her mother's production of *Alice Through the Looking Glass* at the age of eight. Rowena (born three years earlier than Burdekin in 1893) had a passion for the theatre which would lead her to plan, build, and finance The Minack Theatre at Lamorna in West Cornwall. Rowena had bought a piece of land, called the Minack headland, and built a house on it, which was then extended at this time to make a home for Katharine and her children (Minack Theatre, 2011). In conversation with the family, it was stated that since Katharine, Rowena, and their mother did not work they needed things to occupy their time and so they engaged in various creative activities (Smith, 2007). They frequently put on family plays and Burdekin published her first novel, *Anna Colquhoun* (1922), during this time.

In 1926 Burdekin met the woman who would later become her lifelong friend and companion. Burdekin had originally hired Isobel Allen Burns as a governess, but a fast friendship soon developed (Smith, 2007). There has been speculation about the

relationship between the two women. However, there is no evidence that the women were anything more than friends. In fact, the family have stated that Katharine did have relationships with men after her marriage and during the time when she and Isobel lived together (Smith, 2007). Burdekin expressed a sympathetic attitude towards homosexuality in her novels but that, coupled with her friendship with Isobel, holds no concrete proof either way of Burdekin either being bisexual or homosexual; this conclusion could only ever be speculation.

During her lifetime Burdekin suffered from bouts of severe depression. According to the family, she would have long depressive phases and then periods of great creativity (Smith, 2007). The family speculated on the possibility that she was bi-polar, although, according to them, she never received treatment (Smith, 2007). In 1955 she suffered a nearly fatal aneurysm and was bedridden thereafter. Burdekin died in August 1963.

Overall, ten novels were published during Burdekin's lifetime, with a further novel published posthumously. Although many of her later novels featured fantastical elements her early writing career began with several realist texts. *Anna Colquhoun* (1922) was her first novel published and features a strong female protagonist who is an amazingly talented musician. Anna is a character that could be described as fitting the mould of the 'new woman' heroine; she is a strong, confident woman struggling with her ability to have a career as a woman musician. The 'new woman' protagonist was a popular one at the beginning of the twentieth century. The phrase 'new woman' first appeared in an article by Sarah Grand in 1894 and refers to a certain type of woman who 'rejected the traditional role for women and demanded emancipation' (Nelson, 2000: ix). The demand for greater freedom was based on the denial of the idea of 'separate spheres' since this notion was challenged as being 'a construct of society and

culture rather than a biological mandate' (Nelson, 2000: ix). This is noteworthy because women's rights, as a theme, appear in various forms and guises throughout all of Burdekin's texts. The interesting thing about *Anna Colquhoun* is the way that Anna is 'punished' at the end of the novel for being such a strong character. Many of Burdekin's novels feature a character out of place in that person's own time with ideas that do not fit the normal pattern. Burdekin's novels could be said to similarly feature ideas ahead of her time.

Burdekin wrote under various different names: Katharine Burdekin, Kay Burdekin, and the pseudonym Murray Constantine. The six novels written from 1922 to 1930 (*Anna Colquhoun* (1922), *A Reasonable Hope* (1924), *The Children's Country* (1929), *The Burning Ring* (1929), *The Rebel Passion* (1929) and the 1930 text *Quiet Ways*) were all published under the Burdekin name, with different variations of her first name. It was in 1934 that Burdekin felt it necessary to take the name Murray Constantine, ostensibly because of the political nature of her writings. She stated that it was because she feared backlash against her and her family due to the anti-fascist nature of her work (Patai, 1985). However, it could just as likely be related to the exploration of gender and sexuality in her work. It has to be remembered that it was only six years prior to this, in 1928, that Radclyffe Hall's exploration of female inversion in her novel *The Well of Loneliness* caused a stir and was ultimately banned for being 'obscene' (Doan and Prosser, 2001: 1). Interestingly, Burdekin's 1929 novel, *Two in a Sack*, was withdrawn by Thornton Butterworth before publication because of its exploration of androgyny (Glenn Horowitz Bookseller, 2011). Four novels were published under the name Murray Constantine from 1934 to 1940: *Proud Man* (1934), *The Devil, Poor Devil* (1934), *Swastika Night* (1937), and *Venus in Scorpio* (1940). Burdekin wrote a further six novels after World War Two, which were unpublished.

In a letter to H.D., Burdekin seems to indicate the reason why these later novels remained unpublished:

I do write books still but never get them published, though I know some of the unpublished ones are quite as good as any of the published ones, but I think it was always luck if I did get any book taken. One very nice agent who was keen on the books I sent him but wouldn't handle them, said that I didn't write for any particular public, and until I did I wouldn't be able to get them published (Burdekin, no date: 4).

The letter is dated 'Oct 20th' but the year is missing. However, the fact that Burdekin mentions her married daughter and three children indicates it is later in her life when she is a Grandmother. These thoughts reflect the fact that Burdekin was an original thinker and her work resisted categorisation.

Venus in Scorpio is the only novel that Burdekin co-wrote and she wrote it with her good friend Margaret Goldsmith. It received mixed reviews. In *Life and Letters To-day* S. Penn wrote that 'Murray Constantine's gift of psychic evocation is here well substantiated by the sound historical research of Margaret Goldsmith' (Penn, 1940: 30). The review in *The Times Literary Supplement* was less kind, critically finding fault with the novel's imaginative reconstruction of the past whereby 'towards the end, the history-book element tends to creep in more and more' (*The Times Literary Supplement*, 1940: 125). Although the criticism against the style in *Venus in Scorpio* could be said to come from having two different authors involved, in fact difficulties in relation to style also arise in relation to Burdekin's other books. Her blending of story and essay style, although typical of utopian fiction, does not always read particularly well.

Burdekin was not interested in joining in the literary social scene of the interwar period; although her work was admired by many writers of the time, such as Radclyffe Hall and H.D., who wrote to her to praise her work (Glenn Horowitz Bookseller, 2011). She knew Leonard and Virginia Woolf and Bertrand Russell but the people she counted as close friends were lesser known writers such as Margaret Goldsmith, Frederick Voight, and Norah James (Patai, 1989). She and her companion preferred to keep to themselves and in a letter from Isobel Allen Burns to Patai in 1984, Burns says the two women lived the lives of ‘eccentric country gentlewomen’ (Patai, 1989: 164).

Defining Utopia

After establishing some of the facts about Burdekin, her life and works, the topic of this introduction turns to the attempt to define the concept of utopia. The word ‘utopia’ is slippery in the grasp of the critic who tries to define it. It has long since evolved into something (an idea or concept) beyond what it was originally used for, which was the title of Thomas More’s 1516 work of fiction *Utopia*. Three distinct branches of thought relating to the idea of utopia can be distinguished: the literary genre, the practical realisation of utopia, and utopianism as a theory (Sargent, 2010). The literary genre refers to a collection of texts written in the style of More’s original book. The four novels considered in this thesis belong to the category of the literary utopia and as such this branch of utopian thought will receive the most attention here. However, the other types of thought will be considered, briefly, in contrast with the literary utopia in order to help in the understanding of the term. The consideration of the literary utopia will also include looking at the history of the genre and the evolution of its sub-genres, considering the purpose of it as well as the form, characteristics, and themes.

In the discussion of the term utopia, whether it be relating to the literary genre, practical utopia or the idea of utopian social dreaming, the starting point must be More's original creation of the word. He fashioned the word by combining the Greek 'ou' (meaning no or not) and 'topos' (meaning place) (Nicholls, 1979: 622). It has been additionally suggested by critics that the word utopia could equally derive from 'eutopia', which means a 'good-place' (Nicholls, 1993: 1260). In his work More used the word playfully to describe a fictional no-place that is contrasted with, and critiques, contemporary society in the text, and by implication the society of More's own time. The fictional place is described in a great deal of detail and is seemingly a better place to live in at that particular historical time. It is this aspect of a better society that is at the core of the definition of the literary utopia. *The Oxford Dictionary of Science Fiction*, in fact, describes utopia as 'a state, location, or condition which is perfect or ideal with regard to politics, economy, social structure' (Prucher, 2007: 257). However, contemporary utopian criticism tends to avoid using words like 'perfect' or 'ideal' since there can never be a truly 'perfect' society and ideas about a better society are historically subjective. For example, Sargent describes utopia as being something 'the author intended a contemporaneous reader to view as considerably better than the society in which that reader lived' (Sargent, 2010: 6). So 'better' is preferable to 'perfect' and when defining better in terms of comparison with something else, it is with the current society that the author lived in.

More's text was written in Latin in 1516 and translated and published in English in 1551. It has been re-translated and re-published many times since then and remains still in print today. Its popularity and relevance after nearly five hundred years is remarkable. The story has gone on to influence many writers of utopian texts many centuries after it was first written. *Utopia* became a blueprint for the genre, with key

issues, themes, and formal aspects from this work being repeated and reformulated again and again in the works of other writers. *Utopia* is divided into two parts. Book one is about the character, as distinguished from the author, of Thomas More discussing in detail the problems of current society with his friend Peter Gilles and a traveller called Hythlodæus. The second book is the description of a place called Utopia which Hythlodæus has visited in his travels. The place of Utopia, described in detail in the novel, provides a contrast to the description of the corruption of the European society represented in the text. In Utopia everyone has work, there is not a problem with unemployment and they all have enough to eat. No one starves in Utopia. They share the land and property together.

Utopia is an intriguing story. Critics have puzzled, and argued, over the meaning of this text since it was first published. It contains both radical elements and simultaneously quite conservative ones. Humanists hailed it as a humanist work when it appeared. Critics have argued over whether the text is pro-catholic or pro-protestant. However, perhaps it is best to approach the text without the aim of trying to find any definite meaning. The text itself, the form of it, asks the reader to question things; it is not claiming to provide answers. It is trying to engage in a dialogue of ideas. Utopia is a type of ideal world vision. More inserted his text into a tradition of ideal world visions and invented a new type of vision. Other ideal world visions are the Golden Age, The Land of Cockaynge, Arcadian, the Perfect Moral Commonwealth, and Millenarian (Sargent: 2010). One of the most well-known of these types of vision is *The Land of Cockaynge*. The poem is dated back to the early mid 1300s and details a land of plenty.

A number of utopian stories appeared after More. The earliest ones included Sir Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis* (1627) and Tommaso Campanella's *The City of the Sun* (first

written in 1602 but only published in English in 1885). Key texts that followed include Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward* (1888), an influential text in the development of the genre. One particular feature that Bellamy added was the idea of travelling to utopia through time. In the nineteenth century utopian writers became very much interested in where their utopias were in time as much as where they were geographically. The attraction was to imagine a future society extrapolated from current contemporary society. This was in contrast to previous utopias, like More's, that imagined another society elsewhere without any historical context.

Historically, it can be said that the literary history of the genre of utopia begins in the sixteenth-century with More's *Utopia*. However, critics (Carey, 1999: Claeys and Sargent, 1999) have retrospectively used the term to apply to earlier texts, such as Plato's *The Republic* (360 BC), which are either written in the same style or contain similar features or characteristics. *The Republic* explores the notion of a perfect community or commonwealth. Plato has generally been regarded as 'the father of idealism in philosophy' (Hertzler, 1922: 99). His work is important because of the consideration of the implications of the question: 'What is the best form of organization for a community and how can a person best arrange his life?' (Sivin, 1979: 37). The utopian story contains the portrayal of another society, a commonwealth, which theorises better ways to organise society. This includes not only organising society in a better way but also people's lives. In fact the two ideas, of organising society and making individual's lives better, often inform and influence each other.

The definition of a literary utopia at this point seems straight-forward; it is the description of a place, written down, that is better than current society. The next aspect to consider would then be where this place is situated. The difficulty begins when

considering utopia both as a 'good place' and a 'no-place'. Instead of locking down the meaning of the location of the utopian society this only opens up new avenues of approach. The no-place can be the imagination, the future, or not a place that the reader knows or could imagine. It could be connected to the idea that a better and more progressive society only can exist in the imagination and will never be able to be realised. This unknown variable allows writers of utopia to create a space in which to explore different ideas. For example, Burdekin alternately sets her utopia in the future, in visions, and in dreams.

The next step is to consider in what way these places are better. The aspects of things that are better are reflections of what are the worst aspects of the reader's own society. For this reason there are no wars, no religious conflict; instead the societies are represented as peaceful, tolerant places, where everyone is equal regardless of (depending on the time written) race or gender. In terms of political leadership, it is often very left wing, democratic, with a socialist aspect. The common good is often placed ahead of individual freedoms, an idea that seems to conflict with the presentation of a better society. This highlights the fact that utopia is not without criticisms.

However, the reasoning can be understood. The reason why everyone is expected to act in a certain way is to ensure everyone is treated the same and that society is organised in a way so that no-one is left behind and subject to poverty and starvation. The negatives of this approach are that differences and having a sense of individuality are discouraged.

At this point it is worthwhile to distinguish the literary utopia from the other types. The literary utopia is the fictional imagining of another society. On the other hand, the practical utopia involves the actual realisation of a utopian project. People who have attempted to create practical utopias were transferring theory into practice. These

pioneers of the practical utopia were not willing to wait for the realisation of a better society at some distant point. They reasoned that they could instigate changes for the better in their current society. The most well-known exponent of putting into place practical solutions for social problems is Robert Owen (1771-1858). Owen was critical of the way workers were treated in the factory system and put into place new ways of working at his cotton mills in New Lanark. Feeling limited in England he moved to America and from there established sixteen Owenite communities in which the idea was to promote increased co-operation, a new moral approach, and the abolition of money in favour of a system of exchange (Coverley, 2010: 95). Owen wrote down his views about New Lanark in *A New View of Society* (1813). However, Owen, and others like him, such as Claude-Henri de Saint-Simon and Charles Fourier were criticised by other socialists for only ‘experimenting with their small and isolated communities’ (Coverley, 2010: 96). The focus on individual communities was not seen as being enough to combat the problems of all of society.

Critics of the practical utopia include Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels who expressed antipathy towards the idea of utopianism and regarded it as unrealistic fantasy. This makes it all the more intriguing that their writings, and in particular *The Communist Manifesto* (1848), have repeatedly been seen as containing utopian ideals and are frequently included in discussions of utopian texts (Coverley, 2010; Claeys and Sargent, 1999) . Political texts, such as manifestos, can be seen to critique the current conditions of society and try to offer solutions to make society better. It is for this reason that, bizarrely, even Hitler’s *Mein Kampf* (1924) has been considered as a utopian text. For example, John Carey seems to suggest that considering Hitler’s intentions, rather than his actions, these could be seen as utopian since Hitler’s goal was to ‘raise the cultural level and improve the living conditions of the German people’ (Carey, 1999: 423).

However, his methods for bringing this about will always connect him in people's minds with the idea of dystopian, nightmarish society.

Aside from the literary utopia and the practical utopia the third important category of utopian thought is alternatively called utopianism, utopian social dreaming, or what Sargent categorises as 'utopian social theory' (Sargent, 2010). This is a very broad category and is used in various ways, including the consideration of utopian thought as it relates to different ideologies, religious beliefs, and in relation to colonialism and postcolonialism (Sargent, 2010: 7). These broad areas are linked together by what Ruth Levitas describes as, quite simply, 'the desire for a better way of being' (Sargent, 2010: 5). In this respect it is the desire, without reference to any specific way of bringing it about, which becomes important. This is in stark contrast to the literary utopia, which focuses on how, and in what way, the hope or desire is brought about. Intriguingly, it is this desire for something more that can be seen at work in other genres beside the literary one, including music, art, architecture, and theatre. For example, in terms of architecture, the design of more functional and practical spaces is fuelled by the desire to create better places for people to live, work, and play in. The common factor between utopian social dreaming and the literary utopia is, then, the hope or desire for something better, the difference is in the way that the hope or desire is realised. In the literary genre the desire is visualised in a specific and concrete way. Alternatively, in utopian social theory it is a vague idea of there being something better.

Dystopia

The attempt to define dystopian fiction, as with the positive utopia, is not an easy task. The difficulty of defining utopia has been discussed at length in the previous section.

Peter Firchow talks about the difficulty of defining utopia, ‘the word “utopia” can mean, and has meant, different things to different people at different times’ (Firchow, 2007: 1). The same can be said of dystopian fiction. A dystopian text is often a reflection of the historical time period in which it was written, which makes it difficult to generalise about the characteristics common to the genre. It has evolved over time and consequently it has different meanings in different time periods. Further, it is also often defined in very broad terms and this can make it hard to distinguish any significant patterns.

At a basic level, a dystopian text features a ‘bad’ place, compared with the ‘good’ place of eutopia. The eutopian text presents a society that is better than the reader’s own. On the other hand, as Sargent points out, the dystopian novel is something that portrays a society that ‘the author intended a contemporaneous reader to view as considerably worse than the society in which that reader lived’ (Claeys and Sargent, 1999: 2). The connection with the contemporary society of the text is important in terms of definition because dystopias are extrapolations from the present of what the future will be like if society is not more careful. Images of dystopia are ‘are almost invariably images of future society, pointing fearfully at the way the world is supposedly going in order to provide urgent propaganda for a change in direction’ (Nicholls, 1993: 360). The eutopian story prompts the reader to consider changes to society which will lead to a significant improvement in living conditions. The dystopian story warns that if actions are not taken to change society that it could seriously degenerate into a hell on earth.

This aspect of warning seems straightforward but is actually complicated by location. There is a difference between dystopias produced in the East and the West. Dystopias in the West provide warnings against the possibility of a worse society in the future.

However, Erika Gottlieb identifies this purpose as being redundant in terms of some countries, particularly ones in Europe that have lived under communism, because the threat of totalitarianism has been realised. Gottlieb sums this up: ‘there are historical phenomena that create societies that should be described as dystopia, societies where the literary imagination refuses to envisage a world worse than the existing world of reality’ (Gottlieb, 2001: 8). These texts do not present a society worse than the reader’s own but are reflections of a dystopian reality. However, throughout this work dystopian fiction is discussed primarily from the perspective of the Western tradition. In that respect dystopian fiction is meant to provide a warning of what is to come.

The most important consideration in the definition of dystopia is its relation to eutopia. Many critics, such as Nicholls, see dystopia as simply being the opposite of eutopia (Nicholls, 1993: 360). This would be a straightforward view of the dystopian genre. However, overlapping with the description of the anti-utopia, some would view dystopia as also engaging in a critique of the eutopian genre. Gottlieb suggests that dystopian fiction is actually in dialogue with the genre of eutopia: ‘I consider dystopian literature to include those works that rely on a dialogue with utopian [eutopian] idealism as an important element of their social criticism’ (Gottlieb, 2001: 3). Dystopian fiction can, according to this definition, include texts that provide a critique of the eutopian ideal, meaning that the eutopian ideal can often lead to dystopian reality.

The tradition of dystopian fiction is a relatively modern phenomenon, with *The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* describing it as a ‘modern term’ (Baldick, 2008: 100). The earliest known use of the word is taken to be by John Stuart Mill in a parliamentary speech in 1868 (Nicholls, 1993: 360). However, the application of the word as a literary category stems from the use of the word in the critical text *The Quest for Utopia* (1952).

Gottlieb notes that ‘it was only in 1952 that J. Max Patrick recommended the distinction between the good place as “eutopia” and its opposite, the bad place, as “dystopia”’ (Gottlieb, 2001: 4). The dystopian story existed previous to this but was often referred to simply as an anti-utopia.

The genre dates from the late nineteenth century, although there are some earlier examples, most notably Mary Shelley’s *The Last Man* (1826), which imagines a society in which a virulent plague has nearly wiped out the entire population of the planet. The frequency in the appearance of dystopian novels at this particular period in time can be put down to the development of major political thoughts, including capitalism, socialism, fascism, and feminism, which these novels were often reacting against. For example, Walter Besant’s *The Revolt of Man* (1882) is an early anti-feminist dystopia, which represents England where women are in charge and have ruled so badly that the country faces ruin (Carey, 1999: 272). Also, Jack London’s *The Iron Heel* (1907) is a classic example of an anti-capitalist dystopia, in which the masses are crushed under ‘the iron heel’ of the money-loving power-mad capitalists.

The interwar years were a significant time in the history of the genre. This is mainly because of the proliferation of anti-fascist novels, including Owen Gregory’s *Meccania* (1918), Milo Hasting’s *City of Endless Night* (1920) and, of course, Burdekin’s own *Swastika Night* (1937). There is also Joseph O’Neill’s *Land under England* (1935) and Storm Jameson’s *In the Second Year* (1936). These novels reflect an anxiety with the rise of fascism in Europe, particularly in Germany, but interestingly they also consider the potential for home grown fascism. Jameson’s *In the Second Year* is about the second year of the rule of a fascist regime in England.

Post-World War Two dystopian novels are remarkable mostly for the shift in mood. These stories, not surprisingly, reflect a greater despair about the world. One of the most well-known texts from this period is Anthony Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange* (1962). People had lived through a horrific war, and were living under the cloud of the Cold War, and so 'US-UK society lost its faith in the probability of a better future, and the dystopian image was established as an actual pattern of expectation rather than as a literary warning device' (Nicholls, 1993: 362). The dystopian novel functioned less as a warning, than a reflection of the despair and hopelessness that people felt. However, the genre was reinvigorated by feminists in the 1970s and 1980s. Three key texts of this period are *Walk to the End of the World* (1974) by Suzy Mckee Charnas, *Woman at the Edge of Time* (1976) by Marge Piercy, and *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985) by Margaret Atwood. It was in this climate that Burdekin's *Swastika Night* was reviewed again and recognised to be an early forerunner of these feminist texts. These women writers also went on to develop the idea of the 'critical utopia'. Raffaella Baccolini notes that 'recent dystopian sf by women resists genre purity in favour of an impure or hybrid text' (Baccolini, 2007: 166). These are neither utopias nor dystopias. The societies in a critical utopia accept the idea that society as a 'good' or 'perfect' place is impossible to achieve, and accept that imperfections, or 'bad' things happen, however they work to improve themselves and the world as best they can.

Dystopian fiction often provides a warning of things to come. There are three main perceived threats that appear frequently in dystopian texts. They are capitalism, socialism, and fascism. One further important threat that appears is science and technology. It often appears as a main theme, but it can appear as a function of other types of dystopias. For example, it can be the mechanism by which groups, such as capitalist groups, can gain control and maintain their power. There is a belief that

‘scientific progress would make the world a worse place to live in because it would allow society’s power groups more effectively to oppress others’ (Nicholls, 1993: 361). Burdekin’s eutopian novel *The Rebel Passion* makes a similar point, that technology is not bad in itself but the uses of it can be abused.

One of the most common types of dystopia is the anti-capitalist dystopia, like Jack London’s *The Iron Heel* (1907) and George Allan England’s *The Air Trust* (1915). In anti-capitalist dystopias society is organised for the benefit of a capitalist elite, and their greed is privileged over the needs of the rest of society who work for the elite and have few rights and few ways of escaping their role. Capitalism and socialism are often intricately linked, with each fearing the other one. Nicholls comments that ‘[t]he single most prolific stimulus to the production of dystopian visions has been the political polarization of capitalism and socialism’ (Nicholls, 1993: 360-1). Each sees the other as being the enemy, as being the main threat to a peaceful existence.

Examples of anti-socialist utopias are William Le Queux’s *The Unknown Tomorrow* (1910) and Ayn Rand’s *Anthem* (1938). *Anthem*, in particular, offers an interesting vision of a future where a person is stripped of all their individuality, to such an extent that the main protagonist of the story, Equality 7-2521, is unable to refer to themselves as ‘I’, instead using ‘we’ when describing personal actions. The important thing in *Anthem* is not the individual good but the collective good, and any single individual can be sacrificed for this noble cause. The most famous anti-socialist text is Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Although Orwell was a socialist he was also aware that once in power there was the potential for any group, however well intentioned, to become dictatorial. For that reason *Nineteen Eighty-Four* could also be viewed as an anti-utopia,

meaning that it is a novel that doubts utopia can come about because of the very fact of human nature.

The feminist dystopia is not to be confused with the anti-feminist novel. Anti-feminist dystopias appeared much earlier than feminist dystopias, with an early example being Besant's *The Revolt of Man*. As the anti-fascist dystopia was at its peak in the interwar period, the feminist dystopia is centred in the 1970s and 1980s. Feminist dystopias have often been dismissed because of their representation of women as victims. For example, John Carey states that 'in many feminist dystopias, women are depicted as the chief victims, subjected to the virtually boundless cruelty of the male' (Carey, 1999: 412). There may be some validity to this statement. However, women's position in a dystopian society is often exaggerated to deliberate effect. It is done in order to make obvious inequalities in patriarchal societies.

Surprisingly, although dystopian novels often feature societies with hugely different ideological bases the majority of dystopian texts share similar characteristics. The structure of the society being presented is usually deeply hierarchal. As Nicholls notes, a central feature of the society is 'the oppression of the majority by a ruling elite' (Nicholls, 1993: 361). The utopian genre is characterised by a preoccupation with presenting an 'equal' society. On the other hand, the dystopian society features inequality everywhere. The inequalities are usually inequalities that are present in the readers' own society but are magnified to an exaggerated degree. The purpose of this is to highlight the fact that power structures and power relationships in society are not how they are because of any 'natural' state of being. Thus, a person's place in society is not inevitable and the status quo can be changed. For example, in *Swastika Night* women's inequality in society is explained as the 'natural' way of life, and therefore

unchangeable, but in fact their treatment is determined by political and religious discourse. This type of inequality is what Jean-Jacques Rousseau would term as being a 'natural' inequality. Rousseau believes that there are two types of inequality among human beings, the 'natural or physical' and the 'moral or political inequality' (Rousseau, 2003: 49). The first type of inequality, according to Rousseau, comes about because of physical difference, such as 'difference of age, health, [and] bodily strength' (Rousseau, 2003: 49). The difference of class, race, and gender, can also be included. Rousseau's second type of inequality, the moral or political inequality, is about 'the different privileges which some men enjoy to the prejudice of others; such as that of being more rich, more honoured, more powerful, or even in a position to exact obedience' (Rousseau, 2003: 49). Moral inequality is much more complex than the first, this is 'because it depends on a kind of convention, and is established, or at least authorized, by the consent of men' (Rousseau, 2003: 49). The consent of men is usually established through ideology.

Dystopias usually feature an elite group, or a single dictator who rules over the rest of society, and the society is often rigidly structured. This can be seen in *Swastika Night*, where individuals have little opportunity to move out of their rigid social role. The novel has an intricate system that divides society along the lines of nationality, religion, and gender. Because of this type of system in the dystopian text the 'haves' and 'have-nots' have different, but related, motivations, which often form the basis of the story. The rulers engage in strategies to keep the general population under its control, and certain, and sometimes very limited, members of the population aim to overthrow the current system.

Techniques for controlling the masses by the elite group are varied. One way is to control the access to information, often specifically information about the past. A common feature of dystopian literature is the alteration, or the erasure altogether of the past. The past is important in these texts for many reasons, but principally because it offers an alternative perspective on the current status quo. Firchow states that history, ‘reminds people that society was not always organized along the same lines as it now is, and that it may even have once been based on different assumptions’ (Firchow, 2007: 69). The past is seen as dangerous because it could galvanise people to attack the current system. Another way to control the population is by promoting the ideology of doing what is best for the community above an individual’s own needs. Dystopian novels often feature, ‘the trend towards the victory of organic society over the individual’ (Nicholls, 1993: 361). Individual rights and freedoms are subsumed for the ‘common good’. The common good is defined by the elite and changed as and when it suits their purposes. This leads to a lack of freedom for individuals and one of the most common plots of a dystopian novel is the attempt by an individual to gain more freedom and rebel against the system. This is common in many novels, including both Burdekin’s and Orwell’s texts. The protagonist of a dystopia, unhappy with his or her position in life, rebels against the established order. This can be on a small scale; for example Julia in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* feels a sense of rebellion when she smears on some forbidden lipstick. Or it can be on a much larger scale, with the protagonist being initiated into, or as in *Swastika Night* actually starting, a properly formed resistance group.

To sum up, dystopian literature is a modern phenomenon, which presents a society that is significantly worse than the reader’s own. It has a short history, including the unique tapestry of works which were produced in the interwar period, but it has a rich history.

It is full of nightmare images, of Orwell's Room 101, Burdekin's women in cages, and Huxley's drug induced society. Dystopian texts represent societies of deep individual alienation from the rest of society, characteristically featuring a main protagonist who feels oppressed by the society in which he or she lives.

Sub-Categories

As the literary genre has evolved new sub-categories have been created. The sub-category of dystopia has already been mentioned above. Sargent identifies several different types: utopia, eutopia or positive utopia, dystopia or negative utopia, utopian satire, anti-utopia, and critical utopia (Sargent, 1999: 1-2). The word utopia still refers to a no-place; however, it has also come to be an umbrella term to cover all the different sub-categories. The good place is known as either eutopia or positive utopia. In contrast, the representation of a society worse than the reader's own is labelled as dystopia or negative utopia.

Utopian satire is what Sargent describes as 'a utopia that the author intended a contemporaneous reader to view as a criticism of the existing society' (Sargent, 1999: 2). It might seem odd to pair utopia and satire together. Robert C. Elliot writes that 'we normally think of utopia as associated with the ideal, satire with the actual' (Elliot, 1970: 3). Elliot actually sees satire as an integral feature of the utopian story. He believes that:

Satire and utopia are not really separable, the one a critique of the real world in the name of something better, the other a hopeful construct of a world that might be (Elliot, 1970: 24).

Satire refers to the use of humour, irony, or exaggeration as a form of mockery or criticism. Jan Relf characterises the utopian satire as describing texts which privilege the satirizing of contemporary society over the imagining of a new society, and so the primary purpose of the utopian society is to expose ‘the absurdity of what is’ (Relf, 1991: 18). The utopian satire does not offer an ideal version of society, a vision of society to be held up as an example of what human beings can achieve. Its purpose is not to propose solutions to problems, but to highlight issues that need to be readdressed. This might seem to overlap with dystopia since that category also offers a criticism of current society. However, dystopia exists very much in the future, extrapolating what could happen based on current conditions. Utopian satire is simply concerned with criticising conditions as they exist currently and not a warning for how things may progress in the future.

Dystopia and anti-utopia are frequently confused. Chad Walsh uses the terms ‘dystopia’, ‘inverted utopia’ and ‘anti-utopia’ interchangeably (Walsh, 1962: 14). On the other hand, Nan Bowman Albinski sees the anti-utopia as utopian satire, stating that it differs from the dystopia ‘in that the central focus is satire’ (Albinski, 1988: 10). The anti-utopia is similar to dystopia in that it is also representative of a society worse than the reader’s own. However, the peculiar feature of the anti-utopia, which may or may not be a feature in other dystopian texts, is the intention to warn against utopian projects that, however well meaning, can end up having the opposite result. This type of fiction not only attempts to criticize current aspects of contemporary society, it also comments on the limitations of the utopian genre, on what human beings can and want to achieve. Anti-utopia has come to be ‘distinguished by its inherent conservatism’ (Relf, 1991:18). This is because it doubts the possibility of humans to change for the better, or more specifically to be better than they currently are now.

Finally, the critical utopia is one that is meant to be better than current society, 'but with difficult problems that the described society may or may not be able to solve, and which takes a critical view of the utopian genre (Sargent, 1999: 2). The critical utopia is a recent phenomenon. The twentieth century was dominated by dystopian or anti-utopian visions. This led to many critics, such as John Grey, coming to the conclusion that the positive utopia, as a genre, was dead. However, it can be said that rather than it declining in popularity writers adapted it for a new purpose. This can be linked to second wave feminism. Women writers of utopia were aware of the drawbacks of the genre, in relation to the seeming impossibility of representing perfect realities, and decided rather than to reject the genre altogether to adapt it. They believed the future could be better but that it was a future that was constantly evolving to meet the needs of society. They were concerned with making sure that society does not become prescriptive and thus made the element of perpetual change as part of its nature.

Peter Fitting sees women's utopias as places which are never content to take their society for granted, they 'do not exist simply for us to wander into and then live "happily ever after," [...] they must be built and renewed and constantly chosen again and again' (Fitting, 1990: 152). Fitting believes women writers of utopia are concerned that often utopias forget their purpose, that is, according to his definition, to prompt change: 'the building of a better society does not require images of that better world, but the energy, anger, and strategies to change this one' (Fitting, 1990:155). Women's utopias are focussed more on the intermediate stage to utopia, the struggle to get there, rather than the destination itself. Utopia is only achieved after significant work is put in to get to that place.

Utopia and Science-Fiction

The definition of the literary utopia, as shown above, is not straightforward. Even more complex is the relationship between utopian fiction and science fiction. Science fiction is described as a genre:

[...] in which the setting differs from our world (e.g. by the invention of new technology, through contact with aliens, by having a different history), and in which the difference is based on extrapolations made from one or more changes or suppositions (Prucher, 2007: 171).

This explanation would seem to apply to the category of utopia. Throughout this work utopia is referred to in terms of being a 'genre' but some critics actually see utopia as a sub-genre of science fiction. The word genre is 'commonly used to indicate that texts can be sorted into groups which have common characteristics' (Palmer, 1991: 112). Utopias and science fiction share many characteristics and they often overlap. Paul Nicholls believes that it can 'be argued that all utopias are sf in that they are exercises in hypothetical sociology and political science' (Nicholls, 1993: 1260). Darko Suvin describes utopia as 'a literary genre' but qualifies this by adding that utopia is actually a subgenre (Suvin, 1979: 38). Suvin says that utopia is a 'sociopolitical subgenre of science fiction' (Suvin, 1979: 61). Seeing utopian fiction as a subgenre of science fiction, on these terms, seems unproblematic. However, Nicholls confuses the issue by stating that 'only those Utopias which embody some notion of scientific advancement qualify as sf' (Nicholls, 1993: 1260). According to his definition, in order to be included in the genre of science fiction a text must include scientific advancement. In terms of Nicholls' definition, some utopias do fall under the category of also being science

fiction, but not all do. Not all utopian societies are scientifically advanced. In fact utopian visions can often represent pastoral environments. For the purpose of this attempt to provide a definition the important point to recognise is that utopian texts, whether they also come under the category of science fiction or not, can feature societies that may or may not be technologically advanced.

The definition of utopia has been found to be problematic for many other reasons. Levitas suggests that part of the confusion around the literary definition of utopia is tied to the title of More's original work. She asks 'is this eutopia, the good place, or outopia, no place - and are these necessarily the same thing?' (Levitas, 1990: 2). The 'no-place' is problematic because is it a place that actually exists, and if it does not exist is the reason why because it is too 'good' so that it ultimately presents an unrealistic and unattainable vision of society.

Another reason for the problem of definition is the fact that it is hard to generalize about utopian fiction because utopias need to be read in their historical, social and political context. The society described in a utopia is meant to be compared and contrasted with the readers' own society and the shape of the imaginary society reflects the time it was written in. It is dependent on historical context because the two societies exist in dialogue. This can be seen in the following chapters in the way that Burdekin is responding to the social and political changes occurring during the interwar period.

Utopias share some similarities with religious visions of paradise or a heavenly place. However, there are significant differences between a heavenly paradise and a utopian place, the principle difference being the circumstances that led to the creation of the ideal place. The heavenly place has mystical origins while the utopian society is created

through human agency. This does not mean that there is not a connection with religion. Religion is an important utopian theme and religious thoughts and practices often undergo various adaptations and changes in utopian texts. The important thing to stress here is the distinction that the 'better place' is usually a place, a society or commonwealth, which has been organised by human beings; this 'good' place is constructed through human agency. It is not a paradise that exists outside of human history, as Nicholls states:

The myth of utopia, the Ideal State, is an ancient one. It is linked to myths of religious origin - Heaven or the Promised Land – and to the folklore relating to such dream lands as the Isles of the Blessed, but it often stands in opposition to these as a historical goal to be achieved by the active efforts of men, not as a transcendental goal reserved as a reward for those who follow a particularly virtuous path in life (Nicholls, 1979: 622).

The society or commonwealth that is achieved through human agency is reached through human reason and also arranged on rational principles. This has its origin in principles of the Renaissance. Joyce Hertzler describes early utopian writers as the 'children of the Renaissance' and as such 'they were imbued with a love of knowledge and a profound admiration for the newly discovered truths of science' (Hertzler, 1922: 178). Hertzler identifies More as representative of the humanistic period of the Renaissance, characterised by its 'recognition of equal social rights for all reasoning men' (Hertzler, 1922: 147). It is true that utopias do contain an emphasis on the importance of human freedom although it is questionable which types of men are worthy of being included in having equal social rights: i.e. women are often excluded as are elements of the lower classes.

Turning to the purpose of utopia, according to the title page of More's text, the work was meant to be 'as entertaining as it is instructive' (Turner, 2003: xi). This is a significant comment. First, it is in line with Renaissance and classical principles of combining the useful with the sweet. In addition, combining an entertainment aspect with the instructive element allows the author 'to tell home-truths with comparative safety' (Turner, 2003: xiii). Any ideas that raise alarm in the work can be defended by the fact that it is all fiction. This is particularly relevant to More because his story contains theological ideas that could be considered as controversial at the time. The entertaining aspect can also be used strategically to educate the reader in a more accessible way. The fictional aspects of utopian texts are meant to make quite complex and dry ideas seem more appealing. The 'entertaining' aspects also allow the reader to be able to visualise both complex and radical societal changes.

There is a difference between literary fiction and utopian desire, as talked about above in relation to social dreaming. However, there are also some similarities. For example, one function of utopia would be as the catalyst to change. Utopias are 'an ideal which, while strictly speaking impossible to realise, nevertheless (in some specified way) helps history to unfold in a positive direction' (Levitas, 1990: 34). Marxist and Socialist utopian thought and utopian literary fiction both attempt to challenge people's ideas about the world and perhaps incite them into acting to change the conditions of society. In order to do this they explore the way society operates. Levitas writes that the 'proper role of utopia is to criticise the present' (Levitas, 1990: 34). Utopias focus on areas in society which need attention, particularly concentrating on social institutions, such as schools, hospitals, and government, in order to work towards a better way of life. They criticise current society through offering possible, and better, alternatives. These alternatives are not necessarily blueprints for how society should turn out. The

alternatives form two functions, to criticise existing society and to challenge the idea that society is static.

The importance of utopia then is not as a destination but as an impetus to change.

Levitas believes the importance of utopia is to 'produce a desire for a better way of living' (Levitas, 1990: 8). The purpose of utopia can be seen as a goal to work towards, no matter how unrealistic. Utopias are not meant to be copied exactly but exist as an ideal to be worked towards. That is because the aim is to progress towards something, like a utopian society, rather than reach the goal itself, i.e. to achieve the goal of a perfect society:

The virtue of utopia is that it holds up an ideal, an ideal which encourages social progress - but that progress is seen as properly a gradual process, which the literal attempt to institute utopia would interrupt (Levitas, 1990: 11).

The next task then is to consider how the message, the ideals, of the utopian vision are realised. The form of utopia is generally a hybrid combination of essay and fiction. It is about making serious, non-fictional points in a fictional setting. Often there is a lot of description in a utopian text and this can lead to critics, such as Miriam Eliav-Feldon, believing that the fiction of utopia, as a rule, has very 'little literary value' (Eliav-Feldon, 1982: 1). This may depend on how successful an author is at melding these two factors; the imaginary concept of another reality and the practicalities of its formal aspects. Turner sees the combination of fictional and non-fiction styles as 'paradoxically combined' (Turner, 2003: xiii). It is a fictional representation based on non-fictional factors. Daniel Lea sees the combination of fiction and non-fiction as problematic

because the fictional story is diverted by the detail of the non-fictional aspects and this makes it less entertaining:

[T]he fictive element largely involves the initial projection of the utopia itself which, once fully imagined, customarily gives way to the intricate detailing of how that world operates: a process which can be seen to lack narrative drive and tension (Lea, 2001: 39).

Lea particularly sees this fault in William Morris' *News from Nowhere* (1890), describing the dialogue as being static (Lea, 2001: 40). The problem is that any type of fiction is usually driven by 'narrative drive and tension' while the purpose of the utopia, to present a realistic alternative world, often means that the story becomes merely descriptive. This same descriptive element appears in Burdekin's work and in parts some of the texts read almost like anthropological reports.

The unfolding of ideas through dialogue in utopian stories is very important in regards to the purpose of a utopia. The purpose, as stated above, is to question the present through the contrast with another 'ideal' society, and present a 'better' society to work towards. So, the lack of narrative drive, which is seen as problematic by Lea, is necessary for the purpose of the work and in this way it cannot be judged in the same way as an ordinary fictional story. It is a hybrid form of fiction and speculative essay and must be judged according to those criteria. The unfolding of ideas through dialogue is an important, and necessary, formal element of the utopian story and one of the common features of the genre.

Another important formal element of the utopian story, and connected with the common feature of overuse of dialogue, is the use of the narrator. The narrator is one of the main characters who participate in the dialogue. The utopian society is mediated to the reader through a narrator. The communication of ideas is central to the utopian novel and these ideas are often presented in dialogue between a narrator, who is often a visitor, and other characters, such as inhabitants of the utopian world. They perform the role of visitor, observer, and narrator. Patai highlights the importance of the role of the narrator in the utopian story and defines different types of narrator. The narrator is usually a person from a recognisable time period, such as the author's contemporary time, who narrates their perceptions of the different places they encounter.

Patai identifies four types of narrator that are typical to a utopian novel. The first is the 'traveller who moves directly from our time to the future' (Patai, 1993: 227-228). An example of this type occurs in H.G. Wells' *When the Sleeper Wakes* (1899) where the main character falls asleep in the 1890s and does not wake up for two hundred years. He finds the world deeply changed from his own: England is overpopulated, and there is a wealth of new technology. Because he is from a different time, effectively the reader's time, he is able to report on all the aspects of this world that are normal to inhabitants of the new world, who are used to it, but strange to him because they are so different from his own time. The narrator and the reader are both alienated from the 'other' society.

According to Patai various narrative strategies are used in utopian fiction to produce the process of estrangement, a technique which is important for utopian writers who want to 'illuminate their own society by imagining alternatives' (Patai, 1993: 226). They do this by estranging the reader from their own reality. In this process, the narrator is there as an 'agent of mediation' (Patai, 1993: 227). They are there to engage in a dialogue with an alien 'other' on behalf of the reader. The narration of *The Rebel Passion* (1929) fits

into this category, although it features a variation. Here, the narrator travels from the far past to the future, which is the reader's present, and then at the end of the story goes to the far future. The purpose of this is dual. First, the reader can identify with a character who, though not of the reader's contemporary time, is still familiar to the reader. Second, it also allows for a reflection from the point of view of an alien 'other' to the reader's own society.

The second type of narrator is the one who moves or travels 'from our society to an elsewhere' (Patai, 1993: 228). This narrator is present in Mary E. Lane's *Mizora* (1880-81) and Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Herland* (1915). In the latter the 'elsewhere' is different from the future elsewhere. This is a society that has a different historical background to the reader's own. The country of Herland does not exist in the future, but in the reader's own time, and because in the past it became geographically isolated it has a different history to the reader's. Visitors arrive at the 'elsewhere' from a place representative of contemporary society. Another example of this type of narrator can also be seen in More's *Utopia*; the narrator travels over the sea to 'other' countries, including the land of utopia.

The third type of utopian narrator is 'a resident of the unfamiliar society who travels into our world and presents it to us in a new light' (Patai, 1993: 228). This type of narrator features in Burdekin's *Proud Man*. The main protagonist is a citizen of an 'other' utopian society. This is a place that is vaguely defined in the book and that the narrator alternatively conjectures as being either on another planet or in the future. However, the story actually takes place in Britain of the 1930s. The setting should be familiar to a contemporary reader. However, they are estranged from it because they are viewing it from an alien perspective. It is possible to have mixtures of the conventions

of narrators, for example the monk Giraldus in *The Rebel Passion* is both alien ‘other’ in Britain of the 1930s and a character the reader can identify more easily with when he travels to the utopian society in the future.

The last type of narrator is ‘a person from a future time reflecting on the past – and the future’ (Patai, 1993: 228). This is the type featured in Olaf Stapledon’s *Last and First Men* (1930) and both Burdekin’s *Swastika Night* and *The End of this Day’s Business*. The two Burdekin novels are particularly interesting because they both feature a person with privileged knowledge of the past. The dialogue is, interestingly, not between a native and a visitor, but two people of the same society who have access to different levels of information. The importance of the different types of narrator is principally in the attempt to view contemporary society from an estranged perspective.

A common feature of the literary utopia is the journey to utopia, often through an imaginary voyage. Many early utopian stories, including Bacon’s *New Atlantis* and Campanella’s *The City of the Sun*, feature the imaginary voyage as a technique by which the protagonist of the story travels to the other place (James, 1994: 14). Here, the utopian society already exists somewhere on earth waiting to be discovered by people travelling on an imagery voyage, travelling from a known, often European place. This is also linked to the idea of exploration. Hertzler believes that the interest in the imaginary voyage was as a result of the appearance in the early fourteenth century of *The Travels of Marco Polo*, an account of the real travels of the Venetian Marco Polo. She notes that his writings ‘drew attention to the size of the world, the broad expanse of civilization, the diverse social forms and institutions in far-away lands’ (Hertzler, 1922: 122). This was an awakening in people’s minds in that they began to have an appreciation of other societies existing in the world with a different way of doing things.

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the imaginary voyage developed from travel by boat to travel by space ship and then the representation of the utopian society existing on another planet. For example, in H. G. Wells' *The First Men in the Moon* (1901) a scientist creates a flying machine and travels with a companion to the moon and there witnesses an alternative society on the moon. There was indeed a significant shift from the utopia that was placed on earth to it being placed further afield; predominantly the utopia came to be featured in the future, although there was also the start of utopian societies that exist in space, i.e. on other planets. Edward James identifies this shift and states that this prompted a change in terminology:

[T]he utopian tale increasingly becomes a 'tale of the future' rather than an imaginary voyage: a shift in the terminology of some utopian specialists, from eutopia ('good place') to euchronia ('good time'). The change, of course, is linked to a realization that the past was very different from the present (an idea that only slowly gained currency from the sixteenth century onwards) and that the future was going to be very different, too (James, 1994: 19)

A significant amount of time has been spent discussing the genre of utopia in order to provide the context for Burdekin's style of writing. The introduction will now turn to an exploration of the history of women writing utopian texts.

Women Writers of Utopia

There is a long and significant connection between women writers and the genre of utopia. Women writers have identified the genre as an ideal literary space in which to explore the role of women in society. A great majority of women's utopias are feminist

and share the feminist purpose of challenging women's traditional roles in society and theorising new gender relations. In terms of gender and genre, feminists, however, do not straightforwardly appropriate the genre but they adapt it in order to fit their purpose and this often means the blurring of boundary lines. Marleen S. Barr calls this type of fiction by women which blurs the boundaries 'feminist fabulation' (Barr, 1987).

However, as writers, women writers of utopia have also found they have been excluded from the literary tradition of utopian writing: a tradition associated with more well-known writers such as George Orwell and Aldous Huxley. However, the similarity in their works across different time periods raises the question whether a female utopian tradition can be established retrospectively. This section will examine the connection between gender and genre in women's utopian writing and consider what sort of a tradition, if any, they form.

Women have imagined utopian societies in fiction since the seventeenth century. The first utopian story written by a woman, Margaret Cavendish, was in 1666, although after that there was a gap for nearly a century. Then in the middle of the eighteenth century women writers, including Sarah Scott, began using the genre to hypothesise new social situations. The end of the nineteenth century is where utopia, and women's utopia, flourished. The early twentieth century saw a decrease in the number of positive utopias, and an increase in the rise of dystopias. It is really in the late twentieth century that feminist science and utopian fiction developed into a recognisable phenomenon. There was a proliferation of feminist science and utopian fiction, by writers such as Naomi Mitchison and Doris Lessing, and simultaneously women critics were also engaged in recovering previously lost utopian works by women authors. Critics attempted to create a retrospective tradition of women writing utopia. This recovery has, importantly, included Daphne Patai's rediscovery of the writer Katharine Burdekin.

More than a hundred years after *Utopia* was published, Margaret Cavendish wrote the first known utopia by a woman, *The Description of a New World, called The Blazing World* (1666). While Cavendish does not mention Thomas More or his story she is clearly aware of the tradition in which she was writing. She describes her story as a 'description of a new world, not such as Lucian's, or the French-man's world in the moon' (Cavendish, 1994: 124). The reference to Lucian is to the Syrian-Greek writer Lucian of Samosata (c.120-180) (Nicholls, 1979: 366) who was an 'author of dialogues and an imaginary voyage' (Lilley, 1994: 227) and whose works were translated into English in 1634. The French man reference is to Savinien Cyrano de Bergerac and the story referred to is *Historie comique contenant les états et empires de la lune* (1657).

Cavendish's story is a utopia in the sense that it imagines another world that is organised in a different, better, way from the reader's own. It also offers opportunities that are not available to women in contemporary seventeenth society. It starts with a female protagonist abducted from her home by an admirer and carried away on a boat; the boat subsequently runs into bad weather and she is left as the only survivor of the voyage. She crosses over from her world into another world, via the North Pole. Her travel to the 'other' utopian world takes place after an imaginary, or fantastic, voyage. The fantastic voyage is a feature of many earlier utopias and was the most common way to transport a character across to another, utopian, place. Peter Nicholls argues that this is more than a simple matter of transportation: it 'is usually paralleled by a growth towards some kind of maturity or acceptance in the protagonist's mind: towards self knowledge' (Nicholls, 1979: 210). Whether there is psychological growth in the mind of the protagonist of *The Blazing World* is debatable but her material position is certainly improved. Her position of powerlessness is transformed and she gains power as the Empress of the new world when the Emperor admires her enough to marry her.

The power she holds is significant. She is a woman with the power to influence the world around her, and the power to influence society as a whole. This sense of power to shape the world is echoed in Cavendish's idea of the power of literature, in the epilogue Cavendish writes 'my ambition is not only to be Empress, but Authoress of a whole world' (Cavendish, 1992: 224).

Cavendish's new world is inhabited by many creatures, different mixes of animal-men such as bear-men, fox-men, and bird-men, who cohabit peacefully together. The different types of animal-men study the elements of the world that suit their animal nature; thus, the worm-men study the earth and the bird-men study the air. In the story the Empress hears news that the country of her birth, which the reader assumes, by various hints, is England (although the reader is never told for sure), is under attack from enemies. The Empress decides to make an army from the people of the new world to go and fight on England's behalf, burning the enemy's cities and making them pay tribute to England and admit England to be the absolute ruler of the world. Reading this from a modern point of view can be problematic. Cavendish never questions England's divine right to rule over other nations and she sees no problem with subsuming the various religions of utopia under the Christian religion. Geraldine Wagner believes that colonialist ideas are a failing of early utopias, and in particular in Cavendish's work:

[T]his [The Blazing World] utopian experiment fails because early modern utopian discourse itself does not escape implication in conservative, even oppressive, ideologies. From the moment she sets foot in the Blazing World, she espouses colonialist notions of self and Other that compromise the integrity of the Empress's self-realization in this section (Wagner, 2003: 6).

On the other hand, while the novel suffers from certain problems, it works much better when viewed as a feminist text. Kate Lilley sees it as a feminist story, describing it as ‘a narrative of the liberty of the female soul and the emancipatory possibilities of utopian speculation and writing specifically for women’ (Lilley: xxv). Cavendish’s text offers emancipatory possibilities for women in the fact that she offers alternative subject positions for women to inhabit. She is an Empress, a scholar, and a warrior queen.

A. L. Morton is highly critical of Cavendish’s work, describing *The Blazing World* as ‘a wholly reactionary utopia, monarchical and anti-scientific’ (Morton, 1952: 98). There is some evidence for this point of view. However, the other criticisms that he makes of her work are far less justifiable. He continues by describing *The Blazing World* as ‘trivial’, ‘naïve’, and ‘child-like’ (Morton, 1952: 98). In particular he refers to the autobiographical elements in the novel and sees the story as being a compensation for the treatment of Cavendish and her husband in real life: ‘the role of fantasy as compensation for defeat is seen at its clearest’ (Morton, 152: 98). The ‘defeat’ refers to the exile of the Marquis of Newcastle after the execution of Charles 1 in 1649. Morton sees Cavendish as writing the story in order to air her own personal grievances:

[R]idiculed by the raffish, bankrupt Court that surrounded Charles abroad as an eccentric, frumpish blue-stockings, [she] crowned herself Empress of a Never-never World, covered herself with a blaze of diamonds and mocked or exiled all those whom she hated or could not understand (Morton, 1952: 99).

The story undeniably has autobiographical elements. It contains the character of the Duchess of Newcastle and describes the real situation the Duchess and her husband found themselves in during exile, but the appearance of these characters is not

detrimental to the overall story. The story not only contains autobiographical elements, but also fantastical, romantic, and philosophical elements as well. Cavendish herself described the story as a mix of genres ‘the first part whereof is romantical, the second philosophical, and the third is merely fancy, or (as I may call it) fantastical’ (Cavendish, 1992: 124). In more recent times, the mixing of genres has been identified as a particular strength of women’s fiction and, as mentioned previously, Barr used the term ‘feminist fabulation’, a term meaning where ‘generic specificity has been abandoned in favour of an umbrella term for describing overlapping genres’ (Wolmark, 1994: 24). Although this term does not help in terms of genre classifications it at least provides a way to talk about women’s fantastic fiction without denigrating women’s experimentation with mixing genres.

To return to Morton’s criticism, he is not the first to comment negatively on the personal elements of Cavendish’s life in the story. Frank E. Manuel and Fritz Manuel, relatively harshly, write that it is ‘so private’ that it ‘borders on schizophrenia’ (Wagner: 2003: 22). Cavendish’s contemporary Dorothy Osborne stated, on the publication of Cavendish’s first book, ‘there are many soberer people in Bedlam; I’ll swear her friends are much to blame to let her go abroad’ (Lilley, 1994: xiii). The accusations of madness were only equalled by the idea that Cavendish’s writings were not her own. Cavendish was aware of the accusations against her and she refuted the idea that ‘my writings are none of my own’ (Lilley, 1994: xiii) and challenged her critics:

[I]f they will not believe my books are my own, let them search the author or authoress: but I am confident that they will do like Drake, who went so far about, until he came to the place he first set out at (Lilley, 1994: xiii).

It may be the negative reactions to Cavendish's work which led writers like Virginia Woolf, in *A Room of One's Own* (1929), and Joanna Russ, in *How to Suppress Women's Writing* (1984) to defend her. Woolf symbolically shook her head at the way Cavendish was dismissed, she was seen by Cavendish's contemporaries as frittering 'her time away scribbling nonsense' and as a consequence of this she was plunged 'ever deeper into obscurity and folly' (Russ, 1984: 55). Russ comments that, 'our poor Duchess of Newcastle, blamed for not having written her work herself, is also judged mad for having written it' (Russ, 1984: 25). Cavendish's legacy was that she was the first woman to both write a utopian story and to have a central woman protagonist in her utopia. The Empress of her blazing world offered different subject positions for women. She was also the first woman of utopian fiction to be ridiculed in literary criticism for her work and to be dismissed. The rest of the seventeenth century is unremarkable in terms of women writing utopia. It was not until the eighteenth century that women were active again in writing utopias.

Utopian women writers of the eighteenth century are unique in the tradition of women writing utopia because they informed each other's work in a way that had not been seen previously. According to Alessa Johns, women such as Mary Astell, Sarah Fielding, Sarah Scott, and Mary Hamilton, 'inspired and influenced each other' (Johns, 2003: 2). However, these women again have been 'bypassed by critics in favor of better-known but less reformist contributions' (Johns, 2003: 3). Johns identifies one reason in particular why these writers and their works have been ignored. She points to the fact that these novels are not about the socialisation of a central woman character as was typical of most fiction by women at the time. Their narratives featured many women characters and they focussed on how these women interacted with each other, often in all female communities. Sarah Robinson Scott's *Millennium Hall* (1762) is one of the

earliest examples of this type of utopia. The all-female community is very important because it creates a space for women, as Sarah Lefanu comments:

A separatist world allows women physical freedom, access to the public world, and the freedom to express love for other women. All these are felt as a lack by women in the real world (Lefanu, 1988: 55).

The portrayal of an all-female community is also an attempt to show that women are just as capable of organising society as men. In opposition to this, male writers of utopia have tended to use the all-female community to prove that women are incapable of living without men to organise them. Nicholls recognises the tradition of the all-female community in utopia but he is also keen to point out that not all stories with all-female societies are feminist. In particular, he refers to Walter Besant's *The Revolt of Man* (1882) and Robert W. Chambers' *The Gay Rebellion* (1913). The latter book is a collection of short stories which show women being unable to cope on their own: it is a 'story of a revolt of women who find they cannot cope, reform, and get married like good girls' (Nicholls, 1979: 661). This is significantly different from all-women societies in utopias written by women who can clearly cope on their own.

There is a question of whether Scott's work is a utopia or not. James Cruise considers the question and ultimately views it as a non-utopian text. However, other critics, such as Jane Spencer, see it as a utopia (Spencer, 1985: xi). The confusion is not so difficult to understand. For one, there is the setting; *Millennium Hall* is not set in some future place and it is not reached after an imaginary voyage. It is set in an English village. In the story Sir George Ellison, with his travelling companion, Mr Lamont, break down near a great house, it starts to rain and the ladies of this house invite them in to take

shelter. Ellison discovers that one of the women who live in the house is in fact his cousin, Mrs Maynard, and the two men are invited to stay at the house. During the visit Mrs Maynard shows them around the house and the surrounding area. Interspersed with this narrative Mrs Maynard recounts the histories of the individual women who live in the house. These histories are contrasted with the lives that the women now live at Millennium Hall. The Hall functions as the alternatively 'other' good place; it is a place where the women live better lives and organise their society in a better way. They have also arranged the surrounding village in a way that makes life much easier for the inhabitants that live there. They have set up another Hall for women, like themselves, who find themselves at a disadvantage in society because of their sex. Finally, they provide a haven for disabled and so-called deformed human beings. In this way *Millennium Hall* can be classified as a utopia. However, it is a utopia in the tradition of eighteenth century women's utopias which are more concerned with the partial vision of utopia which implies a 'gradual utopian process' (Johns, 2003: 2). This is particularly reinforced in Scott's story because the description of this better 'heavenly society' (Scott, 1986: 200) is placed in dialogue with the women's individual personal histories which originally led them to create this new society.

In the story Millennium Hall is alternatively called an 'earthly paradise' (Scott, 1986: 6) 'an asylum' (Scott, 1986: 19) and 'a heaven' (Scott, 1986: 70). It is simultaneously a better society than the one the women have left behind and a haven from that place. It is a space that women have set up in order to give opportunities to other women and other classes. The asylum aspect is particularly interesting. The word is used in relation to people described as 'monsters', who have their own enclosure in the grounds of Millennium Hall, an enclosure not meant to keep them in but to keep people out. These are physically deformed people, including ex-circus people, who have taken refuge

here. However, the position of the people termed ‘monster’ could just as well apply to the position of the women who have taken refuge from the world of men. Linda Dunne also connects the ‘monsters’ and the women: ‘The similarities between the exploitation of the “monsters” and the economic situations of women are made fairly obvious’ (Dunne, 1994: 67).

One of the main themes of the book is Christian charity and the work of the ladies of Millennium Hall is based on this principle. Christian charity is something Scott tried to implement in her life. Scott was born Sarah Robinson in 1723 and later in life she married George Lewis Scott in 1751. The marriage did not last and in 1752 they separated. After her marriage failed Sarah Scott lived with Lady Barbara Montagu in Bath and the two women engaged in charity work. The two women lived a life of ‘piety, charity and friendship’ (Spencer, 1985: ix). The friendship and charity work of the two women is reflected in the novel.

Although *Millennium Hall* was published in Britain in 1762 and Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s *Herland* was published in America in 1915 the two books share similarities of plot and narrative style. *Herland* is an important utopian novel. Both novels feature an all-female community, and both have male narrators who come and visit them. The narrator in utopia is a very important plot feature and the male narrator coming into a female community is a particular plot device of women’s utopias. In both novels there is more than one man and they both interact with the community of women in different ways. In *Millennium Hall* the interaction is interesting because through the dialogue between the men and women the men’s assumptions about women and their position in society is challenged. In *Herland* there is much more interaction, and disagreement, between the narrator and the inhabitants of utopia. The men do not just listen and

engage in dialogue with the women but approach the women with all the preconceptions of their own community. The narrator's role traditionally is to question and listen to and understand this new world. In *Herland*, however, the male visitors' preconceptions of women are biased and it creates barriers to understanding. Chris Ferns, writing on *Herland*, picks up on the importance of the gender of the narrator/ visitor. First, he points out that 'the visit to utopia tends to impose passivity on the visitor', and that while the form is 'ostensibly dialogic in format, [it] is actually monologic in effect' (Ferns, 1999: 178). However, in *Herland* this is not the case as the visitors are really the 'other' in the dialogue between genders, and the story focuses far more on the interactions between the inhabitants and visitors:

Gilman devotes far less space than usual to direct disquisitions on the wonders of utopia, and far more to the reactions of the visitors to what they experience, while at the same time exploiting the difference in gender to sharpen the contrast between their perspective and that of the inhabitants (Ferns, 1999: 178)

Nineteenth century women's utopias are seen as being more conservative than those of the men (Albinski, 1988: 17). This is because rather than challenging traditional structures in society they aimed instead to place women in those structures. Thus, you have Lady Florence's *Gloriana* (1890) whose protagonist, rather than aiming to change political structures, working within those structures. The first half of the twentieth century was prolific in the output of utopias, in particular in the sub-category of dystopias. These were responses to immense political and social changes in society, including the First World War, and the revolution in Russia, and changes in class and women's positions. In the 1920s Charlotte Haldane wrote the utopian novel *Man's*

World, which has two important themes, science and motherhood. To date this novel has not been republished since 1926.

Man's World is the story of a brother and sister, Christopher and Nicolette, who live in a scientific utopian society; the story charts the choices they have to make as they grow up. It is an interesting novel, not least because of the disputes among critics as to whether it is a utopia, anti-utopia, or dystopia. The title refers to the fact that this new society is man's world, as opposed to god's world. This is a society that celebrates science and has rejected religion. Christopher is not interested in science and sees an alternative in religious feeling, however, this is strictly forbidden. His sister Nicolette's dilemma is different: she has to choose between being a mother and having a career. This is a central theme in the novel and one of the main points is that women cannot have both. The novel advocates that the most important role a woman can have is to be a mother, a full-time occupation that excludes any other work. Women who are judged not suitable to be mothers are free to take employment elsewhere, but the value of that work pales in comparison with the supremely important task of creating life. The women with careers who either chose not to be mothers, or were regarded as unsuitable to be mothers, end up feeling they have missed out on something by not being a mother. This can be seen with the character of Christopher and Nicolette's Aunt, Emmeline, whose maternal instincts are directed instead to her niece and nephew: 'Her procreative instincts had been sublimated. Now, in early middle age, their entire gratification came from the contemplation of eager, upturned child faces' (Haldane, 1926: 24).

Haldane had very strong views on the role of motherhood. In the novel there are certain women who should be mothers, and women who should not, 'only those mothers who possessed certain specific qualities were chosen as teachers for the young' (Albinski,

1988: 81). Elizabeth Russell states that the women in this novel are victims of the dominant ideology, however, this needs to be qualified (Russell, 1991). Women are not victims of biology in this novel; they have options beyond that of being mothers. Men are more interested in their scientific experiments than controlling women's reproduction and so the women have control over their own and other women's reproduction. The novel seems to suggest that if women did have control over their own reproduction this is the way they would control it. There is a maternal tradition in the text of women raising their daughters to be mothers. Although it is never made explicit that women cannot participate in scientific endeavours it is the men who are shown predominantly to do so. The novel argues for men and women not being equal, as in women should be equally able to perform scientific experiments, but women are equal in their different capacity as mothers. Women control the reproduction of other women's lives; they form the panels that decide whether a woman needs to be sterilized, believing that for the good of society only certain women who have the ability to be mothers should have children. From a modern perspective this does not sound very liberating for women, and yet, Haldane is presenting women being empowered in new and different ways, maybe not necessarily feminist though.

Russell read the title of this book as being 'man's world', as opposed to man and woman's world; however, we cannot count the novel as feminist on just the title because there is strong evidence in the novel that Haldane meant the title to refer to the fact that this is man's world not opposed to woman's but opposed to god's world. This is a world where science is the key and religion has been rejected. Haldane's ideas on motherhood as a career were unorthodox but from a modern perspective her ideas seem to restrict women's options so that they are tied to their reproductive function. Russell states that '[a]s the title of her novel suggests, the future for women in a woman's world

is grim' (Russell, 1991: 16). However, for Haldane, the idea of women controlling their reproduction provided a certain amount of liberation.

There are problems with retrospectively establishing a tradition and that is because of modern preconceptions. *Man's World* has been called an ambiguous text, alternatively called a '[s]atire of the future scientific state' and 'one of the least satirical modern utopias', a 'eugenic dystopia' and a 'eutopia' (Albinski, 1988: 79-80). The ambiguity centres on the problem of interpretation. Elizabeth Russell quite clearly views it as a dystopia. However, as Nan Bowman Albinski has convincingly demonstrated, there is evidence that Haldane and contemporary critics were in no doubt that the story was a utopia. Albinski points out that on the dust jacket of a later book by Haldane it is described as 'a romance of the future [...] brimful of new and exciting ideas regarding the future of the human race' praising it as a 'prophecy' and 'a comprehensive survey of [modern woman's] ideals' (Albinski, 1988: 80). Contemporary reviews by *Labour Magazine*, *Scientific Worker* and *Berliner Tageblatt* support this view (Albinski, 1988: 80).

Haldane's husband was geneticist J.B.S Haldane, whose sister was Naomi Mitchison. He wrote *Daedalus* (1924) which was a defence of 'the future role of science' (Albinski, 1988: 88). It was written in reply to Bertrand Russell's *Icarus* (1924) (Albinski, 1988: 88). This is interesting because of the fact that critics, such as Richard Gerber, see a conflict between religion and science in the novel: 'a genuine conflict arises between the new science and the imaginative religious man' (Albinski, 1988: 80). Science questions religion in the novel and it also offers potential advantages to women. In the novel women have control of their reproduction, in particular control over the sex of the child, through scientific intervention. It was a male scientist who discovered how

it was possible to choose the sex of a baby in the womb but in the future women control the technology. The issue of science and reproduction is an important one and it comes up again and again in women's utopias; it is an important issue for women. The most noteworthy factor is the way the relationship between women and science is viewed in dystopia and utopia. In dystopias science is often used to control women and their reproduction, whereas in utopias, particularly utopias around the second wave of feminism, it is often used to free women from their reproductive role. Russell describes Haldane's story as a dystopia and she compares the fictional worlds of *Man's World* and *Swastika Night*: 'The women in these worlds have been reduced to their biological function and it is this alone that gives them a social identity' (Russell, 1991: 15). However, *Man's World* would be better compared to *Herland*, as in both novels it is the women who define their social identity solely through motherhood.

The most significant decade for writers of dystopia in the first half of the twentieth century was the 1930s, a period characterised by the threat of fascism. The interwar period was a time of great political upheaval and this is reflected in both men and women's utopias of the time. However, women were not encouraged to include feminist interests in their works; these were considered of secondary importance. The biggest political threat was felt to be fascism and it was seen to be imperative that it be fought by men and women together, so that 'feminist ideas had fallen out of favour with many anti-intellectuals in Britain during the 1930s' (Joannou, 1999: 139). Women writers were often criticised for placing their feminist concerns ahead of more seemingly important political issues. This criticism was in particular levelled at Naomi Mitchison who struggled to get her dystopian novel *We Have Been Warned* (1936) published. This novel is a 'socialist utopia by a woman' and is Mitchison's 'fictionalised account of her visit to Soviet Russia' (Albinski, 1988: 76). The novel deals with the themes of women

and fertility, the ‘freeing [of] reproductive control through liberalisation of birth control and abortion laws’ (Albinski, 1988: 77). It was written in 1932 but only published in 1936, and to date it has not been republished. Publishers felt ‘that women’s issues in the novel should have taken second place to those of class’ (Lassner, 1998: 72).

In particular with the subject of fascism women writers were often criticised for placing the main emphasis on women’s issues and perhaps this was the reason the focus on gender is remarkably understated in Storm Jameson’s *In the Second Year* (1936), despite the fact that Jameson was very much interested in women’s issues. This novel imagines Britain under the rule of a fascist dictatorship. The title refers to the fact that it is the second year in power. This is not an arbitrary choice however. There are many parallels in the novel with the second year of Hitler’s reign in Germany, in particular the purges of 1934. In contrast to this is Burdekin’s *Swastika Night* (1937), which is the most obviously feminist anti-fascist novel of this period. The treatment of women in this novel, their powerlessness in a totalitarian regime, is used to illustrate the gendered nature of fascism itself, and the necessity of recognising this important aspect of fascism.

It is from the 1960s onwards that science and utopian fiction by women flourished.

Initially the positive ‘eutopian’ type of fiction predominated:

[T]he utopian novels of the 1970s provided the reader with an experience, however limited, of what a better world, beyond sexual hierarchy and domination, might look and feel like (Fitting, 1990: 142).

Joanna Russ' *The Female Man* (1975) and Suzy McKee Charnas' *Motherlines* (1978) are just a few examples of this development. Fitting comments, however, on the fact that this trend did not last. Women turned to dystopian fiction and their works, such as Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* (1986) offered 'depressing images of a brutal reestablishment of capitalist patriarchy' (Fitting, 1990: 142). The early utopias of the 1970s were full of hope for a future without gender inequality. The later dystopias were responding to the backlash against women and their fight for equal rights.

Gender, Sexuality and Other Common Themes

Before moving on to chapter one and exploring each of the novels individually it is worthwhile pausing to consider common themes that run throughout all the novels. Each of the chapters in this thesis offers a different perspective on the utopian genre. However, there are themes and strategies that are common to all the texts. The most obvious theme that appears in all of her works (even including her non-utopian novels) is that of gender. Her novels often feature the representation of characters that have different gendered/sexual identity, such as female/male inverts and androgynous characters. At first glance, her ideas about sex and gender seem blurred, however it must be remembered that Burdekin was writing before the term 'gender' was even developed as a concept. Burdekin shows an awareness of theories of sexuality common to the time she was writing in and her novels show a clear engagement with the early work on sexuality by sexologists such as Edward Carpenter and Karl Heinrich Ulrichs. On the other hand, in many ways Burdekin can be seen as a precursor of second wave feminism. She explores ideas about the objectification of women and provides an analysis of gender power relationships that are ahead of her time. It can be speculated that this aspect of her writing is one of the reasons her work fell into obscurity. She was

born before her time. This included an impressive foresightedness about the rise of fascism and the relationship between gender and fascism.

Other common threads in her utopian visions include the representation of societies resembling a medieval-style environment and an anti-industrialisation approach. For example, *The Rebel Passion* sees working life improved so that a factory system, based on the production line, is replaced with a better medieval style guild system. Religion is another subject that appears frequently. Each of the texts under discussion in this thesis is fiercely critical of church institutions. This does not mean, however, that Burdekin believes that religion should be abolished in a utopian society. She believes the religion of utopia should be Christian, but her own re-invented version of Christianity.

All Burdekin's texts feature an over-dependence on monologue or dialogue, but this is expected given the genre she is writing in. Utopian fiction tends to be highly descriptive and, for example, conversations between native characters of utopian societies and visiting protagonists are often the principle way in which information about the utopian society is gained. This leads to novels that lack a great deal of narrative drive and they tend, in part, to resemble essays.

Historical change and human evolution are common threads in all of the texts.

Each of Burdekin's novels represents utopian societies that have developed over long periods of time, in some cases the society is set hundreds of years in the future (*Swastika Night*) and sometimes it takes thousands of years to reach the utopian existence (*The End of this Day's Business*). Her ideas about human evolution are clearly influenced by the theories of Charles Darwin as she attempts to envision people becoming more evolved and enlightened individuals. However, she also taps into late-

Victorian anxieties about degeneration, and sees that just as humanity is capable of evolving into something better it could just as easily degenerate into something worse.

Chapter One:

The Rebel Passion

Introduction

Burdekin's *The Rebel Passion* (1929) is a remarkable example of a utopian text. It is a powerful, experimental tale that pushes the boundaries of gender and genre. It was also this book that Burdekin identified as the one that signalled her arrival into the literary world as a mature writer. She considered that it marked her transition from her youthful 'baby books' to her more mature works (Patai, 1989: 164). There is no evidence why she thought this but it can be speculated that it is because this novel marked the beginning of her foray into visualising utopian realities.

The Rebel Passion is, in fact, Burdekin's first utopian text. Her previous novels had featured various utopian conventions but could not yet be described as utopian texts. Out of her previous five novels, three were firmly written in the realist genre (*Anna Colquhoun* (1922), *A Reasonable Hope* (1924), and the 1927 novel *Quiet Ways*) while *The Burning Ring* (1927) and *The Children's Country* (1929) show her broadening out and featuring more fantastical elements. *The Children's Country* (written and entitled *St John's Eve* in 1927 and published in America in 1929 as *The Children's Country*), firmly belongs to the fantasy genre but nevertheless does envision alternative societies. In the text, two human children visit a fairy-tale-like land in which co-exist a country of children and a country of adults and through the human children's interaction with these different societies social issues, in particular gender roles, are explored. The contrast of these different societies presents the opportunity to critique contemporary social issues

from Burdekin's own time. This method of critique is similar to the process in which utopian realities are contrasted with the reader's own time. However, what sets this novel apart from novels belonging to the utopian genre is that these societies, in *The Children's Country*, have fantastical origins and are not achieved through human effort, unlike the societies of utopian realities.

Burdekin's prior efforts are leading up to the point of writing a full novel in the utopian genre. It did not necessarily have to follow that she would write a eutopian or positive utopian text. However, *The Rebel Passion* is a novel filled with a sense of hope and optimism about what may happen in the future. Significantly, it is the first and only instance where she represents a truly eutopian or positive utopian society; her later texts would feature much darker realities. Novels like *The End of this Day's Business* (written in 1935) and *Swastika Night* (1937) show Burdekin's disillusionment with the idea that society could progress to become a better place to live. In these novels it is seen that society might just as easily regress to almost nightmare existences.

This chapter will look at the features in the novel typical of the utopian genre and will also consider how Burdekin uniquely adapts the genre for her own purpose. Section one will attempt to give a flavour of the novel: including a summary of the text, consideration of the characters, an overview of the plot, and an exploration of the unique settings in terms of both time and place. In addition, the main theme of the novel will be introduced, which, in simple terms, is the ability or lack of ability to feel 'pity'. Burdekin uses this idea of feeling pity for someone else, a feeling the reader better understands as an empathic sentiment, as a marker of utopian character. The more someone is able to feel empathy for their fellow human beings then the more they are achieving a better version of humanity. In addition, this inability to feel 'pity' for others

is what Burdekin perceives as the cause of many problems in society. For example, the inability of those in positions of power to feel empathy for those who are subservient to them subsequently leads to great ‘cruelty’. The narrative perspective will be explored, as will the peculiar use of vocabulary, which will include looking at her choice of language and her use and adaptation of the meaning of particular words, such as ‘pity’, ‘soul’, and ‘cruelty’. After the summary the context to the novel will be provided, including critical reception and historical context.

In section two, *The Rebel Passion* will be considered in terms of the more typical themes and conventions of the utopian text. For example, the chapter will look at the issue of class and the influence of socialist, particular guild socialist, theories.

Burdekin’s unique approach to religion and history is also examined. Following on from this, section three will tackle the issue of women’s roles, and the formulation of gender and sexuality. This will draw on the work of the sexologists, such as Karl Heinrich Ulrichs, to understand the way that Burdekin was theorising about gender and sexuality. Finally, section four reflects on aspects that would be considered problematic for today’s reader, such as the subject of eugenics and the representation of an ‘all-white’ utopia. The latter is jarring for a modern reader more familiar with the idea of a multi-cultural society.

Section 1

Summary of the Text

The plot of *The Rebel Passion* seems, at first glance, to be a simple one. It starts with a twelfth-century monk, named Giraldus, being visited in his monastic cell by a ‘Child

from God' and shown a series of visions, which he writes down. The visions start when human life was merely 'slime' crawling across the earth (Burdekin, 1929: 31). Giraldus is taken on a whistle-stop ride through history, stopping off at various different places in order for Burdekin to make some very particular points about how society operates and is organised. The visions include representations of the ancient world, the French Revolution, industrialised England, and the First World War in Europe. Giraldus is shown times and places where there has been oppression, on the grounds of class, race, gender and religion. The differing historical locations described in the first section of the book serve as a contrast with the future 'ideal' society that is seen later on, when these oppressions no longer exist.

Visions of the reader's historical past, which to Giraldus is the future, are portrayed in the novel, and then it moves beyond the contemporary reader's own time (the interwar period) to successive visions showing images of an improving society, one that is progressing towards a utopian ideal. It is progressing in two ways. The first way is through social attitudes and legal reforms. People's attitudes towards the church, for example, have changed, so that particular institution no longer has the power to affect people's lives. This forms a wider argument, by Burdekin, against the practices of the church. Legal reforms include the protection of women's rights. The point is made that not only are people's lives improved moving forward into the future but, significantly, women's lives are improved. The other improvement has to do with the character of people. The evolution of the human race is shown to have developed so that people have become 'better' and more humane. This is shown through the concept of the brightness of people's souls; the brighter the soul the better the person. As society changes and reforms are made people's souls also grow to reflect their better character.

Not long before the end of the text Giraldus visits a version of a utopian society. It is set an unspecified number of years in the future, but clearly a significant time ahead of the reader's own. Dates are vague after the description of World War Two. In his visions Giraldus is shown various countries, but the ultimate location of the future utopian society is clearly identified as being England. Giraldus spends some time exploring this society. He journeys, by foot, towards Glastonbury to listen to the music in church. After this vision the Child shows Giraldus one final incarnation of society. The Child takes Giraldus to a society where people are so perfected that their souls shine brightly. The story ends with Giraldus, back in the monastery, hiding the writings he has made of the Child's visits. The more complex aspects of the story come from looking closely at the historical periods that Burdekin has chosen to focus on in her novel and her identification of those aspects of human society that need improvement.

Setting

The settings in the novel are diverse in time and place. The opening of the novel is Giraldus' own time, the 'seventh year of the reign of King Stephen' (Burdekin, 1929: 20). The last Norman king to rule in England, King Stephen reigned from 1135 until 1154. This places the year as 1142. The fact that Giraldus does not state the specific date could be a convention or it could be an acknowledgement of a lack of accuracy retaining to dates at this time. The date of 1142 is less than a hundred years since the Norman Conquest and, as the novel shows, there is still a lot of tension between the ruling Normans and the subordinate Saxons. In addition, Burdekin also emphasises that in this society women have no power and are subject to the will of fathers and husbands. This setting is the first instance of the reader encountering a society chosen, in

particular, for the division of society along the lines of power, contrasting the powerful and powerless.

As mentioned above, the visions are presented in a linear fashion, and start with life beginning on earth: ‘This vision was of the earth alone by itself [...] and on its surface was slime [...] and things began to move and crawl in the slime’ (Burdekin, 1929: 31). The purpose of beginning at this point is that this is part of a larger theme that runs through the novel of challenging ideas about religion. At this point in particular Burdekin is challenging views about the beginning of life on the planet. The Christian version of the Book of Genesis had suffered a major challenge in the nineteenth century by the work of Charles Darwin and his theories of evolution. Giraldu’s visions substantiate the view of the creation of life proposed by Darwin rather than the traditional Christian one. This is not to say, however, that Burdekin sees theories of evolution as being incompatible with religion and the idea of God creating the universe. Burdekin’s criticisms of the church and religion will be returned to later in this chapter, as will the influence of Darwin’s theories in this novel.

Subsequent to this the vision moves to the ancient world and Giraldu is shown ancient Egypt, Athens and Rome. In the former, the might of the Egyptians is contrasted with the powerlessness of the Israelites. The latter two visions focus on the relationship between the citizens and the slaves of those cities. The Child makes the point to Giraldu that although these societies are admired in fact they are built on – as Burdekin puts it – great ‘cruelty’:

‘Giraldu, now thou hast seen three of the greatest civilizations of the world, and three nations which have grown to the full stature of man’s brain. But these

powers that are built on the bones and blood of slaves are not pleasing to God'
(Burdekin, 1929: 58).

Other historical periods that are referred to are the Sack of Magdeburg, the 1789 French Revolution, slavery in America in the nineteenth century and the arrival of Abraham Lincoln, the rise of industrialisation, and the First World War. The Sack of Magdeburg took place from 1630-31 and is of interest because of the brutality of the soldiers. The siege of Magdeburg is notable for the massacre of the civilian population by the conquering soldiers. The different historical time periods and places continue on this particular theme; Burdekin opts to show time periods and situations where there is conflict between a person or groups of people with power and those without power. This power relationship may be based on a number of factors, including the treatment of individuals or groups with the status of slaves (shown in the ancient world), of the lower classes (seen in the industrial era), and enemy non-combatants (shown at different points in wartime). The subordinate position of women in society is a continuing theme throughout all the time periods. The conflict between those who have power and their subordinates is shown from the start. All the visions reveal to Giraldus times of oppression and highlight to this character that people's behaviour is likely to be because of a lack of empathy for others. A final point to be made regarding setting is the contrast between the confined, cramped conditions that Giraldus is subject to in the monastery with the freedom that he experiences from travelling the English countryside in the future society. It is a contrast that is symbolic of the freedom in the future and the restrictions of the past. The historical journey that Giraldus takes to utopia has been discussed in detail and so the next step is to consider how the further evolved utopian society is visualised

In contrast to the previous centuries that Giraldus has visited, where there had been mass inequality, the future utopian society is based on egalitarian principles; all individuals in society are equal and have equal opportunity to participate in all aspects of society. People live simple lives, ‘these hard wooden shelves and thin pallets made me understand that indeed luxury had passed away’ (Burdekin, 1929: 278). They wear simple clothes made from linen or wool. They make and drink their own ale (Burdekin, 1929: 297). This basic existence is not down to necessity, not the result of a lack of resources. No, ‘luxury’ has passed away because it leads to inequality. People, it is suggested, are happier when they have just enough of the necessities of life but no more. Burdekin’s answer to the problem of poverty is the eradication of luxury. The idea of everyone equally living a life of luxury in this society is not even presented as an option. They have simple living conditions and they also have very simple entertainments: their ‘pleasures were music, books (which were sent out from the writing-machines by the wagon load), dancing, games and riding’ (Burdekin, 1929: 297).

The religion of the future is monotheistic. It is a religion based on Christian morals. The people of the future are exceedingly moral and always desire ‘to live in a Christian and pure way’ (Burdekin, 1929: 284). However, it must be noted that the Christian life in the future is one based on redefined religion. ‘Pure’ does not necessarily mean puritanical. The novel has earlier criticised Puritanism. These inhabitants live a Christian life but one that is also kind, ‘they will make it as easy as possible, not as difficult’ (Burdekin, 1929: 284). The practice of religion has also undergone a radical change. Priests, of both sexes, go out amongst the people and give blessings to people they meet on their travels. The people are happy to take blessings from the priests but are also not afraid to challenge corrupt religious men and women. They also do not

believe that the priests are there to mediate an individual's relationship to god. This is an important point because it puts the control in the hands of individuals and not priests. Priests cannot get members of the population to behave, act, or worship in set ways and threaten them with hell and damnation if they do not comply.

The future utopian society is a pastoral place. The factories and cities of industrial Britain have been left far behind and England seems to have returned to an idealised version of the middle ages, with an emphasis on craftsmanship. During his time in the future Giraldus spends his time travelling from place to place by walking on make-shift roads alongside of fields. The impression given is of open countryside. There is a return to crafting for their own needs: 'I saw that all these people must make their own clothes' (Burdekin, 1929: 288). The people of this utopian society are much healthier than in previous societies, and are growing increasingly healthy. They take care of the body so that 'it may be healthy and as beautiful as it can be' (Burdekin, 1929: 280). The pace of life in the utopian society is much more relaxed than in previous visions. People take their time over things, no one 'ever hurries now unless he must, and if he must then he will go in one of the physicians' flying boats, and leap across England in half an hour. But these people are too wise to think speed a good thing in itself' (Burdekin, 1929: 268). The 'flying boats' are intriguing because it is one of the few instances when the use of technology is mentioned. This is a society that uses technology sparingly. This is a reflection on previous visions when technology was described as controlling people's lives. In the industrial era individuals' lives were controlled by machines which divorced them from the fruits of their labour. In contrast, this society has turned to a medieval guild type system.

The governing of society is done entirely by the Guilds, 'as it had been for over a thousand years, and certain men and women were paid by the Guilds to give their whole time to the affairs of government' (Burdekin, 1929: 297). The Guilds are organised along the lines of occupation. The Guild Parliament sits in London and meets infrequently. This suggests that local guilds are well organised to deal with things at a local level that national intervention is not a real necessity. Burdekin is making a point about national centralised government, that it is not adequate to meet the needs of society and must be rejected in favour of a localised system.

Characters

There are two main characters in *The Rebel Passion*: Giraldus and the Child of God. Other characters are mentioned briefly and depart quickly. The visions are, in effect, conversations between these two characters. The Child helps Giraldus understand the visions by providing context to the times and places he visits. Giraldus asks follow up questions, reflects on his experiences and manages to come to certain conclusions. Intriguingly within these conversations there are contained counterarguments to many ideas that may have been controversial at the time of Burdekin writing her text. For example, Giraldus learns of early forms of birth control, which 'enabled a man to lie with his wife and be certain that from the union would come no children' (Burdekin, 1929: 228). Giraldus' first response is one of abhorrence; he describes it as 'wicked and abominable' (Burdekin, 1929: 228). It can be supposed that Burdekin anticipated that this may be the response of many readers of her own time. However, the Child reasons with him and provides a counterargument to this response. The Child does not argue that the invention of birth control is a good thing but presents an alternative view and asks that Giraldus consider the situation rationally. Instead, he takes Giraldus to a

'labourer's cottage' and shows him a pregnant woman with ten children who has no pleasure in life and is worn down by drudgery. Her life, using Burdekin's would-be medieval terminology, is 'a cruelty' (Burdekin, 1929: 229). The Child shows Giraldus the response of the priests, which is described as being negative; they reject it as being irreligious. Giraldus, reasoning the matter through, comes to the conclusion that 'there is no worse sin than cruelty' (Burdekin, 1929: 231). The novel does not argue for or against birth control but, through the character of Giraldus, suggests that even if some view birth control as an evil, it is a better alternative to no birth control and a woman having a difficult life struggling to bring up too many children.

Giraldus is ideal as a protagonist of this tale because he is a conflicted character. He is uncertain and confused about class, sexuality, gender, and religion. Giraldus, as a Norman aristocrat, is part of the ruling elite. However, in contrast to his brother and father he refuses to exercise the power of his position and has instead become a humble monk. He observes the 'wrongs' of society without having the power to affect change and this makes him, at the beginning of the novel, despondent. He even intervenes in the attempted rape by his brother of a Saxon woman. His defence of this woman and women in general leads to him being outcast from his home to the monastery.

It is his exile from home, and the treatment by his family, that provides some insight into Giraldus' gendered character. His father and brother call him 'Woman' not only for his sympathetic attitude towards women but for his 'gentle' nature (Burdekin, 1929: 12). He is a man born, it is learned, with a woman's 'soul'. In an early vision the Child takes Giraldus to when he and his twin sister were born. When they were born, the Spirit of God crossed his hands when giving the two children their souls:

The boy was on the right hand of God, and the girl on the left. He crossed His hands, and breathed across His right hand towards the girl, and across His left towards the boy that was myself [...] So I was given a woman's soul and my sister the soul of a man (Burdekin, 1929: 64-65).

It is then suggested that this was the reason why Giralduus acted like a 'woman' and his sister acted like a 'man'. The consequence of this is that as a gendered character he does not fit into the patterns of rigid masculinity and femininity that would be acceptable of the period. In effect, he is an outcast. This scene has wider implications for Burdekin's argument about gender. Burdekin is, in effect, promoting the belief that people who are gendered differently are not aberrations of the normal pattern, but are part of god's design. In the future society, their dual nature sets them apart as being better because they can understand both male and female nature. This is a striking point to be making in interwar Britain and links with the ideas of the sexologists, which are discussed in further detail in another section. The idea of gender being determined by god conflicts with other perspectives Burdekin takes in other novels about the cultural construction of gender. If the pattern of gender identity is set by god then this presumes it is fixed. However, in novels like *Swastika Night*, ideas about male and female gendered identity are shown to be constructed by cultural factors and ultimately changeable. The reader cannot be too harsh with Burdekin though. Contradictions ultimately stem from her positive attempt to argue for a tolerant and non-judgemental approach to all people.

Giralduus' sexuality is also outside of the conventions of the cultural norms of society. Although it is not explicitly stated, it is heavily suggested that he has homosexual tendencies. He is described as having a strong, if vague, emotional bond with another monk at the monastery. English is comfortable in declaring Giralduus has a 'desire for a

fellow monk' (English, 2013: 106). The monk is Martin, formerly known as John de Crespigny. Early on in the book, Giraldus describes his life in the monastery and the importance of his friendship with Martin: 'I loved him, and to him only I told all that was in my heart' (Burdekin, 1929: 17). Giraldus may love Martin as a friend or he may love him as something more but the sentiment is deliberately vague. It does not suit Burdekin's purposes to have an openly homosexual protagonist.

Apart from class, gender and sexuality Giraldus is further conflicted by his place in organised religion. His idea of religion is gratitude for the creation of things in nature:

For Christ is in the fields and the forests, in the barley stalks and in the young green of beech leaves, in the autumn woods when the trees flame at sunset, in the spring flowers and the growing of the grass in springtime' (Burdekin, 1929: 16).

However, this attitude is not welcomed at the monastery. He is criticised by the Abbot for thinking 'too much upon the beauty of the earth and too little on the glory of heaven' (Burdekin, 1929: 18). Giraldus's view of religion and the Church's interpretation of religion is an uneasy match.

It is Giraldus' conflicted nature that makes him a particularly good choice of narrator. He is an outsider in his own society because of his attitude to class, his gendered character, his sexuality and his approach to religion. At the beginning of the book he is quite despondent over these issues. This contrasts with his feelings at the end of the book, after experiencing the future and the possibility of a utopian reality he feels a calm acceptance. He has seen a future where religion has been transformed and men with

different gendered natures or who exhibit other forms of sexuality find acceptance in society.

The Child is a spiritual guide, leading Giraldus through the visions. As a child, his character represents the idea of purity and innocence. His physical description is uncertain because he is described in religious rhetoric:

He was in the likeness of a human child of about ten years old, but in his countenance there was wisdom and no possibility of sin. He was very fair, a golden and white child like the lilies in the Cloister Garth, and his limbs and raiment shone with fire (Burdekin, 1929: 24).

The Child is a knowledgeable guide throughout the travels through history. He is a rational being that provides a contrast to the emotional turmoil that Giraldus often feels in response to some of the disturbing visions that feature scenes of war and poverty.

Dream Vision

The Rebel Passion is written in the style of a popular type of text of the Middle Ages and of medieval literature, the dream vision. The dream vision was a literary device that was used as framing narrative; however its popularity at this time has led to it also being considered as a literary genre. The form of the dream vision is described, by Stephen Russell, as follows:

At the simplest level, a dream vision is the first person account of a dream; the dream report is usually preceded by a prologue introducing the dreamer as a

character and often followed by an epilogue describing the dreamer's reawakening and recording the dream report in verse (Russell, 1988: 5)

In addition, although the content of the dreams may vary, during the dream there is usually 'conversation with one or more characters, sometimes real, sometimes allegorical' (Russell, 1988: 5). This is exactly the style used in Burdekin's text. *The Rebel Passion* is written in the form of first person narration and is the secretly written record of Giraldus' visions. At the start of the novel Giraldus explains that he is writing down his visions, Giraldus discusses his background, providing the reader with insight into his character. Next, he describes his visions, which are, in effect, conversations between Giraldus and the Child from God. The novel ends with Giraldus explaining that he will hide the visions in a nearby church. It is clear, then, that Burdekin was using the form of dream vision in her text. However, there is a deeper resonance with this genre in her work. This can be seen in the link with a particular type of this form, visions of heaven and hell.

There are numerous visions from the medieval period that deal with the subject of heaven, hell, and purgatory, with many purported to be actual visions that an individual, often a religious figure, for example a monk, have experienced (Gardiner, 1993: xvii). Eileen Gardiner makes some useful defining points in considering this type of text that can be used to better understand Burdekin's work. First, as mentioned, these are visions of heaven, hell, and purgatory, but the formulation of these visions can vary. There is not a specific place that is realised: 'when our visionary speaks of heaven, hell, or purgatory, we cannot limit our minds to fixed locations, easily definable and unambiguous' (Gardiner, 1993: xvii). In addition, Gardiner makes a distinction between the medieval view and the contemporary view of these places. She states the

contemporary view is of the three stages of heaven, purgatory, and hell. In contrast, the medieval view is much more layered, and it 'included various stages of paradise, segregated according to degree of the inhabitants' holiness' (Gardiner, 1993: xvii). The last point seems to reflect Giraldus' own journey through different time periods with people that have different degrees of 'pity' for their fellow human beings. It could be said that Giraldus' journey is mimicking that of the journey in a medieval vision. The various historical stages prior to reaching the future are representative of the stages of purgatory, through which humanity has to travel through to reach 'heaven', i.e. the utopian society.

This idea of journeying in a vision is another point of consideration. Gardiner sees these visions as almost being like 'voyages to the otherworld' (Gardiner, 1993: xxii). This is because the protagonist travels to a destination and is often physically present in the vision. This idea of journeying is common in utopian fiction, and features in different ways as a convention to bridge the distance between some sort of normal, recognisable reality and a utopian reality. However, Gardiner suggests that this journey in some dream visions is mixed with the notion of pilgrimage (Gardiner, 1993: xxiii). In *The Rebel Passion*, it could be considered that Giraldus is on pilgrimage to the future. He is travelling through the 'purgatory' stages of history to reach the pilgrimage destination of the utopian future.

The final point raised by Gardiner in relation to the medieval dream vision, which leads to a much greater issue for this text, is that of the problems of narrating the experience. The experiences undergone in the vision are profound but how does a writer describe something so out of normal experience: 'we must confront the problem of the visionary attempting to articulate an experience of the ineffable [...] language is a limited tool for

quantifying and qualifying experiences' (Gardiner, 1993: xxvi). Language is the only way to describe the experience and language is not adequate to describe it. This makes it doubly intriguing that Burdekin has chosen a medieval monk as narrator of her text because the language skills and understanding of this character are more limited than would be a character from the interwar period, Burdekin's own time. As a first person narrator, Giraldus is a flawed narrator, providing a limited perspective which, by its nature, means the character does not have the modern vocabulary to describe the things he sees. This is something that Burdekin has done deliberately and is far from a flaw of the text.

Many of the historical references in the novel are described in a noticeably vague way. Giraldus' position as narrator may explain the reason for this. Giraldus is a fallible narrator and is trying, in his limited twelfth-century perspective, to understand and describe scenes and ideas that are alien to him. One benefit of this, for Burdekin, is that sections that are weak on historical facts can be explained away because of the narrator's limited experience. There is a disjunction between what the narrator and reader understands and this prompts the reader to think about things that would usually be taken for granted. The reader understands more than Giraldus about the different time periods, but Giraldus' narration of these events is an alienating device that spurs the reading into considering it in a new light.

Narration is an important aspect of utopian fiction because the narrator, as discussed in the introduction, is used to mediate the experiences of the other, utopian, place. It is his or her purpose to describe this society to the reader and in his or her attempt to understand it the reader is also forced to think through ideas about how society works. The reader has become used to the narrative style in the first part of the book so that

when Giralduſ moves forward in time, and Burdekin is describing the aspects of a future ſociety, the reader is leſs likely to queſtion the way Giralduſ is describing the unuſual things that are preſented. It has become normaliſed.

The pseudo-naïve tone of the narration is reflected in the use of vocabulary. Giralduſ uses terms like ‘black ſtone’ to refer to coal and ‘Third Power’ when talking about electricity (Burdekin, 1929: 198). Giralduſ grapples with language to try to describe things that he is unfamiliar with. However, moſt important in Burdekin’s use of her very limited and fallible narrator is the effect it has on the redefinition of words and concepts. This includes the reformulation of the meaning of words ſuch as ‘ſoul’, ‘pity’, ‘cruelty’. The words pity and cruelty are often used in tandem in many different times to conſider ſituations where it is conſidered that there has been an injuſtice. For example, in the times of ſlavery, the fact of ſlavery (from Egypt to Rome to eighteenth century America), is conſidered in each caſe to be the cruelty, and is cauſed by the inability of the ſlaveholders to feel pity for the ſlaves. In this context, the word ſoul is used to reflect how much pity an individual is capable of feeling and this is done with the appearance of a light. Individuals who have little or no ability to feel pity have a dull light, figuring almoſt like an aura around them, and in individuals who feel a lot of pity, for example Abraham Lincoln, then he or ſhe has a bright ſhining light. This idea of pity ſeems to figure more as an empathic reſponse.

This treatment of key concepts, which have effectively been redefined by the end of the novel, is reſiſcent of Gertrude Stein and, along with the preſence of taboo ſubjects, ſuch as homosexuality and gender, introduces a moderniſt component. It is not ſurpriſing then that theſe important ſtyliſtic features alſo appear in the moderniſt *Proud Man*. For example, in that novel, Burdekin uses her narrator to highlight and reasſeſs

notions of ‘*normal*’ and ‘*natural*’ (Burdekin, 1993: 35). Burdekin’s ideas about the soul in *The Rebel Passion* are a precursor to the wider discussion about human identity in her later text.

It is worth highlighting the way that the visions appear in the novel. The visions are historical scenarios but they are not always presented in a straightforward fashion. Sometimes the vision is actually a discussion between Giraldus and the Child about what a particular time was like and there are no physical interactions with the society. The vision may show specific places, for example ancient Greece. On the other hand, the Child, in one vision, takes Giraldus to witness a conversation between two significant individuals, which is the conversation between Henry of Anjou and the contemporary Archbishop, to reflect the atmosphere of the time and the tension between governing state and state religion. Much later in the novel, at the point when Giraldus visits the nineteenth century and has a glimpse of the industrial era, Burdekin uses symbolic imagery. She uses a machine creature to symbolise the way lives are ‘eaten’ by working in such conditions:

He [the Child] made to appear out of the darkness on the wall of the cell a most horrible and ghastly devil with iron arms whirling and snatching, and iron teeth crunching, and a great pot of an iron belly. It has no life, and it was all made of hard cold metal, but as a line of men, women, and little children passed before it they were snatched by the iron arms, and ground up by the iron teeth, and dropped into the great pot of a stomach [...] I was thankful that this vision was a symbol (Burdekin, 1929: 173)

This is referred to as ‘the machine’ but in actual fact is an overall reference to technology and industrialisation. Burdekin is showing snapshots of historical moments and picking individual scenes out to present a very simplistic view of a situation, a very emotional view. This is in line with the simple figure of Giralduus as a fallible narrator. It is an oversimplified popular representation of history with a lack of accuracy with times and dates. The text does not assume a high knowledge of history of the reader but picks identifiable scenes and events which reside in popular memory. Burdekin’s purpose, though, is not to write a historical text. She is using key moments and key people to help highlight the main themes of religion, class, and gender.

It has already been mentioned that Burdekin reconfigures words like ‘pity’ in her novel. However, the particular idea of feeling pity or empathy is also a central theme of the text. The overriding utopian message of the novel is that a utopian character must have the ability to feel ‘pity’ for another individual, whether it be an adult or child. The word ‘pity’ is commonly used to describe the capacity to feel sorrow as a result of observing the suffering of others. The continuing narrative thread of Giralduus’ journey is how much or little the people of the time he is observing are able to feel pity for others. However, the point being made is more than just about the ability to feel pity, or what someone today would more readily describe as the ability to feel empathy. It is about the relationship between feeling and action, the implication being that the lack of this ability leads to the inaction of individuals in helping other human beings who are in reduced/unfavourable circumstances. In consequence, the unspoken assumption is that if people had the ability to feel ‘pity’ they would act to ease the suffering and sorrow of others. In this utopian concept of Burdekin’s novel this idea of ‘pity’ is seen specifically in the judgment of a character as being a ‘better’ person. The measurement of a ‘better’ person is seen by how much pity they are able to feel for another. If an individual can

see beyond their own drive to merely seek their own comforts to look to the needs of others then this, theoretically, makes for a better society and better individuals. It is the key concept of this utopian novel and the key feature of the utopian society Burdekin presents towards the end of the book.

The theme of pity links in a significant way to the title of the novel. Pity is, in fact, considered to be a 'rebel passion'. To understand what this means it is necessary to trace the opening quotation of the novel:

Pity is a rebel passion. Its hand is against the strong, against the organized force of society, against conventional sanctions and accepted Gods. It is the Kingdom of Heaven within us fighting against the brute power of the world (Burdekin, 1929: 7).

These words were written by the classical scholar Gilbert Murray (1866-1957) and were taken from the introductory note to his translation of the 1915 edition of Euripides' *The Trojan Women*. The play is set at the end of the Trojan War and deals with the merciless treatment, by the conquering Greeks, of the captive women of Troy. The Greeks have no pity for the women, who are victims of the war engaged in by the men of Troy and the men of Greece. Pity towards the women, as presented in the play, is unthinkable to the Greeks. Therefore to feel pity towards the women would be to 'rebel' against the conventional thoughts and feelings of the men in charge. The idea of it being a rebellion is because it goes against common beliefs and feelings; on the other hand, the result of a lack of empathy leads to behaviour that may be normalised in one society but morally abhorrent in others.

Burdekin does not, however, make clear the reasoning behind why people, as a society, develop the ability to feel pity or are lacking in that ability. Burdekin's main point, though, is that a better society is one that is inhabited by individuals who have the ability to feel empathy for their fellow human beings. Murray points out that being a rebel, by feeling empathy for others, is something that can be ascribed to the author of the tale, Euripides. His sympathetic attitudes towards the women in the play can be considered as rebellious. At the time of writing the play his own country, Athens, was in the hands of the War Party and his views about war go against the common feelings of the rest of the population (Murray, 1946: 6). His sympathy for the non-combatants, particularly women, provides a challenge to the notion that war and conquest should be celebrated as something great and noble.

Besides the matter of the title, Burdekin's novel links with Euripides' play in other important aspects. The first, of course, is the theme of people feeling 'pitiful' and not 'cruel' to the weak. The second point is that the weak are most often women, and women are most often victimised by men. Euripides appears as a character in Burdekin's text and is described in *The Rebel Passion* as writing about 'the sorrows of women in war' (Burdekin, 1929: 75). His ability to identify with the powerless position of women in society make him an ideal character for Giraldus to 'visit' on his tour through history because it demonstrates that even though Euripides' sympathetic attitude towards women in his own time was not appreciated, the fact that he has a bright 'soul' means that his character was more in line with those of the future 'better' society' than any other person of his own time.

The third, and particularly important point, is the idea of pity being something rebellious. Euripides' pity for the women of Troy goes against what the rest of his

society believes. During a trip to the past Giraldu visits ancient Greece and has a vision of Euripides. In Burdekin's novel he is portrayed as a man to be admired, because 'for pity's sake [he] would go clean contrary to his fellows and endure their enmity' (Burdekin, 1929: 55). Now, it has to be questioned why Euripides is able to feel this empathy for others and the rest of his fellow countrymen seemingly do not have the same ability. In some respects it seems, strangely, as if pity is a 'natural' and not a cultural factor. There is no other way to explain Euripides having a brightly lit soul. This is important because it goes to the heart of Burdekin's whole view of what is important in utopia. For her, the material conditions are secondary to good character. It is assumed that if the material conditions of a society are improved the people's character would naturally improve. Burdekin is putting forth the notion that people must change first. They will change through an evolutionary process whereby the people with bright 'souls' will multiple and become the citizens of the future.

As a side note, it is interesting that the author Vera Brittain similarly used the same words by Murray as the opening of her 1964 book *The Rebel Passion: A Short History of Some Pioneer Peacemakers*. The book is a history of the Fellowship of Reconciliation. This was an organisation founded by the Quakers in 1914; they were dissatisfied with the existing Peace Society in London and wanted to work out a new Christian pacifist philosophy. Brittain was similarly making the point that empathy for others, particularly an 'enemy', is not viewed as culturally acceptable.

Contemporary Reviews

Contemporary reviews of the novel in the 1920s also focussed on the theme of pity. *The Sociological Review* produced a short, but positive, review of the novel in which it

identified the 'rebel passion' as being pity and how the theme was present in the feelings of pity that the 'gentle monk of Glastonbury' felt when viewing different historical periods (1929: 362). The review found the novel notable because it stood out in contrast with other utopian texts of the time in that it has an 'ethico-social presentment' rather than just focussing on material conditions (*The Sociological Review*, 1929: 362). Indeed, this reiterates the point made above, that Burdekin is rare in that she often focuses on the people of utopia and their ethical and moral character in a way that other writers of utopia do not. This will be seen more clearly in the chapter on *Proud Man*.

A longer review by *The Times Literary Supplement* in the same year again talks about the theme of pity, amongst other factors, however it is more cautious in its appreciation of the text. It praises the end of the book, 'the last eighty pages, which described life in England in A.D. 2700' (*The Times Literary Supplement*, 1929: 312). This is the section of the book that shows the future utopian society at various stages in its evolutionary process. The review also describes it affectionately as being 'an old friend' of *News from Nowhere*, only 'with Christianity added' (*The Times Literary Supplement*, 1929: 312). Indeed, the two novels do contain many similarities. They both feature main characters that travel to future (English) utopian societies in an unconventional way. The narrator of *News from Nowhere* goes to sleep and simply wakes up in the future and the novel is about his 'dream' of the future. The protagonist of *The Rebel Passion*, Giraldu, travels through time through visions. They both ultimately end up in very pastoral utopias.

The *Times Literary Supplement* review is keen to point out that both authors similarly set the entrance into their utopian world at the time of harvest, which the unknown

author of the review believes was a device used by Morris ‘for making his utopia look pleasant’ (*The Times Literary Supplement*, 1929: 312). Ultimately, the unknown author of the review describes the text as being a ‘very fascinating book, fascinating despite its inconsistencies’ (*The Times Literary Supplement*, 1929: 312). The inconsistencies include a one-dimensional approach to race and religion. Burdekin is described as being a ‘dupe of that strange myth, the “Yellow Peril”’ (*The Times Literary Supplement*, 1929: 312). She is not called a racist but the implication that race is an issue of contention in the novel is certainly there. In addition, the review criticises the novel’s ‘dislike of the non-Christian religions’ (*The Times Literary Supplement*, 1929: 312). It cites the fact that the novel makes no reference to religions such as Buddhism, which could also be described as a religion that shows the importance of feeling pity, or empathy. The second problem the review identifies is that, although Burdekin depicts the importance of having the ability to feel empathy for others, she is seen as ‘shrinking’ from the causes of inequality (*The Times Literary Supplement*, 1929: 312). Her novel is seen as lacking in its analysis of socio-economic conditions that lead to people developing the ability to feel empathy.

Recent Criticism

More recent criticism has been limited and patchy. This is undoubtedly due to the fact that the novel has, at this moment in time, not been reprinted. Although Patai’s interest in Burdekin started when she encountered *The Rebel Passion* while working on a project on women’s utopian fiction, her work on Burdekin has tended to focus on the other utopian fictions (Patai, 1993: 319). In addition, it is more than twenty years now since Patai first discovered and wrote the main body of her criticism on Burdekin. Since then *The Rebel Passion*, if mentioned at all by critics, is referred to in the listing of the

novels that form the body of her work. The exception is a recent chapter by Elizabeth English in a book on utopian modernism in 2013, 'Lesbian Modernism and Utopia: Sexology and the Invert in Katharine Burdekin's Fiction' in *Utopianism, Modernism and Literature in the Twentieth Century*. Patai's and English's perspectives on this novel will be considered in turn. In contrast to the earlier reviews, the views considered below show a significant shift from discussing the novel in terms of a utopian text to a focus on the representation of gender in the novel.

Patai does identify that the 'moving spirit' of the novel is pity (Patai, 1993: 319). However, she quickly follows that up by stating that Burdekin, in particular, focuses on pity for 'the sufferings caused by rigid gender identity and the conventional polarization of masculine and feminine' (Patai, 1993: 319). Patai focuses on gender because Burdekin's reformulation of gender is an important aspect of the book. Patai talks about this being present in the character of Giraldu: 'we meet a monk born with the soul of a woman, and through this man's understanding of the straitjacket of gender we explore past and future' (Patai, 1989: 177). Trying to understand what Patai means by this, it could be considered that in the past individuals, like Giraldu, could be seen as being bound by the 'straitjacket' of conventional, restrictive approaches to gender and sexuality. This is in contrast to the future where the 'straitjacket' has been removed and people have the freedom to be whoever they are.

English also picks up on the importance of gender in Burdekin's work. She perceptively identifies that 'Burdekin's utopian fiction is populated by other [underlined by English] people', or sexually dissident identities, which Burdekin casts from the moulds of popular sexological discourses' (English, 2013: 94). It can confidently be argued that this is something that Burdekin noticeably does, not just in *The Rebel Passion* but in her

other works as well, most noticeably *Proud Man*. Burdekin is more than making reference to sexological discourses: she is using these theories to visual characters that embody these theories.

Section 2

Socialism and Guild Socialism

The future utopian society in *The Rebel Passion* that Giraldu visits towards the end of the novel shows signs of being influenced by socialist principles. Defining early twentieth-century socialism can be difficult because there are many aspects and variations. However, it is necessary to try to gain a basic understanding of the term in order to understand the influences at work in Burdekin's text. In order to do this, Michael Newman, an author on socialist theory, will be used as a basis. Although there were many influencing factors in the previous centuries modern socialism can be confidently dated to the nineteenth century: 'modern socialism, with its evolving and continuous set of ideas and movements, emerged in early 19th-century Europe' (Newman, 2005: 6). It grew in response to the mass industrialisation that was taking place and that caused significant societal changes (Newman, 2005: 6). Industrialisation had changed society in a way that conditions for many workers were untenable. It must be remembered at this time many laws, particularly factory acts, had to be introduced to deal with poor working conditions and the people who were made poorer under this system: the Factory Act 1819, Althorp's Factory Act 1833, Poor Law 1834, and Mines and Collieries Act 1842. Socialists were concerned with the inequalities in the industrial system. This can be seen in Marx's *Das Kapital* and the work of Friedrich Engels. They did not see the growth of industrialisation as being something to celebrate, as being

‘progress arising from capitalist enterprise’ (Newman, 2005: 6). Instead, they could clearly see that it disadvantaged a huge portion of the population, which ‘were herded into overcrowded towns and forced to work in new factories for pitifully low wages’ (Newman, 2005: 6). Socialists were attempting to theorise an alternative to this system.

Different socialists envisioned different alternatives, one of which particularly applies to Burdekin, guild socialism, discussed below. The differing views often featured varying degrees of acceptance of industrialisation; with some presenting a way of working within the system (such as using trade unions to regulate working conditions) and some advocating abandoning the system in favour of a return to smaller community craftsmanship. However, although there are alternative views, according to Newman there are common underlying principles amongst them all.

First, there is a ‘commitment to the creation of an egalitarian society’ (Newman, 2005: 2). It is about equality in society and being against the inequalities of wealth and power. This is also a common feature of utopian fiction. A second common principle of socialism is a rejection of actions that are motivated by self-interest. Newman sees this as a commitment to ‘the values of solidarity and cooperation’ (Newman, 2005: 3). It is individuals all working together to create a better society. Finally, common socialist principles include the idea that the better society is not achieved through a natural evolution or religious intervention but is reached through human agency (Newman, 2005: 3). This latter point conflicts with Burdekin, because she does see society slowly evolving to be something better, without deliberate human effort or revolutionary actions, and sees individuals developing to become better people. This will be returned to in the history section.

All of the above principles seem to also coincide with utopian principles. Newman even highlights the similarities: ‘The most obvious common feature in the utopian socialists’ transformative projects was the belief that a society based on harmony, association, and cooperation could be established through communal living and working’ (Newman, 2005: 7). In fact, as mentioned in the introduction, there was even a branch of utopian socialists, including many who not only theorised about alternatives but attempted to put theory into practice, however unsuccessfully: Henri Saint-Simon (1760-1825), Charles Fourier (1772-1837), and Robert Owen (1771-1858). Again, though, as mentioned in the introduction, the utopian socialists were often dismissed as presenting alternatives that were ‘unrealistic or fanciful’ (Newman, 2005: 7). This is often a criticism of utopian fiction as well.

The Rebel Passion includes this sense of abhorrence of the inequality of the industrial period. The future society in *The Rebel Passion* is based on principles of equality similar to that of socialism. This starts from an early age when children enter education: ‘Every child now had the same teaching up to the age of fourteen, then, if they wished, they might go on to eighteen [...] no child had any better future when he was born than any other child’ (Burdekin, 1929: 258-259). This refers not just to children of different classes but also to the two genders. Moving into working life the novel also states that equality applies in terms of who works: ‘Everyone worked except the very old, the women in bearing or with young children, those who had been hurt in an accident, and the children who must go to school’ (Burdekin, 1929: 293). Again, the novel stresses the importance of women having the opportunity to work. Everyone makes a contribution to society; everyone has an equal opportunity to participate in society.

More specifically, rather than just being influenced in general by the ideas of the socialists, the novel seems to be particularly influenced by the guild socialist movement. The beginnings of the theory of guild socialism can be dated to the years before World War One, although the National Guilds League itself was created in 1915 (Stears, 1998: 292). The main goal of guild socialism was to ‘decentralize authority to a range of organizations’ (Stears, 1998: 299). These organisations, known as guilds, would provide the regulation of the lives of individuals, not just in economic life but also in terms of social life. One lesser strand of thought, proposed by Arthur Penty, was a return to medieval type guilds. Penty saw the rise of machines and the ‘sub-division of labour’ as the cause of the problems of unhappiness amongst the working classes. Instead he proposed returning to a system based on craftsmanship: ‘he rejected the entire process of industrialization and concentrated on developing a guild programme which would rejuvenate ‘crafts, small industries and agriculture’ (Stears, 1998: 292). The main strands of guild socialism, however, were more sedate. According to Marc Stears, there were two ‘distinct ideological units within the umbrella organisation of the National Guilds League’ (Stears, 1998: 295). The first, headed by Ramiro de Maeztu, was all about functionality. Society can only thrive if each person has a function and is fulfilling their function: ‘if society is to grow and prosper, each individual within it has a clearly defined role to play and duty to fulfil’ (Stears, 1998: 295). This branch theorised that people were unhappy because they were not fulfilling their function. The role of the guilds in this was to organise individuals to make sure that they were fulfilling their function. The role of the guilds was to organise people according to function and identify the function of an individual. This type of system linked ‘the rights and liberties of the individual’ to functionality and this meant that free will was sacrificed to efficiency (Stears, 1998: 297).

A contrasting 'unit' of guild socialism, was that headed by G. D. H. Cole, who, instead, placed individual freedom and democracy at the heart of his theory. In a 1920 pamphlet, published by The Fabian Society, Cole outlined his vision of guild socialism. First, he described a guild as being 'something based upon Trade Unionism' (Cole, 1920: 7). This is meant in terms of the collective organisation of workers. However, more than simply being responsible for 'safe-guarding the standard of life of its members' the guild would, in effect, be in control of the respective industry for which the guild was responsible: 'it would be turning out the goods, seeing that the industry was efficiently conducted, actually running and administering the industry' (Cole, 1920: 9). Cole's model also stressed the importance of democratic rights. Within his guild system they would have a 'well-developed democratic mechanism' (Stears, 1998: 299). Cole believed that by giving people democratic freedom and allowing them to escape from the oppressive regime of capitalism then they would naturally want to work and be a part of the community. Cole writes, perhaps simplistically, that:

I personally believe that a system under which a man has a reasonable control of the conditions of his working life, and also, as a citizen, of the conditions of his political life, offers the best guarantee that you can have, because it offers the best opportunity for a man to give free service to the community and at the same time express himself as a citizen and as a consumer, as well as in his capacity as a producer (Cole, 1920: 12)

The initial use of the guilds would fit into traditional models of industry, for example having a coal miners' guild or shop workers' guild. Cole, however, hoped also, like Penty, for a return to a system based on craftsmanship and that after the overthrow of capitalism, and subsequent to the better education of workers, when people are

confident in the freedom of their trade, 'there will be a gradual reversion to localism, to smaller-scale production, to meet the gradual demand of the consumer for goods of higher quality' (Cole, 1920: 15-16).

Burdekin's vision of the role of the guilds in her utopian society seems to link more closely with Cole's ideas than Maetzku. Everything belonged to a guild and guilds were based on democratic principles, with individuals belonging to the guilds and voting for who would represent them in the guild parliament (Burdekin, 1929: 259). To be in a guild was to have a voice and to not be in guild was to 'have no voice' (Burdekin, 1929: 259). There is no mention of whether people are forced into specific guilds according to ability, as theorised by Maetzku, but the fact that everyone, from farmers to musicians, seem to be peculiarly happy in their roles seems to suggest that they have chosen that role in life. The return to craftsmanship is clear in the types of guilds available: builders, farmers, musicians, bakers and physicians. Land is owned by the guilds and individuals rent the land from the guilds. Finally, in a similar way to the function of the trade unions, the guilds work to regulate working conditions: 'The labourers on the farms had their hours fixed by law' (Burdekin, 1929: 296).

Religion

The subject of religion features heavily in *The Rebel Passion*. At first glance, the historical presentation of the subject of religion can be problematic because the novel does not distinguish between different denominations and the descriptions of religious aspects at various points in time do not seem to have any sort of continuity. In addition, the descriptions of religions figures and religious movements are vague and the point Burdekin is trying to make not always clear. There are two main aspects to be explored

about the way that it is presented in the novel. The first aspect is Burdekin's criticism of the various incarnations of the church in England at various different historical times. The second aspect is how religion features in the future utopian society.

It is necessarily to look at what aspects of religion Burdekin focuses on in the past in order to understand how she theorises about it in the future. In an early vision, dated not much later than Giraldus' own time, the Child shows Giraldus a room with Henry of Anjou and Thomas Beckett. These two figures are representative of the power of the state (Anjou) and the power of the church (Beckett). The argument centres on the corruption of individuals within the church and the unfair protection offered by the institution of the church. Beckett believes that they should be 'tried in the Courts of the Church and there judged by their peers' (Burdekin, 1929: 79). However, the King tells 'tales of cruelty and ill-deeds done by the clerks under the protection of the Church, and such tales of the corruption and utter uselessness of the Church Courts' (Burdekin, 1929: 79). Burdekin's argument, and criticism, here is that individuals in the church get away with corruption because of having the protection of the institution of the church. In effect, the church has too much power. Burdekin is suggesting that self-regulation in the church is not enough for people to have confidence in it to root out corruption.

The religious denominations in the interwar period in Britain were all undergoing a crisis due to declining numbers (Mews, 1994: 450). The First World War had changed people; it had changed their minds, attitudes and opinions. The responses by different factions was either to try to reconfirm the importance of the church and having faith or to radically change the way the church worked: 'A crisis can provoke opposite reactions: retreat into more rigid and authoritarian positions, or attempt at radical reconstruction of the faith' (Mews, 1994: 450). Burdekin's approach fits in the latter

category. Although the religion of the future utopian society is described firmly as being Christian, how this manifests in the texts is rather unusual. It has undergone a rapid transformation from a religion based on rigid conventions to a much more spiritual relationship between individuals and god.

Priests travel the country and give blessings to people on the roadside. They are not confined to churches or, as in Giraldus' own time, monasteries. Priests are important but their position is not guaranteed. In the future 'the most important people are the priests' because 'they care for the souls' (Burdekin, 1929: 301). Given the past, the monk questions whether the people who become priests are worthy of the positions. The Child reassures him that if a priest does not do his job well then 'he will cease to be a priest' (Burdekin, 1929: 301). He is not made to do so by law, but he will voluntarily renounce the position once he realises that he is not suited to it. In that case no one will blame him for this. However, if a priest does a bad job, and is 'drunken or avaricious or lustful, and yet still would call himself a priest' (Burdekin, 1929: 301) then people have the choice now, and will not put up with it. The people call 'the priests Brother and Sister' (Burdekin, 1929: 267). They do not call the priests father. This is significant because it is acknowledging the power relationship that people are placed under with a priest in a father relationship. The people 'will call none but God, Father. And they will call none Mother, save the Mother of our Lord Christ' (Burdekin, 1929: 267). Burdekin criticises the church but in her creation of a Christian utopia she shows a clear commitment to the ideals of the Christian religion. It seems to be her belief that the foundational beliefs of the Christian religion have been corrupted by church institutions and can only be reconnected with when aspects of those institutions have been re-envisioned.

History and Darwin

The influence of Darwin's theory of evolution can be seen in *The Rebel Passion*, as indeed it can be observed in Burdekin's other utopian texts. Darwin's theories have continued to create a stir from the nineteenth century onwards. His ideas are well-known; through the observation of animals and plants, Darwin postulated that animals (which can be extended to include humans) have physically evolved through a process of adaptation, based on the competitive urge. The inhabitants of Burdekin's utopian society are shown to have physically, emotionally and spiritually evolved. Intriguingly, Burdekin sees this all playing out as part of god's divine plan. In the text there is support for the theories of Darwin, as shown in the earlier example of the challenge to the Book of Genesis, with no seeming conflict with a religious interpretation.

Evolutionary ideas feature in the novel at certain points. At the start of the novel the beginnings of life are described: Giraldu observes that 'things began to move and crawl in the slime' (Burdekin, 1929: 31). In the blink of an eye, or what could be millions of years, shapes begin to form from the slime and Giraldu looks and sees 'a small and hairy beast of a shape' (Burdekin, 1929: 31-32). It is at this point that the physical evolution has taken place. The next step is for god to add souls to the creatures to make them human: 'God bade the souls enter the bodies of the beasts and make them men' (Burdekin, 1929: 33). The souls are pure, but after entering the bodies of animals they have become flawed. The next evolutionary step is a spiritual one. The souls of humans are shown over hundreds of years to be progressing towards a better state of being. At the end of the novel the souls of the utopian individuals are, symbolically, blindingly bright: 'it seemed as if all the garden were full of moving flames, this people's souls

were so large and bright' (Burdekin, 1929: 315). The light is an indication of how 'good' is a person's soul.

Section 3

Gender and Sexuality

The subject of gender and sexuality in *The Rebel Passion* is intriguing. At first glance ideas about them, for the twentieth-first century reader, seem confused and the boundaries between the two are blurred. For example, as discussed earlier in the introduction, Giraldus has a homosexual character with a feminine gender. Yet, it would be acknowledged today that sexual orientation does not necessarily link with gendered character; for example, men can be attracted to other men and exhibit so-called feminine or masculine characteristics, and the same applies for women. Men can exhibit feminine characteristics without being gay and they can be gay without exhibiting feminine characteristics. However, looking at theories surrounding this area at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century it becomes clear that Burdekin was tapping into very specific ideas and theories about gender and sexuality. In particular, her work shows an affinity with the field of sexology. Elizabeth English argues that the correspondence between Burdekin and the sexologist Havelock Ellis shows her definite interest in sexology:

The discovery of this correspondence is highly significant since it tells us that Burdekin had an interest in theories of sexual inversion, and that she had a relationship with one of those theories' most famous proponents (English, 2013: 94).

Familiarity with the work of the sexologists also confirms the idea that Burdekin was undoubtedly influenced by them because of the many similarities.

In order to understand the relationship between the ideas of the sexologists and the ideas about sex and gender in Burdekin's work it is necessary to understand what the term 'sexology' actually means. Sexology, simply put, is the study of sexuality. Many sexologists appeared in the nineteenth century to investigate classifications of sexuality in medical and legal discourses. Medical discourses considered homosexuality as an aberration, a departure from 'normality'. In legal terms male homosexuality was illegal for a long time, only being decriminalised in England and Wales in 1967, Scotland 1980, and Northern Ireland 1982. Sexologists, such as Karl Heinrich Ulrichs (1825-95), were trying to establish a biological basis for same sex love in order to mitigate the treatment of this section of society (Kennedy, 1997: 1). Similarly, Havelock Ellis, in his book *Sexual Inversion* (published in Germany in 1896 and in English in 1897) aimed to produce an objective study of homosexuality. Ellis' work was also influential on Radcliffe Hall's representation of the female invert in her novel *The Well of Loneliness* (Doan and Prosser, 2001: 3). Edward Carpenter wrote *The Intermediate Sex* (1908) not long after Ellis.

Sexological discourses are apparent in Burdekin's work in the character of Giraldua. English, quite rightly, sees the connection with sexology in the fact that 'Burdekin's utopian fiction is populated by [...] sexually dissident identities' (English, 2013: 95). In particular, elements in the theories of Ulrichs can be used to analyse the gendered character of Giraldua. Ulrichs produced many writings on the theory of homosexuality between 1864 and 1879. His aim was both 'explanatory' and 'emancipatory'; this was

based on the thought that a greater understanding of ‘a biological basis for it, will lead to equal legal and social treatment of hetero- and homosexuals’ (Kennedy, 1997: 26). His ideas included the creation of the term the ‘third sex’. This term was used to refer to a ‘male homosexual [who] has a female psyche’ (Kennedy, 1997: 27). He also developed the idea of a ‘fourth sex’ to describe lesbians with a male psyche. The person who fits the category of the ‘third sex’ is what Ulrichs terms an ‘Urning’ while on the other hand, a male heterosexual was what he described as a ‘Dioning’ (Kennedy, 1997: 27). The description of the ‘Urning’ clearly crosses boundaries of sex and gender or confuses gender with sexual orientation. This is because in his explanation of the ‘female psyche’ Ulrichs makes reference to it being evident in the appearance of feminine characteristics in a man.

The character of Giraldu in *The Rebel Passion* is clearly an ‘Urning’. Firstly, he can be seen to display feminine characteristics, or lack characteristics associated with masculinity. In his own time his father and brother mock and ridicule him. They call him ‘Woman’ because he displays a ‘gentle’ nature (Burdekin, 1929: 12). He is a man born with a woman’s ‘soul’. His sister is born with a male soul. In contrast to Giraldu’s gentle nature, his sister is described as being the opposite:

[S]he was all that I was not, gallant in bearing, unafraid, high-hearted and of a strong bold spirit, never weeping as other women do, and ready to crack rough jests with him [her father] or any other man (Burdekin, 1929: 14).

This links with Ulrichs’s idea of a man having a female psyche and his suggestion that it is a natural, biological process and as such should be more acceptable. Giraldu’s sister inhabits Ulrichs’ position of the fourth sex.

Ulrichs based his ideas on the 'study of the literature of hermaphrodites' (Kennedy, 1997: 5). Hermaphrodites, according to Ulrichs were exceptions to the 'rule of nature' (Kennedy, 1997: 5). In this vein, he saw that the same could apply to certain men who were also exceptions in that they were attracted to men and not women. He believed this happened because while a 'germ' could 'determine whether the sexual organs developed as male or female' there was also, supposedly, a 'germ that determines the direction of the sexual drive' (Kennedy, 1997: 6-7). The 'Uring' comes from exceptions to the germ that determines the sex drive. However, Burdekin extends this to suggest that it is, in fact, ordained by god, since the switching of the souls at birth was completed by an agent of god. Further substantiation of Ulrichs' category of 'Uring' is Giraldus' strong, emotional bond with Martin in the monastery. The importance of Giraldus' 'Uring' status is that Burdekin is promoting the idea that he is a better, more advanced human being. He is the utopian ideal.

Elizabeth English strongly sees Giraldus as occupying an alternative gendered position. However, curiously, she sees him occupying a position of female inversion. She does, in fact, argue that many of the characters in Burdekin's novels have 'lesbian identities' (English, 2013: 96). This does not seem like a convincing argument but the difficulty may rest in classifying terms related to sex and gender. Perhaps English is using the word lesbian in a wider sense than the dictionary definition, if so she does not clarify her definition of the term. English's interest in discovering 'lesbian identities' restricts her thinking in terms of Burdekin's ideas about sexual and gendered identities (English, 2013: 95). Her concept is useful but overly reductive to pin down to 'lesbian'. Burdekin's ideas about gender and sexuality have a greater fluidity. Further, disappointingly, English does not bring Ulrichs into her discussion of the character of

Giraldus. Perhaps this is because it would mean looking at him as a male invert instead of as a symbolic lesbian character and this could potentially confuse her argument. The theories of Ulrichs, however, are vitally important in understanding the character of Giraldus.

Again, difficulties arise when English further argues for the inclusion of Burdekin in 'the narrative of lesbian modernism' (English, 2013: 94). A text belonging to the category of lesbian modernism, according to English, is 'characterized by its experiments in literary form coupled with an engagement with the lesbian subject, her desires and her identities' (English, 2013: 96). It would be difficult to argue that Burdekin's work is not experimental; however, again, Burdekin's work is not populated with characters that could be unequivocally described as being lesbian. It is too narrow a definition to fully appreciate Burdekin's views on the fluidity of gender and sexuality. For example, English talks about Giraldus' status as 'an invert' with the assumption that this inverted status defines Giraldus as a lesbian subject (English, 2013:106). This conclusion is arrived at by the fact Giraldus possesses a 'female soul as well as by his desire for a fellow monk' (English, 2013: 106). However, Burdekin's message is much more complex than that. She is making points about gender and sexuality that cannot be wrapped up under one neat label. This includes a focus on chastity over sexual relationships and the blending of male and female characteristics to make an androgynous being.

It would seem more helpful to look at Burdekin in the context of queer theory. Queer theory is an umbrella term that includes within it 'lesbian and gay subjects' and its focus is on the 'mismatches between sex, gender and desire' (Jagose, 1996: no page number). Significantly, it also branches out to include 'such topics as cross-dressing,

hermaphroditism, gender ambiguity and gender-corrective surgery' (Jagose, 1996: no page number). This theory seems to offer the opportunity to explore Burdekin's characters without the difficulty of using a word like 'lesbian', which seems to suggest a reference to women who are sexually attracted to women.

Section 4

Multiculturalism

Reading *The Rebel Passion* is not entirely without its difficulties for today's reader. The vision of an all-white society, without the presence of Asians or black people, now sits uneasily in a world more used to the concept of multiculturalism. In a post-war section, Burdekin considers the issue of immigration:

They would have no more people from the East in, and those who were in already were sent away. At this time also the League [The League of Nations in Europe] gradually sent away all the dark people who were living in Europe, and sent them back to their own countries, wherever they had come from, and the League said they would have none in Europe but white men, Christians, and [the] pitiful (Burdekin, 1929: 257).

This sounds like extreme right-wing rhetoric. It features unsettling racist sentiments, picked up by the *Time Literary Supplement* review mentioned earlier. It is discriminatory in the citizens that it will accept in the 'ideal' society; black people and Asians do not belong in utopia. Further, there is no consideration that the 'dark people' might already be in 'their own countries', i.e. the countries of their birth. Further, the

implication is that black people cannot be Christian, or if they are they are the wrong sort of Christians.

Eugenics

The most striking issue of contention for the reader today, however, comes in the form of the appearance of the subject of eugenics, another subject which must be placed in historical context. The future society, and the future people, in *The Rebel Passion* have been subject to eugenic intervention. Eugenics, a term created by Francis Galton in the nineteenth century, refers to selective breeding. Galton introduced the term in his 1883 text *Inquiries into Human Faculty* (Parrinder, 1997: 1). He argued that since selective breeding had been successful in animals why not people: ‘Our races of cows, sheep and horses have been hugely improved by artificial breeding, Galton argued, so why not apply the same principles to human beings?’ (Parrinder, 1997: 3). Eugenics is defined as ‘the science which deals with all influences that improve the inborn qualities of a race; also with those that develop them to the utmost advantage’ (Galton, 1904: no page number). Galton fashioned the word in a similar way to More’s creation of the title of his *Utopia*; he used ‘eu’ to mean good and ‘genics’ to refer to genes. Essentially it is about improving the human race through selective breeding. Galton was the cousin of Charles Darwin and he developed his thoughts on eugenics from Darwin’s theory of natural selection. Darwin talked about nature intervening, by chance, to improve the race. In a reverse of that, natural evolution had also, in some cases led to the extinction of species, such as the dodo. This led to the fear that, unless intervention occurred, this could also happen to the human race. Galton talks about the improvement of the race through deliberate human intervention.

Interventions through eugenic measures can be divided into two categories: positive and/or negative. These two categories are not meant to denote good and bad categories of eugenics; it would be hard to argue morally and ethically for the benefits of eugenic projects. Instead it refers to the alternative actions to promote the ‘best’ people to breed and restricting ‘undesirables’ from having children.

Positive eugenics is a term used to describe the encouragement of the ‘right’ kind of people to have children and the improvement of the prenatal healthcare provided to expectant mothers. This can involve the use of tracking and recording information about families, including medical histories, in order to make decisions about who is and is not suitable to have children. Galton sees qualities that should be passed on as being ‘energy, intelligence, and sensitivity’ (Claeys, 2001:188). Negative eugenics is about taking measures to prevent ‘defects’ to the gene pool (Buchanan et al., 2000: 104). The reasons why someone may be considered undesirable may cover a range of different things. Galton included in his category those attributes associated with ‘criminality and insanity’ (Claeys, 2001:188). Controversial measures are used to prevent individuals supposedly passing on these attributes, such as compulsory sterilisation of people considered to be undesirable, for whatever reason.

Recent utopian critics (Partington, 2003; Claeys, 2001; Parrinder, 1997) have shown an interest in relooking at the relationship between eugenics and utopia. This has included looking at the eugenic aspects of the work of H. G. Wells (Partington, 2003), William Morris (Parrinder, 1997), and Galton’s own utopian texts (Claeys, 2001). This seems to be part of a feeling of trying to address this issue instead of ignoring it. Parrinder notes that ‘the role of eugenic discourse has been marginalized and virtually ignored in almost all recent surveys of utopian history. Presumably it is simply too embarrassing to

contemplate' (Parrinder, 1997: 2). This is somewhat understandable since the use of eugenics is morally repugnant, particularly as advocated and practiced by the Nazis in the Second World War. The Nazis used both types of eugenics: promoting the types of women they believed worthy, Aryan women, to have children while simultaneously deciding that, in their twisted view, the less worthy, in particular, but not limited to, Jewish women, be prevented from having children. However, just because these aspects are controversial it does not mean they should necessarily be ignored. Eugenics was a widespread movement internationally, with advocates in America and Britain. Parrinder argues that many utopians, whether it is acknowledged or not, depend on eugenics: 'Can we imagine a better society without imagining, and wishing to create, better people?' (Parrinder, 1997: 1). In addition, he points to the fact that many texts, particularly post 1870, feature eugenic elements in one form or another. There are elements of eugenic policy even in texts that do not make specific reference to eugenic practices. Parrinder believes: 'Any utopia from before the age of plastic surgery which emphasizes the physical beauty of its inhabitants is likely to be referring to the effects of a deliberate or inadvertent eugenic policy' (Parrinder, 1997: 1). The implication comes from the fact that it seems unrealistic to have societies full of beautiful, healthy individuals without intervention. It is hard to think of one utopian text that features individuals with disabilities. The only way this could happen is through a deliberate process of interceding in breeding patterns.

Turning to Burdekin's text, reading the sections related to eugenics can be difficult. Starting with negative eugenics, the language used is offensive, the part of the population identified as being needed to be got rid of by the rulers of society are described as the 'weaklings and half-witted' (Burdekin, 1929: 244) and the 'little-brained despairing' (Burdekin, 1929: 249). They are described as being people who

could not 'be made clean or seemly or happy' (Burdekin, 1929: 243). They are described in animalistic terms, people 'who lived like swine in a sty' (Burdekin, 1929: 244). The solution that is thought up is to make 'sterile the half-wit men' (Burdekin, 1929: 249). The undesirables have been bred out but the medical profession is vigilant in its watching of children in the school room for signs of degeneration: 'The children in the schools were watched even more intently, and if any grew up under-brained they were made sterile' (Burdekin, 1929: 250). The language is the language of cleansing: 'in the end it would all be finished, and the nation be clean' (Burdekin, 1929: 250). Burdekin's science here is suspect. Her logic is that there are some who cannot be redeemed. She decides that this feature is carried on through the generations.

This strikes a harsh note for today's reader, who would question the right of a profession or authority to make decisions on whose life is worth living. In addition, eugenics filters into the problematic matter of individual freewill versus the will of the community. Eugenics focuses on the improvement of the species at the cost of considering the quality of life of individuals. In Burdekin's *The End of this Day's Business* it is considered acceptable practice for someone who has, through an accident, become physically incapacitated to commit suicide. Their value to society has ended. They are no longer able to contribute to the benefit of the community.

Conclusion

The eugenic practices and the vision of all 'all-white' utopia mentioned in the previous section are only small aspects of an innovative and thought-provoking utopian text. They are unfortunate elements but cannot mar the perception of the novel as a whole. It is a text that uses theories of Darwin and evolution to imagine society evolving into a

utopian reality. It perceptively criticises certain aspects of the institution of the church and reimagines a better way for individuals to live a spiritual life. Burdekin's theories on gender and sexuality, although influenced by the work of the sexologists, are remarkably ahead of her time. She sees utopian possibilities in the reimagining of gender identity. This chapter has spent time looking at *The Rebel Passion* as a positive utopia. The next chapter will move on to consider a dystopian text.

Chapter Two:

Swastika Night

Introduction

The focus of the previous chapter was on the positive society, or the ‘eutopia’, and within this context Burdekin’s *The Rebel Passion* was analysed in terms of its presentation of an image of a better society. In this future society everyone is happy, healthy, and content because society has been organised to improve the material conditions of people’s lives and nurture individual potential. There is equality between the sexes and humans have achieved a kinder way of living in the world and dealing with each other. In stark contrast to this, chapter two looks at the antithesis of the positive utopia: the dystopian society. Dystopian fiction, as discussed in the introduction, refers to the representation in literature of a society that is significantly worse than the reader’s own society. *Swastika Night*, first published in 1937, eight years after *The Rebel Passion*, is a powerful dystopian text. Hopes for the future, present in the earlier text, seem to have disappeared, to be replaced with a deep fear of what society may degenerate into in the future. In the novel, society is organised along hierarchical lines and hatred and brutality are part of people’s everyday existence. As the title suggests, with the reference to the ‘Swastika’ symbol, Nazism plays an important part in the text. The novel is heavily reflective of the current situation in interwar Europe and the novel features a society ruled by the Nazi regime and influenced by the Nazi ideology of the 1930s.

This chapter starts by providing a summary of the text in order to give a flavour of the plot, characters and setting. Next, the chapter will consider the novel's remarkable publishing history, starting with its original publication in Britain in 1937 and its subsequent republication by the Left Book Club in 1940. It disappeared from public view for a number of years before its rediscovery and republication in 1985, significantly at a time when there was an interest in women's speculative fiction. Subsequent to this it enjoyed international publication in various countries in the 1980s and 1990s. Finally, section one will end by exploring the criticism: the contemporary criticism from its original publication and criticism in the 1980s and 1990s resulting from its republication.

Gender is one of the main themes of the novel and section two will focus on the representation of masculinity and femininity. The novel reflects a masculine crisis of identity that typified the interwar period. This can be seen in an emphasis on soldierly values: a man must be, according to a specific construct of masculinity, strong and aggressive and must not allow feminine characteristics to corrupt or devalue his masculine identity. Theories of homosociality are useful to understand how patriarchal societies maintain their power. The role of women in the novel is an important factor because it shows how definitions of masculinity impact on definitions of femininity. Male gender identity gains validation from the degeneration of women: in the novel men are strong and women are weak, men have value and women are valueless. Women are considered in the text in terms of their animalistic representation, their role and value in society, and their right, or lack of, to bodily integrity in a society that legalises rape.

Section three focuses on the novel in relation to the dystopian tradition. There are three aspects to this focus, and again gender plays a significant part. The first aspect is the exploration of the text in terms of the 'male' tradition typified by writers like George Orwell. This type of tradition can commonly be called androcentric, meaning that the male experience is central to the story and women feature secondarily, if at all. Patai, in fact, describes *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1948) as being 'androcentric and misogynistic' (Patai, 1984: 85). Burdekin is, in fact, remarkable for her departure from this type of writing. Her work reflects such resonance with later women's utopian texts from the second wave of feminism, such as Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985) it makes it doubly amazing that Burdekin wrote it so many years before. Finally, Burdekin's dystopian text is also intriguing in respect of the context in which she was writing. A number of similarities have been discovered amongst women's utopian writing in the interwar period warning of the fascist threat. In addition, the fascist threat was also of concern at this time for other women writers in general, such as Virginia Woolf.

The main focus of section four is the subject of fascism. First, the Nazi attitude towards women in Germany is examined and explored in the way it is reflected in the novel. For example, during the interwar period many nations were concerned with falling birth-rates: the Nazi party took this to the extreme and made having children the first and foremost purpose of a woman's life. The consequences of proceeding on this course of action are shown in *Swastika Night*. In the novel, women have become breeding cattle with no function outside of this. Secondly, the nature of the Nazi regime is considered in terms of Burdekin's representation of it in the novel. This includes the way the Nazis used propaganda to present themselves as a 'political religion' and how the political

party in the novel is transformed into an actual religion. Finally, section five deals with other important issues in the novel. This includes looking at the subject of religion.

Section 1

Text and Context

The story begins in a church with Hermann, last name unknown, attending a service. However, this is not a typical church service. The religion is one based on Nazi ideology in which Hitler is seen as a God and the priests are Nazi Knights. In the service Hermann admires the looks of a young choir boy. This is the first indication in the text that male attraction to boys is normalised in this society. This is surprising for two reasons. The first reason is that at the time Burdekin was writing homosexuality was still, in fact, illegal. The second is that the boy Hermann is admiring is a young, adolescent boy, described as a 'golden-haired chorister' (Burdekin, 1985: 6). The Knight in charge of the service, the Knight von Hess, preaches to the all-male audience:

As a woman is above a worm,

So is a man above a woman (Burdekin, 1985: 7)

The second service of the day is the women's service. The women are not fully allowed into the church itself and, unlike the men, are not allowed seats and have to stand throughout the service. The reader learns several significant things during the women's service. The first is that the women are commonly perceived as animalistic. The Knight von Hess, in his own thoughts, describes the women as 'cattle' (Burdekin, 1985:11). In addition, at one point, the reader learns that women have no rights over their bodies; the

use and control of their bodies belong to men. One of the responsibilities of the Knight is to get it into the women's heads that 'they must not mind being raped' (Burdekin, 1985: 13). If a woman is taken sexually by a man who does not own her, the woman is not the victim. The victim of crime is the man who has had his property misused.

It is not just women, however, who are subject to Nazi denigration. Earlier in the men's service, the Knight von Hess also makes clear the position of Christians in this society:

As a woman is above a worm,

So a worm is above a Christian (Burdekin, 1985: 7)

In addition, Christianity is no longer considered a religion. Christians are now considered to be a race of people. Unsurprisingly, the racialization of the Christians is concomitant with the Nazi ideology becoming a religion since it would be unlikely, in the text, that the Nazis would want anything to challenge the ruling Nazi religion. Indeed, The Christians have become a replacement target in the Nazi ideology for the Jews, who have long since been exterminated. Burdekin prophetically extrapolates the annihilation of the Jews from observing the attitude of the German Nazi party in the 1930s. In addition, the replacement of the Jews with the Christians warns the reader that no-one is safe from the Nazi political agenda and that once one enemy is eliminated a new scapegoat will be defined.

The Nazi society is also stratified in terms of the Nazi people and its empire:

As a man is above a woman,

So is a Nazi above any foreign Hitlerian.

As a Nazi is above a foreign Hitlerian,
So is a Knight above a Nazi (Burdekin, 1985: 7)

This rigid hierarchy makes the importance of position very clear. This is in contrast to the position in many positive utopias, where equality is a key factor.

When Hermann leaves the church he is surprised to see a friend, Alfred Alfredson (meaning son of Alfred), standing outside. Alfred is the real protagonist of this tale. His is an Englishman, so the reader is aware that his position in society is lower than Hermann's, an ordinary German Nazi. Although movement between countries is strictly limited, Alfred has been granted the privilege to travel to Germany 'on pilgrimage to the Holy Places in Germany' (Burdekin, 1985: 18). A part of the refiguring of the Nazi political party as a religion has included placing religious significance on places and things: for example Munich is now called the 'Holy City' (Burdekin, 1985: 6). Alfred would not have ordinarily been granted the right to travel except for the act of going on pilgrimage and the fact that he is well-liked by his superiors at work. He is a technician in an aerodrome. However, he laments that, because he is an Englishman, he is not allowed to fly.

In conversation with Hermann, Alfred announces that 'I am going to destroy your Empire' (Burdekin, 1985: 23). This is a grand statement which Alfred modifies by likening himself to the acorn in this scenario: 'I am only the acorn' (Burdekin, 1985: 23). He is the acorn which will grow and develop into a mighty oak tree. However, this is not a violent revolution, instead it is going to be a revolution of ideas: 'The rebellion of disbelief' (Burdekin, 1985: 26). At this stage Alfred's words seem like idle dreaming. He is merely speculating on illogicality concerning the Nazi rule and religion. He does

not believe that Hitler is a god and once that thought enters his mind it undermines the reasoning for the way society is organised.

On the walk home to the farm where Hermann lives and works the two men stop and Alfred decides to have a nap. At this time Hermann hears a noise and upon investigating finds the choir boy from earlier trying to rape an underage Christian girl. Hermann is enraged. He is not angry about the rape, or that the girl is underage or Christian. No, his fury is directed at the fact that this attractive boy would be interested in girls at all. In a jealous rage he beats the boy unconscious. The boy later dies of his injuries.

The incident with the boy leads to Alfred meeting with the Knight von Hess when Hermann needs to make a deposition to the Knight. As well as having the responsibility of overseeing church services the Knight owns the villages and lands in the surrounding area and is also in charge of judicial matters. This meeting is a turning point in the story because it is the Knight von Hess who opens up opportunities to Alfred. The Knight recognises in Alfred a rebellious spirit and entrusts him with a vital piece of knowledge and the possession of a photograph and a book. The photo features a representation of Hitler, other than what has been authorised in the official version of the appearance of 'God', in the presence of a young girl, a feminine girl nothing like the females in this future society. It is shocking for the men to see this picture because the image of her is radically different from the way females are now. It is the young boys who hold the attraction and thus the girl is described in comparison with that: 'A girl as lovely as a boy' (Burdekin, 1985: 68). The book was written by von Hess' ancestor and is an account of the time when the Nazis gained power and records their deliberate efforts to reduce women and to erase history. The book offers the 'proof' that Alfred needs, the knowledge that will start his rebellion of disbelief. The book is not without its

fallibilities, including the memory of the author and his range of knowledge, at one point the current Knight von Hess is asked a question about the past, about the Jews, and he cannot answer because his frame of reference, the ancestor von Hess, 'does not know' (Burdekin, 1985: 149). However, the book's very existence is a challenge to the official version of events.

In the home of the Knight von Hess, in a discussion with Alfred, many things about this society are revealed to the reader. The Knight talks about being at war with the Japanese Empire. The world is divided between the German and Japanese Empires. Germany rules over Europe, while the Japanese 'rule over Asia, Australia and the Americas' (Burdekin, 1985: 76). Burdekin shows the racism she shares with contemporary society, also present in *The Rebel Passion*, against the 'yellow peril'. As much as the Germans are bad, the Japanese are worse. Officially these two Empires are at war with each other, but no fighting takes place. This is because the two are evenly matched and because of a declining birth-rate neither side can afford to lose any of their population. The Knight reveals that: 'The peace between Japan and Germany is permanent' (Burdekin, 1985: 76). If the population were aware of this fact, however, it would cause a crisis of identity amongst the male population. Male masculine identity is premised on their role as soldiers. If they no longer have a role then this throws that identity into crisis.

While Alfred is invigorated by the new knowledge he is receiving from the Knight, Hermann is defeated by it. His weak mind is unable to deal with the information. In order to stop Hermann falling into despair and possibly attempting to kill himself, the Knight exiles him to England, on the charge of killing the choir boy. Before Alfred and Hermann go to England, the Knight allows Alfred to fly a plane. This forbidden act has symbolic significance. Alfred is being given the freedom to fly. The role of planes and

flying in the novel at first glance seem to play an insignificant part in the story.

However, it could be argued that there is a symbolic resonance in their presence in the text. In his chapter 'Flight, Gender, Dystopia: Katherine Burdekin's *Swastika Night*; Storm Jameson's *In the Second Year*; Rex Warner's *The Aerodrome*' Chris Hopkins compares the elements of flight in three utopian texts. He discusses the idea that the plane was first seen as a sign of human progress and a way to promote peace through travel and an attempt to gain a better understanding of others. However, this soon turned to a view of planes as linked to war and the military. Hopkins sees the military aspect in Burdekin's text: 'The Sacred Aeroplane symbolizes the Hitlerian achievement of the destruction of all significant alternative belief systems' (Hopkins, 149). Hopkins also points to the significance of Alfred being technician at an aerodrome. Alfred's flight, then, can be considered as an attempt at rebellion.

In England, Alfred reads the book, with Hermann's help translating the German. Significantly they keep the book hidden at Stonehenge. Armed with his new knowledge of women, gained from the conversations with the Knight von Hess, the information contained in the book and the photograph of the girl from another time, Alfred visits his 'woman' Ethel and his new daughter Edith. He imagines a future in which Edith is brought up differently and can grow up to be a human being and not an animalistic creature. He concludes, with regret, it would be impossible to do at the current time because she would have no place in the world. In addition, he also visits his friend Joseph Black. Black is a Christian who voices a convoluted version of Christianity from an oral tradition. The novel ends with Alfred's violent and pointless death. He is discovered with Hermann at Stonehenge and a group of nervous German soldiers violently beat Hermann to death. Alfred is also attacked but does not immediately die. He dies in hospital, after passing on the book to his son, Fred, who takes it to Joseph

Black to look after. Alfred's death suggests that his attempt at rebellion is defeated. However, the book has still survived and it is possible that Fred may take over the attempt to rebel against the current system from his father.

Characters

Alfred is a bridging character between the different types of people in the book. The reader learns at the beginning of the book that this society is based on strict hierarchical lines. However, Alfred continually crosses those lines. He not only regularly interacts with ordinary Nazis, including the ones he works with at the aerodrome, but he is also *liked* by those characters. The reaction of his Nazi colleagues on learning of the attack on Alfred at the end of the book is related to Alfred by his son: 'all your German friends are upset' (Burdekin, 1985: 194). Not only is Alfred friendly with ordinary Nazis he enjoys an unexpected familiarity with a German Knight, von Hess. Looking further down the hierarchical chain, Alfred is also a regular visitor in the home of the Christian, Joseph Black. The scene at the end of the book, when he visits his 'woman' Ethel and daughter Edith, shows Alfred's attempt to bridge that final gap and ignore the biggest taboo of all. At the beginning of the book Alfred says that: 'Women are neither here nor there' (Burdekin, 1985: 23). He has since learnt the importance and value of women in society and his visit to Ethel and his reflections on the future for Edith show that he has a greater understanding of how important a part they must play in the reshaping of society. Society cannot simply attempt to go beyond the boundaries of race and class without also considering the boundary of gender. This bridging of the gap between different types of people is relevant because it shows how change will occur. As referred to above, Alfred envisions a peaceful solution to making the changes necessary for the future of the human race.

Alfred has three sons. The fact that he has sons, in particular three sons, has some significance. He is a member of a subject race and is not required by the ruling authority to have children. However, the fact that he does have numerous children, in contrast to Hermann, who has none, suggests that the potential for growth and the future is more likely to be in the English race. At twenty-five, Hermann has no sons or daughters, even though it is a legal requirement that he has children by the age of thirty, or he will be punished (Burdekin, 1985: 22). In addition, the Knight von Hess, like Alfred, is the parent of three boys. Symbolically, while Alfred's sons are alive and healthy, von Hess' sons 'were killed all together in an aeroplane crash many years ago' (Burdekin, 1985: 65). This makes the passing of the book to Alfred even more important. The 'curse' of possessing and having knowledge of the contents of the book has been passed from generation to generation of the von Hess family (Burdekin, 1985: 65). The Knight von Hess is unable to pass the book on and so has to go outside of the family. In addition, the family of von Hess have always perceived this responsibility as a burden. To Alfred, it is an opportunity, a hope for change.

Hermann is the perfect example of what happens to individuals brought up in a totalitarian society. He is emotionally and intellectually stunted. He is unable to read or write. He questions why he would ever need to, after all the people 'had nothing much to read but their technical books and the Hitler Bible. News was always broadcast. One didn't miss anything by not being able to read' (Burdekin, 1985: 17). His lack of intellectual ability means that he is unable to cope with the 'truth' that is revealed by the Knight von Hess. He is described as collapsing completely (Burdekin, 1985: 101). He has an intense repulsion of women, which amounts to fear. When the choir boy

disappoints him, Hermann is unable to handle the emotions and reacts in a violent jealous rage.

The Knight von Hess is an intriguing character. He is German, and therefore Alfred's enemy, but he is described as being kindly. He helps Alfred by giving him the book and photograph and even lets him fulfil his dream of flying a plane. Alfred sums up the tension between the two thoughts:

“I love my love with a G,” he said slowly, “because he is good. I *hate* him with a G, *because he is German*. If I could only remember your face and hair and the shape of your beard, and your eyes, and forget that blue tunic and the cloak, and those silver swastikas on the collar! You have done us a very great harm, because now we can't really love all through, as we should like to, even the best German, not even the *best man*, if he should be a German, in the world”
(Burdekin, 1985: 152)

This summation points to the real difficulty of reconciliation and forgiveness. England is a colony of Germany and there is bitterness in Alfred's words about the 'harm' Germany has done. Yet, for the arrival at a future world based on peaceful co-operation these feelings must be worked through.

There are two female characters in the text and they only appear for a few pages towards the end of the novel: Ethel and her baby Edith. Ethel lives in the Women's Quarters, a caged area at the edge of town. When Alfred first visits Ethel she is terrified he will remove the white armlet that marks her as belonging to him. She prefers to belong to Alfred in comparison with others, who might be violent, or the Germans who

are described as being 'brutal' (Burdekin, 1985: 159). She is shocked that Alfred shows an interest in seeing the new baby, Edith. In this society it is shameful to have a daughter. However, with the new knowledge that Alfred has gained he now sees the situation of women in a different light. In this scene there is both a sense of Alfred's power, in Ethel's terrified reaction to Alfred, and from Alfred's part nostalgia for a home life with both the sexes, with Alfred imaging a homely scene with his three sons that includes Edith and Ethel.

Publishing History

Swastika Night has a remarkable publishing history. From 1937 to the present it has been published and re-published seven times by seven different publishing houses in Britain and Europe. This includes a time of over forty years when the novel, and the author, seem to have been 'forgotten' and perhaps would have remained so but for being rescued from obscurity by Patai. During some research on feminist utopian texts Patai discovered that though the novel was first published under the name Murray Constantine this was in fact a pseudonym of Burdekin. It is not a coincidence that the subsequent re-edition, as a consequence of Patai's discovery, of the novel in the 1980s occurred at the same time as critical interest was growing in terms of looking at utopian and dystopian fiction by women. Contemporary women writers were producing utopian texts and critics were also involved in a process of recovering forgotten utopian texts by women from previous years. However, the point to be made here is that the timing of Burdekin's literary recovery took place in a historical period when women's utopian texts were receiving serious attention.

The novel was first released, under the Constantine name, in 1937 by the publisher Victor Gollancz. The date eerily foresees the extremes of the German regime in the late thirties and early forties. In 1940 the book was republished by the Left Book Club, an off-shoot of Victor Gollancz. This was unusual because the Left Book Club typically did not deal with fictional texts and tended to engage with more political matters (Patai, 1984: 85). At this time a publisher's note was added at the beginning of the book stating that the novel is 'symbolic rather than prophetic'. The publisher's statement contained two key concepts, that the author still believes, since it was originally published, 'that the Nazi idea is evil'. However, the author, it states, is now less confident about the power the Nazis have to infect the rest of the world with their evil, and significantly that 'Nazism is too bad to be permanent'. Since the novel was first published the time had changed from pre-war to war-time conditions. Given the context, it would not be inspiring to a reader under threat of Nazi invasion to believe that the Nazis' taking over was inevitable. The note was most likely meant to make clear to the reader that the novel was not suggesting that English defeat by the Nazis was inevitable. The situation was not 'prophetic', prophesying the shape of things to come, but 'symbolic' of the dangers of fascism and reinforcing the importance of fighting against this threat.

The book then seems to have been forgotten until Patai's discovery and was published for the first time under Burdekin's real name in 1985. It was claimed by feminist critics as part of the tradition of forgotten feminist utopias. This, indeed, has been the way that contemporary critics have tended to approach the novel. Finally, the book has enjoyed international popularity: published in Portuguese as *Noite da suástica* (1989); in 1993 it was released, in Italian, as *La notte della svastica*; in Germany it was translated as *Nacht Der Braunen Schatten* (1995), which actually translates as *Night of the Brown Shade*. It is not surprising that countries where it has been published internationally (Portugal,

Italy, and Germany) are also countries with a history of previously being ruled by fascist regimes.

The most interesting translation is the German one. Already the title *Swastika Night* gives the impression of a dark story to come but the change in the title of the German version provides another subtlety. The German version is the only one not to feature the word 'swastika' in its title. It was published in Germany in 1995 and the title was changed from *Swastika Night* to *Night of the Brown Shade*. It is highly likely the change was due to the fact that the public showing of the swastika symbol itself is illegal in Germany. The German title is interesting in that the attention becomes more focussed on the 'night' of the title. The word 'night', at a basic level, is connected with darkness, in contrast to the light of day, but historically speaking the word 'night' also has a particular resonance with events in Nazi Germany of the 1930s. The first is the Night of the Long Knives, which Burdekin would have been aware of, and which refers to a series of purges that took place in Germany in 1934. There is also the 1938 *Kristallnacht* or Night of Broken Glass which saw a series of attacks against Jewish people, homes, synagogues and businesses. Further, the introduction of the words 'brown shade' in the German title also seem to refer to the identifying brown uniform of the German SA men, who came to be known as brownshirts. The suggestion is that the society represented in the novel is living under the shadow or shade of the Nazi party.

Criticism

Surprisingly, given that *The Times Literary Supplement* had reviewed nearly all of her other novels, including the ones written in her own name as well as under her pseudonym, they significantly omitted to review this one. The reason why they failed to

publish a review is unknown. However, perhaps the reason can be guessed at from an unfavourable contemporary review by Kenneth Macpherson. He wrote that:

It is a pity that a writer, whose previous books have revealed her to be a profound observer of human behaviour, should dissipate considerable strength of feeling in a spendthrift and somewhat unconvincing tirade of a quite improbable sub-Wellsian “shape of things to come” (Macpherson, 1937: 189).

This review seems to suggest that *Swastika Night* was not considered at the time to be the crowning oeuvre of her body of work. However, Macpherson’s criticisms seem to be directed more against the genre of dystopia. He argues that politics should be reserved for the newspapers and it is pointless to try to predict the future because ‘tomorrow [sic] comes always unforeseen’ (Macpherson, 1937: 189). It seems unfortunate that the initial reception of her novel was seemingly marred by being caught up in the views on the worth of utopian and dystopian texts.

Contemporary criticism, as with Burdekin’s *The Rebel Passion*, has tended to focus on her analysis of gender. Patai praises the novel for the way it ‘satirises ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ modes of behaviour’ (Patai, 1985: iv). Sussex creatively compares the work of Burdekin with that of Philip K. Dick in her short story ‘Kay and Phil’. In the story she imagines a meeting between the two authors and they discuss their different imaginings of futures in which the Nazis won the war. Differences of opinion arise over the Nazi treatment of women.

Section 2

The cultural construction of gendered identity is the most important theme of *Swastika Night*. The novel features an exaggerated form of gender identity extrapolated from Nazi ideology. Patricia Adair Gowaty also picks up on this point in Burdekin's work: 'Burdekin's fiction explores how small incremental exaggerations in culturally mediated sexual power asymmetries similar to those extant in Europe during the mid-1930s might look after forty or fifty generations' (Gowaty, 2003: 65). The exaggerations present in the future society make clear current gender inequalities in the interwar period.

Masculinities

Masculine identity in the text is connected with soldierly values. Gowaty describes it as 'hyper masculinist' (Gowaty, 2003: 65). In the Church ceremony at the beginning of the book the Knight von Hess, in his role as priest, gives an indication of what masculine character is like, he preaches: '*I believe in pride, in courage, in violence, in brutality, in blood-shed, in ruthlessness, and all other soldierly and heroic virtues*' (Burdekin, 1985: 6). Alfred questions this with Hermann: 'Look here, Hermann, what *is* a man? A being of pride, courage, violence, brutality, ruthlessness, *you say*' (Burdekin, 1985: 28). Alfred is questioning the Nazi construction of male identity. In this questioning Alfred also ultimately reveals that gender identity is a social construction and not necessarily based on 'natural' factors. The reader knows that men are not *naturally* violent and brutal.

Homosociality

The society in *Swastika Night* is organised on rigid gender lines. In this culture men have the power and women are subordinate, as would be expected in a patriarchal society, however the degree to which this power relationship is represented is extreme. Men and women's lives are completely separate. Men, depending on race and religion, have relative freedom, while women are caged and segregated from the men. The women in the text are so degraded that they are considered to be no better than animals. This leads to the main bonds in a man's life being other men. Therefore, this future society could be described as one designed along homosocial lines. The basic definition of homosociality is that it is a concept which 'describes and defines social bonds between persons of the same sex' (Hammarén and Johansson, 2014: 1). This definition mainly applies to the men in the novel, not the women, because the women are not conscious enough to feel that sense of bonding and kinship with other women. The men's interactions in their working, social, and home lives are only with other men. The only contact with women is when the men go to the women's quarters for sexual interactions, primarily for procreative purposes.

The question to ask then is if the situation is as a result of the way society is organised in the text or the actual cause of it. The answer is probably the latter. The term homosociality has often been used specifically to refer to a way that men, in a patriarchal society, maintain their superior position in society: the term is 'frequently applied to explain how men, through their friendships and intimate collaborations with other men, maintain and defend the gender order and patriarchy' (Hammarén and Johansson, 2014: 1). In effect, this suggests that men's bonds with other men are used purposefully for the subordination of women. This is the extreme situation in *Swastika*

Night, men are organised together for the subordination of women. Men have not turned to other men for emotional fulfilment as a result of the situation but have done so in their pursuit of the effective exclusion of women from the human race.

However, another explanation of homosociality suggests that male bonding in homosocial relationships is more complex than that and complicated by notions of sexuality. It could be seen to be 'characterized by homosocial desire and intimacy, as well as homosexual panic' (Hammarén and Johansson, 2014: 2). This explanation suggests that homosocial behaviour can sometimes be the result of a homosexual desire, however the conflict between heterosexual cultural normalcy and homosexuality desire results in a crisis of sexual identity, which results in a hatred for homosexuality and a reaffirmation of a heterosexual identity, based on a hyper-masculine pattern:

Homosocial desire refers to men turning their attention to other men, and homosexual panic refers to the fear of this attention gliding into homosexual desire. In an attempt to emphasize heterosexuality, fear or hatred of homosexuals and misogynist language are developed (Hammarén and Johansson, 2014: 2).

This explanation makes sense when considering the Nazi attitude toward homosexuality in the interwar period, though needs to be viewed slightly differently in the novel. The Nazis in the interwar period were violently homophobic while spending vast amounts of time, as soldiers, surrounded by men and bonding with other men. This situation led to sexual conflict and a re-enforcing of heterosexuality with a type of violent hypermasculinity. The Nazis in *Swastika Night* are far from being homophobic but the situation is an extrapolation of the homosociality typified by the Nazis. If men spend all

of their emotional and social lives surrounded by men then it is only one step further to suggest a sexual relationship. Further, the exclusion of women has led to them being so degraded that they are incapable of being partners on the same intellectual and emotional level.

Homosexuality

An intriguing part of the novel is the widespread acceptance of a homosexual lifestyle. Early on in the text when Hermann is attending a church service he is distracted with his admiration for a young choir boy and it is acknowledged that 'gazing at lovely youths in church was not even conventionally condemned' (Burdekin, 1985: 5). This acceptance of the homosexual lifestyle is later confirmed when Alfred reflects on his brother, Thomas, who has nothing to do with women: 'His whole sexual and emotional life was lived among men. No stigma attached to it, and the German government had nothing to say against a whole-time homosexuality for Englishmen' (Burdekin, 1985: 166). Reflecting on the subject of homosexuality in the novel is not straightforward. Firstly, the criticism of the novel as being homophobic must be addressed. Secondly, it must be considered what point Burdekin is trying to make with having an open acceptance of homosexuality in the text. Finally, the relationship between dystopia and homosexuality will be explored.

The subject of homosexuality in the novel is not without its criticism. In a review of the novel, L. J. Hurst questions Patai's discussion of the novel, including her focus on the subject of the oppression of women to the exclusion of all else, such as the subject of the Jews and the representation of homosexuality, which is considered by Hurst to be homophobic:

[I]n her praise of the novel Patai is also prepared to remain silent about a major flaw in *SWASTIKA NIGHT* – that it is violently anti-homosexual. All the Nazis are misogynists, most of them are gay, and many of them prefer little boys – not just pederasts but paedophiles. Burdekin’s sophistication did not stop her using homosexuality as an automatic disqualification from humanity. She used an ultimate cliché [sic], to prove the villainy of the Nazis and Patai does nothing to correct the slander (Hurst, 2006: no page numbers)

These are harsh words, both against Patai and Burdekin, and they will be taken point by point. Patai did rediscover Burdekin and has written many critical pieces on her novels but overall her writings have not been that extensive and so it is not unusual that Patai has not mentioned homosexuality in the text. Further, this subject has received little attention from other critics. In addition, it feels almost as if Hurst is deliberating accusing Patai of not addressing this subject. However, it would be wrong to assume that critics are remaining silent on the subject when it could simply be that they do not agree with Hurst’s position. This position itself can legitimately be challenged and Hurst’s reading of the text could be considered harsh, overly simplistic and too generalised. The attack on the text itself will be considered next.

Hurst’s accusations of homophobia in the text seem to centre on two points: the men in the novel hate women and the men are attracted to young boys. Hermann is shown to be attracted to a young boy at the beginning of the novel but this cannot be used to demonstrate the assertion that ‘many of them [Nazis] prefer little boys’ (Hurst, 2006: no page numbers). In fact, although the protagonist Alfred is shown to have emotional bonds with the men in his life there is only evidence that he has sexual contact with the mother of his children. In addition, the idea that the men in the novel become

homosexual from distaste for women is much too simplistic. The position of women in the text and the response of men to them form a much wider argument relating to women in a patriarchal society. It is not being argued here that the text is or is not homophobic. Reading the novel in context, however, provides a different perspective on Burdekin's views on homosexuality. Given her more positive acceptance of homosexuality in her other utopian texts, especially *The Rebel Passion*, it can be speculated that she was not making a point about homosexuality being wrong.

Taken outside of this context, however, there are difficulties in portraying homosexual characters in a dystopian text. Resorting to homosexuality in a dystopian text seems to suggest that this is an undesirable thing because this is an overall negative society, worse than the reader's own. If this was a eutopian text then the opposite would more likely be inferred; that society has become more progressive and accepting. In the second half of the twentieth century many dystopian texts featured societies in which homosexuality was encouraged or enforced as a part of the population control of that society: *The Wanting Seed* (1962) by Anthony Burgess, *The Forever War* (1974) by Joe Haldeman, and *Solution Three* (1975) by Naomi Mitchison. It was seen as the negative consequence of the dystopian society. However, this is clearly not the way Burdekin was using the subject in her text. Further, the fact that the ruling party are Nazis and the governing powers are accepting of homosexuality has a greater relevance than if it was another ruling system or party. There is an incredible irony that a well-known anti-homosexual party ends up, in Burdekin's text, having widespread acceptance of homosexuality.

Another point that Burdekin could be making is that in a society with such rigid definitions and very distinct representations of masculinity and femininity it makes it

incredibly difficult for successful heterosexual partnerships. In the text, Thomas is the only character who seems to be fully happy with his sexuality. He is happy in his homosexual relationships. This is in contrast to the distorted representation of heterosexual relationships in the text. Alfred's emotional and social life is lived with men and the way women have been degraded means that he cannot have an emotionally satisfying relationship with the mother of his children, Ethel. Alfred's German friend, Hermann, is a damaged character. He has a 'deep repugnance, which amounted to a fear of women' (Burdekin, 1985: 33). This fear develops into violence when confronted by the object of his desire, the young choir boy, trying to rape a Christian girl. Hermann is presented as being truly enraged that the boy is attracted to the opposite sex: 'he's a pretty lad who ought only to be interested in *men*' (Burdekin, 1985: 35). There has already been a hint of violence in Hermann's representation when he imagined earlier giving the boy's head a 'good tug' to 'make him mind' (Burdekin, 1985: 8). In the society that he lives in Hermann is so confused that he is unable to have either a fulfilling homosexual or heterosexual relationship.

Femininities

One of the main themes in the novel is gender and the treatment of women. The dystopian genre allows Burdekin a certain freedom to discuss and explore these issues. Women, in *Swastika Night*, are animalistic and in fact it is the young boys that take on feminine characteristics. Hermann admires the young choir boy for characteristics which are traditionally admired in women, in particular his 'long fair silky hair' and his smooth skin (Burdekin, 1985: 5). The women in *Swastika Night* live separately from the men in 'cages', which actually means caged areas, and their position in society is reduced to the function of mere breeding cattle. The men feel nothing but contempt for women: so

much so that they even feel defiled in having been born from a woman. Part of their religion concerning Hitler has him being born not from a woman but from his father's head, he was:

[N]ot begotten, not born of a woman, but Exploded!...From the Head of His Father, He the perfect, the untainted Man-Child, whom we, mortals and defiled in our birth and in our conception, must ever worship and praise (Burdekin, 1985: 6.).

It is interesting that both birth *and* conception are highlighted as if it is a highly degrading chore that men have to perform to have sex with women. However, if that was so it is highly suspect that the German Knights, when posted to England, would still feel it necessary to rape English women even though because of racial factors they are forbidden to have children with them. This suggests that the position of power is the most important part of the subjection of women and not just for interests of producing children.

The women have to give up the boy children that they bear when they are one year old in order for the children to be brought up 'properly' by men, girl children however are left to stay with their mothers because they are essentially of no value to society except as future mothers and this requires little or no education. A boy child is a cause of celebration while a girl is a disappointment for the father, and deeply shaming for the mother. When told that his baby is a girl Alfred responds by saying 'can't be lucky every time' (Burdekin, 1985: 156). This attitude has led to a situation where more boy children than girl children are being born and as a consequence the lack of girls poses a serious threat to the birth rate. The fact that more boys are being born than girls is hard

for the Knight von Hess to explain because there seems to be no physical reason why this should be and it is suggested that there is a psychological reason. This concept seems unrealistic and unscientific but somewhat explainable in terms of a convoluted theory of adaptation. The human species have adapted so that only the strongest members of society survive, the men, with the consequence of it leading to the extinction of the species.

In this German Empire, women have no formal education whatsoever and the only way that they are taught their role in society is through listening to the Knight's speeches in church. This includes the Knight repeatedly telling them that they must not mind being raped. Women have no rights over their bodies and it is legal for them to be raped by any man. When they are taken by a particular man they wear a white armband to show that they are taken, but even then they are not safe from rape from other men. The Knight tells them they must submit to other men even if they wear the white armband, their duty is not to resist but to inform the man they belong to afterwards and let the men deal with it among themselves. The Knight makes it clear that rape, as a concept, does not actually exist, however there are certain restrictions on which women can and cannot be taken and that has to do with age restrictions: 'there was no such crime as rape except in connection with children under age' (Burdekin, 1985: 13). It is forbidden to rape girls, but not for any moralistic reason but because they would only produce 'puny' babies. There are also matters of race and religion involved in the matter of procreation. It is allowed for German men to have sexual relations with women of the subject races however they must ensure that no children are born from the union. However, it is considered a great crime even to think about being with a Christian woman. It must be remembered, a Christian woman is considered worse than a worm.

These women do not see themselves as being raped because they have no sense of having ownership of their bodies. The words are used in the text but the relevance of using the words is not meant to be directed at the women but at the reader of the text. They have been programmed to accept something that the reader would see as unacceptable and would label as rape. The idea of women as property can be linked to the issue of rape in marriage. In the novel women wear a white armband, to show that they belong to a specific man, and this armband could be read to also stand as a type of wedding ring. Historically, when Burdekin was writing it was legal for men to rape their wives. It was not until 1991 in England that the law was changed. In the novel, when the woman wears the white armband of a man she is his property and not for other men to interfere with. This has to do with ensuring the paternity of the male children. This reflects the fact that historically rape was seen as a crime against the man, who was the owner of the 'property' in question.

The Knight von Hess traces the reasons for how it came to be that women lost their freedom. Men felt resentful that women had the right to reject them. In simplistic terms, it was felt by the men that they had greater value, as soldiers, since they went out and conquered the world, by going to war and, after all, all women did was have the children. In this binary pairing childbirth is considered culturally of less value than that of the soldier. The ultimate point being made is that being conquerors gave the men a sense of entitlement.

The situation for women in *Swastika Night* is not the same for all women. The reader has no knowledge of what the position is for women in the Japanese Empire, although the Knight von Hess guesses that it is similar to the position of women in Europe.

However, the reader is aware that the position of Christian women is different from the

non-Christian ones. For one, Christian women live together with the men, although the relationship between Christian men and Christian women is far from being equal and is more like master and pet. Christian and non-Christian women alike are considered not to have souls, they are less than human, and according to the Christians when the end of the world comes women will no longer be necessary and will just disappear. The Knight von Hess believes that women have, 'have no will, no character, and no souls; they are only a reflection of men' (Burdekin, 1985: 70).

The Knight continues along the same line of women only being a reflection of men and condemns them further for not being able to change this pattern, a pattern he has already deemed unchangeable by his belief that women have no souls, he says: 'But what men cannot do, never have been able to do, is to *stop* this blind submission and cause the women to ignore them and disobey them' (Burdekin, 1985: 70). This conclusion is flawed because it supposes that women being obedient to men is a natural and not a cultural phenomenon and as such the pattern cannot change, because it is natural, but as the Knight admits, 'The human values of this world are masculine' (Burdekin, 1985: 108), and as such women have little choice but to obey men in order to survive.

The Knight talks about what he knows of the development of Christian women, saying that in the beginning women were told by men that they had souls and Jesus loved them. The Knight does not believe that women have souls and that when religion preached that all women did was develop a 'simulacrum of a soul and a sham conscience' (Burdekin, 1985: 73). The Christian men also acquiesced in the Reduction of Women, the name of the project of degrading and devaluing women in culture and physically controlling them. They acquiesced because the heart of the religion was always secretly misogynistic. It was then the Christian men had to abandon the pretence because they

‘found it impossible to go on believing they [women] had souls’ (Burdekin, 1985: 73) when they became so animalistic and resembled nothing more than a shell of a human being.

Women are no longer considered to be human in *Swastika Night*. The Knight admits that: ‘We Germans have made women be what they cannot with all their good will go on being – not for centuries on end – the lowest common denominator, a pure animal’ (Burdekin, 1985: 70). It is not just in function that they have become animals but also in terms of the mind:

None of the women found their lives at all extraordinary, they were no more conscious of boredom or imprisonment or humiliation than cows in a field. They were too stupid to be really conscious of anything (Burdekin, 1985: 158).

There is only one instance in the book where the reader sees things from a woman’s point of view, when Alfred goes to see ‘his woman’ Ethel in the Women’s Quarter, and even then her thoughts are the interpretation of the third person narration. Ethel literally does not have the vocabulary or the intelligence to comprehend her own situation: ‘She was wretched and she was ill, but she knew it hardly more than an animal would have done’ (Burdekin, 1985: 159).

Women’s physical appearance is very significant in the novel. They are deliberately made ugly with unflattering clothes, shaven heads, and although described by Hermann as having ‘bulgy’ bodies it is very likely that in physical appearance women are very emaciated after being given barely enough food to live on. The shaven head is particularly significant because traditionally this is used as punishment for women who

have fraternised with the enemy. The question of how women became the animalistic creatures they have become in *Swastika Night* is one considered by Alfred and he asks the Knight von Hess ‘why have they let themselves go *down* so’ (Burdekin, 1985: 70). There is a clear implication that women are the way that they are because of something they *themselves* have done and not from anything that men have done to them. The Knight is dismissive of women and tells him that women acquiesced in the Reduction of Women because ‘[w]omen will always be exactly what men want them to be’ (Burdekin, 1985: 70). This judgement is glaringly flawed, as is shown in the example below. It is often the case that women have no space or power to become anything else.

The Knight relates an incident of a girl who opposed the Reduction and was brutally murdered by other women who were supposedly full of support for the new way for women. However, when the talk comes to the Christians and Alfred wonders what would have happened if the Christian women had not acquiesced in the Reduction of Women the Knight replies: ‘Then they would all have been killed, however inconvenient. You cannot imagine that *that* would ever have been allowed’ (Burdekin, 1985: 73). From both incidents the reader learns that it cannot be assumed that all women joyously embraced the new way of life, in fact they seemed to have been limited to the two options: embrace the system or be killed.

Section 3

Genre

There are many striking similarities between Burdekin’s *Swastika Night* and Orwell’s *Nineteen-Eighty Four*: the book from the past with a different account of history, the

division of the world between two empires, the static war between the two empires, and the poor living conditions of the working people. The similarities have prompted critics to wonder whether Orwell, ‘an inveterate borrower’, had been influenced by Burdekin’s novel in writing his own (Patai, 1985: xii). Burdekin’s text was published twelve years before Orwell’s better known novel. Although there is no direct evidence Orwell had read Burdekin’s work, there is some circumstantial ‘proof’. Patai speculates on the tenuous link that the two writers shared the same publishers (Burdekin, 1985: xii). Gilbert Bonifas provides a more convincing argument in his letter to *Notes and Queries*. He points out that Orwell’s friend, Geoffrey Gorer, wrote in praise of *Swastika Night* in the journal *Time and Tide* in 1938, describing it as being superior even to *Brave New World*, and although Gorer did not remember doing so, he said it was highly possible he could have lent or given a copy of the book to Orwell (Bonifas, 1987: 59). There is no way to know whether Orwell had read the earlier novel or not. However, critics have often found the similarities between Burdekin’s and Orwell’s novels noteworthy (Baccolini, 2000: Patai, 1984: Croft, 1984). The importance of the similarities is twofold. The first reason why it is important is that it forms part of a wider attempt by critics to reimagine the literary history of utopia to include a greater variety of authors. The second reason is because of the feminist perspective Burdekin takes on women and gender in her text, in contrast to the seeming androcentrism of Orwell’s text.

As mentioned above, there are many similarities between Burdekin’s and Orwell’s text and this begs the question then why Burdekin was ‘forgotten’ and Orwell ‘remembered’. The explanation could be in their polarized approaches in terms of representations of gender. Patai describes this in the following way: ‘*Swastika Night*, like Burdekin’s other work, is a strongly feminist text, while *1984*, like Orwell’s other work, is androcentric and misogynistic’ (Patai, 1984, p.85). This, indeed, is harsh condemnation

of Orwell and his text. The androcentric (male-centred) aspects of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* are not confined to Orwell alone, but are endemic to the genre, and feature in many other male utopias and dystopias, including the work of H. G. Wells. In fact, Sussex accuses Philip K. Dick of the same point.

Swastika Night has frequently been compared with Philip K. Dick's *The Man in the High Castle* (1962). Both novels imagine a future society extrapolated from the alternative viewpoint of if the Nazis had won the Second World War. Carlo Pagetti, who also wrote the preface to the Italian translation of *Swastika Night*, compares the two and highlights the importance of Burdekin's work in terms of her going 'against the fundamentally male character of utopian (including dystopian) discourse, especially in regard to its often highly reductive representation of female characters' (Pagetti, 1990: 361). In this respect, the male character of utopian discourse is typified by texts like Orwell's and Dick's. At the heart of this issue is an acceptance of a patriarchal society as the norm. Male utopian writers may criticise power relationships in terms of class but this does not mean they have the same approach to gender.

Lucy Sussex considers this in the attitude of writer Philip K. Dick towards women and Nazi ideology. In her short story 'Kay and Phil' (1994) Sussex imagines a fictional meeting between Burdekin and Dick. Tellingly, in terms of Burdekin's position as a forgotten utopian writer, when Sussex submitted the story to be published in a collection with other writers the editor knew who Dick was, however he assumed that Burdekin was a fictional creation (Sussex, 1997: 304). In the story Dick is disbelieving of Burdekin's treatment of the women in the novel, instead reflecting on the Nazi ideology, '[t]hey were keen on *Kinder, Küche, Kirche*; but I don't think they were misogynists' (Dick, 1994: 547). In fact, historical research (such as by Koonz and Stephenson) on this

subject have shown the Nazis to be deeply misogynistic. Sussex also suggests the possibility that Dick could have read Burdekin's novel, '[w]hat might he have made of Murray Constantine's *Swastika Night*, a book it was at least possible he could have read, since it was, in its second printing, widely distributed by Gollancz' (Sussex, 1998: 298). Burdekin may or may not have influenced Orwell or Dick, however, her novel is a significant precursor to both novels, as well as the feminist novels of later decades.

Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* shares striking similarities with Burdekin's text. She has admitted, in an interview, to reading the novel, under the Constantine name, as a child. However, she gives more credit to Orwell as a source of inspiration for *The Handmaid's Tale*: 'Orwell became a direct model for me much later in my life – in the real 1984, the year in which I began writing a somewhat different dystopia' (Atwood, 2012: 143). Comparisons with Burdekin's tale seem more fitting when warning about backlash and complacency within a patriarchal society.

Section 4

Burdekin's text is a clear reflection of the concern with the rising popularity of fascist ideology in many European countries during the 1920s and 1930s. Similarly, other utopian texts published during this period also reflected this concern, and all take a particular, that is anti-fascist, stance. Naomi Mitchison's *We Have Been Warned* (1935) is another novel, like *Swastika Night*, particularly concerned with German fascism. On the other hand, Storm Jameson's *In the Second Year* (1936) projects a vision of Britain ruled by home-grown British fascists. However, Patai believes what sets Burdekin's text apart from 'many other anti-fascist dystopias produced in the 1930s and 40s' is its analysis of gender (Patai, 1985: iv). In *Swastika Night*, Burdekin clearly focuses on the

misogyny of the Nazis. Patai perceives Burdekin as showing not only that the Nazis were misogynist but they were, in fact, only an extreme extrapolation of everyday misogyny in a patriarchal society: 'fascism is not qualitatively but only quantitatively different from the everyday reality of male dominance, a reality that polarises males and females in terms of gender roles' (Patai, 1985: iv). This is one of the reasons why this text enjoyed some popularity following its republishing. This relationship between fascism and women in the text will be explored.

Curiously not all critics have such a positive response to Burdekin's perceptive representation of the Nazi attitude towards women in *Swastika Night*. In a bizarre introduction to her text in *The Faber Book of Utopias*, John Carey accuses Burdekin of, in relation to the Nazi attitude towards women, providing a 'misleading account of Nazi thought' (Carey, 1999: 413). A commonly held view is that, although traditionalist and conservative, the focus of the Nazis on 'Kinder, Küche, Kirche' (a slogan for women's role in society which translates as children, kitchen, church) shows an appreciation of the role of women in society. Peculiarly Carey provides evidence from Joseph Goebbels, the Nazi propaganda minister, to refute any idea that the Nazis were misogynists, believing that they 'looked to woman with her 'inner fullness and inner eagerness' to give life its colour' (Carey, 1999: 413). His comments, in fact, reveal a naïveté on his part in taking at face value propaganda put forth by the Nazi party, as well as an ignorance of the historical position of women during this time period. Carey's comments not only fail to show an appreciation of the wider situation of women in Nazi Germany; they also seem to take for granted the idea that the promotion of women's primary role as having children is unproblematic. Traditionalists who see women's place in society as wife and mother might perhaps agree with this viewpoint.

The fact that a woman's educational and career opportunities were simultaneously being severely restricted seems to play little part in his argument.

The horrific events of this time and the horrendous treatment and mass murder of millions of Jews are clearly forever imprinted into people's impression of the period. However, other researchers have looked at other aspects of the Nazi regime. During the 1970s and 1980s extensive research was undertaken on the position of all different types of women, including different classes and races, in Nazi Germany to create a much more accurate picture of what was going on at this time, of particular note is Claudia Koonz *Mothers in the Fatherland: Women, the Family and Nazi Politics* (1987) and Jill Stephenson's three books, *Women in Nazi Society* (1975) *The Nazi Organisation of Women* (1981), and *Women in Nazi Germany*. Looking at some of this research shows not only Carey's error but also how intuitive Burdekin was in understanding the Nazi attitude towards women.

The discussion of *Swastika Night* and the Nazi regime will start with a more general discussion on women and nation. It is easy to underestimate the relationship between nation/alism and gender, particularly since it has often been approached in an asexual way, 'for the most part, nations, nationalism, and nationalist movements have been treated as non-gendered phenomena' (Racioppi and O'Sullivan See, 2000: 21).

However, feminist critics on the subject take a different view. They believe that in today's society, particularly with resurgent interest in national feeling by certain nationalistic groups, it is impossible to ignore the implications for the relationship between nation and gender: 'No serious scholar writing about nationalism today can ignore or marginalize the gender dimensions of nations' (Ranchod-Nilsson and Mary

Ann Tétreault: 3). The problem in considering the idea of nation and nationalism at all is that the ideology of a nation is very changeable:

The chameleon quality of nationalism means that it can be couched in multiple and, at times, competing organizational forms and this confounds any attempt at glib generalization or universalizing pronouncements (Ranchod-Nilsson and Tétreault, 2000: 7).

One reason for this could be that, like most things, the nation is defined by its opposite and ‘the boundaries of “the nation” are always in flux as “insiders” and “outsiders” grapple for political power’ (Ranchod-Nilsson and Tétreault, 2000: 5). There is also the very complex relationship between national identity and personal identity. Generally the nation is associated with an idea of collectivity; the nation is a collection of people who are categorized together, and yet there is a very close relationship with collective national identity and individual self whereby ‘individual sense of self and individual experiences are connected to the development of collective national identity’ (Racioppi and O’Sullivan See, 2000: 20). For women as well as men identity is not just a private matter since ‘the self is always connected to some collectivity’ (Racioppi and O’Sullivan See, 2000: 20). Whatever defines what the nation is or is not most feminists writing on the subject of women and nation would agree that the nation is ‘premised on particular gender identities and meanings’ (Ranchod-Nilsson and Tétreault, 2000: 3). This is because membership of a nation is based on cultural considerations such as sexual and racial boundaries, origin myths, and social construction of identity. An example of this is the way women are viewed in the nation in terms of the military: ‘The military plays a key role not only in defending the nation-state, but also in arbitrating criteria for membership (citizenship) in the nation’ (Ranchod-Nilsson and Tétreault,

2000: 7) The soldier is worthy of the vote and membership, women (who are only mothers) are not.

Particularly interesting is that the current interest in gender and nation has also led to a rethink of previous nationalistic movements whereby critics have started to rethink 'the gender dimensions of earlier nationalist movements in light of recent developments' (Ranchod-Nilsson and Mary Ann Tétreault, 2000: 2). In terms of the Nazi movement, feminist critics in the seventies and eighties became interested both in women's positions in this movement and the way Nazi ideology viewed their position, of particular note is Claudia Koonz's *Mothers in the Fatherland: Women, the Family and Nazi Politics* (1987) and Jill Stephenson's three books, *Women in Nazi Society* (1975) *The Nazi Organisation of Women* (1981), and *Women in Nazi Germany*. As a side note, Gisela Bock in her essay 'Racism and Sexism in Nazi Germany: Motherhood, Compulsory Sterilization, and the state' (1983) is quick to point out, though, that these studies seem to ignore the more complex problem for women in terms of their relationship to the nation by gender and race.

It is not unusual to talk about the Nazis and the subject of nation because the Nazi party was intensively nationalistic. Roger Griffin characterizes the thing that nearly all fascist movements, including the Nazis, have in common is a 'palingenetic [myth of rebirth] form of popular ultra-nationalism' (Griffin, 1993: 44). In the novel *Swastika Night* Burdekin presents the reader with all the worst aspects of nation/alism and particularly of Nazis nationalism. It would be very hard to argue that nation/alism has no impact on women's lives. The ideology of the Nazis is the one that tells women that they have to be subservient to men. The military demands this of the women because they hold the

soldier up as the defender of the nation state and these values are the values of the society.

The subject of national identity and women in general is very interesting. In recent years there has been a great deal of critical discussion on the relationship between gender and nation. This is because in the past critics have tended to ignore the connection between gender and nation, or rather, not perceive that there is a connection at all. The reason why this has been the case is because the nation has been viewed as being part of the public world: 'As nationalism and nations have usually been discussed as part of the public political sphere, the exclusion of women from that arena has affected their exclusion from that discourse as well' (Yuval-Davis, 2000: 2). The men are the citizens of the nation because they work in the public realm, the important realm, and women are not considered citizens because they are assigned to the private realm and seemingly make no contribution to the image of the nation. Women critics have challenged this view and believe that: 'No serious scholar writing about nationalism today can ignore or marginalize the gender dimensions of nations' (Ranchod-Nilsson and Tétreault, 2000: 3). This is not just because of women's continued presence in the public world, 'women did not just 'enter' the national arena: they were always there' (Yuval-Davis, 2000: 3).

The view of the nation as belonging to the public world needs to be seriously reanalysed because of the fact that the two areas of public and private world are not separate. The public depends on the private and also the public sphere significantly influences the private; the public makes laws and policies in an effort to control the private and restrictions are placed on the private by the public. There is the assumption here that just because a woman does not have a national identity that she does not have any national importance. In national ideology women are not viewed as having a national

identity in the way that men are. In respect of this, Mary O'Brien has identified the importance of history and the idea that women's act of reproduction is a seemingly timeless act while man's production is the making of history whereby: 'In making the state, men believe themselves to be making history' (O'Brien, 1989: 22). O'Brien, however, is quick to point out the flaw in this argument because it ignores the fact of 'the necessity for women's labor to reproduce the species in history' (O'Brien, 1989: 22). O'Brien criticises the belief that in historical and political terms production and reproduction are separated and the latter considered of less value than the former.

Women's importance to the nation state usually turns around their role as mothers. This role involves both the biological act of producing children and then the raising of children with values that agree with the ideology of the nation state. The nation state has used the role of women as mothers in various ways, from using it as an excuse to deny women greater political rights in peace times and in war time using it to persuade women to sacrifice their needs for the good of the nation. The 'natural' act of being a mother is considered to be a private act that has little to do with the public world or state control. However, it can actually be seen that the state interferes to an amazing degree in the lives of mothers, from the right of a woman to control her own fertility to the amount of control she has over the education and upbringing of her own child.

As a result it is very important to consider gender in relation to the nation because it is the nation that separates and labels the roles of men and women in the community. It is not individual men that oppress women but the collective of men embodied in the state. Women are not constrained by their sex or gender but by the ideas that surround these concepts which means that 'not biology but culture becomes destiny' (Yuval-Davis, 2000: 8). This means the act of giving birth is not an event that exists outside of history because of the ideas surrounding the very act itself: 'Why do we not give the lie to the

claim that birth is merely a biological happening, when our sex has universally created reproductive cultures which structure this event in variable but persistent sets of social relations' (O'Brien, 1989: 13).

Women's perceived unimportance in relation to national identity is the reason why women's role in the Nazi regime was neglected for so long. Historian Claudia Koonz in her text *Mothers in the Fatherland* has commented that 'half of the Germans who made dictatorship, war, and genocide possible have fallen through the historian's sieve' (Koonz, 1987: 3). She further comments on how: 'Historians have dismissed women as part of the timeless backdrop against which Nazi men made history, seeing men as active "subjects" and women as the passive "other"' (Koonz, 1987: 3). The renewed interest in the role of German women in Nazi Germany highlighted how much women are excluded from the image of a nation. Because, until recently, the Nazis have generally not been viewed within the context of gender does not mean that this is not a gendered issue. In fact it demonstrates amazing masculine bias. It is assumed that men are the important ones, history is made by the men, and the soldiers and politicians, who of course are men, are the only characters of interest. Women's roles in Nazi Germany were ignored for so many years because their role was not considered important enough to be worthy of attention.

In order to consider the position of women in Nazi ideology it is first necessary to look at the position of women in German society before the Nazis came to power. From when the Kaiser fled Germany after World War One and the country became a Republic women's rights progressed at a significant rate. In 1918 all women were granted the vote and women's participation in politics increased so that: 'Between 1919 and 1933, approximately 8 percent of the national legislature was composed of women' (Koonz,

1976: 664). It could be assumed from this that women would be hostile to such an anti-feminist party as the Nazi party, but in fact the women's movement in Germany had more in common with the National Socialist Nazi party than the rulers of the Democratic Republic.

The truth is that although the women's movement started out as progressive in the 1890s by the time Gertrud Baumer took over the leadership of the Bund Deutscher Frauenvereine (BDF) in 1910 the moderates had managed to suppress the radical faction of its cause. So much so that when the League for the Prevention of the Emancipation of Women was established in 1912 instead of challenging this group the BDF tried to placate it, stating that it, in fact, strove to affirm 'its support of the institution of marriage and its patriotism' (Evans, 1976: 177).

An example of women 'buying' into traditional male views of their value in society is the argument used when seeking to get the vote in pre-Nazi Germany. They did not make the argument that they were entitled to it on the grounds of equality and as a matter of justice they did so in respect of the fact that they gave service to the country by giving birth to the soldiers of the future. This was a viewpoint that Hitler would also later express; he 'availed himself of arguments devised by the women's movement itself, notably its attempt to argue that women were performing the equivalent of military service by risking their lives in childbirth' (Evans, 1976: 254-255). The Nazis promoted the idea that women were equal but in their separate sphere. Hitler made his views on the public and private sphere very clear. Speaking in 1934 Hitler said: 'Providence has entrusted to the woman the cares of that world which is her very own, and only on the basis of this smaller world can the man's world be formed and built up' (Noakes and Pridham, 1994: 449). However, the recognition that women's lives were

important was still based on patriarchal ideas. Hitler continued: 'We do not consider it correct for woman to interfere in the world of the man, in his main sphere' (Noakes and Pridham, 1994: 449). His flowery and flattering words could be said to be used to try and encourage women to the cause and are in fact nothing but propaganda.

The truth was that in Germany during, and after World War One the value of a soldier was considered to be high and the value of a mother in comparison was low. In *Swastika Night* von Hess relates the theories of Rupprecht von Wied and tells the reader that men resented women's rights when: 'The women hadn't beaten the world and made the Empire. They had only borne the children, and that was no more than any English woman or Russian woman could do' (Burdekin, 1985: 177). This gives a flavour of the true view of the value of women's role in society in the interwar period. This reflects soldiers' attitudes when returning from World War One. In 1919 a women's periodical carried a man's complaint that: 'The man had to go into the field and, for a tiny wage, risk his life; the young women sat safely back home and enjoyed their complete personal freedom' (Koonz, 1987: 27). This complaint was made as part of the dissatisfaction with the fact that women were unwilling to give up jobs they had taken up during the war.

Swastika Night makes reference to the ideas about women proposed by Otto Weininger, the author of *Sex and Character*. The character of Rupprecht von Wied, who was mainly responsible for the Reduction of Women in the novel, seems to resemble Weininger. It is von Wied that proved 'women were not part of the human race at all but a kind of ape' (Burdekin, 1985: 79). This links with Weininger's views on women. Firstly, he believed that men have souls but women do not, women are not logical and ethical and 'therefore, the ground for the assumption of a soul is absent' (Weininger,

1906: 186). A woman's intellectual ability, he continues, is low: 'Mind cannot be predicated of her at all; she is mindless' (Weininger, 1906: 253). According to Weininger, women's only value is in the continuation of the species. This is the main idea that runs throughout the entire novel. A reader today cannot help but find Weininger's ideas ridiculous and question the credence to such misogynistic views. Burdekin's point was that people were taking him seriously.

It has been made clear that Hitler viewed the realm of women as being the private sphere and the public sphere belonging to men. However, difficulties arise when the attempt is made to view the two as separate. In a 1934 speech to the *Nationalsozialistische Frauenschaft* (the female section of the German National Socialist Party) Hitler made his views on the role of women in society clear:

[T]he program of our national socialist women's movement has in reality but one single point, and that point is the child, that tiny creature which must be born and grow strong and which alone gives meaning to the whole life struggle (Noakes and Pridham, 1994: 450).

The role of women in society is thus reduced to giving birth. The public sphere (the Nazi regime) had a vested interest in interfering in the private realm (domestic life). Subsequently it can be said that the private realm has importance in that it fulfils the goals of the public sphere. Despite making these grand claims that the two were separate the regime set out to, to an unprecedented level, make changes and to control women's domestic lives.

As part of the Nazis' vision they needed to address the issue of procreation. Nazi ideological concern with the promotion and encouragement of the role of the mother was partially prompted by the need for more soldiers to realise Germany's plans for expansion into a great empire. The trouble was, however, that birth rates had been falling steadily since the beginning of the century. In 1900 the percentage of live births per 1,000 was 35.6% compared to 1933 which saw a drop down to 14.7% (Stephenson, 2001: 24). There were many reasons for the drop in birth rates, a problem not just confined to Germany but apparent in the rest of Europe as well. However, there was also the fact of increased female emancipation, more women working, the increase in the provision of birth control, and the growing trends in cities for women to prefer to have smaller families of one or two children.

In the interwar period the response to this issue was that the Nazis restricted women's opportunities in relation to education and work. They also introduced tax breaks and policies relating to improved maternal care. More controversially they introduced selective antinatalist policies. Their concern with getting the birth rate up was strictly limited to encouraging 'proper' Aryan mothers to give birth to more children so that at the other end they were increasingly concerned about rooting out the asocial mothers so that the pronatalist policies were met and outmatched by the antinatalist ones. In 1933 the Law for the Prevention of Hereditarily Diseased Offspring was introduced which included the legalisation of eugenic sterilisation that stated if certain women, meaning asocial women such as Jewish women, prostitutes and alcoholics, did not voluntarily submit to sterilisation they could be forced to (Bock, 1983: 408). It also became acceptable practice to force 'asocial' non-Aryan women to have abortions as well. The position is clear; women's birth control choices were being taken over by the state.

The Nazis were determined to return women to an idealised version of femininity. In the Weimar Republic women had made educational and political gains, including attaining the vote. The Nazi regime introduced incentive policies as well as restrictive policies to limit women's encroachment on masculine domains. It is significant then that married women were often the target of employment policies, with the assumption being that married women would be supported by their husbands with no need for them to work themselves, but with the aim of having women back in the home and having children (Noakes and Pridham, 1994: 466). In terms of education, in elementary school (*Volksschule*) and middle school (*Mittelschulen*) girls were indoctrinated into accepting their future roles as wife and mother as part of their allegiance to the nation. The role of wife and mother was seen to not necessitate a university education, and university admissions, in 1933, were 'restricted to 10 percent' (Stephenson, 2001: 72). Women's role in the Nazi regime is clear; they are to be wives and mothers. Contradictory they also had a role, though limited, in party politics. Before the Nazi *Machtübernahme* (takeover of power) there were many different women's groups which had close ties to the party but were not directly affiliated. The party had made no attempts to provide a women's group of their own but were aware of the importance of trying to appeal to the woman voter and so the NSDAP agreed to a proposal by Elsbeth Zander, the founder of the *Deutscher Frauenorden* in 1923, to 'place the DFO under the direct jurisdiction of the NSDAP' (Stephenson, 1981: 29).

This ready-made *volkisch* women's organisation must have seemed ideal to the party who had made no efforts previously to attract women or include them in the party at all. However, there were problems with the fact that the DFO still retained a certain amount of independence after they became affiliated. In different *Gaus* there was trouble when the DFO would not subordinate itself to the *Gauleiter* in charge of that area. It was not

just men that had problems with the DFO either, many women were unhappy with Zander's leadership. So much so that many of these women left the DFO to form rival Nazi women's groups such as the *Frauengruppen* (Women's Group) and the *Frauenarbeitsgemeinschaften* (Women's Working Group). It is directly because of the friction between these groups that the Nazi leadership took the decision to join all the women's groups together in the formation of the NSF.

There were many Nazis women's organisations in the interwar years, dealing with different issues relating to women with the majority of them affiliated in some way to the NSF. There was the *Deutscher Frauenwerk* (German Women's Enterprises) which was a sort of federation of women's groups and was closely linked with the NSF, particularly because Scholtz-Klink was in charge of both organisations. Other organisations included the *NS-Lehrerbund* (Nazi Teachers League), *NS-Schulerinnenbund* (Nazi Schoolgirls' League), and the *NS-Volkswohlfahrt* (the Nazi welfare organisation). The most interesting of all the groups though is the *Bund Deutscher Madel* (League of German Girls) which was the 'section of the NSDAP's youth organisation, the Hitler Youth, for girls of 14 to 18 years of age' (Stephenson, 2001: 181). The reason why this particular group is so interesting is because of the conflict over who had the right to be in charge of shaping the minds of young girls. The BdM was under the control of the *Hitler Jugend* (Hitler Youth) and this was under the control of Baldur von Schirach who was the *Reichsjugendfuhrer* (National Youth Leader). It had no affiliation with the NSF whatsoever, something which the NSF was far from happy about. Throughout the Nazi regime there was strong hostility towards the BdM from the NSF with many attempts by the NSF to intrude into BdM territory. Although the NSF was the female section of the NSDAP it had very little to say in the ideological position under National Socialism. Its task was to give 'ideological

leadership to the female population of Germany' (Stephenson, 1978: 193) but it was the men who decided what that leadership image should be. It is true that within the NSF women were organised to an unprecedented degree but they did not deal with anything beyond what was traditionally considered women's areas. It is also significant that most of the women working for the NSF were volunteers, 'just under 12 per cent of NSF officials were full-time salaried employees' (Stephenson, 1978: 192).

The function of the NSF was to give 'cultural, spiritual and political education' (Stephenson, 1978: 192) for German women, in effect it was organised propaganda. It did various things in order to get the message of women's role under Nazi ideology across; organising courses across the country in home and child care, providing the official magazine of the NSF, the *NS-Frauenwarte*, as well as providing radio programmes, doing recruitment drives and putting on cultural evenings to encourage a sense of national feeling towards German culture (Stephenson, 1975). The American historian Mary Beard believed in 1941 that Scholtz-Klink was 'governing some thirty million German women and tightening her grip on some twenty million other women in lands occupied by German troops' (Koonz, 1987: xvii). In fact Scholtz-Klink only had authority over the members of the NSF and not the estimated thirty million women that lived in Germany. This is very significant because the NSF needed the willing co-operation of German women, particularly housewives, and could not force them in any way to do anything.

Although Scholtz-Klink constantly put forward in propaganda that the 'Nazi-directed activity of women in the Third Reich was energetic, all-embracing and performed with enthusiasm by vast numbers of German women' this was in fact an exaggeration since the numbers of women participating was in fact very low with the truth being that the

‘mass of German women did not want to be organised’ (Stephenson: 182). How this would have changed once the girls who had grown up in organisations such as The League of German Girls is unknown. This is a significant point since although the Nazis’ attempt to target the younger generation was wide-spread, the end of the Nazi regime meant the success could never be measured. The role of women in these women’s groups is at odds with the Nazi view of women’s role of wife and mother. The women’s groups were not viewed as equal to the men’s but were tolerated in terms of their role in convincing other women to the cause.

In terms of sexuality, it would be assumed to be a matter for personal preference rather than national importance but in fact for the Nazis it was very much a national issue. It is not just a question of gender and the nation but also of sexuality and the nation.

Culturally the norm is heterosexuality and this is also reflected in the views of the nation. In Nazi Germany the focus on heterosexuality was very much connected with the birth rate. Whatever other feelings the Nazis may have had about homosexuality the official line was that it was a crime for people not to do their duty by producing children: ‘Nazi dogma described the mentally ill, sexually deviant, retarded, crippled, alcoholic, and other “defectives” as germs attacking a “healthy” society’ (Koonz, 1987: 190). As such homosexuals, particularly male homosexuals, were dealt with very harshly by the regime, after being arrested they were often sent to concentration camps, tortured and killed.

Interestingly enough, female homosexuality in Nazi Germany was considered less of a threat than male homosexuality, generally it was treated as undesirable but it was condoned on the belief that ‘lesbians were also often heterosexual and therefore much less likely than homosexual men to fail to contribute to the birth rate’ (Stephenson,

1975: 63). They had different attitudes towards homosexuality in Aryans and non-Aryans. The birth rate of the non-Aryans did not matter to the Nazis, in fact they were also actively trying to decrease the birth rate in certain people with measures such as forcible sterilisation, and so for this reason Himmler himself ‘contemplated tolerating it [male homosexuality] in non- ‘Aryans’ while punishing most severely German ‘Aryan’ homosexuals’ (Stephenson, 1975: 63).

Intriguingly, according to critics (Grand, 1979: Stephenson, 1975) the treatment of women under fascism during the interwar period was no different from that of any other patriarchal society. In terms of National Socialism, Stephenson asserts that ‘women in the late 1930s were neither better nor worse off than women in other countries in terms of status and opportunities, even in the Third Reich’ (Stephenson, 1975: 3). This does not present an opposition to the representation of women in Burdekin’s novel. This is because it is not challenging the actual way in which women are treated but suggesting that many societies view women in the exact same way. Fascist regimes of the interwar period were reactionary in their attitudes towards women. Women had gained, and were continuing to gain, freedoms and concessions.

The Nazi ideology of the 1930s was intensely nationalistic and nearly all their policies were justified to the public as being for the good of the nation. However, what was good for the nation was subject to change. One example of this is how at the beginning of the regime Nazi propaganda worked hard to convince women that for the good of the nation women needed to return to the home and produce future soldiers to necessitate German expansion. Yet, when World War Two started the nation needed women out of the home working for the war effort.

The Nazis interfered in the private realm in terms of female sexuality. The Nazis' attempt to control female sexuality for the good of the nation can be seen in their attitudes and policies towards prostitutes. This again goes towards showing how the representation of the position of women in *Swastika Night* is not baseless and is clearly featured on Nazi views and policies. The quote below by Timm shows a characteristic of the Nazi, the interference in the private lives of a regime's citizens, which regularly features in dystopian texts:

The totalitarian impulse to make even the most private of human activities serve national goals meant that Nazi leaders sought not only to define acceptable sexual behaviour but to redefine sexual acts as acts with public - not simply private - significance (Timm, 2005: 223).

The question for the Nazis was not the right or wrong of prostitution, but how it could be used for the Nazis' purpose. The way it could be used was to first bring it under state control and then it introduced harsh penalties to streetwalkers and supported and actively became involved in the administration of brothels. The fact that the regime was actively 'involved in the actual administration of prostitution' (Timm, 2005: 240) is very significant, particularly because it raised accusations that it 'provided an incentive for the slave trade in women and children' (Timm, 2005: 240). Women who were prostitutes were not free to be in control of the sale of their own sexuality, some women also did not have the choice of whether they wanted to sell their own sexuality:

Women who were considered prostitutes according to previously instituted definitions were registered and incarcerated in brothels. If they removed themselves from police or medical control, they were put into concentration

camps. This group also included women who had committed “race defilement” (Timm: 247).

The Nazis were against street-walkers and instead favoured state-controlled prostitution. They were particularly interested in using and controlling prostitutes for sex with soldiers. The connection between the Nazis’ brothels and the women’s cages in *Swastika Night* is obvious. The limiting of the women themselves to a specific area where they are readily available anytime for the pleasure of men but separate as well which means emotionally and physically they have no place in the public ‘man’s’ world. Women have no choice but to submit to state control.

In the novel, the Knight von Hess accuses women of being participants in their own downfall. He states that: ‘Women are nothing except an incarnate desire to please men’ (Burdekin, 1985: 82). Women are accused of being complicit in their own downfall by falling into line with what men wanted. The women in *Swastika Night* seem to be the victims of the Nazi nation; however, the Knight would take issue with this. He believes that, in the past, it was women who committed the crime by letting the men treat them this way. This statement is meant as a challenge to the reader. As has been seen, women played their own role in the rise and acceptance of the Nazi regime. Patterns of women’s behaviour show that women are often complicit in the restriction of their own role in society because they accept without challenge traditional ideological perspectives. The Knight’s conclusion would be that if women accept the way they are treated in society they cannot complain when men degrade them further and further. The concern with birth rates in *Swastika Night* reflects concern with birth rates in Germany in the interwar period. However, the reason for the concern is different in the novel. The reason why birth rates are low is that more male children are being born than

girls. This is leading to an imbalance where there are more men than women. The Knight knows what the rest of the population does not, and certainly the women do not, that 'every statistical paper with its terribly disproportionate male births caused groanings and anxieties and endless secret conferences' (Burdekin, 1985: 14). Although women are considered of little value to the nation it becomes clear that the private is very much political in the fact that society is set to crumble because women are not producing girl children. The stark truth is that 'if women stop producing themselves, how could Hitlerdom continue to exist?' (Burdekin, 1985, p.11).

In *Swastika Night* Alfred's brother Thomas is a full time homosexual, his 'whole sexual and emotional life was lived among men. No stigma attached to it, and the German government had nothing to say against a whole-time homosexuality for Englishmen' (Burdekin, 1985: 166). The attitude for German men, however is somewhat different. Although homosexuality is acceptable for German's, 'gazing at lovely youths in church was not even conventionally condemned' (Burdekin, 1985: 5), heterosexuality is nationally enforced. Hermann's sexuality is not a matter of choice as he is reminded by Alfred, 'as you are a Nazi, if you haven't had any children at all by the time you're thirty you'll be punished. It's only the subject races who are allowed to omit begetting children if they like' (Burdekin, 1985: 22).

A milder version of the Nazi antinatalist policies can be seen in *Swastika Night*. 'Asocial' mothers (Christian and subject-nation mothers) are not restricted from having children. However, German men are compelled to have children with Germany women to ensure the continuation of the species. The Nazis were more successful at weeding out the 'asocial' mothers-to-be than in persuading the Aryan mothers to produce more

children and that is because they needed the Aryan women's co-operation, unlike the 'asocial' women who they felt free to abuse at will.

The term 'mother' is problematic in relation to *Swastika Night* because the rearing of the child has been taken out of their hands and their role is limited to just the physical act giving birth. Women are incapable of being mothers, in the sense that the reader understands, to either boy or girl children. The boys are physically removed from their care and although the girls stay in the cages with their mothers these women are poorly equipped to properly educate them in anything. In fact, the feelings that the women have towards the children are described as being akin to the way an animal would feel about its young: 'Ethel hovered near with a terribly anxious look in her eyes, like a bitch whose new-born puppies are being handled' (Burdekin, 1985: 160).

In the novel there is a strong disconnection between women and mothering. The boys only have a vague idea of who their mothers are and it is considered unseemly for 'a man to point to a woman and say "there is my mother"' (Burdekin, 1985: 10). The only reason why they even have a vague understanding of who their mothers are is because when the boy children are older: 'To prevent incest, which was considered weakening to the race, a certain house (or houses) was pointed out to the son by the father as barred. The women in those houses were not for him' (Burdekin, 1985: 158). For the men in *Swastika Night* there is something shaming in being born of a woman, who after all is no better than an animal in the book.

In line with this, the Knight, speaking to the women, says: 'Are you not blessed above all female animals in being allowed to be the mothers of men? (Burdekin, 1985: 12). It seems to suggest that women should be grateful for any part in the birth of men. This is

what the Knight tells the women but this perspective is to be questioned. Later in the novel Alfred feels jealous of his woman's, Ethel's, ability to feed their child: 'He walked up and down the room while Ethel fed her. He could not bear to see this natural process [...] he was furious with Ethel for being able to do something for the baby he could not do himself' (Burdekin, 1985: 163). This shows, although the act of giving birth is degraded, in fact the truth may be that men are jealous that women can perform this important function that they cannot.

Alfred places great importance on parenting, and by both parents. This lack of mothering or parenting has damaging effects: 'Nothing is unthinkable to men who are born of mess. Lots of evil things might be unthinkable to the sons of men and women' (Burdekin, 1985: 108). Alfred learns that it is not the fact that women are born inferior but that they are made inferior by society, he believes that it is 'not in the womb the damage is done' (Burdekin, 1985: 162). He reflects on his new daughter and that if he took her away from everything and brought her up away from the rest of society then: 'This little thing could be made into a woman' (Burdekin, 1985: 161). This is not a woman in respect of the way she is described in the novel. It is the idea of woman, not the animalistic reality she has become. However, he is unable to do that so he reflects that 'it'll grow up to be exactly like Ethel' (Burdekin, 1985: 161). He knows that it is already too late for Ethel. Even so, she proves she is capable of some understanding when Alfred unexpectedly warns her to take care of Edith, she says, 'I-I will care for her always as if she were-were a boy' (Burdekin, 1985: 164).

Alfred is also extremely possessive of this new daughter and sees her as belonging to him: 'Edith, he felt, was entirely his, no one else ought to touch her. For he alone knew what Edith was now, not dirt at all, but the embryo of something unimaginably

wonderful. Ethel was not fit to touch her' (Burdekin, 1985: 163). This is problematic because it shows that Alfred sees no part for Edith in the upbringing of their daughter. Even with his progressive attitude, Alfred is unable to see any value in women's contribution and would raise Ethel in the male tradition. He states that: 'The highest possible masculine pattern of living should be imposed on women' (Burdekin, 1985: 109). Yes, it can be argued that because of women's degraded position in the novel they have little to contribute to the possibility of creating a new female image. However, he makes little or no effort to even understand Ethel's feelings and viewpoint.

It is very significant that in the book not only are the men allowed to rape women but the German men also have the ability to prevent pregnancies as well, 'the German men were taught how to prevent racial calamities of this kind' (Burdekin, 1985: 159). This again links with the Nazi attitude towards birth control in the interwar period. It is the regime which decides who can and cannot have children and with who they have children.

Section 5

Religion

It is necessary to consider the text in relation to religion. In the novel itself the Jewish religion has long since been eradicated. The Christians have replaced the Jewish religion in Nazi ideology as the scapegoats, figures of hate. The Nazis society is hierarchical and each person, or grouping, has their place. Although the Christians are hated and looked down upon as worse than a worm they also play an important part in the Nazi ideology. They are important enough to be in the creed, read in the Nazi church

service at the beginning of the novel. The balance of superior/inferior can only be sustained by the existence of something inferior. The Christians are a perpetual enemy. There is an ambiguous attitude towards Christianity in the novel. This novel, as with other works of Burdekin, seems critical of organised religion. In fact, in *Swastika Night* the novel shows that Christian men were complicit with the Nazis in degrading women. Burdekin could be making two different points with the Christian complicity. The first is that, like in *The Rebel Passion*, church religion is criticised for being misogynistic. Or, it could be an overall point that what joins together all men, whatever political affiliation or religious background, is a belief that women are somehow lesser than men. Nevertheless, ultimately hope rests with the Christians; the book, with its alternative vision of history, is left in the safe-keeping of the Christians. This might seem odd, since Joseph Black's convoluted version of Christianity certainly does not seem to offer a positive alternative to the current system. However, in other places Burdekin also seems to present a conflicting attitude towards Christianity. Burdekin is not afraid to criticise religion while at the same time believing that a future utopian society will ultimately be based on Christian principles, as can be seen in *The Rebel Passion*.

The relationship between religion and politics in the novel is complex. In the novel Hitler has turned from a political into a religious figure. It is not uncommon for a dictator figure to take on a saviour role (which can also be seen in the figure of Big Brother in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*). This personality type can be seen in the novel as someone to be worshipped, someone who is there to keep control and order. This is similar to when Hitler was first welcomed in Germany as a sort of saviour of the people. In looking back on the interwar period Nazism, and Italian Fascism, have often been described as a political religion because they often employed the trappings of traditional religious iconography. Hitler was seen as the saviour of the nation for attempting to get

Germany back on its feet after the Great Depression and the humiliation of the Treaty of Versailles. The language used to describe Hitler and the Nazis party was very much influenced by rhetoric that had often been used by religion.

Another aspect of the representation of religion in the text is the idea of the end of days. In fact, dystopian fiction is often apocalyptic. The idea of apocalypse is common in religious writings. In terms of the Christian perspective, the idea of apocalypse 'was grounded in the belief that humanity was in its final days' (Grey, 2008: 8). *Swastika Night* anticipates the end of the world in various ways. The first main anticipation in the novel of the end of the world is through war between the German and the Japanese empires. The idea of an apocalypse coming about because of war is not an unexpected one. However, it is revealed to Alfred by the Knight von Hess that although there is an expectation of war by most of society, it is not likely to become a reality. The society of the Nazis is organised on soldierly principles and the common Nazi is expected to, and is in fact keen to fight in combat with the Japanese. The culture of the Nazi society is based on this principle. However, what the ordinary Nazi does not know, and what is known by the higher officials of both empires, is that war between them is practically not possible. Neither can successfully attack the other. They have reached a stalemate. The problem is that not only are both sides equally matched but because of the decline in the birth rate of both empires they cannot afford to risk the possibility of huge losses of life. The novel here questions the idea of war being a necessity. War can sometimes be viewed, for various reasons, as being necessary. The deeply pacifist Burdekin is making the point that far from war being necessary it is unproductive and can never feature in the progress of the human race. So, the final end of days, in this society will not come about through the action of war.

However, the impossibility of war is just as likely to have a damaging effect in this society. The stability of a war-like society is under threat when there is no possibility of war. In a conversation with Alfred, the Knight von Hess states:

A people which is conditioned for war from childhood, whose ethic is war and whose religion is war, can live, though not very happily, on the hope of war; but when that breaks down it must change its conditioning or perish, like animals which cannot fit themselves to their environment (Burdekin, 1985: 76).

It is curious that rather than war being the cause of the end of society in fact the lack of a war may be the cause of society breaking down. A society that revolves around the idea of war will fall into crisis and turn in on itself when the possibility of war is revealed as a fiction. The people, or the men, facing this cultural crisis have little capacity to deal with it or build something better. There is no doubt that the species has degenerated dramatically in the novel. Science fiction writers, such as H.G. Wells, at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, were questioning the idea of evolutionary progress. Just as humanity is capable of evolving to become more advanced, humans are just as capable of devolving into something worse than what they are currently. In *Swastika Night* the men are intellectually stunted and the women have been affected even worse. They are degraded physically and mentally. In respect of their conscious existence they are now no better than animals. After all, the empire has no need of thinking women when women's value lies in their ability to give birth. This value is brought into sharp focus with the declining birth rates, which is the second anticipation of the end in the novel.

When thinking about the end of the world or the end of society it is often represented as

a catastrophic event. But the end of the world can be a slower process. The human race does not have to go out in a huge display but can fade away slowly. In simple terms it is possible that the human race could just die out. The idea of an evolutionary apocalypse brings to mind H. G. Wells' *The Time Machine*. In that novel the time travelling protagonist travels to the end of the planet earth and faces a bleak landscape. No human life exists and the planet is dying a natural death. The people who live in the society of the novel *Swastika Night* face a similarly bleak future. It is possible that the human race will die out due to population decline. For some reason, that no one can understand, only male children are being born. Although this seems to be a so-called natural phenomenon it could be speculated that cultural factors, such as the poor treatment of women also play a part. In the Nazi society male children are considered a blessing, while girl children are seen as a curse. It is this attitude, although scientifically unexplainable, that is responsible for the current situation. This shows that rather than women having no value they are in fact the key to the continuation of the species. The question of why only male children are being born is interesting because it suggests a sort of social Darwinist slant. That society has been organised for the benefit of the what, culturally, is determined to be the strongest members of society, which are the men, and so society has adapted itself to eradicate the so-called weakest members, women, and this destruction of the so-called weakest members of the race will lead to the destruction of the race.

Finally, the last great anticipation of the end of the world in the novel is a specific imagined religious vision of the end of the world which is believed by the Christian population. Visions of the end of the world are common in religious ideology, as Edward James points out in his essay 'Rewriting the Christian Apocalypse as a Science-Fictional Event' (2000). He points to apocalyptic writing in the Hebrew Bible, the

Jewish Apocrypha, and the New Testament. In the Christian religion there are the prophecies of the Book of Daniel and the Revelation itself. In *Swastika Night* although the Christian vision of the end seems to be influenced by certain religious ideas of the end, it quickly becomes clear that Christian theology has become seriously corrupted. This is due largely to the fact that history now relies on an imperfect oral tradition.

The reader gets an insight into the perspective of the marginalised Christians in the novel through the character of Joseph Black. According to Black this current persecution by the Nazis is interpreted as being a time ordained by god. Christians are being punished for persecuting Jews for the death of Jesus Christ. However, there is an end in sight. This period of persecution, according to Black, will end in three hundred and five more years, which will bring the total years of persecution by the Nazis to a thousand years. At the end of these thousand years of persecution there will be what Black calls the Last Day. The Last Day is described as being a judgement day. It is a time when the wicked will be punished and the faithful rewarded, when Christians will be given knowledge and understanding and the Nazis will 'burn forever in the fiery lake' (Burdekin, 1985: 175). Black talks about the Last Day to Alfred and states that '[i]n that day before the eyes of the faithful remnant then alive, and all the glorious hosts of the Christian dead, Hitler the foul fiend and all other false gods shall plunge at the head of their reprobate followers into the lake of fire' (Burdekin, 1985: 175). Just as with the rest of society, women are not spared any sympathy from the Christians. Considered as having no value, on the Last Day women, both Christian and non-Christian, will just disappear. Black believes that women are nothing but dust and they will disperse back into nothingness.

In helping to understand the importance of the Christian interpretation of their position it

is worthwhile to consider Robert Crossley's view of the character of the curate in H. G. Wells' *The War of the Worlds* in his essay 'Acts of God'. He says:

The curate's desperate desire for an adequate interpretation of the initial deaths and mayhem caused by the Martian invaders in the suburbs of London, his querying of divine acquiescence in and human responsibility for the disaster are the distinctive human responses to catastrophe from the early modern era to the present (Crossley, 2000: 75).

Crossley is suggesting that when faced with seemingly un-explainable events a typical response is to look for a religious cause for an explanation. It also asks the reader to question what amount of responsibility human beings have for their own downfall. It is easier to blame divine causes rather than consider human behaviour. In many ways the Christians in *Swastika Night* have abstained from any initial responsibility in their downfall by interpreting their experience as being motivated by god's will. In the perspective of the Christians, the Nazis are merely god's instrument of punishment. This interpretation does give the Christians some power over the narration of their current situation.

So far, the visions for the future have been pessimistic visions. However, now the attention will turn to the idea of apocalypse and hope. In his essay 'Aspects of Apocalypse' David Seed writes that 'the term 'apocalypse' often denotes a complex interplay between endings and beginnings. Not even the most pessimistic apocalypticist closes the door completely to some kind of continuity through rebirth' (Seed, 2000: 7). So that often while apocalypse can denote an 'end' it does not necessarily have to refer to a final 'end'. No matter how small the possibility is, as long as there is some

possibility of continuation, there can be hope. This hope can be seen in many different ways in *Swastika Night*. Firstly, although Alfred's attempt to defy the Nazi party, both on a personal and wider level, seems to have ended in failure, since he is ultimately murdered by Nazi soldiers when he is back in England, there is hope in the fact that he has passed on the knowledge given to him by the Knight von Hess to his son Fred. There is hope with Fred now the possessor of the book given to Alfred by von Hess; a book that challenges the historical narrative given by the Nazi party and offers the possibility of the insertion of an alternative truth at some future point. There is larger hope in the possibility that Fred will be able to use this knowledge to organise a rebellion. The smallest hope is the one for women. At the beginning of the book Alfred would have felt negatively about having a girl child. However, at the birth of his daughter near the end of the book he begins to see the potential for her. So, while the change in attitude has only affected one man, and possibly will end with his death, the fact that his attitude has changed at all offers some hope that other men will see things the same way. So while one of the appeals of writing about the end of days is to imagine the worst that can be imagined, this is usually accompanied by trying to imagine ways of how these things can be overcome. Hope can follow despair and endings can be followed by new hope and new beginnings.

Conclusion

Swastika Night is a remarkable dystopian text that features ideas about masculine and feminine gender identity that are ahead of Burdekin's time. Burdekin is clearly knowledgeable about events in Europe during this time and her work shows perceptive insights into the workings of fascist ideologies. The next chapter will turn to a different type of utopian text, the sex-role reversal utopia.

Chapter Three:

The End of this Day's Business

Introduction

The End of this Day's Business was one of many texts that still remained un-published at the time of Burdekin's death. Patai's rediscovery of Burdekin led to it being re-published for the first time in 1989, although Patai speculated that it was most likely to have been written in 1935. This dates it firmly between the eutopian *The Rebel Passion* in 1929 and the dystopian *Swastika Night* in 1937. However, it is not so straightforward to categorise which type of utopia *The End of this Day's Business* belongs to: eutopia, dystopia, or even utopian satire. This is one of the subjects to come under consideration in this chapter. The chapter is divided into three sections: an introduction to the text, an exploration of the problems of genre, and the influences of the work of Freud and theories of psychoanalysis in the novel.

As in the previous chapters, this one will consider the plot, setting, context and literary criticism of the novel. In the previous chapters, contemporary criticism from the original time of publication was looked at alongside modern criticism produced in the light of the novels' republications. For obvious reasons, contemporary criticism is not a consideration here. This is a shame because it would have been interesting to see what the 1930s reader would have thought of the text, especially in comparison with other similar texts. More recent criticism has been sparse and particularly focussed on the main character of Grania. For example, Elizabeth English and Kenneth Payne have both focussed in particular on her character, and their view on her character will be explored

in the general section discussing the characters in the text. The introductory section will also discuss the title, which is from a line in Shakespeare's *Julius Cesar*, and the context of the interwar period.

Section two, as already mentioned, deals with the matter of genre and initially addresses whether it can be argued that the text fits the category of eutopia or dystopia. Next, the text's relationship with utopian satire is considered and then its inclusion in the category of a type of utopian text called the sex-role reversal utopia. The chapter will reference Patai's oft quoted 1982 essay 'When Women Rule: Defamiliarization in the Sex-Role Reversal Utopia'. In this essay Patai not only discusses the issue of classifying the sex-role reversal but she also identifies one of the key techniques used in these works, as well as in utopian fiction in general, the use of defamiliarisation. It is this technique, it is suggested, that make these texts so effective.

Finally, section three explores the influence of psychoanalytic theories in Burdekin's work, particularly the influence of the theories of Freud. As roles are reversed in this text, so are psychological explanations of the genders. Penis envy is changed to womb envy. The starvation of the psyches of women in a patriarchal society is reversed so that male psyches are 'underfed' in a matriarchal society. Burdekin is a clear admirer of Freud, seeing in his work a method to analyse existing gender conditions. Finally, Burdekin reimages a female gaze, whereby men are objectified by the perspectives of women.

Section 1

Introducing the Text

The plot of the novel will now be summarised in detail. *The End of this Day's Business* is about a future society run by women. The novel begins on a May Day more than four thousand years in the future. The reader is immediately introduced to the character of Neil: 'sometimes Big Neil, or, to distinguish him from other Neils, Neil Carlason' (Burdekin, 1989: 1). His surname alone gives an indication of the gender relationships in this society; his name, Carla's son, comes from the mother, a reversal of the traditional habit of children's surnames coming from the father. Neil is plagued by a sense of unhappiness that he cannot trace back to a cause. The reader later learns more about this society and comes to the realisation that Neil's unhappiness is a result of the inferior position of men in this society. Neil is approached by a woman, Bernadine, who seems sexually attracted to him and asks him whether he is going to the May Day celebrations. He does not like it when she gives him an admiring look because it makes him think of 'people looking over animals' (Burdekin, 1989: 9). He feels objectified. This is an important point because it shows that men's value in this society is linked to their looks and this value is based on how sexually attractive they are to women.

The scene with Bernadine upsets Neil and he proceeds to go to his friend Andreas' home and is surprised to find his aunt, Grania, is also at the house. Grania shocks him with the revelation that she is in fact his mother and Andreas is his father. He has been brought up believing Grania was his aunt and not knowing at all who his father was, since it is not the convention for children to know that. Although the knowledge is unexpected Neil reflects on how much he feels connected to the pair. Grania is an

important driving force of the novel. It is her actions and her decisions that form a small act of personal rebellion against the current order. In character, the novel stresses the fact that Grania is not a typical woman; she is described as eccentric and masculine. This does not mean that the rest of the women in this society are ultra-feminine, but that in features Grania is seen as resembling a masculine type. This identification of Grania as being a different type of woman is important because it can be used to explain why she subsequently decides to 'betray' the women who rule this society and help Neil understand the source of his unhappiness. Her betrayal is centred on the fact that she decides to give Neil forbidden knowledge. She is attempting to bridge the gap between the ruling sex, the women, and the men, who are kept deliberately in a subordinate position in society. The men, however, do not have a self-conscious awareness of their own inferior position in society. Men's education is different from the women's. Men's access to the past is denied. They little suspect that society was once ruled by a patriarchy and men were not always in the subordinate position they have come to assume. Grania attempts to raise her son's consciousness so that he has an awareness of why he is unhappy.

It is at this point that Grania reflects on her upcoming endeavour to educate Neil and what the outcome will be. She makes reference to the Shakespearean quote which also provides the title for the text:

"Oh, that a man might know the end of this day's business ere it come. But it sufficeth that the end will come, and then the end is known. O wise Old Man," she thought, "the End will come, in God's time, not mine. And in God's time, not mine, the End of my day's business will be known. But not by me."

(Burdekin, 1989: 29).

If anything is to come from her attempt to educate Neil, and in this small way take a step towards trying to create an equal society for men and women, it will come long after Grania's death. This is one of many places where Burdekin emphasises the historical changes in society that occur gradually.

Grania invites Neil to her home to begin her endeavour to educate him. She feels nervous about starting to talk to him and so she decides to draw a portrait of him and asks him to take off his shirt. This makes Neil uneasy because men, in the text, are modest about their bodies. This strikes a chord with the reader because this is one of many examples in the book where men are not just shown as being deemed inferior to women but designated so in traditionally feminine terms. Men are naturally 'submissive and obedient, and very shy' (Burdekin, 1989: 40). Neil is ashamed of his body because he has a flat chest, whereas women are proud of their breasts because they are of biological value (Burdekin, 1989: 40). This leads on to Grania talking about men and women's psyches and the encouragement of the psyche of one gender and the starvation of the other. Burdekin strikingly uses many psychological terms and theories to account for how society ends up with an imbalance in the treatment of the sexes. She challenges notions of natural behaviour and attitudes in the reimagining of them as cultural constructions. This is presented in this utopia in the way the women treat the men, but the reader is meant to keep in mind the point being made is not about the position of men in a matriarchal society but women in the current patriarchal society of the interwar period.

Grania starts explaining to Neil how society had been organised previously. In the original patriarchal society, men ruled, and women were submissive. Men had well-

developed psyches and women's psyches were starved. She says the men also suffered from 'death-hysteria' and engaged in wars that threatened the survival of the species (Burdekin, 1989: 62). It is this 'death-hysteria' that forms part of the justification for why women later felt they needed to rule. Men cannot be trusted to ensure the continuation of the species in a peaceful way. Grania talks of women beginning to feel that they were entitled to rights, such as education, as human beings. This realisation led to action and unfortunately '[t]his women's movement caused a reaction in the men' (Burdekin, 1989: 62). Burdekin is here referring to the backlash to the feminist movement after World War One. Alison Oram describes this period in history as being characterised by backlash against women, both in men's attitudes and in terms of action, in the form of law and policies:

It is still useful to conceptualise the interwar period as one of masculine backlash. This backlash took a number of forms and historians have already shown the ways in which, for example, government policy was used to exclude married women from the workforce and benefits system and re-emphasise women's place in the home. But this stress on gender difference was also used to reassert the rights, powers and privileges of masculinity after the trauma of the First World War (Oram, 1996: 222)

This backlash, in Grania's historical overview, led to women further submitting themselves to the rule of men. Women are accused of throwing their independence away 'cheerfully on the altar of fascism' (Burdekin, 1989: 64). This was an accusation Burdekin would make again in her later novel *Swastika Night*. In that novel, women were seen as being complicit in the rise of a regime, extrapolated from the real support of some women in the interwar period of fascist regimes, which was ultimately hugely

damaging, in the novel, for womankind. She is referring to the support that the fascist parties, both in Germany and other countries, gained from women. Burdekin is, however, suggesting that women who support fascism are doing a disservice to their own sex by supporting a misogynistic system.

Grania next identifies another group of individuals who were subject to oppression at this time (Neil and Grania's past but Burdekin's own time) and those are the Jewish people. Grania talks of the three Jewish 'Messiahs': Jesus, Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud (Burdekin, 1989: 70). These three, apparently, came as saviours to humanity but were 'rejected' (Burdekin, 1989: 70). Further, the system in Communist Russia, used as a contrast to the fascist system, is admired by Grania as being 'more humane and reasonable' (Burdekin, 1989: 71). The situation is then described, in the text, in very simplistic terms. The fight was between the seemingly brave communists and the evil fascists. The fascists were anti-women and the communists supported women: 'the Communists, both the women and the men, knew very well that a nonpolitical, economically dependent, will-less woman is the greatest drag on progress there can be, for she will always incline to timidity and conservatism' (Burdekin, 1989: 82). In Grania's historical account in the novel, the fascists were defeated by communists. The communists are hailed as saviours and organise women's lives so they are happy and recognised and organise the economic system so that everyone has enough food to eat. There was peace and contentment for one hundred and twenty years of communist rule until 'the old sex issue [...] rose up again' (Burdekin, 1989: 87). Fascism, seemingly the symbol of all-things misogynistic, raises its head again. At the heart of this re-emergence is again the spectre of backlash. It is here that the reader sees the beginning of how the current system was created. Women decided, for the protection of themselves and the continuation of the species, to begin a deliberate project against

men. They removed the father-role, an important part of the patriarchal system which allowed men to pass on privileges and wealth to their sons. The ruling women also restricted men's opportunities for work and reduced their educational opportunities.

The knowledge Grania imparts to Neil occurs at different meetings and eventually Neil brings other men to Grania to share the knowledge with as well. These men listened 'but never did they *understand* anything at all' (Burdekin, 1989: 115). Their character has been formed by their childhood and they have been brought up deprived of the ability to independently think for themselves. One of the men reveals to another woman what Grania has been doing. Grania is taken by the Women's Council who send her for judgement to Munich. Grania is found out on Midsummer's Eve and flown to Munich on the evening before Midsummer's Day, which Grania reveals is also her birthday. Midsummer is often viewed as a threshold, a moment of liminality between the seasons when the boundary between other places is lowered. At this point Grania has a dream. She dreams she is on a hill, struggling to walk up it, and is accompanied by various different women at different points. These women are representative of women at different points in the evolution of the human race. At the end of the hill Grania reaches a garden and this is representative of Grania's own time and her woman companion on the journey is similar to the women of Grania's own time, not 'deformed or hairy, or cringing and anxious' (Burdekin, 1989: 131). After this Grania reaches a time she describes as perfect but is not described in any detail. She simply feels it is better. The point being made is that even though there have been dark days in the history of humanity society will eventually reach a point of equilibrium.

In Germany, Grania meets her friend, Anna K., who is part of the German Council. It is unclear in the book why Grania and Neil have to go before the German Council rather

than an English one. Perhaps this Council has a higher authority, or perhaps Grania has to go before it because she is part German and was born in Germany. She tries to convince Anna K. of her views on the position of the sexes. Anna remains unconvinced. Neil and Grania are sentenced to death by the Council. However, Grania does not see the sentence as a defeat of the cause. She believes that 'Anna will go on with it' (Burdekin, 1989: 157). Even though Anna is unconvinced now, Grania believes that 'Anna will see straight' (Burdekin, 1989: 157). The book ends with Grania and Neil's death by self-administered poison.

Places of Resistance in English Folklore

The novel makes reference to May Day, Midsummer Day and Midsummer's Eve. Given that the novel is set thousands of years in the future it seems strange that celebrations from English folklore feature so prominently. These celebrations, however, are also sites of resistance. They are a break from everyday reality and as such offer a space to challenge the status quo.

The opening words of the text, written in uppercase to emphasise their importance, identify the day and year at the start of the story: 'ON MAY DAY IN THE YEAR 6250' (Burdekin, 1989: 1). At first glance, these two items seem like an odd pairing. The year sees the tale set more than four thousand years in the future, but 'May Day' refers to a pagan holiday originating from Celtic times. It was a time for feasting and games in celebration of the coming of summer (Libcom, 2014). The height of its popularity was in the Middle Ages, when it was associated with 'common people', the celebration of an agrarian life, and curiously, the mocking of the upper classes (Libcom, 2014). Celebrating nature and the summer season seems like a positive factor and as

such is fitting in a utopian text. However, there are much more subversive undercurrents to Burdekin's choosing to start her novel on this day. It is day with the possible power to reverse the current conditions. This is because of events happening around forty years prior to the writing of *The End of this Day's Business*.

Proceedings in America in the 1880s would forever impact on the meaning of May Day and see it connected with the socialist movement and workers' rights. On May 1st 1886, hundreds of thousands of Americans went on strike for workers' rights. Eight anarchists were arrested: four were executed, one took his own life in an act of rebellion against the state before they could execute him, and three were eventually pardoned (Libcom, 2014). May Day subsequently became known as International Workers' Day and has often been a date which protestors have chosen for organised rallies, such as the 2001 anti-capitalist Mayday Monopoly protest in London (Libcom, 2014). Burdekin's choice of May Day, then, has political significance. This day presents the opportunity for protest against an unjust system. This system, in the book, is one divided on gender lines, with, in a reversal of Burdekin's own time, the men at the bottom of the system. In the book the celebrations are a male holiday and women play 'no part at all in the May Day celebrations' (Burdekin, 1989: 2). It is a male-only space that offers the opportunity for rebellion against the current order.

Midsummer's Day and Midsummer's Eve are also celebrations from English folklore that are mentioned in the book. These days in the Christian religion are also called St John's Day and St John's Eve. It was a celebration heavily connected with fire and the middle of summer. It was often celebrated by men jumping over fires, which echoes back to the beginning of the text when the men jumped over the bonfires in celebration of May Day. In addition, this time of year was also seen as having mythical

connections. Part of this view can be traced to Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, which features lovers caught up in midsummer madness caused by fairy characters. This view of midsummer being connected with fairies was re-enforced in 1908 when Edward Robert Hughes produced a painting called 'Midsummer Eve' that also featured fairy characters. Burdekin's previous novel, *The Children's Country*, originally titled St John's Eve, opens on that day and also suggests a magical and mythical connection. The children, Carol and Donald, are told that if they go to the 'Standing Stones' on St John's Eve they 'will have an adventure' (Burdekin, 1929: 9). The night of St John's Eve is described by the children as being 'a great fairy night' (Burdekin, 1929: 6). It is this night that offers the opportunity for Carol and Donald to pass from their world into another world. Grania's dream on this same night offers her the opportunity to view another reality beyond her own, a historical vision that ends with a utopian possibility.

Characters

The two main characters in the book are Grania and her nephew/son Neil. Grania is another character, created by Burdekin, with an alternative gender identity. In many ways Grania is reminiscent of *The Rebel Passion's* Giraldu. Giraldu could be described as, according to Ulrich's definition, an 'invert'. He has the body of a man but the 'soul' of a woman. Grania, although a woman, is described in masculine terms, and this suggests her character could be described as a female invert: 'she was far too big for a woman. She was as large as quite a lot of men. She was muscular and heavily-built. Her hands were like a laborer's' (Burdekin, 1989: 10). Elizabeth English also identifies this aspect of inverted gender identity in Burdekin's work: 'Burdekin's protagonist is an image of the female invert' (English, 2013: 102). English believes that 'Grania occupies

an intermediate or third place in society' (English, 2013: 102). Her evidence for this is threefold. The first reason is, as mentioned above, her masculine characteristics. The second is her determination to envision a different society beyond the current one and the act of putting her thoughts into action with Neil and his friends. Finally, English suggests that there is also an element of sexual orientation, her sexual attraction to the same sex. English suggests that there is 'erotic potential' in the relationship with Anna K. (English, 2013: 103), although no sexual relationship occurs in the novel.

Incidentally, Burdekin's novel never explicitly describes this society's perspective on homosexuality, whether this society condemns or is accepting of same-sex relationships. English's idea that Grania has an alternative sexual identity is not without its justification. Grania's career is as an artist and when she talks about the character of an artist she describes them as having a 'bisexual psyche' (Burdekin, 1989: 56).

Kenneth Payne similarly focuses on the character of Grania in *The End of this Day's Business*. He sees her as accessing the possibility of a utopian reality through altered states of consciousness. She is attempting a project of 'consciousness-raising' of a small group of men in this society and is in an ideal position to do this because of her ability to access alternative forms of reality (Payne, 2005: 4). Payne gives various examples of this, including the way that she is drawn to the spiritual energy of Stonehenge, but the most convincing example is, again, the dream that Grania experiences on the plane to Munich. In this dream, Payne states that she 'experiences a visionary foretaste of what the far-off state of human bliss may be like or, or more precisely, feel like' (Payne, 2005: 5). This dream-vision takes Grania outside of the rational experience of the women's world to see something beyond that world and beyond her own experience.

As Grania is similar to Giraldu in *The Rebel Passion*, Neil is somewhat reminiscent of Hermann from *Swastika Night*. Both have minds dulled by an oppressive system and find it difficult to think independently. Neil is described, by Grania, as having an ‘infantile mind’ (Burdekin, 1989: 39). She completes a sketch of him and observes: ‘Granite outside and soft as a rotten apple inside’ (Burdekin, 1989: 39). Neil is ‘submissive’, ‘obedient’ and ‘shy’ (Burdekin, 1989: 40). Although he does have a limited understanding of the message Grania is trying to impart to him, the damage has already been done. Burdekin is highlighting that this is the situation in contemporary Britain. The way women are viewed and treated in society, including the reduced educational and job opportunities, means that they do not always develop the ability to think critically. This then becomes a self-perpetuating cycle. Character is formed by cultural experience but once formed it becomes evidence of natural factors and a justification for the way women are subsequently treated.

Narrative Perspective

Although the narrative starts from the perspective of Neil, it is Grania who is the true driving force of the tale. As in Burdekin’s other works, and many utopian texts, this work is descriptive and essayistic rather than driven by plot. Grania spends a great amount of the book explaining things to Neil, teaching him about the past. Patai explains that the tale is a combination of ‘explanatory dialogue, historical disquisitions, and didactic discourse’ (Patai, 1989: 169). However, there is also a great deal of striking imagery in the story. The most striking section is when Grania has the dream of going up the hill. As mentioned above, she has this dream on the night of Midsummer Eve, and this gives the impression that this is not just a dream but almost a psychic vision.

Other times when Grania seems to be in touch with something outside of herself include when she visits Stonehenge.

Context

Burdekin borrows the title words of her text from Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*. The lines are said by Brutus in the final act of the play. Brutus has been part of a conspiracy to assassinate Caesar; the conspirators have succeeded in their task but face opposition from Caesar's friend, Mark Antony, and his successor, Octavius. The words are spoken in anticipation of the battle with the army of Octavius and Antony:

Why, then, lead on. O, that a man might know
The end of this day's business ere it come!
But it sufficeth that the day will end,
And then the end is known. Come, ho! away!
(Shakespeare, Act V, Scene 1: Lines 123-126)

The connection between Burdekin's and Shakespeare's texts is twofold. Firstly, the character of Brutus can be compared to the character of Grania. Although Brutus is seen as a traitor, it is, in a sense, an honourable betrayal of trust. He betrays his friend, Caesar, whom he loves dearly, but he does so for the good of the city of Rome. Brutus fears that Caesar's ambition will destroy the Roman republic and his dictatorship will lead to oppression. This is similar to the position of Grania in *The End of this Day's Business*. Grania is guilty of betraying the ruling female power and effectively betrays Anna K. However, she believes that ultimately it would be better for humankind if the

sexes achieved a more balanced way of co-existing. She is betraying her 'sex' for the greater good of human cohesion.

The deaths of Brutus and Grania and Neil also share some similarities. In both circumstances the characters are forced into a situation where the end result is suicide. Brutus, with the aid of a friend, falls on his sword rather than be captured by the enemy. Grania and Neil are sentenced to execution and the mode of their deaths is 'self-administered' poison (Burdekin, 1989: 155). Although the result of their 'day's business' is defeat, there is some dignity in their deaths.

Placing *The End of this Day's Business* in its historical context, the novel is influenced by many political concerns of the interwar period. The societal backlash against feminism in response to the threat to traditional images of masculine identity in the interwar period has already been mentioned above. Other concerns include the rise of fascism in Europe, particularly in Germany, but also in Italy and Spain. In addition, reference is made to the popularity of communism in Soviet Russia and the changes brought about by the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution.

As in the later novel, *Swastika Night*, Burdekin's *The End of this Day's Business* is concerned with the rise of fascism post-World War One. In the text Grania explains to Neil how during this period a 'cult of instinct and violence' arose (Burdekin, 1989:66). The solution to the spectre of fascism is identified as communism, after all 'Jesus was a communist, born before a world was ready for communism' (Burdekin, 1989: 82). The time of the communists, in the book, is described in glowing, utopian terms: 'there was no class-distinction, and no sex privilege, and where every person was first a human being and a friend, and then of a certain sex, nation or race' (Burdekin, 1989: 86).

Burdekin seems to place a great deal of faith in the communist system to provide the opportunity for the equality of the sexes. Her ideas about the communist system were influenced by the Russian Revolution, which is mentioned in the book (Burdekin, 1989: 71). Among the stated goals of the revolutionists was the emancipation of women, based 'on women's full and equal participation in productive labor and the socialization of household tasks such as child care, laundry, and cooking' (Engel, 1987: 787). The hope in the communists is based on 'the assumption that women's economic independence provides the essential material base for women's equality' (Engel, 1987: 795). The embracement of the communist system seems at odds with other points that Burdekin is making in the book. Burdekin shows elsewhere in the book that material conditions do not form the whole picture of the cause of sexual inequality. The ability to work in certain jobs or have educational opportunities and be free from poverty is not the only factor in the improvement of sexual equality. It is the attitudes and beliefs of the men and women in the book that cause the real problem. At the basic level, the men believe the women are superior because they have the ability to have children. This belief will not change with the improvement of material conditions. Historically, this is borne out in the reality of the Soviet system, where women in the workplace were not treated equally and simultaneously had to balance working 'full-time outside the home while juggling housekeeping and motherhood' (Engel, 1987: 795).

Section 2

The Problem of Genre

The End of this Day's Business is a sex role-reversal utopia, in which the traditional gender roles in society are reversed. In this novel women are the dominant sex and men

are often limited in terms of equal rights and job opportunities. As such, it uses the familiar utopian technique of defamiliarisation. All utopias use the technique of defamiliarisation. They use it to present aspects of society in a different way in order to provoke the reader into rethinking them. The power of the sex-role reversal utopia rests in the defamiliarisation of the gender role. The gender reversal highlights the cultural, not natural, classifications of gender. It also shows how cultural constructions of gender are used by one group, in power, to attain hegemony over another.

Returning to the definition of the positive utopia in the introduction, Lyman Tower Sargent describes it as being a society ‘considerably better than the society in which that reader lived’ (Sargent, 1994: 9). Using certain criteria, the society in *The End of this Day’s Business* is unarguably better than the society of the interwar period. This period, as reflected in its name, is characterised in terms of its relationship to war; Britain, as in other countries, was coming to terms with the after-effects of World War One and was also under a heavy cloud as events seemed to indicate the rise of another conflict. It was also a time of other major upheavals: major economic disruption, the 1928 financial crash, and social upheaval. The future represented in *The End of this Day’s Business* is one that is noticeable for its peaceful conditions and international co-operation. Patai describes the novel as ‘depicting a truly utopian way of life, a global society in which distinct national cultures are preserved but coexist without competitive nationalism, without violence, and without war’ (Patai, 1989: 160). Even considering the ‘cost’ of achieving this state of being, which Patai rightly observes as being ‘the subjection of men’, it is still a better society than the interwar reader’s own (Patai, 1989: 160). The subjection of men in a matriarchal society is still better than the subjection of women in a patriarchal society. The reason for this is that it is important that women in the text are shown to be capable of rationality and being able to effectively rule a society. Showing

that women are incapable of effectively managing the business of a society would merely tap into stereotypes of women not being fit to be placed in positions of power.

Burdekin is not, ultimately, arguing that women should rule and men should be permanently subservient but depicts this situation as part of a wider argument on gender construction. Certain definitions of masculinity seem to be tied to violence and what Burdekin refers to as the cult of 'death-hysteria' (Burdekin, 1989: 88). From a reader's perspective, the unequal treatment of men may make it seem like a dystopian text. However, other types of literature in which women are negated never seem to warrant that label. The utopian satire perhaps might offer an alternative perspective.

Role-reversal utopias are often also considered to be utopian satires. However, there is some dispute about this amongst critics. For example, both Susan Gubar and Daphne Patai use Anne Denton Cridge's *Man's Rights; or, How Would You Like It?* (1870) as an example of a sex-role reversal utopia. Gubar clearly identifies it as satire. She sees this in the extolling of 'explicitly matriarchal virtues that implicitly criticize patriarchal values' (Gubar, 1986: 79). Patai, on the other hand, denies the claim that Cridge's text is satire. For Patai, it is not enough to feature an 'attack on an existing state of affairs' (Patai, 1982: 58). It must also feature 'humor and a sense of the absurd' (Patai, 1982: 58). Patai makes a distinction between the satirical and non-satirical sex-role reversal utopia. The satirical element presents itself in the anti-feminist role-reversal which aims to show that 'a society in which women dominate is a self-evident absurdity' (Patai, 1982: 58). Patai cites Jesse Wilson's *When the Women Reign* (1909) as an example: 'the book appeals to the reader's presupposed belief that women in power simply are absurd and grotesque' (Patai, 1982: 62). This theory could equally be turned on its head and similarly applied to feminist sex-role reversal. The unequal treatment of the men in a

sex-role reversal in fact highlights the mockery of the women's unfair and unequal position in a patriarchal society. It would be difficult to classify *The End of this Day's Business* as a satirical utopia. The defining characteristic of humour, common to the definition of satire, is absent from the text. However, there does seem some merit in arguing for the absurdity of the position of the sexes.

Section 3

The Influence of Psychoanalysis

The End of this Day's Business is heavily influenced by psychoanalytical theories and, in particular, the work of Sigmund Freud. The novel, through the character of Grania, clearly indicates admiration for Freud. He is described as a 'Messiah' who had come 'to deliver them [humanity] from ignorance and superstition and incomprehensible guilt' (Burdekin, 1989: 70). Grania, however, reflects on the fact that society was not ready for his ideas. Burdekin is commenting on how Freud and his work were received during the interwar period. It is interesting he is mentioned in the same section where Grania is describing the historical Nazi threat and the persecution of the Jews. Although *The End of this Day's Business* was written after Freud fled to England to escape Nazi persecution, Burdekin would have been aware of the mass book burnings in 1933 of the works of many, primarily Jewish, writers, including Freud: 'Into the bonfires went the "un-German" books by such authors as Sigmund Freud, Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, Upton Sinclair, Jack London (Bosmajian, 2012: 165). In this novel, Burdekin is presenting Freud as a person with powerful ideas ahead of the period he is living in.

Feminist Criticisms of Freud

In the years since Freud first postulated his ideas there has been some criticism of his work from feminists, especially second-wave feminists such as Betty Friedan, Kate Millett, and Shulamith Firestone. Considering the work of Freud, Juliet Mitchell has commented that ‘The greater part of the feminist movement has identified Freud as the enemy’ (Mitchell, 1990: xv). In his own time, female psychoanalysts such as Karen Horney were quick to criticise his perspective on women and sexuality. The accusation was that his views on women and female sexuality were limited because he was coming from a phallic centred position. However, Mitchell has a slightly different perspective. She believes that his work needs to be looked at in terms of the analysis of a system instead of the recommendation for a certain type of system: ‘psychoanalysis is not a recommendation *for* a patriarchal society, but an analysis *of* one’ (Mitchell, 1990: xv).

This is important because it cannot be assumed that because Burdekin is an admirer of Freud she is naive about his theories or uses them without having a self-conscious awareness of the faults. Burdekin uses the theories of Freud for a feminist purpose. The first point Burdekin makes in respect of her questioning of Freud is the idea that his theories of the female psyche are static. His version of events is based on the psyches of women in a patriarchal society. Burdekin’s belief is that the female psyche would be different in a different set of circumstances:

For of course Freud and all his disciples had been studying the psyches of starved women, and their conclusions were no more correct for psychically healthy women entirely free from either conscious or subconscious sex-shame than would be the conclusions of an anthropologist who went to study the

physique or a certain race and concentrated his attention entirely on undernourished hunchbacks (Burdekin, 1989: 90)

The point is made that culture and not nature determines the psyche. The value of his work is ultimately a base, a jumping off point for others then to develop the idea further. In the text, Grania talks about how women proceeded to continue the work started by Freud, using it as a basis, to then create ‘a correct account of normal feminine psychology’ (Burdekin, 1989: 90)

Psyche

As mentioned above, Burdekin addresses the concept of the psyche. Freud’s ideas of the psyche revolve around the idea of the ego, id and super-ego. The id refers to instinctual drives, the ego is about how the id is expressed in an acceptable form in society, and the super-ego ‘reflects the internalization of cultural rules, mainly taught by parents applying their guidance and influence’ (Siegfried, 2014: 2). The latter applies to *The End of this Day’s Business*. Burdekin is interested in the way that cultural rules regarding gender are internalised. Although Freud developed the ideas of the psyche and the ego, id and super-ego, Burdekin was interested in a more straightforward view of the psyche. She uses it in a more simplistic way, going back to an earlier meaning of the word:

Originating from Greek myth, the word psyche originally referred to the soul. But psychoanalytic terminology does not use soul in a religious sense. Rather the psyche is the mental apparatus as it is defined in contrast to the body or the **soma** (Thurschwell, 2000: 4).

Burdekin often uses the word psyche as representative of the soul and her main thesis in the novel is that the 'soul' can be developed or it can be underdeveloped. Her engagement with theories of Freud and ideas about the psyche are limited, not necessary because of having only a popular understanding of Freud, but because she adapts his ideas to her theories about the soul. Burdekin's use of the concept of the soul can be traced back to her earlier novel *The Rebel Passion*. In that novel, Burdekin explores the idea of people historically becoming better and this is evidenced in the brightness of light in an individual, which represents the individual's soul. In *The End of this Day's Business* constructions of male and female gender are seen as a barrier to the whole of society developing into better people. In a system based on specific gender differences the soul of one gender develops, but it does so at the expense of the other gender. In a society organised along rigid gender lines the psyche of one sex will grow at the expense of the starvation of the other sex. In a traditional patriarchal society the psyche of the female population is seen to be underdeveloped. In this reversal it is the male psyche that is underfed. Ultimately, Burdekin is suggesting that in order for all members of society to have healthy psyches it is necessary to move beyond rigid gender roles and to achieve a power balance between the genders.

Hysteria and the Unconscious

The women have ruled for centuries. Men have no memory of society being anything different. Under these circumstances it is odd that Neil, for no identifiable reason, starts to feel unhappy. Using psychoanalytic theory, it could be suggested that Neil is suffering from hysteria. Someone who is a hysteric has memories of suffering an unpleasant trauma. Although Neil does not directly suffer a trauma, the male sex has

suffered a trauma. It is a gender trauma passed through the male race: 'it's a spiritual human shame, a genuine half-conscious stirring of your human soul' (Burdekin, 1989: 20). It is the memory of this trauma and shame that is trying to resurface in Neil's unconscious. In this way, Grania acts as his 'therapist'. She brings to light his problem and attempts to 'cure' him with the historical knowledge of what occurred.

The 'Female Gaze'

The value of men within this society is based on their strength and attractiveness. This is made clear early on in the text when it is stated that it is not uncommon for men who do not fit the ideal to commit suicide:

There had been men, not that he knew any, but had heard of them, who were weak, for some reason, puny, ugly, unattractive, and could nether hold up their end with men, nor have any women to love them, who gradually sank deeper and deeper into despondency, and so to suicide (Burdekin, 1989: 6)

Neil is admired by women because of his attractiveness. Before his feelings of discontent he, in fact, liked that 'appraising, admiring look' from women (Burdekin, 1989: 9). Now, however, he sees it differently, in the scene with Bernadine, when she looks at him: 'he thought of people looking over animals, to see if they were worth buying' (Burdekin, 1989: 9). Psychoanalytic theories can be used to explain his change in feeling. Laura Mulvey, who has used theories of the male gaze in discussion of the visual arts, divides the act of viewing into active and passive interaction: 'In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female' (Mulvey, 1989: 19). In this novel, where things are reversed, Neil

has come to realise that he is a passive recipient of Bernadine's admiring gaze. Her view of him gives him worth and value but it is only superficial. Burdekin's approach to the 'gaze' is innovative considering that the subject of objectification is more familiar in feminist discussions in the 60s and 70s.

Conclusion

The End of this Day's Business is another novel by Burdekin that is remarkable for its analysis of gender. Burdekin adopts the conventions of the sex-role reversal utopia, which is a powerful tool to bring to light gender inequalities. As Patai has stated, its success rests on representing the familiar in an unfamiliar light. So the familiar situation of women's position in society is made unfamiliar by reversing the roles and having men occupy that same position. In addition, Burdekin also shows great insight into psychoanalytic theories and adapts them to explain women's position in society. The next chapter also explores another novel that is influenced by psychoanalytic theories, *Proud Man*.

Chapter Four:

Proud Man

Introduction

This final chapter will explore ideas about utopian identity, including gendered and national identity, in Burdekin's utopian novel *Proud Man* (1934). The previous chapters have concentrated on the utopian genre itself, looking at the characteristics and history of the genre, the subgenres, and the contrast between eutopia and dystopia. However, this chapter will take a slightly different approach in that the focus will be on how the utopian genre offers a unique platform to explore a particular theme or issue, in this case the issue of identity. *Proud Man* was first published in 1934 by Boriswood Publishing under the name of Murray Constantine. While it was the first of Burdekin's Constantine novels, it was actually her seventh novel altogether, and her second utopian text. As has been seen already in a previous chapter she had already used the utopian genre to good effect in her earlier 1929 novel *The Rebel Passion*. Patai's discovery that Murray Constantine was the pseudonym of Burdekin prompted the republishing of some of her earlier books and this included *Proud Man* in 1993. Surprisingly, this novel has received less critical attention than the other Burdekin novels republished by The Feminist Press. Perhaps this is because it was the last of the three to be republished (*Swastika Night* was republished in 1985 and the manuscript of *The End of this Day's Business* was published in 1989). Another reason could be that the novel is a very difficult text. In terms of the narration, Daphne Patai, in fact, describes it as 'Burdekin's most complex narrative experiment' (Patai, 1993: xx). Patai believes that the difficulty lies in the role of the narrator who is a unique character and presents the story in a

distinct way. This is something that will be explored in more depth later on. A further difficulty with the novel is that, as with other Burdekin texts, it is densely packed with ideas and within the pages the narrative jumps from idea to idea in quick succession. It is a novel that needs time and care to unpack. The first two important things to consider in looking at *Proud Man* are: what is the plot of the novel and what category of utopian text does it fall into.

Section 1

Novel Summary

Proud Man is the story of a visitor from another place, an undefined place that could possibly be the future or another planet, who comes on a visit, or ‘dreams’ about a visit to Britain in the 1930s. The novel is divided into four parts, or sections, and these parts are variously labelled as ‘The Person’, ‘The Priest’, ‘The Woman’, and ‘The Man’. It is an exploration of the contemporary society of Burdekin’s time from the point of view of a traveller from the future. Through the book the traveller takes on the characteristics of both sexes, alternatively called Alethea Gifford Verona when being a woman, Gifford Verona when being a man, and also given the nickname of Paris. The interactions of the traveller with the people from the 1930s provides an ideal point of departure to look at the intricacies of society itself, how it functions, how it thinks and acts, and more importantly it offers the reader the opportunity to view it from both male and female perspectives.

The first part, ‘The Person’, is a report on the current situation in Britain in the 1930s. It is written by Verona as a preliminary to the experience itself. To start with, Verona talks

about this report as being a letter. S/he is writing down an experience that s/he has had and is now writing down his/her thoughts on it. The experience itself is recounted in the following three parts, but the first part is a summary of what has been learnt overall.

The novel itself begins with the words: 'I am writing this account of a unique experience while it is fresh in my memory' (Burdekin, 1993:13). There is significance in the fact Verona is engaged in the act of writing because it is often a common feature in utopian novels. In particular it features heavily in the dystopian tradition, with the form taken often being that of a diary, journal, or letter. This has been mentioned by critics as representing a hybrid form of the utopian genre. One reason why it is popular in dystopian texts is that in totalitarian societies it can be almost impossible to exchange ideas, because of the risk of betrayal, and so this form offers an outlet for protagonists to express themselves. For example, in the dystopian novel *We* (1921) by Yevgeny Zamyatin the thoughts of the main character, D-503, are recorded in a diary/journal. The act of writing also frequently appears in Burdekin's work. For example, Burdekin's novel *The Rebel Passion* (1929) starts with Giraldu recording the story of his 'unique experience' in written form in the form of a diary/journal. Reflecting this earlier novel, *Proud Man* similarly has the protagonist, Verona, recounting his/her experiences in the first person, this time in a letter to an unknown recipient.

However, unlike protagonists in dystopian texts, Verona has no fear of the society s/he lives in and is not writing illicitly. In fact Verona lives in a free and open society, and s/he is actually dismissive of writing, calling it a 'primitive occupation' (Burdekin, 1993: 13). The point is to focus on the reader. It is not the person writing and the act of writing itself that is important but the act of reading. In the illicit writings mentioned above there is little expectation that, in the context of the story, there will be a reader. Verona is specifically writing with a reader in mind. The reader is never directly

identified. It is merely a 'you'. It is possibly 'you' in a general sense with no specific person intended. The following quotation hints that it is a 'you' that Verona has yet to meet: 'Some day I may meet you, and after referring to this written account I will communicate more to you than is in it, for there is necessarily much that I cannot write down' (Burdekin, 1993: 13). Intriguingly Patai believes that the use of 'you' is meant to interpolate the reader as belonging to the race that Verona comes from, it 'is as if we were indeed capable of perceiving our own reality [...] with the detachment that the narrator's, not the author's, contemporaries have achieved' (Patai, 1993: xv).

Verona's written account is of the experience that 'came in the form of a dream' (Burdekin, 1993: 13). It is actually a dream-within-a-dream. Verona dreams of discussing with other people travelling to another place, which they get to through 'wishing' it (Burdekin, 1993: 15). Verona wishes him/herself into this other place:

[H]ow I should come to them, seeing that they were either on another planet or in another time, the way thither was made clear to me, for all I had to do was to wish to be there with them, and there, wherever or whenever it was, I should be (Burdekin, 1993: 15).

Burdekin also uses this technique in *The Burning Ring* (1927) where the protagonist wishes himself back to various historical eras. The journey into the future in *The Rebel Passion* also has a fantastical, indeed mystic, origin. The action of dreaming or falling asleep is a common utopian plot technique for characters to travel to an 'other' place. For example, in H. G. Wells' *When the Sleeper Wakes* (1899) the central character falls into a coma and wakes up more than two hundred years later. It is a version of the fantastic voyage. Many utopian stories feature the imaginary or fantastic voyage as a

way of travelling from one place to another. In *Proud Man* the dream ends when Verona and Gilbert, a child murderer, are hit by a lorry. Gilbert dies and Verona returns to his/her own reality.

Following on from the first part of the novel, 'The Person', which gives an overall view of the place Verona is visiting, or more precisely has visited, it is in the second part of the novel, in the section entitled 'The Priest', when Verona finally arrives in Britain of the 1930s. S/he first encounters and observes the behaviour of a proletarian family. This first experience shows up major differences in the attitudes, beliefs and lifestyle of the utopian Verona and the working class family. S/he stays with them for a very short while before going to live with a more compatible companion, a priest named Andrew Gifford. Verona discusses religion and the role of the church with Andrew and after this Andrew questions his identity as a priest and eventually he decides that since his beliefs and the attitude of the church are incompatible he can no longer be a priest.

In order to get an insight into what it means to be a woman, in the next part, 'The Woman', Verona decides to act the part of a woman and lives with another woman. This other woman, Leonora Simons, is a struggling writer who teaches Verona how to 'act' like a woman. In 'The Woman' section there are many interesting facets of identity explored, mostly gendered identity, which includes looking at the role of women writers. In many ways Leonora is reminiscent of the character of Lily Briscoe in Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* (1927) in that both feel the pressure of being women artists in a patriarchal society where it seems as if men are 'willing' them to fail.

Finally, in the last part of the book, Verona becomes, or acts the part of, a man and meets another man, who turns out, shockingly, to be a child murderer. This is in stark

contrast with the previous chapter. Leonora is full of grief after having lost a little girl to meningitis, while Gilbert has murdered little girls by slitting their throats and spilling their blood. Verona learns of this because s/he telepathically reads Gilbert's mind when Gilbert is recalling his first murder when 'he had killed a little girl by cutting her throat across with a sharp knife and letting her blood flow' (Burdekin, 1993: 255). It is this child-murderer section which has caused Williams to suggest a parallel between the final part of the book and Fritz Lang's 1931 film *M*, citing the fact that both show the murderer's point of view (Williams, 1999). Burdekin is trying to analyse how this character came to this point and interestingly recognises the possible part that psychological methods can play in rehabilitating him.

After 'the sleep' or 'dream' Verona takes the time to meditate on the experience that s/he has had and that time takes 'significantly' forty days: 'I lay down to sleep some forty days ago' (Burdekin, 1993: 14). This has religious resonance. Forty is a number that frequently appears in the bible. In the Book of Genesis Noah's flood is said to have lasted forty days and forty nights and this is also the period of time that was said to separate Jesus' resurrection and his ascension into heaven. Further, the period of Lent lasts the forty days before Easter. The Temptation of Christ is documented in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke in which Christ spends forty days fasting in the desert and resisting the temptations of the devil. It is interesting that not only does Verona take forty days to meditate but *Proud Man* itself is also divided into four parts. The novel also plays with time in the time taken for the experience itself. Verona states that although the 'dream appeared to last about two years, though in actual time it only took one night' (Burdekin, 1993: 16). The event, while lasting in time only one night, actually contains two years of experiences.

The reader never sees the visitor's own society and only can guess what it is like from the descriptions that the protagonist provides. As a result of this the focus centres on the character of the visitor. Instead of imagining what the future will be like the novel looks at what the people of the future will be like, which is not necessarily the same thing.

The existence of a stable and peaceful society does not presuppose that you have enlightened and moral inhabitants. Furthermore, the relationship between the inhabitants of a place and the place itself is not always clear. Often utopian fiction improves the material conditions of society and as a result the people of this society are presented as being 'better' and more moral people. However, the connection between the two is not as straightforward as it seems because it assumes that human nature is fixed and that at heart all people are good people and only do bad things from external circumstances. In utopian fiction, writers frequently focus on the material conditions of life and seem to stereotype the people of utopia, being unable to imagine what people will be like in different material circumstances. In fact, this is something that Burdekin criticises in the work of Aldous Huxley. In *Proud Man* the protagonist reads a book by Huxley at the British Library. This book is not named, but from the description given it is presumably *Brave New World* (1932). Huxley is viewed as having no imagination because he 'could not conceive the change in their [men and women's] characters which must come about if they were brought up in a totally different way' (Burdekin, 1993: 226). The view that is taken in *Proud Man* of Huxley is that while he seems to have a belief in the power of environment over identity and that people's identity is not fixed he could not imagine it and that 'his imagination would only function if he dealt with materials' (Burdekin, 1993: 226). This is what makes Burdekin's work so unique, because she is presenting the people of utopia in a very different way than previously. She is presenting these people as completely different types of human beings because

she is aware that people's characters are not necessarily going to be the same in a different set of circumstances and utopian fiction needs to reflect that.

The Problem of Names

It is very difficult talking about an androgynous person and the attempt to do so only leads to the realisation that linguistically it is hard to define an individual's identity outside of the context of gender. The novel is written in first person, and so Verona has no problem talking about him/herself. However, the difficulty comes in when the critic wants to describe him/her. Verona could be called 'it' but this seems clumsy and impersonal. In this chapter Verona is called s/he but this is unsatisfactory as well. It would also not be accurate because Verona is not a 'he' or 'she' or even a combination of the both. Just what exactly Verona 'is' will be discussed more fully in the section on gender, although it is worth mentioning here the difficulty that also arises in Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* (1928). In the change from a man to a woman the language used to describe Orlando also undergoes changes. As a man Orlando is at first still described as 'he'. This then changes and for a brief moment Orlando is seemingly described as two people, one male and one female, when the narrative talks of 'their future', 'their identity', and 'their portraits' (Woolf, 2003: 67). It is finally concluded that, for convention's sake 'we must [...] say 'her' for 'his', and 'she' for 'he' (Woolf, 2003: 67). The difficulty is that there are no words to describe an individual who does not fit the traditional categories of gender. That person must be made somehow to fit.

For the sake of convenience in this chapter the protagonist of *Proud Man* is called Verona. However, the name of this androgynous protagonist is never known and s/he is given several names throughout the novel. Verona is reluctant to give his/her name to

the people of the 1930s. The reason given is that s/he does not want his/her name spoken by, what Verona terms as being a 'subhuman'. In practical terms though it raises the issue of whether society can imagine a 'human' name. In a gendered society names reflect an individual's specific gender. In order for Verona to interact with people s/he has to pretend alternatively to be a man or a woman and so has to frequently change his/her name in order to reflect the gender that s/he is acting. The only constant is the name Verona. S/he is alternatively called just Verona, by the priest Andrew Gifford, who then changes Verona's name when s/he chooses to go amongst society as a woman, at that point his/her name then changes to Alethea Gifford Verona. Finally, Verona becomes Gifford Verona when taking on the appearance of a man. Verona cannot maintain the same name when changing gender because in a gendered society personal names reflect an individual's gender.

Burdekin and Modernism

Proud Man can be described as a modernist text. It is probably the most experimental of all Burdekin's novels, both in style and in content. It features clear examples of modernist themes in her work, including an interest in time and a modernist criticism of the linear ordering of time, and the use of the technique of stream of consciousness. For this reason it has, by critics such as Williams, been associated with modernist experimentation. Williams is quick to point out however that these elements are used 'sparingly' in her work, something he attributes to Burdekin believing that the 'political crisis was too urgent to risk obfuscating her message' (Williams, 1999: 161). The use of stream of consciousness is one example of where modernist experimentation is used 'sparingly'. The utopian protagonist is telepathic and in the novel this character's 'mind-reading is often presented as sequences of free indirect discourse or interior

monologues, quintessentially Modernist innovations for depicting subjectivity' (Williams, 1999: 160). The strongest example of stream of consciousness is on a bus ride when the protagonist is listening to another character's random thoughts while they are travelling together on a bus:

That man either drinks or has a weak heart or indigestion. His head is a fine shape. This bus is travelling very badly. Ethyl is supposed to stop cars knocking. Could the L.G.O.C. afford Ethyl? That's an awful green hat. Some women are colour blind. We know a certain amount about what Charlemagne did, we don't know at all how he thought (Burdekin, 1993: 165)

Burdekin's use of modernist elements is intriguing. The most modernist perspective on her work, however, is her different perspective on gender.

Context

The title of Burdekin's *Proud Man* derives from Shakespeare's play *Measure for Measure*:

But man, proud man,
Dress'd in a little brief authority,
Most ignorant of what he's most assur'd,
His glassy essence, like an angry ape
(Shakespeare, Act 2, Scene 2, Line 117-120)

These lines are spoken by the character of Isabella, whose brother, Claudio, is being held in prison by the Deputy Angelo and sentenced to death. The reference occurs when Isabella is begging for the life of her brother. She accuses Angelo of being arrogant and abusing his position and authority and she compares the temporary power of Angelo with the true power of the angels in heaven. *Proud Man* picks up on the idea of the powerlessness of women in a patriarchal society where men are free to use and abuse the power of authority. However, the bigger theme is the situation of man as a species. In the evolutionary scheme of things humans are still at the stage of the 'angry ape' rather than being anywhere nearing the point of a fuller sense of being human. This is the main message of *Proud Man*. As a species, 'civilised' humans arrogantly believe they have achieved a higher state of being, without questioning what it means to be human. This includes looking at how people treat each other and in particular the disparity between the roles of the sexes in society.

Another text from the 1930s, *Man, Proud Man* (1932), was similarly influenced by the words from Shakespeare's text. Burdekin's subsequent use of the title is probably not coincidental. In fact, it is likely that Burdekin was directly making a reference to not only Shakespeare's play but this other text as well. This volume featured a variety of different essays on the subject of 'man' by different women writers: Susan Ertz 'Man as Pleasure-Seeker'; Storm Jameson's 'Man the Helpmate'; Sylvia Townsend Warner's 'Man's Moral Law'; Rebecca West's 'Man and Religion'. The book is a remarkable analysis of men's power in society: 'Each essay deals with a specific aspect of man's behaviour within the patriarchal framework of contemporary European Society' (Maslen, 1997: 53). However, Burdekin moves one step further in her novel by looking at both sexes and reimagining both sexes.

The Reverse-Utopia

Proud Man could be described as a reverse-utopia. In fact, *The Times Literary Supplement* review from 1934 describes it as a reverse of William Morris's 1890 *News From Nowhere*, describing it as 'Morris's fantasy inverted' (*The Times Literary Supplement*, 1934: 390). Instead of a protagonist or narrator exploring a utopian society, in this novel a character from a utopian place visits a representation of the original reader's own society, which in this case is England in the 1930s. The effect of this is twofold. The first is, as befitting the topic of this chapter, it focuses the reader's thoughts on utopian character rather than physical infrastructure. The second effect is that it provides another way to see the familiar in an unfamiliar light. The society of the 1930s is presented in a different, alien way in the descriptions by the utopian protagonist, corresponding with the utopian technique of defamiliarisation.

This type of story, the visitor from another place story, provides a much more direct way of criticising society than do either the typical eutopian or dystopian stories. The reader is seeing a physical representation of their own society, but they are seeing it through different eyes. They are seeing it from an alien point-of-view. Patai considers this technique as a way of seeing something before people's eyes, seeing reality, but seeing it properly. She sees it as one of the narrative strategies of estrangement that are at work in utopian fiction (Patai, 1993: xiii). Keith Williams describes *Proud Man* as using the same 'back-from-the-future' strategy as H. G. Wells in his 1924 novel *The Dream* (Williams, 1999: 152). Williams describes how in that novel Wells has a utopian neurobiologist go back to the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Williams identifies the importance of this strategy in the same way as Patai does in that it

provides a 'futuristic perspective' in order to 'defamiliarise and criticise' (Williams, 1999: 153).

The reverse-utopia is an unusual representation of the genre but it is not without precedent. Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *With Her in Ourland* (1916) is another story that features a utopian character who visits the 'real world'. The tale is the second part to Gilman's 1915 story *Herland*, in which three Americans stumble across the utopian society of Herland, a separatist society of women who reproduce parthenogenetically (Deegan, 1997: 1). In the second part of the tale, *With Her in Ourland* one of the women of Herland, Ellador, returns with the Americans to see what the rest of the world is like. In her introduction to the re-publication of the text, Mary Jo Deegan considers the differences between the two texts, *With Her in Ourland* 'does not begin with easy utopian escapism but with the extraordinary problem of surveying Ourland and the complex, real world task of integrating and applying the positive lessons of Herland to the lived realities of Ourland' (Deegan, 1997: 1). This quotation suggests an added dimension to the technique of reverse-utopia. The presence of the utopian protagonist, from a better society, in a representation of current society starkly highlights the gap between utopian dreams and present reality. The journey to a utopian society will not be an easy one.

Section 2

The utopian genre allows for the representation of a new way of being and existing. It is therefore not surprising that Burdekin used this form in the novel *Proud Man* because in this novel she was trying to re-imagine what it means to be a human being. In fact the utopian form was the ideal literary genre for the task. It is difficult to see what other

form she could have used to effectively portray the ideas that she was trying to get across. If she had written in a non-fictional form her ideas would have been seen as fantastic and unrealistic. On the other hand, if she had used another fictional form her ideas might have been taken too seriously and like Radcliffe Hall before her she could have been subjected to not only literary criticism but also to criminal proceedings. The purpose of using the utopian genre, for Burdekin, is that it allows her to imagine a new way of existence.

Before discussing one of the main topics of this chapter, the human/ subhuman divide, it is worthwhile pausing to consider the many moral and ethical problems for a reader today with the discussion of the categories of 'human' and 'subhuman' (it is particularly the latter word that causes the most problems). The word 'subhuman' has been used to refer to different people in different contexts and in most cases the use has been overwhelmingly negative. The reader today will no doubt connect it with the atrocities of Nazi Germany. The Nazis believed themselves to be 'the master race' and described certain groups, such as Jews, gypsies, and homosexuals as 'subhuman', and subsequently this was used as an excuse to commit horrendous acts against these groups. In those circumstances the two terms were used on a racial basis. It would be unfair to attribute this historical use of the word to *Proud Man* because although Burdekin uses similar terminology she uses it in a different context. First, the use of the word 'subhuman' is meant to challenge the reader's assumptions about the word 'human' itself. Second, although the two terms are contrasted they are not meant to represent two groups directly opposed to each other but as different points in the evolutionary process. The exact relationship between Verona's people and the people from the 1930s is unclear. Verona's people could either exist in the future and be the descendants of the 1930s people, or they could exist on another planet, but interestingly

Verona believes that even if the situation was of two contemporary societies the 1930s people would be in character 'like our ancestors had been' (Burdekin, 1993: 14). The important point to focus on is that these are two societies at very different places in terms of evolving. Subhumans and humans are not to be seen as two groups set up against each other, but as different points in the evolution of human life.

Human/ Subhuman

From the outset a hierarchy is established between the two societies, or more specifically the two sets of people who inhabit the societies. The people from Verona's utopian society are seen as superior in character to those of the people from 1930s England. Verona uses the terms 'subhuman' and 'human' to describe the people from the two societies. The 'humans' are Verona's people, while the people from the 1930s are termed 'subhuman'. One of the main aspects of this is the idea of levels of consciousness. The people from the 1930s are described by Verona as being subhuman because they are considered not to have achieved the level of consciousness of Verona's people. Crudely speaking, it could be seen as being like a meeting between a caveman and someone of today. The implications of this debate over being a person, which include ideas about evolution, will form a large part of this chapter on identity.

Evolving, or developing into human beings is linked in the novel with levels of consciousness. When Verona comes into contact with various people s/he assesses them on their level of consciousness and from that determines whether they are closer or further away from achieving the label of human. For example, when Verona talks to Andrew about the Bishop, s/he states that the Bishop is a not-person, and so s/he says is Andrew, however s/he also tells Andrew that 'you are more like a person in your mind'

(Burdekin, 1993: 145). 'Humans' are defined as being fully conscious beings. Certain 'subhumans' are shown as being capable of achieving higher levels of consciousness than other subhumans and potentially are capable of developing into the humans of Verona's people. Part of the reason why Verona chooses to visit the people of the 1930s in the first place is to discover whether they 'were likely ever to evolve into humanity, or whether they were stagnant in their chrysalis stage, and would remain, while the sun shone, subhuman' (Burdekin, 1993: 14). It is at this point that Verona is 'much inclined to think it was not on another planet, but on the same planet in another time' (Burdekin, 1993: 15). This is spoken early on in the novel. However, by the end of the experience Verona's view has changed and states that 'it does not seem probable that such were our ancestors' (Burdekin, 1993: 318). This is because Verona has no belief that 'the future story of that race will be very different from its past' (Burdekin, 1993: 318). This is quite a bleak view. The society of 1930s Britain seemingly has no hope of developing into something better. This is presented as not necessarily a problem, since in the end '[b]easts, children, adolescents, or mature, probably it's all the same to God' (Burdekin, 1993: 240). Confusingly this seems to advocate acceptance of the status quo. If it does not matter what you are then there is no incentive to change. This seems to be borne out by the fact that at the end of the novel Verona reflects back and states that 'my report must necessarily be very tentative and inconclusive' (Burdekin, 1993: 317). Then, rather tellingly, s/he ends up concluding that 'the whole experience was of no importance whatever' (Burdekin, 1993: 317). Given that humans have no interest in subhuman life then the experience of a visit to subhuman society will of course be of no importance to human beings. The importance is to the subhuman society. Verona's lack of faith in subhuman society demands a response from the reader. It asks the reader to think about what kind of society is the best one and will make people happy and content.

The superiority of 1930s human society is challenged through society's treatment of the more vulnerable members of society, and in particular animals. The novel asks the question of how humankind can believe itself to be a superior creature when man is so vicious and cruel to animals, and also to each other. Animals are often a vulnerable species in human society and some ethics theorists include animals in the concept of 'person'. In this context both Immanuel Kant and Jeremy Bentham's ideas about animals are considered. While Kant believes that as conscious beings society should not hurt animals because it will hurt people's sense of identity, Bentham believes that the difference between humans and non-humans is not a moral difference but one based on experience. If animals feel pain then humans should avoid causing them pain regardless of whether they are conscious or not. In the novel the rights of animals are highly respected in Verona's society.

The ideas of Kant and Bentham are often used in the discipline of bioethics and are interesting to consider in relation to looking at 'non-people'. Bioethics is 'the study of ethical issues arising from the biological and medical sciences' (Kuhse and Singer, 2006: 1). It draws on theories of ethics from such theorists as Aristotle, Kant, Bentham and John Stuart Mill in order to examine the ethical implications of medical practices. The medical issues involved often centre on the rights of the non-person, so issues like abortion, people in a vegetative state, and the use of animals in medical testing are popular concerns. Medical ethics has a long history going back to Hippocrates in ancient Greece, but bioethics dates from around the 1950s, driven by new medical technologies (Kuhse and Singer, 2001). What is useful here is the line between the person and non-person and the subsequent rights afforded to each. In bioethics there is a theory called 'personhood theory'. The 'personhood theory' divides human and 'non-human' in terms of consciousness and it seems to describe the same ideas about

consciousness that Burdekin uses in *Proud Man*. The 'personhood theory' sees the category of 'person' as not something that is automatically given on birth but something that is worked at and earned. When children are born they do not automatically as a right inherit the label of 'person'. Individuals have to develop into being human. However, bioethics can be just as problematic in terms of morality. Non-people are seen as being unborn children, embryos and foetuses, as well as newly born, and it can also include people who are mentally disabled. Thus while ideas of being a human include human dignity and autonomy, the protection of the vulnerable has also become a large part of the debate.

There seems to be conflicting ideas about human identity in the novel. On the one hand identity is seen as something that is flexible, and that it is possible that subhumans can change their identity to something else. However, once a person has reached full consciousness there is the suggestion that identity is then fixed. Humans are described as being 'fully conscious, with minds permanently welded into one piece' (Burdekin, 1993: 14). It seems to suggest that there is an end point for identity and that once this point has been reached human beings will stay the same way forever. The question is, is this something that is possible, and is it also something that is desirable. In identity studies today the view is that identity is something that is flexible and fluid and it is very hard now to think of identity as something that is fixed. If it was possible to have a fixed and coherent identity would that necessarily be something that would be wanted. This question goes to the heart of one of the major conflicts within utopian fiction. The imagined perfect place is a stable place and does not require change. Utopian societies subsume all differences between people in order to avoid conflict; however, this can lead to a society that does not change or progress and ultimately stagnates.

In the novel humans are described as having neither ‘unfulfilled wishes, nor conflict; and dreams’ (Burdekin, 1993: 14). Utopian fiction assumes that all the population wants the same thing and it does not allow for plurality. There are no cultural differences in Verona’s society. There are no racial differences. The entire race has been made the same. This is made clear when Verona is out on the street and s/he sees ‘a dark skinned subhuman’ (Burdekin, 1993: 66). In Verona’s society there is a ‘[p]erfect fusion of races’ (Burdekin, 1993: 193). People are not black or white, instead ‘the whole human race, if it ever was a race, would be brown’ (Burdekin, 1993: 193). Presuming that race is the result of climate Leonora asks ‘what if some parts were so hot the climate sort of demanded a black skin?’ (Burdekin, 1993: 193). Verona replies that they simply would not live there. Apart from the simplistic attitude towards race, there is also the problem of uniformity. Is a perfect place really a place where everyone is the same? No cultural differences, no racial differences, no sexual differences, everyone is exactly the same. The motivation for this type of society is a positive one, to avoid discrimination and conflict. However, a reader today would think turning everyone the same does not celebrate individuality. Individuality in a society of individuals who all think and act the same cannot exist.

The idea of fixed identity is backed up when Verona talks about history and states that ‘all record of our transition stage, or race infancy, has long since been lost’ (Burdekin, 1993: 14-15). It has been lost because the utopians do not care about the past ‘since we are contented with our present’ (Burdekin, 1993: 14-15). There is not the idea about learning from the past since the present is perfect and so history no longer has value. This idea is something that is common in utopian fiction. In both positive and negative utopias, for different reasons, the past becomes lost. In dystopian fiction it often disappears in order for a totalitarian regime to impose its own will on the people. In

utopian fiction the motivation seems to be similar to the reason in *Proud Man*. If people are contented in the present then there seems no reason to dwell on the past, which can often have negative associations which surround the living of an imperfect existence. However, this fails to recognise the importance of history in personal and societal identity. For many people it is important to know where they have come from.

This neglect of the past seems to hint that when utopian writers imagine the type of people that will inhabit utopia that they pay more attention to intellectual considerations over emotional ones. This accusation could very well be addressed to *Proud Man*.

Although Verona is an enlightened human individual s/he comes from a society where laughter and smiling do not exist. Verona observes these things and describes them as being animalistic. For example, s/he describes a smile as being 'a grimace rather like that of angry or frightened carnivorous animals' (Burdekin, 1993: 75).

It has been mentioned previously that the use of the word 'subhuman' is meant to challenge the 1930s subhumans assumption that they are superior creatures. The way this is challenged is done in different ways. One way is in terms of language and the use of the words 'human' and 'subhuman' in the novel itself. Although Verona describes him/herself as being 'human' and sees the people of the 1930s as 'subhumans', the people of the 1930s themselves use the word 'human' also, naturally enough, to describe themselves. This highlights the problem of perception, or preconception. The subhumans in the novel, and this point is also directed to the reader, call themselves human without reflecting on what this means. The term is often used to distinguish human behaviour from the behaviour of animals, and in the novel it shows that a hierarchy is established between animals and humans, which is something Verona

destabilises by showing how human behaviour is more akin to animal behaviour than any defined 'civilised' behaviour.

The word 'civilised' appears frequently in the novel and is another example of the way Burdekin challenges the way 'subhumans' set themselves up as superior creatures.

Verona points out that the word *civilised* (introduced in the novel in italics) is often used by people, or nations, when they are being the least civilised. Verona sees how the word is used by slightly more conscious 'subhumans', meaning nations like England who are seen as more developed, to define themselves and yet in Verona's view these 'civilised' people are no 'nearer to a human conception of the true relation of the self to the not-self than are the primitive or uncivilized nations' (Burdekin, 1993: 19). In fact Verona talks about how the 'civilised' English nation had not long ago taken part in a 'highly civilized war' (Burdekin, 1993: 20). This is referring to the First World War. Burdekin also throws doubt on the concept of 'civilised' nations in terms of colonialism by the fact that 'civilised' nations, like Britain, have a tendency to go about 'land-grabbing or Empire-building' (Burdekin, 1993: 20). The novel criticises war and sees it as damaging to human identity. It presents the concept of war from the point of view of someone who comes from a society where war does not exist and it is from the description by Verona that war seems pointless, unnecessary, often absurd, and leads to devastating consequences. War is seen first as a clash between 'nations' and Verona points out that there seems to be a contradiction between believing that it is wrong for a solitary person to kill someone else of their own nation, while it was quite acceptable for a group of people to kill on mass people from another nation: 'that was against no law, it was not murder, and it was right' (Burdekin, 1993: 19).

In the clash between nations, national pride is invoked as being a reason why men should go to war. Burdekin is here looking at the destruction that can result from the imposition that men's identity should include 'patriotism or national pride' (Burdekin, 1993: 21). Verona uses the First World War to illustrate that fact. Millions died in the war, and all 'these males obtained glory' (Burdekin, 1993: 20). However, the glory can be seen as worthless next to the loss of life: 'it might have been better had these dead males done without the glory, and retained their lives' (Burdekin, 1993: 20-21). The novel highlights the ridiculousness of dying for glory, while reflecting on the pressure that was involved in ensuring compliance. The feeling was that if you were opposed to war and killing, if you were a pacifist, then this was morally wrong. If a man who has been fighting refuses to go on killing then 'he himself is killed by the males of his own side' (Burdekin, 1993: 22). Women are seen as culpable in this imperative to make men believe that there is glory in fighting, before conscription, 'every conceivable mental pressure, including the most revolting moral cruelty by the females, was brought to bear upon them to make them go to war' (Burdekin, 1993: 22). National pride is seen as a subhuman characteristic and not a 'human' one.

The novel sees the gathering together of humans or 'subhumans' in a mass of people as damaging to individual identity. It is asserted, firstly, that 'in herds we are horrible' (Burdekin, 1993: 147). The belief is that individual humans lose their individual identity when they are together in a pack, so that there 'is no humanity in herds' (Burdekin, 1993: 147). The use of the word 'herd' suggests that people take on an animal pack mentality, '[e]ach little bit of humanity in the individual dries up and dies directly that individual gets clamped in a herd' (Burdekin, 1993: 147). In terms of evolution, it is stated that the pattern has gone through from 'primitive tribe action' to 'selfish individualism' and then back to 'civilized tribe action' (Burdekin, 1993: 148). The

description of people in herds refers to people in two circumstances. The first is the mindless mob. This is the mob contemplated in part four of the novel in relation to the child murderer Gilbert. It is thought that if the mass of people knew what he had done then ‘they would tear him to pieces in a frenzy’ (Burdekin, 1993: 266). That, in revenge, there would be required to be enacted ‘a final vengeance to be taken on him’ (Burdekin, 1993: 266). The interactions between Verona and Gilbert during this part of the book argue for a rehabilitative approach. The justice of a mob is based on revenge. On the other hand, a one-to-one approach is more likely to yield a better result. Morality and doing ‘right’ seem to have little to do with a herd mentality. The herd cannot have an ‘attack of conscience’ in the same way that an individual human can. It seems as if the only measure of right or wrong is if everyone is doing something then it must be right, so that ‘[i]f the whole herd is doing a thing it must be right’ (Burdekin, 1993: 149). The other type of herd that is represented is the more conscious, and regulated herd which includes the army, as well as ‘nations, churches, fascists, communists, trade unions, the B.M.A., the Great White Race, the Nordic Myth, the proletariat, the bourgeoisie, the gangsters, the priesthoods of all religions’ (Burdekin, 1993: 147). Until all of these ‘herds’ have been broken up, it is thought that ‘there can be no humanity on earth’ (Burdekin, 1993: 147). Verona believes that even if only one herd were left it would not be right because it is the approach and not the particular herd that is the problem.

The ‘Untermensch’ and the ‘Ubermensch’

Burdekin’s use of the terms ‘subhuman’ and ‘human’ share some similarities with Friedrich Nietzsche’s concept of the ‘Untermensch’ and the ‘Ubermensch’. These terms appeared in his 1887 fictional work *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. The character of Zarathustra gains perspective and understanding about the human condition after

isolating himself in a cave. After a significant period of time, Zarathustra returns to human society and preaches about the need to become better people and talks of the 'Übermensch', a superior pattern of being to which humanity should aim to emulate. However, the people he encounters are not interested in his ideas. The 'Übermensch' can be contrasted with the 'Untermensch', or 'Last Man'. In his work Nietzsche talks about the 'Last Man' and that nothing great is possible for the 'Last Man', he epitomises 'creeping mediocrity':

[T]he human type whose sole desire is personal comfort, happiness. Such a person is "the last man" quite literally, incapable of the desire that is required to create beyond oneself in any form, including that of having children (Janaway, 1999: 40).

In this sense Nietzsche's subhumans are seen as a threat to the progression of the race. In *Proud Man*, Verona, as the utopian ideal, can be seen to be representative of the 'Übermensch', while the subhumans, the un-evolved inhabitants of the 1930s, are the 'Untermensch'.

Nietzsche's ideas about the 'Untermensch' are forever tarnished by the Nazis adaptation of his theories to justify their own position as the 'master race'. In the Nazis perspective, the superior Aryans were the 'Übermensch' and the inferior Jews the 'Untermensch'. The Nazis were not the only ones to pick up on this contrast of classifying people according to being superior and inferior. Lothrop Stoddard also constructed an idea of the 'under-man' in response to Nietzsche's 'Übermensch'. In 1922 Stoddard published a pamphlet entitled *The Revolt Against Civilization: The Menace of the Under-man* and in this work Stoddard talks about the quality of human

character and that for society to be successful it must be peopled by quality people. This aim for a better class of people is not necessarily a bad one. The problems arise when thinking about what to do with those people who do not fit into a set vision of how humanity should be. Aside from the Nazis there were many people at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century who advocated eugenic programmes in order to improve the human race. This can be seen in the work of utopian writers such as H. G. Wells.

Wells was concerned with the problem of humanity devolving, shown in *The Time Machine* (1895) where humans have become two different races, one a cannibalistic tribe called the Morlocks, while the Eloi are apathetic and easy prey for the Morlocks. Shockingly Wells advocated killings, sterilisations, and birth control for the destruction of 'inferior' people, which included disabled people, as well as people of certain races (Carey, 1999: 368). He believed in eugenics and saw that in terms of evolution, the future of society needed to be carefully controlled. Carey lists the ways in which Wells advocates dealing with the 'People of the Abyss' in Wells' book *Anticipations* (1901). The nation who 'educates, sterilizes, exports or poisons' will gain ascendancy' (Carey, 1999: 368). It is interesting that amongst that list is education. Not all theorists who talk about subhumans and humans are promoting the idea that in order to get to a better state of being you have to eradicate all traces of negative elements in society. In fact, most utopias instead strongly advocate education as the way of physically and mentally improving the people of society.

Burdekin is aware of eugenic theories at the time she was writing, as is made clear in *The Rebel Passion*. However, in the case of *Proud Man* it is uncertain how, if at all, subhumans have developed into humans. If the change has occurred then it has clearly

come about through the process of evolution. Humanity has evolved so that individuals are better people. In *The Rebel Passion* a eugenics programme was one of the elements involved in bringing about a better society. However, although eugenics is advocated in *The Rebel Passion*, the rights of the individual are much more at the forefront in *Proud Man* and in fact another option is provided to deal with undesirable people. For example, the child-murderer Gilbert is given the unique opportunity to reform through a sort of psychoanalytic method. In the novel Verona almost takes on the role of psychiatrist. As an impartial observer s/he guides Gilbert into seeing his situation in a rational way. Although there are seemingly no subhumans or subhuman types in existence in Verona's society, Verona's attitude towards the people of the 1930s is one of understanding rather than condemnation.

Burdekin's work ties in with discussions taking place at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twenty-first about the progression of man. This was spurred on by the writings of Charles Darwin on evolution and the origin of the species. If humanity has progressed to the current level of civilisation over the years then it seems logical that humans can progress even further and reach new levels of potential.

Section 3

Gender identity is often included in the debate in the novel over being human and a person, but there are other issues to do with gender in this novel and again they come back to the character of Verona. Verona is a 'human' and also s/he is androgynous. It is the contrast between the androgynous Verona and the gendered individuals of the 1930s that sets up questions on what it means to be gendered. Further, when Verona arrives in Britain of the 1930s not only does s/he have to try and hide his/her 'humanity' in order

to blend in with the population s/he also has to hide the fact that s/he is androgynous and has to 'act' an appropriate gender. It is through the attempt by Verona to understand the concept of gender and through his/her efforts to hide his/her androgynous nature, by 'acting' a gender, that gender itself is shown to be something that is not fixed but can be fluid and adaptable. This is important for gender identity because it shows that there are things that can be changed.

In the first half of this chapter identity was explored in the novel in relation to the idea of being 'human'. The very word 'human' is questioned by the character of Verona as a word that is often used by people without them ever reflecting on what it actually refers to. Verona, in fact, while considering him/herself as being worthy of the label 'human', re-labels the people of the 1930s as 'subhuman'. It is then the contrast between the 'human' Verona and the 'subhuman' people that s/he encounters which raises awareness that the term 'human' is more fraught than would appear. The pairing of the categories of gendered and non-gendered interacts in an interesting way with the subhuman/human divide. The categories of subhuman/human, in fact, mirror the division between gendered/non-gendered beings. Correspondingly, being subhuman is intimately connected with being gendered, while to be human is to be without gender, to be, as Verona is, androgynous. This is made clear early on when Verona first arrives in England and s/he comes to the realisation that s/he has to 'pass' as a gendered being. S/he pronounces that s/he could not be a person, a 'human being', during the experience because there were none in existence at the time, the only people were (subhuman) men and (subhuman) women, 'in my dream I could not be a person, for none were in existence, but must appear to be either a woman or a man' (Burdekin, 1993: 65). According to Verona, in order to be 'human' you must not be constrained by being a male or female. This statement is not entirely unproblematic because it is not altogether

clear whether s/he is referring to sex or to gender. One point that confuses the issue is the fact that Verona is physically as well as psychologically androgynous. However, the complications relating to the issue of the physical aspect will be left to be discussed after looking first at the gendered aspect.

In the middle section of the novel when Verona is 'passing' for a woman and is living with another woman, the writer Leonora, there is a discussion between the two about the difference between sex and gender and there is clearly an awareness of the latter as a culturally defined category based on the former. The point is raised that 'male' and 'female' are not 'natural' categories but cultural ones. This is significant because there is the suggestion that if the problems of inequality are cultural ones then this allows for change. Leonora says that people 'must stop being masculine and feminine, and become male and female. Masculinity and femininity are the artificial differences between men and women. Maleness and femaleness are the real differences' (Burdekin, 1993: 178). However, this raises the problem of essentialism. Is there an essential maleness or femaleness beneath the cultural categories that can be hunted out? In fact, what Verona believes makes gendered 'subhumans' so unhappy is not that there is a misrecognition of their 'true' sexed selves but it comes from a denial from society that individuals are, in fact, not meant to be male or female but instead to be bisexual.

The insistence of dividing society up along the binary lines of both man and woman and the corresponding gendered characteristics of male and female is seen to lead to the repression of the bisexual self. In particular Verona believes that the unhappiness of 'subhumanity' is due to the recognition of this aspect of repressing of anything of the opposite sex within the self. Early on in the book Verona states that subhumans 'are not happy in their bisexuality, because they have become conscious of it' (Burdekin, 1993:

23). This is not referring to sexuality, or homosexuality, but aspects of the other sex that are present within a person and which are seen as debasing to their gendered character. For example, if a man wore long hair, something considered typically female, it would cast doubt on his masculine character. The race of 'subhumans' that Verona comes into contact with find it difficult to comprehend anything outside of strict boundaries of gender

When Verona first arrives in England s/he notes that 'I saw immediately that the subhumans were of two sexes, like animals' (Burdekin, 1993: 67). The comparison of 'subhumans' to animals again seems to be insulting. However, Verona is referring to the fact that 'subhumans' rigidly insist on staying within the boundaries of their given sex. This refers back again to the idea of being human and being more conscious. It is this insistence on staying within defined boundaries that prevents 'subhumans' from being 'persons' and in fact it is this which prevents them from recognising Verona as a person. Many of the people in the novel that Verona comes into contact with feel uneasy around him/her and the reason why is because individuals are expected to act in a pre-assigned way and will not accept anyone acting outside of that. Yet, Verona believes that this is exactly what is holding subhumans back from reaching their potential, noting that '[t]hey were not persons, and they did not want to be persons; they were males and females' (Burdekin, 1993: 23). This quote shows that Verona views this inability to go beyond gender as something that is chosen. There is no reason why 'subhumans' cannot be androgynous (psychologically, if not physically), or less confined by their gender roles, except for a repugnance to do something different.

As a character, Verona is undoubtedly unique. It is this aspect of androgyny that makes him/her so unique, particularly the fact that Verona is without gender and without a

physically defined sexed category. When thinking about androgynous figures in literature the character and novel that springs to mind is Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* (1928). The novel is the fictional biography of a character who falls asleep as a man and after existing in a trance state for over a week wakes up to the new discovery that 'he was a woman' (Woolf, 2003: 67). The novel not only blends the boundaries between fiction and biography but also between what it means to be a man and a woman. For example, it raises questions over what it means to be a sexed and gendered being; does the definition of being a man or woman extend beyond the physical body, and is this definition fixed or fluid?

Six years later Burdekin similarly explored questions like these in *Proud Man* with the androgynous Verona. The fact that Verona is androgynous in character and physically s/he is also sexless raises questions about the word 'androgyny' itself and what it, in fact, refers to. It possibly refers to a specific mode of being and existing, one that somehow and in some way combines male and female characteristics or even goes beyond this to a 'non-gendered' state of existence, or it could simply refer to the idea of the breaking down of the traditional conventions and boundaries of sex and gender.

Either way it has to be said that there remains some confusion over the meaning of the word 'androgyny' and one of the reasons why is that its basic definition is a loose one.

The word 'androgyny' itself derives from the ancient Greek and combines the words 'andro', meaning male, with 'gyn', meaning female (Heilbrun, 1973: ix-x). However, the statement that androgyny means the combining of male and female is fraught with complications because there is the question of how they are combined. Is it a physical combining? It could be that it refers to people who are hermaphrodites. The physical aspect links with the speech of the character of Aristophanes in Plato's *Symposium*.

Aristophanes hypothesises that:

[O]ur original nature was by no means the same as it is now. In the first place, there were three kinds of human beings, not merely the two sexes, male and female, as at present: there was a third kind as well, which had equal shares of the other two, and whose name survives though the thing itself has vanished. For 'man-woman' was then a unity in form no less than name, composed of both sexes and sharing equally in male and female; whereas now it has come to be merely a name of reproach (Plato, 1925: 189)

Aristophanes' belief here was that there were three types of beings, one made up of man and man, another woman and woman, and the third of man and woman. The three beings were split and this split explains the sexual desire between different individuals because it is the result of peoples' desire to re-join again with their other half. In *Proud Man* Verona has become sexless through evolution. In the character of Verona it becomes necessary to separate the physical androgyny with the psychological androgyny in the discussion of him/her. Critics, such as Carolyn Heilbrun, believe that androgyny must not 'be confused with hermaphroditism, an anomalous physical condition' (Heilbrun, 1973: xii). The discussion of androgyny in *Proud Man* would benefit from disregarding the physical aspect.

However, whilst disregarding the aspect of physical androgyny in the overall discussion of androgyny it is important to consider the reason why Burdekin chose to have a physically androgynous main character. Considering the physically androgynous aspect of Verona is useful, but not because it is promoting an ideal for the future; after all it is unknown, and possibly extremely unlikely, that humans, or 'subhumans', could physically develop into the androgynous bodies that reflect Verona's people. In fact, the idea of utopia as blueprint or vision for future society falls down somewhat over the

concept of evolving into an androgynous person and it could also lead to other ideas on gender in the novel being disregarded as fantastical. However, it is useful because it raises numerous important questions. The first is whether a man or woman can move beyond their particular sex. Can a woman who tries to move beyond her gender become a person or will she only become a 'masculine' woman? In discussing the work of Rose Macaulay the critic Jeanette Passty includes in the category of androgynous characters 'masculine women'. Passty talks about androgyny as being a way of allowing expression of the true self, so that 'Macaulay's masculine women are true to themselves only when they dress, act, play, work, think, or dream in a way that others in their social milieu choose to regard as more appropriate to men' (Passty, 1988: 17). It seems very likely that Burdekin chose to have a physically androgynous character in order to try and avoid the misrecognition of her intention to portray this character as being a 'human' rather than a 'masculine woman' or a 'feminine man'. Moreover, this character cannot be described as a combination of both because through this character Burdekin is also not just questioning gender relations but such universal themes as 'human' morality.

Returning to the subject of combining male and female characteristics, this can present another difficulty in terms of defining what it means to be male and what it means to be female and how they are mixed and in what way. Is it a matter of balancing characteristics traditionally thought of as applying to one sex, such as balancing 'male' forcefulness with 'female' passivity, or is it a matter of finding a common universal approach? The trouble is that characteristics associated with men are predominantly considered positive and often come to represent 'universal' values, while women represent the lack of those values. Even a reassessment of female characteristics in a more positive light is not going to mean that in combining male and female

characteristics the end result will be a 'human' being because while there is no fixed meaning attached to what it means to be a man or woman, there is also no clear definition of what it means to be a human. This was recognised by the writer Winifred Hotlby, who wrote in the book *Virginia Woolf* (1932) that:

We cannot recognize infallibly what characteristics beyond those which are purely physical are "male" and "female". Custom and prejudice, history and tradition have designed the fashion plates; we hardly know yet what remains beneath them of the human being (quoted in Heilbrun, 1985: 73)

This leads on to another possible definition of androgyny, that it refers to a condition beyond gender, if that is possible.

Section 4

'The Man' is a strange chapter, different from the rest of the book in its content, if not in its style. The androgynous narrator of the novel who has spent the previous section of the book taking on the role of a woman is now 'acting' the part of being a man and he meets Gilbert Hassell in the park. Listening in to Gilbert's thoughts Verona learns that this man is a child serial killer. In particular he is a killer of little girls and although the reader never actually finds out how old the children are that he kills the narrator observes that when walking with Gilbert he shows particular interest in girls aged seven to eleven.

The reality of Gilbert being a child serial killer has importance more in its symbolic function than anything else. In particular the relationship between Gilbert and his

victims serves more as a representation of Gilbert's, and men's, relationships with women in general. In *Swastika Night* Burdekin goes to the extreme to make her point about misogynistic attitudes towards women, showing how much some men are repulsed by them by locking them up in cages. In *Proud Man* she similarly uses the shock tactic of having women, or girls, being on the end of abuse by men, and again has it entirely from the man's point of view. The whole of *Swastika Night* as well as 'The Man' are positioned from the point of view of men but the writing seems to be directly addressing women. The situations are situations involving men but used to enlighten women to make them think, to make them consider the world around them and the position that they are in, to understand that some men hate women only because they are afraid of them and not from any inferiority on their part.

Throughout the book the tone of the novel is similar, from the point of view of the traveller it has a coldly thoughtful, assessing, analytic tone. The same tone in the fourth chapter takes on a different significance than in the other three. The subject of a child murderer is an emotive one and yet Verona considers it and thinks about it in his/her usual clinical way. The tone and the subject matter jar and provide an interesting contrast between the emotion and the intellect. At one point in the story Verona reflects that: 'An adult who murders other adults is regarded with some horror, but an adult who kills children is loathed as something below humanity' (Burdekin, 1993: 266). His/her observations read more like an anthropological habit of calling people subhumans. These techniques produce anger in the reader at the reduction of societal feeling, and perhaps is Burdekin's criticism of Freud and psychoanalysis which has a tendency to dehumanise people and consider their problems in an unemotional way. Nancy Chodorow comments on Freud's lack of 'human' feeling in her work *Femininities*,

Masculinities, Sexualities: Freud and Beyond, particularly paying attention to his lack of personal comment on the abuses of children (Chodorow, 1994: 25).

At the end of the book just when Gilbert is about to confess his crime to the police he is involved in a car accident and through Verona's attempt to save him he is inadvertently killed instead. This is obviously Gilbert's punishment for his crime, a way of letting him know that despite his attempt to repent he can never be forgiven. After all Verona's attempts to convert him and make him not want to murder children it really counts for nothing, because society is not merely logic but also emotion. Verona makes society's view very clear when he elucidates the feeling of adults on the abuse of children. In many ways 'The Man' is about the contrast between logic and illogic. This contrast has great significance in the actual contrast between the narrator and his actual environment, and this contrast highlights the position of the reader and places the reader, interestingly, somewhere in the middle, seeing both logic and tempering it with emotion.

There are many symbolic elements in 'The Man', the most obvious of which is the knife that Gilbert uses to kill the little girls. The knife is an obvious symbol of phallic power, both social and sexual. Gilbert was made emotionally powerless by his mother as a child and by murdering these children he gains his power by having control over their life and death. It is also interesting that other victims of his have included small animals, such as rabbits, and his choice of victims, their complete helplessness against him, is the most telling. He considers the knife and thinks of the other uses that it can be put to, such as cutting up 'bread and apples, nice brown bread and golden apples' (Burdekin, 1993: 290). In the middle of his musings comes the thought: 'Serve them right the whores' (Burdekin, 1993: 290). Gilbert describes the fact that after he kills the girls he

experiences a sort of release, which could be read as the sexual climax that comes after the act of penetration, and the blood itself is the ejaculation of the coupling. The death of the girl is both physical and symbolic in that her death is the sacrifice that has to be made in order for male pleasure.

Another symbolic element is the tree that overshadows his mother's bedroom. When he returns to his home in the country he refuses to take his mother's bedroom, even though the housekeeper has prepared it ready for him because it is the best in the house, because it has this darkness to it from the presence of the tree outside. The tree is another phallic symbol, but this one representative of the power of his father. It obsesses him so that in the end he has to cut it down which makes him feel better, because he has thrown off his father's power.

Daphne Patai states in the 'Afterword' of *Proud Man* that Burdekin 'was acquainted with the work of Freud and Jung' (Burdekin, 1993: 325). Her interactions with psychoanalysis include scepticism of it. Burdekin's relationship to psychoanalysis and Freud is not straightforward. In *The End of this Days Business* she turns Freud's theory of Penis Envy on its head by reversing it to make a theory of a sort of womb envy. In *Proud Man* she explores the dynamics of psychoanalytic theory from both the angle of theoretical theories and from the experience of psychoanalysis itself. So that in 'The Man' the reader sees evidence of dream theory and theories of childhood yet the perspective is the exchange between Verona and Gilbert, which are more like exchanges between patient and psychiatrist.

Gilbert feels strongly about women and his feelings are that, 'emotionally he was repelled by women' (Burdekin, 1993: 281). His childhood is offered as one of the main

reasons for his current feelings for women, going back to his education: 'A contempt for females was part of the tradition of his school' (Burdekin, 1993: 281). In addition, there is his upbringing by parents. His father plays his part in the fact that he was so unapproachable and Gilbert, as typical in Freud's Oedipus Complex, hated him. Verona believes though that it is ultimately Gilbert's mother who is at the root core of his problem:

Now I thought I knew the root cause of Gilbert's madness and his consequent unsocial behaviour. Probably at the age of three his adorable mother had represented to him not only a woman but women as a whole, the female and opposite element. Then it had been impressed on him by shock that this element was not only a storehouse of all possible delights, but literally two faces, and that one was [...] ghastly and very terrible (Burdekin, 1993: 304).

Gilbert's response to his mother contains within it the difficulty of men coming to terms with the idea of woman.

Conclusion

The aim of this last chapter was to consider utopian identity. In light of this, identity was considered in terms of being human and questions about what it means to be human were explored. In addition, gender was considered in the matter of identity and the confines of male/female gender was, ultimately, seen as a barrier to belonging to the category of human.

Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to explore four utopian texts from the interwar period by the writer Katharine Burdekin. Each of the texts was chosen for the different perspective they took on the utopian genre: *The Rebel Passion* was considered as an example of the positive utopian text; *Swastika Night* was representative of the dystopian genre; the sex-role reversal was demonstrated in *The End of this Day's Business*; finally, *Proud Man*, the 'reverse utopia' focussed on utopian identity.

Chapter one looked at Burdekin's eutopia, or positive utopia, *The Rebel Passion*. This novel fits the conventions of the literary utopia in many ways. Firstly, it is a 'no-place' and a 'good-place' described in some detail and set at some future time. Additionally, the protagonist is from outside the utopian society and is able to view it, and describe it to the reader, with the fresh eyes of an outsider. It is a pastoral vision of a simpler time, making use of technology as and when necessary. For example, there is the use of planes to travel across the vast expanse of land. However, Burdekin also incorporates her own unique touches in this text. In her text the protagonist does not travel directly to the utopian society. Giraldu is first shown visions of different historical times and places. The point that Burdekin is trying to make with this side journey is that progress happens slowly. There is no easy or quick solution to creating a better society. In addition, the novel is interesting in terms of its liberal, particularly for the interwar period, attitude towards homosexuality. Burdekin shows a sort of bravery in tackling this subject sympathetically in a time when homosexuality was illegal. The novel was also seen to not be without its difficulties for the twenty-first century reader. Subjects like eugenics and the realisation of an all-white society are problematic for today's

reader in a way which they would not have been then. Despite this, *The Rebel Passion* is an interesting addition to the body of utopian texts.

Chapter two examined the dystopian text *Swastika Night*. The novel was considered in terms of the tradition of dystopian writing. Again, the society represented in the novel is a ‘no-place’, described in detail, set at some future time. However, the society represented in this novel is much darker than in *The Rebel Passion*. In many ways *Swastika Night* features various characteristics associated with the dystopian genre. Education is state controlled and with the purpose of keeping people at an intellectual level of being unable to question current conditions. Society is deeply hierarchal, with women, Christians, and individuals from the Nazi subject nations positioned firmly at the bottom levels of society with no ability to move beyond that. The discussion of the position of women, however, is where this novel shows great originality of thought. Burdekin makes connections between Nazi ideology and women that still escape the perception of twenty-first and late twentieth century critics. In addition, her analysis of the way the Nazi political party took on the appearance of a political religion is brilliantly insightful.

The difficulties from the perspective of a twenty-first century reader result from a misrecognition of her insight and also her intentions. The criticisms of critics like Carey show a lack of understanding in respect of Nazi ideology and attitude towards women which leads to him judging her unfairly. The criticisms in relation to the representation of homosexuality are less easy to address. The inclusion of it in a dystopian text inevitably leads to the conclusion that it is something negative. By implication it suggests that in a ‘bad-place’ people will be homosexual. However, the point Burdekin is trying to make is that options in terms of compatible partners will be severely

restricted if women are treated as nothing more than animals. Men having relationships with other men for homosexual men does not create problems in the novel, as in the example of Alfred's brother. However, for characters like Hermann problems arise as a result of an inability to engage in a heterosexual relationship. The reduced status of women and their degraded position has created a pathological fear in him of women. Chapter two continued with the subject of *Swastika Night* and considered the novel in respect of its fascist elements. The fears and anxieties in this novel are a reflection of the fears and anxieties relating to the interwar period in relation to fascism.

Chapter three considered *The End of this Day's Business* and looked at the problems of genre. Categorising whether this text is a positive utopia, dystopia, or utopian satire is not easy. It is not in dispute, however, that the novel is a sex-role reversal utopia. This means that traditional gender roles in society are reversed, men take on the roles of women and women take on the roles of men. Burdekin does this to defamiliarise gender roles to highlight gender inequality.

Finally, chapter four considered Burdekin's most experimental text, *Proud Man*. This text was considered not in respect of where it fit overall within the genre, in respect of positive utopia, dystopia, or women's utopia. Instead, it was considered in terms of how the utopian genre was used to explore ideas about identity. This included looking at ideas about human, fixed and gendered identity.

To provide an overall conclusion, Burdekin's work shows a consistent interest in the theme of gender in all of her novels and explores it in creative and innovative ways, making use of the utopian genre to explore ideas about gender in different ways, such as reversing the gender roles. Burdekin shows a keen awareness of the intellectual

atmosphere of the period, aware of the work of people like Freud, Nietzsche and Ulrichs. In addition, Burdekin's work shows a reflection of the themes and concerns of the interwar period, in particular the rise of fascism in Europe. To conclude this thesis, Burdekin created four distinct utopian visions, each written in the utopian tradition but with her own unique perspective on the genre.

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