The Role of Heroism in the Science-Fiction Utopias of Ursula K. Le Guin and Kim Stanley Robinson

by

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Abstracts

English: Taking as a starting point Tom Moylan's notion of the critical utopia as defined by a political quest rather than a geographical journey to utopia, this thesis examines the role of the heroes and heroines represented in science-fiction utopias such as Ursula K. Le Guin's *The Dispossessed*, Kim Stanley Robinson's *Mars* trilogy, and Robinson's novel *2312*. By reading these texts as critiques of their generic predecessors' ideals of utopianism and of heroism, a political ideal of communitarian heroism emerges, as the thesis goes from the lone hero of *The Dispossessed* to the community of heroes of the *Mars* trilogy to the post-utopian institutionalized heroism of *2312*.

Français: En prenant comme point de départ la notion de l'utopie critique avancée par Tom Moylan, qui la définit comme une quête politique plutôt qu'un voyage géographique vers l'utopie, cette thèse examine le rôle des héros et héroïnes évoluant dans les utopies de science-fiction telles que *The Dispossessed* d'Ursula K. Le Guin, la trilogie de *Mars* de Kim Stanley Robinson, ainsi que le roman *2312* de celui-ci. En lisant ces textes comme des critiques des idéaux utopiques et héroïques de leurs prédécesseurs génériques, un idéal politique d'héroïsme communautariste se dessine, alors que la thèse va du héros solitaire de *The Dispossessed* à la communité héroïque de la trilogie de *Mars* à l'héroïsme institutionnalisé post-utopie de *2312*.

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Thesis Introduction

Project Goal and Overview

Since its rise in the 1970's, scholarship on utopian fiction has neglected the critical importance of the heroes and heroines who drive utopian narratives. Instead, utopian scholars have traditionally given more attention to the worlds represented in these texts. In a telling example, when Tom Moylan describes how essential contributors to the field such as Lyman Tower Sargent and Peter Fitting defend the value of utopian fiction, they always do so primarily by reference to the power of utopian "images of the future": thus, they prioritize utopian world-building over characters (Moylan, *Scraps* 97). By contrast, the project of this thesis is to bring critical attention to the importance of heroic agency in utopian texts. As Ruth Levitas says, "the [utopian] dream becomes vision only when hope is invested in an agency capable of transformation. The political problem remains the search for that agency and the possibility of hope; and only if we find it will we see our dreams come true" (Levitas, quoted in Moylan, *Scraps* 67). Inspired by this claim, I suggest that within utopian texts, that agency *capable* of transformation is the heroic figure, be it singular, plural, or institutional. However, to speak of a utopian hero or heroine requires a utopian quest within the narrative: that is why I focus my analysis on the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, when utopianism allied with science-fiction and became novelistic, featuring more heroic and psychologically developed characters (Freedman 93).

With this paradigm in mind, Shevek from Ursula K. Le Guin's 1974 *The Dispossessed* is the first utopian hero I analyze in this thesis: he has all the heroic features of a science-fiction hero, but he is also important as a utopian hero since *TD* is one of the very first utopias that abandoned the traditional model of the hero-as-visitor and adopted the model of the hero-as-

political-activist. Before this shift, the dominant model for utopian protagonists was established by characters such as Raphael in Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516) and Gulliver in Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726). These characters discover a utopian society, then learn how that society functions and report their findings to their own society. Unlike characters like Shevek, they do not directly try to improve the society in which they live through direct action. In my chapter on Shevek, I analyze the science-fiction tropes applied to him by the narrative and argue that they frame Shevek's utopian activism as worthy of admiration and emulation. However, I also show the dark side of these tropes, as the narrative's valuation of Shevek is accompanied by a devaluation of the political agency of the masses Shevek means to help. After analyzing Shevek, I interpret each subsequent hero as a critique of the previous one, thus framing the development of utopian sci-fi as a search for the ideal utopian hero or heroine. Following this logic, I argue that the community of heroes in Kim Stanley Robinson's *Mars* trilogy (1993-96) surpasses Shevek as an ideal of utopian heroism, since the community of the trilogy allows for a diverse and polyvocal model of heroism that also values the agency of the people of Earth and Mars in general. Finally, I frame the heroism of Swan and Wahram from Robinson's 2012 novel *2312* as the next development in utopian heroism, showing that their posthuman and post-utopian heroism allows a constant expansion of the novel's utopian community to include animal and artificial nonhuman beings. Their post-utopian heroism also frames the heroes' quest as a constant process of utopian transformations, rather than a single quest for a definitive utopian transformation as in the *Mars* trilogy.

However, since the heroic status of these texts' heroes is closely tied to the world in which they evolve, I also compare the utopian worlds of these novels. Thus, I argue that the world of the *Mars* trilogy revises the utopianism of *TD* by featuring a realized utopia that does

not need to be further improved within its narrative. I also argue that the world of *2312* critiques the exodus from Earth that is at the heart of the *Mars* trilogy and shows a utopian alternative where Earth is rescued from its problems within the main narrative and not only on its sidelines.

Brief Historical Overview of the Heroic Utopian Genre and of Utopian Scholarship

Before utopian literature became novelistic and allied with science-fiction in H.G. Wells'1895 *The Time Machine*, the traditional utopian protagonist could not accomplish more than his role as a passive visitor to the utopian world (Moylan, *Demand* 44). Moreover, the traditional utopian genre was always struggling with the boredom inherent in its form, with its "flatness and over-explicitness", as Carl Freedman puts it (89). Traditional utopias were more concerned with describing their societies and explaining what made them utopian than with telling a story, which made their style very descriptive and their protagonists very passive. In one notorious example from William Morris' 1890 novel, *News from Nowhere*, the protagonist William Guest awakens from his slumber to realize that he has *slept through* a socialist revolution and now lives in a utopia, Nowhere. The section of the novel in which Guest learns a narrative account of the revolution is widely regarded as its most compelling and readable (Moylan, *Demand* 6-7). This fact foreshadows the narrative revolution that would soon happen in the genre, when the utopian process itself would take center stage and its heroes would finally become active utopian agents. Indeed, in non-traditional utopias such as Wells' utopian science-fiction novels or the later critical utopias, the heroes would not sleep through revolutions anymore: they would make them happen. By mixing utopianism with the burgeoning science-fiction novel, Wells supercharged the narrative potential of the utopian genre and created the generic basis for most subsequent utopian works to this day, as Freedman shows (92). The figure of the hero is also radically different in Wells' foundational text. Rather than travelling to a

utopia as a passive visitor, Wells' Time Traveller invents his Time Machine himself and travels to the future as an adventurer (Wells 12). There, instead of only receiving information about a utopia, he has to fight superhuman creatures and navigate his way home after realizing that the utopia he landed in is really a dystopia. The Time Traveller's extraordinary feats of scientific creation and adventure clearly differentiate him from the visitor protagonists of traditional utopias, such as William Guest. However, the Traveller cannot be counted as a proper candidate for my treatment of utopian heroes because his main objectives have nothing to do with making the world a better place: he mostly cares about satisfying his scientific curiosity about the future and returning home when he faces danger.

Beginning in 1914, soon after *The Time Machine* made sci-fi novels the most common form for literary utopias, the brutal world wars of the twentieth century made dystopian literature become the dominant form of utopian expression (Moylan, *Demand* 8). The dystopias of the early twentieth century also benefited from the science-fiction novel form inaugurated by Wells, and their heroes were consequently closer to later utopian heroes like Shevek. For example, George Orwell's *1984* (published in 1949) features Winston Smith, a character who actively tries (though he ultimately fails) to rebel against the unjust regime he lives in. Indeed, Smith tries to join a resistance group called the Brotherhood: even though his actions fail to impact his world, the political and heroic nature of Smith's quest to oppose Big Brother makes him an important archetypal forerunner to Shevek, a utopian hero who also fights oppressive political structures to improve the world.

Amidst the counterculture movements of the late 1960's and 70's, utopian literature and scholarship experienced a massive rebirth: the first wave of what were termed 'critical utopias' was published, including *The Dispossessed* and Joana Russ' *The Female Man*, among others.

These books were called “critical utopias” by Tom Moylan because they worked from an awareness of the limitations of the utopian tradition and endeavored to transcend these limitations, both in their form and in their narrative content (10). The defining traits of the critical utopias were a philosophical emphasis on the flaws of the utopian society and a narrative emphasis on the conflict between the original world and the utopian one, on activism, and on the utopian process. From this framework, fully realized and psychologically complex utopian heroes were born, with Shevek chief among them. This is also the time when utopian scholarship came into its own, as Lyman Tower Sargent’s “The Three Faces of Utopianism,” a foundational text of the field, came out in 1967 (Moylan, *Scraps* 70). In this essay, Sargent defined the subject of the field as three-faceted: utopian philosophy, utopian literature, and communitarian movements.

Throughout the 1980’s, however, there was a counter-revolution by a “revitalized capitalist system” which crushed the “progressive and socialist gains” of the 1970’s (103). Thus, utopian literature became dominated once more by dystopian texts seeking to critique the current political climate (84). The emblematic text of those times is Margaret Atwood’s 1985 *The Handmaid’s Tale*, which Moylan calls one of the last classical dystopias before the form became dominated by cyberpunk dystopias populated by posthuman heroes (105).

Robinson’s utopian *Mars* trilogy emerged in 1993, out of the dystopia-dominated 1980’s. Just as *TD* was published when utopian scholarship rose as an organized force, the trilogy also came out during an important period of transition for the field. Indeed, in 1990, the Society for Utopian Studies established the *Utopian Studies* journal, the foremost journal of the field to this day. Thus, two of the main texts I study were both bold reinventions of the utopian genre: *The Dispossessed* as one of the first critical utopias, and the *Mars* trilogy as a trilogy-spanning

narrative showing the establishment of a utopia from its beginning to its completion. Furthermore, both of these texts feature heroes that reinvent the archetype of the utopian hero in their own way, as we shall see in the following chapters. Published twenty years after the trilogy, *2312* arrived in 2012, a time when there was a great reckoning with the concept of the Anthropocene (the era when humanity's activities have a visible effect on the geologic record) within science-fiction and the ecological humanities at large, including utopian studies (Canavan 260).

Methodology

Utopian scholars like Peter Fitting focus on analyzing utopian content, while others, like Fredric Jameson, focus on studying utopia as praxis and process (Moylan, *Scraps* 97). Scholars like Fitting think the literary vocation of utopian texts is to represent better worlds. By contrast, Jameson thinks the vocation of utopian texts is to hold a mirror to our inability to represent utopia as a result of the systemic and ideological closure which imprisons us (97). This leads him to see the representational value of utopian literature as secondary, while its primary value is as a source of political praxis and critique (94). In this thesis, I follow Fitting in studying utopian content and utopian representations as intrinsically valuable. I believe in the ability of utopian texts to create new social dreams in the minds of readers through the representation of utopian worlds; I also believe in the ability of compelling utopian heroes to inspire political activism. Narratively, however, the texts I study focus more on the utopian process than on describing their utopian worlds. My primary analytical method is close reading, and I compare the texts to each other and analyze how their utopian representations evolve from one text to the next, in a continuing conversation about what makes an ideal world and what kind of heroes and heroines could bring us there. The theoretical tool I use the most is Moylan's distinction between the

critical utopia genre and the traditional genre: indeed, this thesis follows the ripples created by that revolution in the genre from the 1970's to the 2010's.

Chapter 1: Shevek as a Utopian Science-Fiction Hero in Ursula K. Le Guin's *The Dispossessed*

Tom Moylan describes the genre of the traditional utopia as one that typically features the protagonist as a visitor from the real world who spends time in the utopia, talking with its people and learning in what ways their society is better than our own, only to then return home and try to communicate these learnings to others (Moylan, *Demand* 44). By contrast, the critical utopia genre, according to Moylan, features the protagonist as a hero who sets out to radically improve the world through their own political power (45). Thus, the critical utopia is the activist's utopia: while the traditional genre emphasizes already-established social systems and the story's setting, the new genre emphasizes the hero's political quest instead (45). Ursula K. Le Guin's 1974 novel *The Dispossessed* is a pioneering text of the critical utopia genre, and Moylan chooses it to illustrate its characteristics. For Moylan, the novel functions generically as a critical utopia overall, while its prequel storyline functions as a coming-of-age story for Shevek and its present storyline functions as a heroic fairy tale (110). Kim Stanley Robinson argues that *The Dispossessed* (*TD*) is the first great utopian novel precisely because it is the first one to function well *as a novel*: "Le Guin combined an intriguing utopia with a compelling novel, and the result was superb. […] It's political fiction at its best" (Robinson, *Novel Solutions*). Although both Moylan and Robinson are right in praising the novel as generically innovative, their analyses do not tell the whole story regarding the nature of its many generic and narrative innovations, as well as the ways in which these innovations inform its utopian elements. More precisely, they do not attend sufficiently to the science-fiction and science-fantasy aspects of the novel in framing the protagonist, Shevek, as a hero. Using Moylan's ideas about the critical utopia genre as a starting point, I want to offer a narrative and genre-focused reading of *The Dispossessed* that

highlights how the specific utopian science-fiction and science-fantasy tropes used to frame Shevek as a hero enhance the novel's functions as a critical utopia, even as I examine how these same tropes risk going against the novel's egalitarian values.

For Moylan, utopian literature as a form of romance or fantasy "serves to stimulate in its readers a desire for a better life and to motivate that desire toward action by conveying a sense that the world is not fixed once and for all" (*Demand* 200). Traditional utopias accomplish this task by describing a world that is preferable to our own, while critical utopias accomplish it instead by representing the hero as a figure whose ability to change the world for the better makes them worthy of emulation, thus promoting political activism. It is because of this concern with representing the utopian hero favorably that tropes from science-fiction, science-fantasy and heroic fiction come into play. Though *TD*'s story world exists firmly in the science-fiction genre, the novel uses both science-fiction and science-fantasy tropes to fulfill this utopian function by portraying Shevek as a mythical, quasi-religious heroic figure. In this chapter, I will use as analytical tools the tropes found in the 1965 novel *Dune* by Frank Herbert, an influential and foundational text in the science-fiction, heroic fiction, and science-fantasy genres (Kennedy 6). Beyond the novel's great influence in its field, its thematic and generic similarities with *TD* further legitimize the comparison: both heroes hail from a utopian planet (Caladan for *Dune*, Anarres for *TD*) and must head to a dystopian planet (Dune/Urras) to try to fulfill a prophecy by liberating the planet's oppressed people and turning it into a utopia resembling their home planet. After reviewing the tropes of the Hero, Evil Emperor, Dark Father, and Anti-Hero in *Dune*, I will show how these tropes are utilized in *TD* to render Shevek as a heroic character.

My argument thus addresses Moylan's neglection of the science-fiction and science-fantasy tropes of *TD* in his analysis. Granted, he does point out the religious aspects of the

novel's representation of Shevek: for example, he compares the young Shevek to "a young Jesus teaching the elders in the temple" because of the way he effortlessly bests his physics professors from a young age (*Demand* 108). Furthermore, Moylan analyzes the way in which Shevek's status as a fairy tale hero and as a religious hero combine: "one might be tempted to say that he descends from heaven to hell to redeem all of humankind in an act of cosmic détente. In both cases, he is the individual hero—aided by others, but working alone" (109). By omitting the science-fiction aspects of the character, however, this analysis misses a crucial part of the way the novel accomplishes its utopian function of framing Shevek as a heroic model of utopian activism. That missing part is what this chapter aims to bring forward.

Shevek as an SF Hero

First among those overlooked SF tropes is Shevek's status as a science-fiction hero, which provides the generic motivation for his invitation to Urras. His scientific genius manifests early and dramatically when he conceptualizes Zeno's paradox on his own at only 8 years old: "to get from you to the tree, the rock has to be halfway in between you and the tree, doesn't it?" (Le Guin 29). At 20 years old, Shevek becomes the greatest physicist on Anarres and seriously challenges Atro, the foremost physicist on Urras (114). At the height of his prowess in physics, Shevek completely revolutionizes the field by creating the General Temporal Theory, which enables the creation of technology for instant communication across galaxies and, in theory, faster-than-light travel (343). Shevek's science-fiction forebear for this trope is Wells' Time Traveller, whose genius allows him to create the titular Time Machine. Shevek's science-fictional aspects form an important tool for the novel to accomplish its utopian function of framing him as a hero worthy of emulation. His extraordinary scientific prowess strengthens the overall appeal of his character, which in turns strengthens his status as a utopian political hero.

Indeed, Shevek's scientific prowess ties directly into his utopian heroism, as his Theory allows the creation of the communication device known as the ansible, which in turn allows for the creation of the utopian League of Planets knows as the Ekumen in Le Guin's *The Left Hand of Darkness*: "[Shevek's Theory] would make a league of worlds possible. […] We have been held apart by the years, the decades between […] question and response. It's as if you had invented human speech! We can talk—at last we can talk together" (344). This speech illustrates how Shevek's scientific prowess becomes an enabling condition for his status as a utopian political hero.

Science-fantasy tropes similar to those in *Dune* are also used to build Shevek's status as a hero. A key example is Shevek's prescience during his dreams. In *Dune,* the hero Paul Atreides also has prescient dreams, as his prescience allows him to "see" years into his future (Herbert 195). In *TD,* Shevek dreams of the primal number as a boy. The number is "both unity and plurality", and he is told by a voice in his dream that the prime number is "the cornerstone" (33). This dream about the coexistence of unity and plurality foreshadows Shevek's solution to the conflicting Temporal Theories which he later reconciles, Sequency and Simultaneity. Echoing that dream as an adult, Shevek explains that the cyclic hypothesis is the "cornerstone" of the Simultaneity theory he is trying to establish at that time (119). Another classic science-fantasy trope which frames Shevek's heroic status is that of the Prophecy. In *Dune,* Paul is prophesied to be the Mahdi, a figure who will turn the desert planet Dune into a lush paradise and lead its people to freedom (Herbert 100). In *TD*, late in his stay on Urras, Shevek learns from Pae (a secret agent from a rival country) that members of the oppressed class have a prophecy about him, the myth of the Forerunner: "the one who comes before the millennium—a stranger, an outcast, an exile, bearing in empty hands the time to come" (231). This prophecy allows Shevek

to access political power more easily among the oppressed class later in the novel. The more important point here, however, is that just as science-fiction tropes are used to convert Shevek's scientific prowess into political power, tropes from science-fantasy also turn his prophetic dreams and the prophecy about him into proofs of his greatness as a political leader, given that the prophecy and prophetic dreams paint him as both a great *and* a good man. Thus, the science-fantasy tropes applied to Shevek enhance the larger utopian function of framing him as a heroic figure worthy of emulation.

Heroic Typology in *The Dispossessed*

TD's science-fiction and science-fantasy DNA also shapes its generation of a critical utopia through the way Shevek relates to the other characters of the novel and of Le Guin's larger Hainish universe, of which *TD* is a part. For example, Shevek is linked to his heroic predecessor Laia Odo and his heroic successor Genly Ai in much the same way that heroes are typologically linked to each other in religious texts and science-fantasy sagas. In the *Dune* novel, Paul works to fulfill the political dream of the Planetologist Liet-Kynes, while in the later books, his son Leto II furthers his own work. In *TD,* Odo is the founding philosopher of Odonianism, which is the philosophy behind Shevek's ideals. Her own heroic story is about her choosing to embody and spread utopian ideals in a world that is utterly devoid of their presence. Like Shevek, then, Odo is the lone righteous hero who suffers a great deal, yet succeeds against overwhelming odds: "You've seen the pictures of Odo in the prison cell in Drio, haven't you? [She was the] image of defiant patience" (34). Also, Shevek and Odo both create a utopia in which they can never live (Anarres for Odo, while Shevek creates the Ekumen). The structure of the novel's heroic typology thus echoes *Dune*'s: Odo, essential to Anarres without ever being able to live on it, plays the role of the Planetologist, while Shevek, who carries on Odo's legacy

and even exceeds it, plays the role of Paul in this analogy. Indeed, Shevek is often presented as a New Odo continuing her legacy on Anarres. When a massive strike is about to take place on Urras on the anniversary of the original Odonian uprising, Maedda, the leader of the Urrasti revolutionaries, tries to recruit Shevek by invoking this kind of typology: "A strike is what we need, a general strike, and massive demonstrations. Like the Ninth Month Strike that Odo led. […] We could use an Odo now" (295). Siro, the girl who helps Maedda, tells him about Shevek: "you've got your Odo. […] After all, Odo was only an idea. Dr. Shevek is the proof" (296). Siro's speech not only reinforces Maedda's idea that Shevek is a new Odo, but also goes further into typological thinking by establishing Shevek as greater than Odo in an analogical way to how Paul is greater than Liet-Kynes in *Dune*.

Unfortunately for Shevek, he is not the last utopian hero of Le Guin's Hainish universe, typologically speaking. That honor goes to Genly Ai, who does not appear in *TD*, but appears in *The Left Hand of Darkness*, published earlier but taking place later than *TD* chronologically. As Liet-Kynes is Odo's *Dune* analog, Paul's son and heroic successor Leto II is Genly's. Genly is a utopian hero in much the same vein as Shevek, visiting worlds less utopian than his own and bringing them into the Ekumen, which Moylan describes as "a federation of peace and good will, a galactic UN which works" (*Demand* 94). Since Shevek's brilliance led to the creation of the Ekumen and Genly goes from world to world like him, bringing worlds into the utopian space, Genly functions as a sort of fulfillment of Shevek's heroic quest, or at least as the newest bearer of the torch. *TD* alludes to this typological logic through the character of Ketho, who converts at the last minute of the story to become Shevek's disciple and the only foreign visitor to Anarres in hundreds of years. Ketho's statement of intent mirrors Genly Ai's mission in service of the Ekumen: "As an officer of a mission ship, it is part of my duty to explore and investigate a new

world when possible" (Le Guin 383). Though Anarres does not appear in *Left Hand of Darkness*, it seems certain that Ketho's visit to the utopian world lays the groundwork for connecting it to the Ekumen in the future. Thus, Ketho functions as a typological in-between for Shevek and Genly Ai. The effect of these strong science-fantasy typological elements on the utopian function of the novel is felt in how they build onto and expand Shevek's legacy in time. Shevek's political legend is thus legitimized by the dual historical aspect of his role in the novel: not only is Shevek's utopian work made to seem greater through the way it is framed as a fulfillment and improvement upon Odo's own utopian work, but Shevek's legacy is also safeguarded in time through the work of Genly Ai and Ketho's status as Shevek's disciple. Shevek's status as an object of admiration and emulation for Ketho, combined with the heroic way in which Ketho himself is framed, offers a structure of imitation and emulation crucial to the novel's utopian function as defined by Moylan.

Shevek's Urras Rivals as SF Archetypes

There is one more manner in which science-fiction and science-fantasy tropes inform *TD*'s utopian function: the relationship between the narrative archetypes represented by Shevek and those represented by his rival characters in the novel. As a science-fiction, science-fantasy, and mythic hero, Shevek is clearly the novel's sole protagonist: every chapter is first and foremost about him, his story and his goals. By contrast, the other characters of the novel exist mostly as foils whose purpose is to make him seem (even) more heroic in comparison. Rather than presenting a scene-by-scene analysis of how this is the case, however, it seems much more appropriate to show how the relationships between Shevek and his rivals follow a mythical logic, one in which every character illuminates a different aspect of his heroic status by acting as a foil to it. Indeed, the archetypal relationships between Shevek and Pae, Chifoilisk, and Atro are based

around the science-fantasy and heroic-fantasy codes of heroic competition. As rivals of Shevek, they serve the utopian function of the novel by making us actively root for Shevek against them. They are villains to his hero, broadly speaking. I will first look at these archetypal relationships featured in the present-day storyline, then switch to the prequel storyline.

In *Dune*, the figure of the Anti-Hero is Feyd-Rautha. Rather than only opposing Paul, Feyd provides an image of what kind of hero Paul would be if he were serving the evil Harkonnens: like Paul, Feyd has incredible martial abilities, which makes him the perfect opponent to face Paul in the novel's climactic duel (Herbert 467). Furthermore, just like Paul, Feyd is the product of a breeding program meant to create the ultimate being: thus, he also has amazing genetics and is only a few gene codes away from sharing Paul's superhuman abilities (315). In that sense, Feyd-Rautha is not only an anti-hero (contrasting Paul), but also a rival hero (sharing in the abilities that make the hero great). *TD* also presents both kinds of foils for Shevek. For example, Pae is the anti-hero, the anti-Shevek, not in the sense that he is his greatest rival, but in the sense that he is the most different from him. While Shevek is always truthful with others and does not understand the secretive manners of some Urrasti people, Pae is the opposite: he is A-Io's secret agent, which is what makes him a hero to them. Like a good secret agent, he never interacts truthfully with Shevek, always concealing behind a fake amiability the fact that he only wants his Theory. Unlike Shevek, Pae's scientific prowess does not amaze anyone: Shevek describes him simply as "pretty good" (Le Guin 138). In fact, Pae tries (and fails) to steal Shevek's Theory on his desk: "Is [Shevek] a complete fraud? […] Where's his theory? Where's our instantaneous spaceflight? Where's our advantage over the Hainish? Nine, ten months we've been feeding the bastard, for nothing!" (232). Compared to Shevek's other rivals on Urras, Pae is the one who hates Shevek the most, as shown in his speech above.

However, he cannot help but unintentionally aid to Shevek's development as a heroic protagonist: after all, Pae is the one who announces the Forerunner Prophecy to Shevek, thus conferring upon him another layer of heroism. Furthermore, his gift of a Relativity Theory book to Shevek ends up allowing him to finish his Theory (278).

While Pae is an anti-hero compared to Shevek, Atro and Chifoilisk fit into the science-fantasy archetype of rival heroes. The difference is that unlike Pae, they both share in Shevek's qualities in some way, while crucially falling short of them in other ways, which serves to emphasize Shevek's heroism. While Shevek represents the best of Anarres, Atro and Chifoilisk represent redemptive aspects of A-Io and Thu, respectively. Just as Shevek is able to think for himself against the dogmas of his society, Atro subverts his own country's dogmas by rejecting capitalism: "wealth impressed him not at all […] his respect was not to be bought […] his genuine contempt for both money and power made Shevek feel closer to him than to anyone else he had met on Urras" (141). To this feeling of kinship must be added the fact that Atro is the greatest physicist on Urras, and thus the closest to being on Shevek's level. Additionally, Atro shares some of Shevek's ideals in that he does not hate Anarres and wants to unite it with Urras, but unlike Shevek, he wants to do so against the Hainish: "I want to see the best survive. The kind of humanity I know. The Cetians. You and I: Urras and Anarres. We're ahead of them now, all those Hainish and Terrans and whatever else they call themselves, and we've got to stay ahead of them" (143). The many similarities between Atro and Shevek only serve to make their differences clearer: ultimately, Atro's xenophobia against the Hainish paints him in a negative light that highlights Shevek as the only viable heroic model in the novel.

Chifoilisk works archetypally in much the same way, only he is Thu's hero. As such, he also shares Shevek's hatred of capitalism and seems to have a conscience of his own, separate

from his duties to his country. Shevek sees this side of him and appeals to it: “I think you are a patriot, yes. But you set above patriotism your respect for the truth, scientific truth, and perhaps also your loyalty to individual persons. You would not betray me” (139). Chifoilisk ultimately proves Shevek right, advising him to help Anarres instead of Urras: “Don’t give the usurers anything! Get out. Go home. Give your own people what you have to give!” (140). Overall, Chifoilisk’s situation reveals the relative privilege of Shevek: had he been born somewhere other than Anarres, he would probably not be equipped to improve humanity as he does. Conversely, Chifoilisk gives the impression that while he has moral character, he was not born in the right country to be the hero humanity needs: to be Shevek, in other words. Ultimately, Chifoilisk is condemned to be a lesser hero than Shevek because his country’s ideology does not allow him to consider the needs of humanity as a whole and to work for its advancement, while Shevek’s Odonian ideology does.

Indeed, the science-fantasy character types of the anti-hero and of the rival hero used in the novel reinforce the idea that there can only be one true hero in the story, as all his rivals are significantly flawed. Thus, the function of these character types is to give the impression that Shevek is elected the hero by the narrative and that his rivalry with the other would-be heroes serves as a debate about heroism out of which he emerges as the clear and legitimized winner. In turn, this process reinforces the novel’s utopian function by showing how Shevek improves the world in a manner that exceeds those of his rivals, which furthers his status as a figure worthy of emulation and thus paints his utopian political activism as a worthy pursuit.

Rulag and Sabul as SF Archetypes

Shevek’s two rivals during his coming-of-age story are very different from the other ones. While the present storyline has a fully grown Shevek struggling against his opponents,

Sabul and Rulag are special because they interact with a Shevek who is still developing, still finding his way in the world. As antagonists in a coming-of-age science-fiction storyline, their skills and characteristics are linked not just to who Shevek is, but also to his potential, to who he *could be*. I will address Rulag, his mother, first. One of the first things we learn about her, from Shevek's dad, is that she is a great engineer and a dutiful Odonian: "It's the Central Institute of Engineering that wants her, see. I'm not that good. Rulag has a great work to do" (27). Her achievements in science and her social sense of duty, which work to the detriment of her personal relationships (she abandons Shevek as a child to serve Anarres), make her very similar to Shevek, at least in some parts of his early story. In Rulag, we see a version of what Shevek could become if he let his sense of duty annihilate his desire for personal relationships. The first time they meet after their separation, Shevek firmly rejects her, but not before she tells him that he resembles her: "You don't look like [your father]. In fact you look like me" (122). This fact haunts Shevek for the remainder of the novel: even decades later, he sees himself in a mirror and turns away from it, but not before having been "forced to see that, thus clothed, his resemblance to his mother Rulag was stronger than ever" (133). Clearly, Shevek is uncomfortable with his similarities to his mother.

In his two parents, Shevek sees an ethical dilemma: is it better to be loving and kind like his father, or to be great and respected like his mother? Samuel Delaney points out that this dilemma is particularly effective in that it reverses the traditional archetypes of male coming-of-age fiction: the absent but great father and the present and caring mother (153). As he points out, "It is the Father whom the son must overcome. It is the Father who stands for society. […] Le Guin then places [Rulag], as a symbol, in the position so frequently filled by the Father" (153). Thus, the gender egalitarianism of Anarres allows Le Guin to shift the traditionally male role of

the towering parental figure to Shevek's mother, transforming the typical Oedipal struggle by making it about one's duty to society (which Rulag always prioritizes) instead of about gendered subject formation. Right after getting back from the hospital where he saw her, Shevek resolves to change his ways and become more sociable like his father, but the specter of his mother keeps coming back: "His efforts to break out of his essential seclusion were, in fact, a failure, and he knew it. […] Solitude was his fate: he was trapped in his heredity. She [Rulag] had said it: 'the work comes first'" (157). Shevek is therefore always struggling with not wanting to be like his mother, while also having to recognize that his greatness as a thinker comes from her.

This relationship is an example of the classic Hero/Dark Father (here Dark Mother) relationship from science-fantasy, exemplified most famously by Luke Skywalker and Darth Vader in *Star Wars*. Before *Star Wars*, however, *Dune* did it first: the Baron Harkonnen fills the role of the Dark Father for Paul, as he is revealed to be Paul's grandfather (Herbert 195). This revelation is horrifying for Paul, as the Baron is pure evil, but similarly to Shevek and Rulag, Paul would not have the extraordinary abilities that allow him to be a hero without the Baron's genes. This ambivalent relationship is crucial to the way the Hero/Dark Father archetypal relationship works. When Rulag reappears as Shevek's main opponent in the Production and Distribution Coordination (or PDC) council, the closest Anarres equivalent of Parliament, he must finally admit to himself how talented and impressive his mother is. His friend Bedap, unaware of their blood relation, tells Takver: "that Rulag, by damn, she's a formidable opponent!" (364). This reveals a very specific similarity between mother and son: both are *at the same time* great scientists and gifted orators. Given all these similarities between them as well as Shevek's status as a fantasy hero, Rulag plays the science-fantasy role of the Dark Mother, who torments the Hero by standing as the living example of what he could become were he to lose his

way. Furthermore, Rulag is unique among Shevek's rivals in that he never truly triumphs over her. Her argument against him at the PDC council is that he is free to leave Anarres for Urras, but if he returns and is killed by angry Anarresti who feel that he has betrayed them, he will be responsible for it: "if there is violence, you will have caused it. You and your syndicate. And you will have deserved it" (358). Because the novel ends before Shevek lands back on Anarres, we never learn if he does get killed or not: thus, we will never know whether he or Rulag has won the battle for the soul of their world. However, such a powerful Hero/Dark Mother relationship shows the importance of utopian politics: if Shevek has been successful in changing the world for the better, he will live in the end. If he has not and Rulag was right all along, he will die. The novel's political activism is thus tied intimately with a life-or-death outcome for the protagonist, which is not the case in traditional utopias where the utopian quest is already achieved. This narrative valuation of utopian political activism is only made possible by the novel's co-option of the Hero vs Dark Mother/Father science-fantasy trope and the resulting conflict between Shevek and Rulag.

If Rulag is the novel's Dark Mother archetype of science-fantasy, then Sabul is its Evil Emperor archetype: he is the figure that Shevek has to overcome fully and even replace before leaving Anarres and fulfilling his heroic destiny on Urras. Shevek's victory over Sabul, in turn, marks his attainment of his full scientific and political powers. In *Dune*, the Padishah Emperor fulfills this archetype: not only is he ultimately responsible for the death of Paul's father, but he and his army also represent the most powerful force that Paul has to overcome before taking his place as Emperor. Like Shevek, Paul can only overcome his own Evil Emperor by attaining his full personal and political powers. In *TD*, Sabul serves as a living symbol of Anarres' corruption away from Odo's original ideal: thus, by learning how to overcome Sabul, Shevek also learns

how to begin improving things on Anarres. Shevek's early encounters with Sabul are very telling: as soon as Shevek has successfully learned everything Sabul has to teach him in physics, Sabul appropriates Shevek's work for his own purposes. Then, he refuses to further publish Shevek's work, effectively forcing him to slow down his life's work dramatically (creating and publishing his Theory). Indeed, Bedap (Shevek's friend and occasional lover) sees Sabul as a barrier that keeps Shevek from developing: "You've come up against the wall. […] In your case, the wall seems to be Sabul, and his supporters in the science syndicates and the PDC" (164).

In this moment, Shevek learns for the first time that his scientific prowess alone will not be enough for him to fulfill his life's work: he will also need to acquire the political power to create his own press, publish his own works, and re-establish his scientific relationship with Urras. Takver, Shevek's partner, insists that this is the right way to proceed, the way of the political hero: "We'll print the book. Form a printing syndicate, learn to set type, and do it" (239). However, a great drought is starting on Anarres and paper is scarce: only essential PDC documents can be printed. Knowing this, Shevek compromises and lets Sabul once again take the credit for his work in order to get it printed. Here, the novel uses the Hero/Evil Emperor relationship to catalyze Shevek's political involvement: knowing that his work is being appropriated in this way is humiliating for him, which creates a motivation for Shevek to become politically powerful and overthrow Sabul's dishonest reign over Anarresti physics publications. Similarly to the Hero/Rival Hero relationships outlined above, Shevek's competition with Sabul serves as a legitimation process for Shevek's political power, showing how his ascension is necessary, both for himself and for the good of his people. It is only after having gone through deep pain and trauma in the great drought that Shevek returns home, almost like a war veteran, and decides to embrace his heroic destiny:

> "The fact is, neither of us made up our mind [during the printing decision]. Neither of us chose. We let Sabul choose for us. […] Well, never again. I learn slowly, but I learn."
>
> "What are you going to do?" Asked Takver, a thrill of agreeable excitement in her voice.
>
> "Go to Abbenay with you and start a syndicate, a printing syndicate. Print the *Principles,* uncut. And whatever else we like. Bedap's *Sketch of Open Education in Science,* that the PDC wouldn't circulate. And Tirin's play. I owe him that. […] I'm going to fulfill my proper function in the social organism. I'm going to go unbuild walls." (332)

Here, it is hard not to share Takver's excitement: this is the moment when Shevek finally decides to become a great utopian political hero. He has started thinking like a generous leader who will give meaningful gifts to the world and to his friends. Yet this moment could not happen without Sabul, as his own political power necessitates Shevek's rise. Without Sabul to block him, Shevek might have been content to live a quiet life as a renowned academic. Here, the relationship functions like a classic Hero/Evil Emperor example: without the oppression caused by the latter, the former might never need to become a hero.

One last scene is relevant to the dynamics of this archetypal relationship: years later, when Shevek has actually created the Syndicate of Initiative and made Sabul irrelevant, Sabul tries to regain control by offering to let Shevek publish whatever he wants if he joins the PDC and leaves the Syndicate, which would make the latter politically irrelevant. This is another classic Hero/Evil Emperor trope: once the hero has ascended to the Emperor's level of power, the Emperor attempts to corrupt the hero by promising peace between them in exchange for a moral compromise. In *Dune,* the Emperor calls Paul his "respected kinsman," thus offering to restore the honor and power of Paul's family if he gives up his vendetta against him (Herbert 460). In *The Dispossessed,* however, the Shevek/Sabul relationship is special in its distinctively

political and utopian character. Shevek represents utopian progress, while Sabul represents the status quo and corruption of Anarres. By framing the relationship with these tropes, utopian progress is linked to Shevek's development as a hero, which allows the novel to achieve its function of promoting utopian political activism.

The Dark Side of Shevek's Science Fantasy Heroism

Having shown how *The Dispossessed* uses science-fiction and science-fantasy tropes to function more effectively as a critical utopia, I now want to show the dark side of using such tropes. One major issue is that the egalitarian goal of the novel (to create an equal society) can sometimes be at odds with the means it takes to reach that end. For example, although Shevek is shown rousing big crowds and giving revolutionary speeches to them, the story is only invested in Shevek's story and not theirs, in part because of how the science-fantasy tropes paint Shevek as the only meaningful political actor. Thus, in chapter 9, when the uprising happens and multiple Urrasti people are gunned down by the government, there is a strong disconnect between the horror of the situation and the novel's investment in it: none of these people are named characters, and Maedda, the only one we know in the scene besides Shevek, is nowhere to be seen as soon as the shooting starts. Therefore, the tragedy does not resonate in the same way it might have had if Shevek had met up with a whole cell of named activists before the uprising. What this example shows is that glorifying only Shevek ends up working against the very social changes that he wants to achieve, since these changes require the work of a community and not only a single person. Moylan addresses this issue in terms of gender exclusion:

> in centering her picture of activism on such a character, Le Guin foregrounds a type of commitment that revolves around a single redeemer. […] [The novel's] ideological expression of appropriate activism reinforces individual enterprise and male supremacy at

> the expense of collective resistance, particularly by women. Le Guin pushes against the barriers, but in the final analysis she remains ambiguously within present boundaries of the status quo. (*Demand* 109)

While Shevek the lone hero is ultimately successful in granting his Theory to all peoples, the community's uprising against oppression is shown to be a failure: "the city is quiet now, apparently; the insurrection seems defeated, at least for the time being" (Le Guin 350). The implication is that mass movements are not a reliable way to effect utopian change, while individual excellence is. This runs counter to the egalitarian ideals championed by Shevek. Furthermore, the issues pointed out by Moylan are exacerbated by the science-fantasy tropes used to elevate Shevek to the level of a fantastical hero. Indeed, the very existence of a prophecy encourages people to *wait* for a great leader to save them instead of *organizing* themselves to effect change collectively. Thus, the science-fantasy tropes reinforce the idea that there can only be one hero in the story, as all the other characters (and the activist community at large) are shown to be politically ineffective. *Dune* also explores the link between heroism and anti-democratic elitism, as Paul foresees in his visions that after overthrowing the Emperor, he will also become a despot (Herbert 195). The difference is that *Dune* represents Paul negatively once he has become this way, while Shevek is portrayed positively for the entirety of *TD*.

One other major way science-fantasy tropes run counter to the novel's utopian goal and its values of universal compassion is that they elevate Shevek as a heroic figure *above reproach*. Katherine Cross points out that one of the least remarked upon aspects of the book is the sexual assault that Shevek commits against Vea, spewing semen on her dress after she tries to stop him eleven times (Cross 1337). I want to single out this scene because it is by far Shevek's worst action in the book, and it is irreconcilable with his status as a hero. Cross is right to argue that

"What is so jarring about the scene is that Le Guin never addresses it again; had it haunted Shevek as a moment of profound moral failure, it might have served some use" (1338). The fact that the novel itself does not spend much time analyzing Shevek's action indicates how science-fantasy tropes that function to glorify Shevek as a hero can also allow him to escape accountability more easily. One can get swept up in the heroism and forget about actions that contradict it.

Why Le Guin—a female author, no less—includes this scene in the narrative is unclear, especially since it risks jeopardizing Shevek's status as the hero of the story. I suggest that the scene's narrative purpose is to represent utopian culture and social norms as ineffective tools for regulating behavior. The theme of social norms failing to regulate behavior is represented through Shevek's assault of Vea, since Shevek hails from a morally superior society which is supposed to produce morally superior citizens. The theme is also represented through Vea herself. In A-Io, women are considered inferior to men, but when Shevek asks Vea why they don't rebel, she counters with a positive vision of A-Io's women that gives them real agency: "women [in A-Io] do exactly as they like. And they don't have to get their hands dirty […] or stand about shouting in the Directorate, to do it" (214). When Shevek asks her what they actually *do*, Vea responds: "Why, run the men, of course! And you know, it's perfectly safe to tell them that, because they never believe it" (215). Regardless of whether women are actually in control of A-Io, Vea's speech to Shevek represents the limits of A-Io's sexist ideology: while she does not have official power, Vea refuses to consider herself as truly inferior to men. In the same way, Odonian ideology has failed to mold Shevek into a morally perfect person.

This pessimistic representation of utopian culture and behavior is answered by Kim Stanley Robinson's optimistic portrayal of Wahram in *2312*. Unlike Shevek's, Wahram's

upbringing in a utopian culture that transcends gender norms fully succeeds, as Wahram is shown to be incredibly kind and respectful to women throughout the novel. In *TD,* Shevek presents Anarres as a culture of perfect sexual freedom and respect, where "Between a man and a woman there is what they want there to be between them" (218). Immediately after his assault on Vea, he tells her: "I am—sorry—I thought you wanted", which suggests that instead of making him care more about consent, growing up in Anarres' sexually liberated society has had the opposite effect: Shevek seems to take Vea's consent for granted instead of caring to ask for it (230).

As Cross says, the scene does not haunt Shevek's conscience in any major way. The only signs of remorse he shows are the minimal apology he makes to Vea and his shame after the event. Shevek reflects that his behavior at Vea's party—the assault, but also his excessive drinking throughout the night—has made him feel true shame for the first time in his life: "Shame—the sense of vileness and of self-estrangement—was a revelation" (272). In this way, the novel's treatment of Shevek's guilt is ambivalent: he is deeply ashamed of his actions, yet he does not think about them at all after this passage. When it comes to Shevek's overall status as the novel's hero, his disastrous night at Vea's is framed as the rock bottom he needed to reach in order to regain his heroic composure and write his Theory: "He had spent nearly a year now doing nothing, except being a fool. It was time he did something. Well, what had he come here to do? To do physics" (277). Thus, the heroic tropes informing Shevek's story and the singular heroic model espoused by *TD* are directly linked to why the character is not allowed to fully investigate the meaning and consequences of his actions towards Vea. Shevek's heroic journey to save two worlds (which is, after all, the novel's main story thread) must go on, so a rushed

apology and one passage about feelings of guilt must suffice to liberate him from further narrative consequences.

I argue that this narrative neglect of Shevek's less heroic side is a direct consequence of his being the only utopian hero featured in the novel. Indeed, in the multi-hero *Mars* trilogy, characters such as Frank Chalmers and Maya are afforded the narrative space to reflect on their less heroic actions more completely. When it comes to Shevek, his incredibly positive impact on the worlds of *TD* dominates his characterization. Still, the scene with Vea confirms that Anarres' utopian culture is not enough to produce perfectly virtuous citizens: in *TD*, unlike in *2312*, human nature is never perfected by culture.

Conclusion

TD's use of science-fiction tropes to frame Shevek's heroism serves the utopian function of painting him and his political activism as worthy of emulation. In the history of utopian fiction, it is the first novel to use these kinds of tropes so extensively and to put them in service of the hero's utopian quest. Furthermore, the novel's exploration of the relationship between heroism and egalitarianism has only become more and more relevant over time, as newer entries to the utopian canon also grapple with these questions. This theme will be explored further in the next chapter, as the *Mars* trilogy starts with Lone Utopian Hero characters similar to Shevek before developing its more diverse cast of heroes into a pluralistic heroic community instead.

Chapter 2: The Egalitarian Heroic Utopia in Robinson's *Mars* Trilogy

While Tom Moylan uses literary utopias from the 1970's such as *The Dispossessed* to build his idea of the critical utopia genre, Kim Stanley Robinson's *Mars* trilogy (MT), published between 1993 and 1996, fits into that category perfectly, as its overarching narrative is wholly concerned with humanity's quest to transform Mars from a desolate yet beautiful planet into an egalitarian utopia. In this utopia, as Ann Clayborne remarks at the end of *Blue Mars*, "Nowhere on this world were people killing each other, nowhere were they desperate for shelter or food, nowhere were they scared for their kids. There was that to be said" (Robinson, *Blue Mars* 609). The fact that this endorsement of Mars is made by Ann, the character most opposed to the terraforming effort throughout the trilogy, only further glorifies this Martian utopia's political and scientific achievements. While the trilogy shares its narrative genre with critical utopias like *TD*, it differs from its forebears in three major, interconnected ways. First, the trilogy's narrative ends with a complete and closed utopia, rather than an ambiguous and open one such as Anarres in *TD*. Second, the trilogy uses a realistic, hard science-fiction approach, which makes its utopianism seem more possible. Here, "hard science-fiction" designates when extensive scientific explanations are given for how the science-fictional aspects of the novels work. Third, the trilogy is different from most critical utopias in that more than one hero achieves its utopia, and it also gives a key role to the general populations of Earth and Mars in the third (and final) Martian revolution's success. While the endpoint and the utopian political process of the trilogy differ from that of most critical utopias, the trilogy's emphasis on the Earth-Mars conflict and on a political quest to improve the world is what makes it a critical utopia. In this chapter, I will show how the trilogy's closed utopia and use of hard science-fiction make it unique in the genre.

Then, I will show how the trilogy articulates a complex relationship between heroism and utopianism by representing a community of heroes as essential to attaining utopia.

Due to the sheer amount of heroic characters in the trilogy, this chapter will use a very different methodology from the last one: rather than analyzing how tropes are applied to each individual hero of the trilogy, I will point out a movement in the trilogy's novels from a monopolized narrative emphasis on unsuccessful individual heroes to an evenly distributed narrative emphasis on a successful community of heroes. The novels' movement towards a more utopian model of heroism is emphasized by the way later characters echo the qualities of the first two major heroes, John Boone and Frank Chalmers, while clearly surpassing their heroic legacies. By tracing this movement, I will show the emergence of the trilogy's ideal of communitarian heroism. Through the character of Sax Russell, this heroic ideal is accompanied by an ideal of utopian science and of how engagement with politics and with different fields of knowledge can turn a scientist into a utopian hero. I will analyze the trilogy's ideal of the utopian scientist at the end of the chapter, when my discussion of the novels' heroes concludes with Sax.

***Blue Mars*: An Unambiguous Utopia**

Arguing that *Blue Mars* features a closed and complete utopia is sure to be the most controversial aspect of this chapter. Indeed, many critics, including Robinson himself, have written about the MT as an example of a utopia of constant process rather than a static utopia. In his monumental chapter on the MT, Chris Pak writes that Robinson

> [R]edefines [utopian thought] as a process involving continual change and not a static blueprint. Robinson reflects that 'Joanna Russ talks about changing the term from Utopia to Optopia, meaning "the optimum possible" – a continuous, dynamic process. Even H.G.

> Wells in his Utopian writing would often talk about this kinetic process rather than reaching any kind of stasis. (Pak 186).

Pak adds that the kind of sci-fi writing at work in the trilogy is based in a "distrust of static utopias, favouring instead the openness of utopia as a continual process" (203). I agree with Pak that the utopia featured in the trilogy is not static. However, the narrative of the trilogy is closely tied to the quest of creating a utopia and its characters are constantly focused on overcoming obstacles and solving problems to accomplish that quest. This means that to give his extraordinarily hardworking characters a happy ending, Robinson has to allow them to actually reach their goal. My point, then, is not that the trilogy uses a static utopia model, but rather that politically and narratively, the Mars of the end of *Blue Mars* is a complete and closed utopia which does not really need to be improved further. Robinson uses a complete utopia as a dramatized story setting, while Le Guin does not: *Blue Mars* features a realized utopian setting that the characters can live in, while *TD* does not.

Perhaps this point could be illustrated more clearly by contrasting the trilogy's closed utopia to the open utopia featured at the end of *The Dispossessed*: *an Ambiguous Utopia* (the original title). As pointed out in the previous chapter, *TD*'s happy ending should not be taken for granted: Shevek could be killed immediately upon returning home by vengeful Anarresti people who consider him a traitor. This dramatic possibility highlights how far from completely utopian the world of the novel is at the end: not only is Anarres still ruled by Shevek's mother Rulag and her PDC's letter-of-the-law Odonianism, but the state of A-Io is also still profoundly unjust, to say nothing of the other countries on Urras (Le Guin 358). Even if we were to say that *TD*'s utopian hope comes from the ansible and the Ekumen league of worlds it allows, this does not close the utopia of Le Guin's story world. Indeed, *The Left Hand of Darkness* shows that many

planets are not part of the Ekumen yet and that changing that fact will take a lot of time and some major sacrifices. In Le Guin's utopian universe, then, there is still work to be done to truly achieve utopia, even at the end of the story.

Not so in the *Mars* trilogy. By the end of *Blue Mars*, all the major problems that have plagued the characters for more than a century are resolved: the Red-Green conflict on terraforming has ended, the Earth-Mars conflict over immigration as well, and even the memory losses caused by the longevity treatment (which allows its recipients to live for more than two hundred years) have been solved by Sax Russell and his science team. The final chapter of the trilogy, "Phoenix Lake", functions as one long happy ending for the central characters: all conflicts are resolved, letting Sax, Ann, Nirgal, Maya, Art, and Nadia finally enjoy themselves with their offspring at the beach (Robinson, *BM* 602). Ann's remark that no one is desperate for shelter or food on this planet serves to highlight how well-deserved this happy ending is, as well as how it is actually possible for anyone on Mars to enjoy the same happiness as Ann and her friends are. Indeed, its egalitarianism is why *Blue Mars* represents a closed utopia: Mars does not stand on its own as the utopian, more successful brother of Earth, mocking Earth's inferiority. Instead, the utopian features achieved on Mars are exported back to Earth as well. Most importantly, by the twenty-second century, every Earth capitalist company eventually converts to the Martian post-capitalist cooperative system: "as the great metanationals of Terra had in reality all mutated into Praxis-like worker-owned cooperatives, with people in control of their own work—democracy it was, for the moment. They had enacted that hope" (393). Health care has also improved immensely, with its access guaranteed in the Martian constitution and with staggering feats now possible, such as regrowing Nadia's severed finger with an injection: "they had injected some knuckle zone cells, and now it was just longer than the first joint of her other

little finger. […] Every day a little bigger" (255). The universality of worker-owned coops, coupled with the universal access to miracle interventions such as finger replacement and the longevity treatment (with no loss of memories) on both planets, means that at the end of *Blue Mars*, anyone can choose to live the life they want, a long life of comfort being as accessible as one filled with adventure.

The utopian features of the world of *Blue Mars* are striking, both in the utopian activities they allow and in the real-life problems they solve. For example, science-fiction adventure abounds in the novel. Zo Boone (John Boone's great-granddaughter) spends hours flying in a hawksuit with a flexible exoskeleton: "Zo the hawk, wild and free" (408). Furthermore, in this bold new age of humanity called the Accelerando, people can choose to terraform and colonize their own little asteroid (391). The arts are also thriving on Mars, and they are influenced by the trilogy's heroes: for example, there is an opera about John Boone, the first man on Mars (493). Besides great universal workers' rights, health care, science-fiction activities and entertainment, one additional utopian aspect of this world is its high quality of education. Indeed, Bao Shuyo's status as both a Martian native and "the queen of physics", who is on the verge of effectively combining quantum mechanics and gravity into one theory, proves that great education is an integral part of the Martian utopia (341).

All these utopian gifts combine in such a way that at the end of *Blue Mars*, history itself is on the verge of ending. In the twenty-second century, the Martian historian Charlotte Dorsa Brevia writes a theory of metahistory according to which "each great socioeconomic era was composed of roughly equal parts of the systems immediately adjacent to it in past and future" (391). Charlotte says that a shift of socioeconomic era accounts for the Accelerando even more than technical advances. The shift in question is that from the Capitalist age to the Democratic

age, which is achieved on Mars during the trilogy: "as each system passed on to the next, the circle of equal citizens had bloomed wider, […] until now not only were all humans (in theory, anyway) equal, but consideration was being given to other animals, and even to plants, ecosystems, and the elements themselves" (392). Charlotte paints such consideration towards nonhumans as foreshadowing the final stage of history beyond Democracy, the utopian stage of Harmony or General Goodwill. However, Sax Russell doubts that humanity will ever reach that final stage, as he thinks there is some sort of "asymptotic curve in human history" which could keep humanity in the current stage of democracy. Sax is untroubled by this idea, however, as he thinks the state of democracy is good enough to call it a "successful civilization. Enough was as good as a feast, after all" (393). If Sax is right—which, given his intellectual achievements and track record, is very likely—then history has already ended by the end of *Blue Mars*.

Since Robinson's Martian utopia ends with all its internal and external conflicts resolved as well as an amazing education system, health care system and even great entertainment, it is indeed presented as an achieved utopia: it does not need to be improved any further to be considered a utopia. However, this does not mean that there cannot be more problems beyond the ending of the trilogy: that would be reading beyond the text. The point I make here is that there are no more possible problems *presented* in the narrative, which means that Mars is presented as an achieved utopia. Therefore, while the MT is a dynamic utopian text, it does reach a point of relative stasis where utopia is achieved. In that way, the trilogy differs from other critical utopias, which maintain a critical stance towards the final society. That might be why Moylan does not refer to the trilogy as a critical utopia, but rather as a "new utopian narrative" (*Scraps* 105). However, I argue that the trilogy's emphasis on the Mars vs Earth conflict and on the quest for utopia gives it much more in common with critical utopias than with traditional ones. In that

way, the MT could be said to incorporate elements from both the traditional utopia and critical utopia genres: telling a dynamic story about establishing utopia, but also featuring an achieved utopia in a more static way reminiscent of the traditional variety.

The narrative question at the heart of the first two books (and a significant part of the third one) is: *how* can humanity reach the age of democracy from the age of capitalism? More directly: how can the trilogy's characters transform a world similar to our own into the utopian one depicted in *Blue Mars*? Robinson's answer lies in the foundation of an egalitarian community of heroes. However, before I tackle this subject directly, I want to take a quick detour to analyze the hard science-fiction aspect of the trilogy and how it works in conjunction with the themes of utopia and realism.

Hard Science-Fiction as Utopian Realism

Robinson's *Mars* trilogy has been widely praised for its use of hard science-fiction. Indeed, the trilogy gives extensive scientific explanations for how the science-fictional aspects of its story world work. In her influential essay, Carol Franko says that Robinson "puts the struggle for utopia into a near-future story that could come true - a story informed by "hard" science in a way that has justly impressed readers and that renders in believable detail how humans soon might be settling on Mars" (57). Indeed, Robinson's believable use of hard sci-fi makes the trilogy more unique in the utopian canon.

Robinson uses hard sci-fi in two different ways. The first way provides a realistic solution to scientific problems. Fredric Jameson points out that the scientific data and activities of the trilogy are staged as "data and raw materials for the solving of problems, rather than as abstract and contemplative features of an epistemology or scientific world picture" (Jameson, *If I*

find 209). We see an example of this scientific display when John Boone learns about the longevity treatment:

> [cell-division] errors are caused by breaks in DNA strands, so we wanted to strengthen DNA strands. To do it we would read your genome, and then build an auto-repair genomic library of small segments that will replace the broken strands […] we push this auto-repair library into the cells, where they bind to the original DNA and help keep them from breaking (Robinson, *RM* 308).

Here, "so" and "to do it" emphasize the logical, goal-oriented aspect of the longevity treatment, its problem-solving purpose. The explanation is so clear and simple that it makes one believe it within the story world.

The second way Robinson uses hard sci-fi in the trilogy is by constructing long and virtuosic explanatory sequences not directly related to a problem. Rather than making specific solutions seem possible, these sequences serve to make the trilogy's world-building believable by showing that enormous thought has been put into analyzing how Martian colonization would work. This kind of virtuosic scientific world-building is particularly at play in *Red Mars*, the first book of the trilogy, where more-or-less everything has to be built from scratch on Mars:

> The Boeing air miners had been only the start of the factory complex; their gases were fed into big boxy trailers to be compressed and expanded and rendered and recombined, using chemical-engineering operations such as dehumidification, liquefaction, fractional distillation, electrolysis, electrosynthesis, the Sabatier process, the Raschig process, the Oswald process… Slowly they worked up more and more complex chemicals, which flowed from one factory to the next, through a warren of structures that looked like mobile homes caught in a web of color-coded tanks and pipes and tubes and cables. (119)

In such a passage, one of the three processes mentioned could be fictional and most readers would not notice the difference. Indeed, the confident reference to these processes just after having referred to real scientific operations such as electrolysis functions to make the whole paragraph convincing, thus sustaining Robinson's science-fiction world-building as solid and well thought-out. As Jameson says, "one would also like to hear the scientists' opinions or to browse through a collection of essays by the experts on [Robinson's] treatment of these specialized matters" (Jameson, *If I find* 208). Indeed, the impression created by such passages is one of scientific mastery and authority, which supports the utopian aspects of the trilogy in two ways. First, it interacts with Jameson's assertion that "SF does not seriously attempt to imagine the "real" future of our social system. Rather, its multiple mock futures serve the quite different function of transforming our own present into the determinate past of something yet to come" (*Progress* 288). Indeed, the air of scientific authority conferred upon the text by its virtuosic use of hard sci-fi allows it to enjoy an almost documentary-style verisimilitude, which makes the MT's utopian future seem more credible as a historical possibility than it would without this rigorous style and methodology. Second, the scientific authority derived from the hard sci-fi passages makes the trilogy's political content credible, too. Vlad Taneev (the co-creator of the longevity treatment)'s utopian defense of the coop system is a good example of this transfer of credibility from science to politics:

> We must change. It is time. If self-rule is a fundamental value, if simple justice is a value, then they are values everywhere, including in the workplace where we spend so much of our lives. […] And in our years on Mars, we have developed an economic system that can keep all those promises. That has been our work these last fifty years. In the system we have developed, all economic enterprises are to be small cooperatives, owned by their

> workers and by no one else. They hire their management, or manage themselves. Industry guilds and co-op associations will form the larger structures necessary to regulate trade and market, share capital, and create credit. (Robinson, *BM* 117)

When a capitalist jumps in to tell Vlad that his ideas are nothing more than utopian, Vlad responds: "Not at all. The system is based on models from Terran history, and its various parts have been tested on both worlds, and have succeeded very well. […] Most of our microeconomy has been in successful operation for centuries in the Mondragon region of Spain" (117). Here, Vlad's forceful, matter-of-fact language gives off an aura of scientific authority that benefits from Robinson's use of hard sci-fi throughout the trilogy. Furthermore, the technique of mixing in real-life examples such as the Mondragon region of Spain with Vlad's fictional economic system makes it seem more real, just as using real scientific operations does for the following processes in the air miners example above. This rhetorical technique is crucial to literary utopianism: a utopia can never be justified by reference only to itself, so it must be justified using admirable examples from the real world.

The trilogy's abundance of hard science-fiction therefore strengthens its utopian functions in many ways: it makes its world more believable as a version of our future, it makes its utopian inventions seem possible and therefore desirable, and it brings that credibility back into its political aspects, as evidenced by Vlad's speech. However, Vlad is only one of the many heroes of the MT, and it is thanks to their collective efforts that the utopia of *Blue Mars* is built.

The End of Singular Heroism and the Rise of Heroic Community in the *Mars* Trilogy

Through Shevek, *The Dispossessed* features an extraordinary scientist-turned-political activist as its utopian hero who makes possible a League of Planets. In the previous chapter, I looked at how *TD*'s representation of Shevek's heroic status can seem paradoxical as a model of

utopian heroism, as it advocates for a more egalitarian world while letting the singular hero do all the work. Robinson's *Mars* trilogy features an equally complex relationship between utopia and heroism. For instance, the trilogy agrees with *TD* in presenting the heroism of extraordinary individuals as necessary to achieve utopia. However, because of the great length and multiple perspectives of the trilogy, no single character can be seen as the main hero of the trilogy in the same way that Shevek is for *TD*. William Dynes asserts that "Robinson's structural technique is clearly recapitulated in his handling of his narrative's point of view. No one strand, perspective, or tale adequately communicates the whole, and this premise is reinforced throughout the series" (150). With that being said, the trilogy does not only disagree with *TD* about utopian heroism. In fact, in the two later books of the series, the hero whose single perspective dominates the most and who arguably accomplishes the most utopian feats is Sax Russell, who is also a genius scientist-turned-political-activist like Shevek. This important resemblance can be explained by Robinson's view that science is the quintessential utopian way (*Remarks on Utopia* 4). However, Sax never becomes the true protagonist of the trilogy, which remains firmly an ensemble story. For Jameson, the trilogy "projects an original collectivity – the first settlers, the so-called "First Hundred" –, as a collective protagonist or multiple subjects for [their own] history" (*If I find* 212). While I agree with Jameson that the First Hundred form the collective protagonist of the trilogy, I argue for a different reading of the First Hundred as collective heroes. *Red Mars* features two main heroes in the style of Shevek for *TD*: John Boone and Frank Chalmers. These two heroes' tragic fates and political failures form a critique of the kind of monopolizing heroism represented by Shevek. After *Red Mars*, a community of heroes (rather than a messianic single hero) comes together to enact the second and third Martian revolutions, which are successful. Furthermore, this move from singular heroism to egalitarian heroism is reflected in how the third

Martian revolution succeeds largely thanks to the population of Earth and Mars. In the following pages, I will trace these important movements through the trilogy by analyzing the role of each major hero and their place in the overarching narrative.

John Boone and Frank Chalmers: the Doomed Singular Heroes

Any self-respecting analysis of the heroes of the MT must begin with John Boone, the First Man on Mars. His assassination in the prologue-like first chapter by Frank Chalmers, his political and romantic rival (who is also his former friend), turns him into a tragic figure from the very beginning of the saga. Carol Franko sees him as a Socratic hero:

> I consider John Boone's life and death on Mars as that of a carnivalized Socratic hero seeking a syncretic solution and a viable sense of "we" for humans on Mars through the power of speech acts to produce "impact metamorphosis" […] The action plot of Red Mars is overlaid with ongoing, multifaceted debates in which John Boone and others practice a method of seeking knowledge that Bakhtin credits Socratic dialogue with inventing. (58)

Indeed, John seeks utopia through dialogue, and his own evolution as a character and as a hero happens through his dialogues with others. Every hero in the trilogy has their own characteristic heroic activity, their own way of accomplishing heroic tasks. For example, Frank's way is to negotiate behind-the-scenes with powerful people and to manipulate their interests in such a way that the situation goes in his favor. By contrast, John's characteristic activity is to travel around Mars, asking important or wise people about their vision for Mars and incorporating the parts of their answers that he likes into his own worldview. His ultimate goal is to use his political power to push this syncretic worldview (his version of utopia, assembled from many others' ideas) into reality. For example, when he goes to visit Arkady (the First Hundred's radical anti-capitalist) on

Phobos (Mars' moon), the narrative structure of the episode plays out as if John is the hero of a traditional utopian tale and Arkady is his guide through the utopia of Phobos: "The next day he felt better, and Arkady took him on a tour of Phobos. […] the interior rooms and some of the big galleries had been built according to Arkady's socio-architectural theories […] circular hallways, mixed work-and-recreation areas, […] all features that had become standard […] but of which Arkady was still proud (Robinson, *RM* 363). As a true anti-capitalist mentor, Arkady also gives John some much-needed ideological perspective. The scene becomes mythical as the mentor takes his protégé into an open gallery paneled in faceted mirrors, so that as they talk, they see hundreds of reflections of each other (364). In this setting, Arkady imparts some wisdom to John about how revolution against the transnational corporations of Earth is necessary to achieve Martian independence: "It will take something much more radical [than a treaty] to stop these people, John. Direct action […] it will come to that, because there are guns under the table. Mass demonstration and insurrection are the only things that will beat them, history shows this" (368). While he acknowledges Arkady's wisdom, John only answers: "I'd like to try my way first" (368).

What is John Boone's way, then? William J. White writes about the distinction between Boone and Chalmers' methods very insightfully: "[Frank Chalmers] pursues policies where John tries to understand; [Frank] wields political influence where John makes friends. John is earnest and optimistic (Frank would say naive), open, passionate, charismatic, and famous; Frank is cynical and angry, manipulative, reserved, pragmatic, and behind-the-scenes, the eminence grise of Mars" (595). Indeed, Boone's heroic talent is to inspire others and make friends: that is why he believes so strongly (and wrongly) in negotiating with the transnationals. Perhaps his most epic display of heroism is when he unites most of the First Hundred colonists on Olympus Mons,

the highest mountain on Mars, and delivers a rousing utopian speech to them: "it's democracy versus capitalism at this point, friends […] that being the case, we had better band together for the common good, for Mars and for us and for all the people on Earth and for the seven generations" (Robinson, *RM* 406). Boone's speech has an almost religious euphoric effect on his friends: Maya, Vlad, Ursula, and Nadia all kiss him right after. Before the speech, the crowd chants "John Boone" and "Mars" in the same breath, after Hiroko adds John's name to a list of names for Mars chanted by people from different cultures. Indeed, perhaps Boone's gift is to prefigure utopia when it has not yet arrived through his speeches and charisma.

Boone's charisma is also his tragic flaw, however. The reason he cannot be a Shevek-like ultimate savior is because he refuses to see the necessity of revolution and believes that if he can get everyone around a table, he can make utopia happen. His enemies believe that on top of being the most powerful man on Mars, he wants to be its king (13). However, his overconfidence also makes him underestimate his enemies' power relative to his own. When Arkady warns him that Frank's consulting work for transnats means he has more power than him, John dismisses the idea in his head: ""[Arkady speaking: Frank and Phyllis] are richer than us. And in this system, richer is more powerful." We'll just see about that, John thought" (367).

We *do* see about that in the end. After having had John killed, Frank Chalmers thinks to himself: "Now we'll see what *I* can do with this planet" (26, emphasis added). Indeed, Frank is certainly the character whose individual motivations and actions affect the narrative of *Red Mars* the most outside of John. White even argues that his story is the central one of the novel: "there is a larger story revolving around Frank Chalmers in which John's quest despite its salience is a mere incident: ultimately, Red Mars is Frank's story as much as if not more than it is John's, since it is about the failure or bankruptcy of all the old ways of doing politics" (594-5). I agree

that John Boone's charismatic showmanship and Chalmer's aggressive behind-the-scenes negotiations are portrayed by the narrative as antiquated political methods which are ineffective in bringing about revolution and utopia. However, these skills are also shown to complement each other very well. When Frank thinks back on his days of friendship with John, he thinks about their skill as a team: "Oh, they had been hot in those days, Chalmers and Boone; Frank with the ideas and John the front man, with a momentum that was practically unstoppable" (13). Here, Frank's memory can be read as a personal *and* political nostalgia in that he misses both the brotherly relationship he used to have with John and the greater political achievements their duo was capable of. Given this fact, perhaps one can surmise that if the two had worked together during the events of *Red Mars*, they could have achieved utopia in a different way and stayed alive. Indeed, many years later, when Maya (who knew both men very well) sees a tag with the name Lincoln on it, she thinks: "the greatest American, a man who had been a kind of combination of John and Frank, as Maya understood him. […] They needed a Lincoln these days" (*BM* 496). According to this analogy, maybe John and Frank die without accomplishing their goals because they try to be The Big Hero, without working *together* as two leaders of a community of heroes instead.

Despite his obviously evil murder of John Boone, it is important to the trilogy's developing treatment of heroism that Frank Chalmers is not represented as a villain in *Red Mars*, but rather as an anti-hero. White voices this idea in mythological terms, arguing that "it is possible to see Frank as a mythic hero in his own right, albeit a dark one: his qualifying test is the instigation of Boone's murder, his (ultimately failed) main test is the negotiation of the treaty revisions, and his "glorifying" (better: redeeming) test is his (perhaps unintended) self-sacrifice during the Marineris flood to save the rover his friends were in" (597). While I agree with White

that Frank is his own mythic hero, I think his heroism is better articulated as a dark reflection of John's own. The hero/anti-hero dynamic I am proposing is similar to the dynamic between Shevek and Atro in *TD*, where Atro shares Shevek's scientific greatness and belief that Urras and Anarres should unite, but does not share Shevek's regard for living beings outside of the two planets. In a similar way, Frank's mythic heroism echoes John's own. As Frank implies after having killed John, he replaces his rival in several key ways: as Maya's love interest, as the main character of the novel, and as the most powerful man on Mars and the one who has to negotiate the treaty that John was supposed to negotiate. His killing of John makes him villainous, but his fighting on John's side against the transnats makes him an anti-hero (rather than a villain) in the larger conflicts of the trilogy.

Frank's heroic abilities are also dramatized in a way that echoes John's. For example, after John makes another charismatic speech to the crowd, Frank's own charisma is shown to equal his: "[Frank] had the crowd, fickle souls that they were, about as securely as John. […Chalmers] knew that he had his own rough charisma, and as he warmed up he drew on it" (Robinson, *RM* 7). The two men also have the same reaction to confrontation: they both "work their magic" until they've won the encounter and their ego is satisfied. John applies this method in his encounter with Helmut, a top officer from Earth, who thinks he controls Mars more than Boone: "John had found in the past that a few minutes of his First Man on Mars routine was usually enough to crush that kind of attitude" (291). Frank works his own routine after Phyllis, a member of the First Hundred who works for the transnats, challenges him to a contest of influence over Washington, which he wins: "On the trip back down the cable [where Phyllis is], he scheduled video appointments on the half-hour, fifteen hours a day" (479). The fact that both John and Frank are adept at these domination games targeted at their egos signals just how

similar they are, and Frank's victory here—against the transnats—cements his status as the anti-hero to John's hero. Perhaps the final way in which Frank echoes John is in how tragic his death is: John dies just as he is about to make a real stand against the transnats, while Frank dies by saving his friends from a flood. The ultimate consequence of their shared Strongman status is that, like White says, they both represent the Old Ways, which means they must die to make way for the new kind of heroism that the trilogy upholds: communal heroism.

After *Red Mars*: The Successful Community of Utopian Heroes

After the deaths of John and Frank, the remaining heroes of the trilogy enact a more egalitarian ideal of heroism by working together. Furthermore, the novels invite this comparison between the first two heroes and their successors through the many ways in which the various heroes echo John and Frank's characters. This difference between the remaining heroes and the two fallen ones can be explained by the fact that following the tragic ending of *Red Mars* and the failure of the first Martian revolution, the remaining First Hundred spend decades living underground. There, they have time to learn more about the metanats (evolutions of the transnats) and about what kind of tactics they should apply against them, knowing that the tactics of the First Revolution have proven ineffective. They also have time to mature and to reflect on the kinds of heroes they want to be. On a narrative level, other changes happen: there are no more "half-protagonists" like John and Frank who compete for dominance and around whom most of the narrative revolves. Instead, Nadia, Maya, Sax, Nirgal, and Art Randolph, the main heroes going forward, all learn to work together as a heroic community in order to achieve large-scale enterprises, such as the second and third Martian revolutions. The only exception to these notions is Sax Russell, who does get more point-of-view chapters than the other characters in *Blue Mars* and who is more prone to accomplishing feats of brilliance all by himself. However,

Sax's character development is strongly tied to Robinson's conception of utopia and of science more generally, and he does become more of a team player as the trilogy progresses.

Nadia and Maya: Heroines of the Three Revolutions

Nadia and Maya echo John and Frank's personalities respectively, and over the course of the trilogy, they uphold the heroic legacies of both men while also transcending them by putting their community before their egos. As the quintessential engineer and builder, Nadia is already a *model* of communitarian heroism during the first Martian revolution. As the revolution (and the accompanying destruction) rages on, Nadia focuses on using her amazing engineering skills to fix what infrastructures she can and prevent more loss of life: "I'm not fighting anyone," she says, "It's stupid. I won't do it. I'll fix things where I can, but I won't fight" (520). Nadia's leadership develops over the course of the next book, to the point where at the start of the second revolution, she tells officers of the United Nations Transitional Authority: "I'm Nadia Cherneshevsky. I built this town. And now we're taking control of it. Who do you work for?" (*GM* 642). While she acts with newfound confidence, the Nadia of *Green Mars* has not lost her respect for all life: "We don't want bloodshed. […] We don't even want to take you prisoners. There's our train right there; you can take it […] and go join the rest of your team" (642). As Nadia's group outnumbers the UNTA unit, they respond: ""we'll take your train." And so, Underhill was the first town freed" (643). Here, we can see that Nadia has found a way to maintain her pacificism while still taking on a more active role in the conflict than she did in the first revolution. However, Nadia's newfound leadership is put to the ultimate test when she is called upon to be the very first President of Mars in *Blue Mars*. Having worked tirelessly to help adopt the Constitution, Nadia would like nothing more than to quit politics and go build things. However, as Art tells her, she is the best person for the job because "You're the only one on

Mars that everyone trusts" (*BM* 236). This popularity makes Nadia reminiscent of John Boone's qualities. Rather than simply live in Boone's shadow, however, Nadia acts with an altruism that surpasses his: when she realizes that the pressures of the presidency bring out her most impatient and despotic sides, she decides to quit her political position as soon as she can to focus on engineering projects and raising a family with Art (279). By contrast, the non-altruistic course of action would have been to remain president and become more and more despotic. Boone shows some of these despotic and power-loving tendencies when he feels strongly irritated that Helmut thinks he has more influence on Mars than he does, when he insists on doing things his way instead of Arkady's, and when he arrogantly dismisses Arkady's claim that Frank has more power than him. Boone might have become the first President of Mars had he survived long enough, but the heroic trajectory of the trilogy affirms that Nadia is indeed the best woman for the job.

Just as the novels frame Nadia as echoing Boone's heroism, they also frame Maya as echoing Chalmers'. As such, Maya perpetuates Chalmers' type of heroism, but she also ultimately surpasses it by learning to work as a group with her fellow heroes rather than alone, as Frank would have. Therefore, the development of Maya as a heroine illustrates how much the trilogy's model of heroism changes after Chalmers' death. Before looking at how she transcends Frank's self-interested brand of heroism, however, let us look at how she resembles him. Like Frank, Maya is one of the only First Hundred to kill another one. Indeed, just like Frank kills Boone, Maya kills Phyllis in revenge for her working with the transnats during the first revolution and for getting Sax captured and tortured (*GM* 300). In *Green Mars*, however, Maya learns to use her similarities with Frank in a positive way. Indeed, she uses her Frank-like ability

to influence others in a way that makes her a more communitarian heroine than Frank has ever been:

> Frank had always lashed out at his audience. These people needed something more – or, to be precise, they deserved something more. Something positive, something to draw them as well as to drive them. Frank had said this too, but he had seldom acted on it. They needed to be seduced, like the nightly dancers on the corniche. […] So she seduced them. She did it even when she was frightened, or in a bad mood (*GM* 583-4)

Maya continues this theme of both honoring and surpassing Frank's legacy as she leads the third Martian revolution and works with her fellow heroes: "Once again it was Maya who pulled them into action, playing the wrist like Frank used to, calling everyone in the open Mars coalition and many others besides, orchestrating the general response" (*BM* 595). Through honoring Frank's memory and using his methods, Maya becomes the exact heroine she needs to be in order to bring humanity into utopia: a more community-focused leader who knows how to seduce crowds and manage them positively. To go back to the previous analogy about Frank and John, perhaps Maya working together with Nadia has created the metaphorical female Abraham Lincoln that the people of Mars—and Earth—needed. By making the heroes and heroines echo their forebears throughout the books, the trilogy emphasizes that each of them has a piece of what is needed to achieve utopia, but only by working together to join all these pieces can they create the world of *Blue Mars*.

Nirgal and Art Randolph: The New Generation of Heroes

As the only heroes in this list to not be in *Red Mars*, Nirgal and Art represent new blood within the community of heroes that brings about the utopia of *Blue Mars*. Just like Nadia and Maya, they both echo the characteristics of John Boone and Frank Chalmers. Indeed, it would be

no exaggeration to call Nirgal the reincarnation of John Boone. First of all, both are mythical figures: "Nirgal" is a name for Mars, just like Hiroko added "John Boone" to the list of names for Mars on Olympus Mons. Boone is the first man on Mars, while Nirgal is the first Martian ambassador to Earth. In addition to having a mythical status like Boone, Nirgal shares his popularity and his talent for making friends easily. Put simply, everyone loves Nirgal. When Maya hears that she will see him soon, she becomes happy: "It was always good to see Nirgal" (*BM* 474). Art Randolph and Nirgal are extremely close since the Dorsa Brevia Conference, where the main rebel groups met to establish common ground before the revolution. At the Conference, both Art and Nirgal stay up later than anyone else, reviewing videos of the day's debates and noting down the points that all groups agree on to make a master list of political common ground among the revolutionaries (*GM* 437). Their enthusiasm for political syncretism recalls John Boone's own attitude in *Red Mars.* Nirgal's popularity also extends to Earth: after the second revolution, the people of Earth invite Nirgal to their planet. As a Martian native, Nirgal's situation on Earth is similar to Shevek's on Urras, in that both of them are natives from a utopian colony, back on the home planet in order to spread a message of brotherhood: "we can most help the home planet by serving as a way to see yourselves. […] On Mars we have seen that the best way to express [our] interdependence is to live for giving, in a culture of compassion. Every person free and equal in the sight of all, working together for the good of all" (*BM* 141). Here, it becomes clear that Nirgal is the living embodiment of the utopian dream of Mars, the New Martian Man, perhaps linked to the idea of the Soviet New Man (Jameson , *If I find* 227). In any case, he is the product of a successful cultural revolution. Just as John Boone represents the best of pre-Mars humanity, Nirgal represents the best of humanity post-Mars.

Beyond his popularity and his penchant for giving great speeches, however, there is another important way in which Nirgal resonates with John Boone's character: both men love the outdoors and flying. Boone is remembered after his death as "the best pilot on Mars, he could fly like an angel" (Robinson, *RM* 413). As for Nirgal, his affinity with the outdoors goes far beyond only flying: Nirgal also loves to run as a mode of transportation, which is practical for him given that he is the fastest cross-country runner on Mars, finishing first in a hundred-kilometer barefoot race (*BM* 480). Nirgal's running goes beyond sports: he lives for a while as part of a hunter-gatherer group (372). The importance of Nirgal's lifestyle is symbolic, as he lives out Robinson's idea of a utopian lifestyle leading to the greatest happiness:

> What the human sciences are telling us now is that the closer you live to a Paleolithic lifestyle—with good dental care—the better off you are. This is another utopian thought, coming straight out of the latest scientific findings: we are happiest when we are healthiest, and we are healthiest when we live a life that engages us in the physical world in a rather low-carbon-burn way—walking around outdoors a lot, talking, the occasional dash or tumble, making a meal together, and so on. These low-carbon activities are often felt as the best part of the day, and that's no coincidence. (*Remarks on Utopia* 12)

In a very exact way, then, Nirgal is the living and breathing embodiment of the lifestyle that the trilogy (and Robinson in this passage) elevates as truly utopian: the lifestyle of the outdoors frontier adventurer. Thus, his embodiment of the idea of utopia surpasses even John Boone's own mythical status. Even with all these gifts and accomplishments, however, Nirgal stays humble and altruistic, which prevents him from becoming selfish like Boone and Chalmers can be at times.

Complementing Nirgal's status as a Martian native, Art Randolph is unique for being a Terran character after the first revolution. He initially goes to Mars as an ambassador for the Praxis corporation in the hopes of establishing a relationship with the revolutionaries. However, it is during the post-revolution constitutional meetings that Art truly shines as a diplomat. Indeed, if Nirgal can be considered a reincarnation of and improvement on John Boone as a hero, Art is the same thing for Frank Chalmers. As great as Frank is at negotiating, Art shows how much greater he could have been as a diplomat if he lost his ego. Every morning of the constitutional negotiations, Art carries out a routine in service of others. Similarly to how Maya feels about Nirgal, the groups who receive Art are always "happy to see Art when he came by in the course of the day, as he represented a break, some food, some jokes" (105). Art's acts of service keep the negotiations running smoothly, and when push comes to shove, he is a strong negotiator in his own right. Indeed, he is the one who brokers a deal with the Reds, one of the most radical and unflinching political factions on Mars (127). This gesture is perhaps Art's greatest contribution to Martian history, one that only he could achieve. Indeed, it is hard to imagine Chalmers, with his bad temper and bad relationship with Ann (the Red leader), managing to please everyone as Art does. Therefore, just as Nirgal fulfills Boone's legacy as a hero, Art fulfills Chalmers'. Just like with Nadia and Maya working together, Nirgal and Art working together (most notably at the Dorsa Brevia Conference) symbolically heals the original divide between Boone and Chalmers. Art and Nirgal are perhaps the most egalitarian and community-focused heroes in the entire trilogy: their positive influence takes the group of main characters away from the old heroism of Boone and Chalmers, and into the communitarian heroism needed to bring about the world of *Blue Mars*.

Sax Russell and Science as Robinson's Utopian Way

Of all the characters analyzed so far, Saxifrage Russell is perhaps the odd one out because he does not carry any major characteristics from John or Frank: Sax is his own (very peculiar) man. Indeed, his development as a utopian hero is not framed as a fulfillment of the original two heroes', but rather as a synthesis of two other pairs of opposites: science and other fields of knowledge, and Sax and Ann's worldviews. Originally, Sax is skeptical of the value of any field of knowledge that is not the natural sciences. However, under the supervision of Michel (the psychologist of the First Hundred), Sax gets an experimental brain plasticity treatment that radically changes his worldview. The treatment itself is framed as a rebirth: "[It's like he's back] in the womb. Yes, being reborn. He doesn't even look the same" (*GM* 317). From then on, Sax undergoes a process of therapy with Michel. Their conversations have a profound impact on Sax and how thinks about psychology and the social sciences. Through these deeply conceptual conversations with Michel, Sax begins to see the natural sciences and other fields of knowledge as complementary rather than as opposites.

Sax's utopian heroic development is also defined by his trilogy-spanning rivalry with Ann, the Red leader and scientist who believes Mars should not be terraformed because its primordial beauty will be lost (*RM* 185). Sax, in response, believes that "the beauty of Mars exists in the human mind. […] It's we who understand it, who give it meaning" (186). In *Blue Mars*, Sax attempts to reconcile his longstanding differences with Ann by going with her on walks across Mars, to try to see the planet as she does: "would you like to, to accompany me, on a trip to south Tharsis, to, to, to examine the upper boundary of the aerobiosphere, together?" (*BM* 49). After getting closer to Ann and learning to see the planet her way, Sax experiences another major development when he uses a new memory treatment on himself and literally

experiences his whole life anew. By reliving their lives, Sax and Ann remember that they were in love before the events of the trilogy, thus reigniting their lost passion for each other (570). Their status as archrivals-turned-lovers proves incredibly important during the third revolution, when they appear together and Ann says that "the government of Mars in recent years had broken the law and the spirit of human compassion, by forbidding immigration from Earth to Mars. The people of Mars did not want that" (596). Immediately after, Sax says: "Mars has to be protected. The biosphere is new, its carrying capacity limited. […] Terrans had to understand that, and not overwhelm local systems" (596). By each saying lines that would normally be associated with their archrival, the two scientists support the revolution by being a living symbol that fundamental differences (such as the Earth-Mars division at play in this revolution) can be successfully overcome. Sax and Ann's speech has a strong impact on the population of Mars and Earth, who become the ones to truly enact the third revolution: "Out in the outback, locals confronted settlers […] At any point in the process, things could have turned violent; […] but cooler heads prevailed. […] This was the moment of mutation, history in the making. […] They talked themselves into it. A new government. A new treaty with Earth" (597). In the end, Arkady's idea that mass demonstration and insurrection are the only true way to enact revolution and achieve utopia is proven right. Sax ultimately transcends Shevek (his archetypal equivalent) by empowering his community using his own example instead of trying to save it from the outside. Unlike Shevek, the heroes of the MT do not single-handedly give to their people a utopia that they (the people) cannot obtain by their own efforts: instead, they band together to show the people of Mars and Earth how to improve their world through radical democracy.

Given Sax's character development, we can see that he represents science as the quintessential path to utopia for Robinson, who writes: "While writing the Mars Trilogy, or

maybe before, I began to think of science as another name for the utopian way, or what Williams called the long revolution" (*Remarks on Utopia* 4). Indeed, Sax's production of a memory drug thanks to intensive scientific experiments serves as a miraculous utopian feat that redeems the longevity treatment's weaknesses: in effect, Sax has allowed the people on Mars to live three normal human lifetimes. This achievement has a profoundly utopian effect on humanity at large and it is distinctly scientific. Rather than only producing utopian gifts, however, the trilogy represents science as a utopian process in itself, a view Robinson expresses in his article: "the various components of the scientific method, and the structure of scientific institutions, are simultaneously both a method for discovering nature and a utopian political program" (14). Sax echoes exactly those ideas when he intensifies his research to find a memory drug:

> in the labs and the conference bars the work [of scientific innovation] went forward, as a dialogue of people who understood the issues, and did the hard work of experimentation, and of thinking about experiments. And all this vast articulated structure of a culture stood out in the open sun of day, accessible to anyone who wanted to join, who was willing and able to do the work; there were no secrets, there were no closed shops. (*BM* 528)

The scientific community Sax describes is fundamentally communal: "in truth the work of science was a communal thing; […] a constant struggle to understand" (527). Furthermore, Sax finds the scientific method utopian in that it is singularly focused on finding the truth and it has a purpose independently of politics: "Science was a social construct, but it was also and most importantly its own space, conforming to reality only; that was its beauty" (528). For Robinson, however, beyond this formal independence from politics, science needs to be guided by other fields of knowledge in order to fulfill its utopian mission:

> While I support science as the best name for our species' life-support system, I also recognize that many scientists are like the character Beaker in *The Muppets*, geeking their way through life, their education deep but narrow, making them often naively unphilosophical, to the point where they think that what they do is straightforward and nonpolitical. It's the humanities' job to disabuse them of that mistaken notion, by way of fully supportive lessons in history, philosophy, political theory, rhetoric, and literature. The humanities need to educate the sciences rather than attack them; this education is not an option, if you want to be aware of how the human world works. (*Remarks on Utopia* 13-14)

Here, the key to understanding the utopian significance of Sax's character arc is revealed: Michel stands in for the different fields of knowledge educating Sax's hitherto unphilosophical science. Thus, Sax's brain plasticity treatment marks the point where he starts his journey from being a great but spiritually empty scientist to being a truly utopian scientist, educated in psychology and philosophy. Furthermore, his intensive research to discover the memory drug makes him rediscover the scientific method as itself a utopian process. Only once Sax has achieved these utopian realizations can he experience another rebirth (the memory drug) and fulfill his destiny by becoming Ann's lover and participating with her in the third Martian revolution. Therefore, in the same way that Nirgal is a living example of the novels' idea of a utopian lifestyle, Sax's whole character journey and the scientific marvels it produces are symbols of the trilogy's view of science as the utopian way *par excellence*.

Conclusion

We have seen that John Boone and Frank Chalmers fail at bringing about utopia because they care too much about being The Big Hero in a trilogy that transcends this notion. For

example, Boone should have heeded Arkady's calls for revolution instead of insisting to do things his own way. We have also seen that most heroes after *Red Mars* honor Boone and Chalmers' legacies while surpassing them, and they do so by keeping their focus on helping their community and on working with their fellow heroes as a team. In promoting such egalitarian ideals, the *Mars* Trilogy critiques the kind of Strongman heroism at play in other critical utopias, such as Shevek's heroism in *The Dispossessed*. Additionally, we have seen how the utopia featured in *Blue Mars* differs from most critical utopias by being actually free of conflict and of any form of lack. We have also seen how the use of hard science-fiction in the trilogy makes its utopian aspects more believable and makes the trilogy's fictional history easier to contemplate as actually possible. However, as we shall see in the next chapter, *2312* grapples with the idealism of the trilogy and revises some of its major ideas.

Chapter 3: Posthuman Heroism and Genre Evolution in Robinson's *2312*

The simultaneously utopian and dystopian world of *2312* stands as a dialectical synthesis of the utopian visions of *The Dispossessed* (*TD*) and *Blue Mars*. It is a world where the utopian process has stagnated after a time of great progress. The novel's utopian locations, including Mars and a large alliance of planets called the Mondragon Accord, are realized utopias, like Mars in the *Mars* trilogy. However, the Earth of *2312* is profoundly dystopian, an overpopulated capitalist planet abandoned by its upper classes long ago, evolving in a solar system where the Mondragon planets have been socialist for decades. The sad state of Earth highlights two of the biggest generic evolutions that *2312* brings to the critical utopia genre: first, the importance of replacing the pro-exodus ethic of most utopian sci-fi with a pro-Earth one, and second, the necessity of thinking about utopia as a permanent revolution of utopian transformations, rather than a model where the utopian process ends when utopia is first achieved. In this chapter, I will discuss these ideas in two different ways. First, I will examine the generic revision that happens in the novel: while it operates in the genre of the critical utopia in a manner similar to *TD*, *2312* also functions as Robinson's self-critical revision of the MT's celebratory exodus from Earth and of the closure it gives to the utopian process in *Blue Mars*. I will show how the idea of exodus is communicated differently in the two works by contrasting how each work represents Earth and Mars in relation to each other. In particular, *2312* shows the need for a utopianism that makes Earth and its problems a central narrative concern, rather than making Earth's problems secondary to those of Mars as in the trilogy. The novel also revises its understanding of the utopian process as one that constantly necessitates new transformations, which stands in contrast to the singular transformation that happens in the MT with the Third Revolution. Second, I will discuss the specific type of utopian heroism represented by Swan and Wahram in *2312* and argue

that these characters' status as posthuman and post-utopian heroes (heroes who have grown up in an already utopian environment) illuminates the generic revision and evolution that Robinson performs in this novel. Swan's posthuman relationship with nonhuman entities shows that the utopian sense of community needs to expand constantly to include new types of consciousness, while Wahram's institutional heroism provides a model of how heroes can constantly renew the utopian process over time. While this chapter relies less on character analysis than the previous ones, I will show how the most significant genre revisions of the novel happen through its narrative and worldbuilding dynamics, and are reflected through its character developments.

2312 and the Utopian Genre

In *2312,* Robinson seeks to recall and revise elements from *TD* and the MT to alter the critical utopia genre's stance on the necessity of exodus from Earth to achieve utopia. The generic similarities between *TD* and *2312* are especially clear on a narrative level: in both novels, the protagonist has grown up in a utopia (Anarres for Shevek and Mercury for Swan) and decides to journey to their species' planet of origin, which is dystopian (Urras for Shevek, Earth for Swan) to improve the living conditions of people on the original planet and perhaps create a universal utopia on the scale of a whole solar system. Once their mission has been more-or-less completed, both heroes return home. *2312* even follows *TD* in representing the reignition of a utopian process that had stalled rather than a completely realized utopia. Just as Shevek's utopian work will only pay off much later, the efforts of Swan and Wahram to transform Earth from a dystopia into a better place to live in will only be fully realized much later than the year 2312: "events [set in motion in the year 2312] were mired and complex, and many took decades more to come to fruition. That the Mondragon [Accord] would unify much of Earth, that Mars would recover from its qube-inflected withdrawal and rejoin the Mondragon—none of that was clear to

us then" (Robinson, *2312*, 551). Thus, just as Le Guin gives us an incomplete utopia in *TD* but gives us hope for a complete one in the novel's ending and in *The Left Hand of Darkness*, Robinson gives us an incomplete utopia in *2312*, as only certain parts of the solar system are utopian, even as he gives us hope for its eventual completion in the epilogue of the story.

While it is possible to conclude from all these narrative similarities that *2312* is simply another entry in the canon of sci-fi critical utopias, its narrative emphasis on the negative effects of abandoning Earth to escape its problems and establish a utopian colony elsewhere sets the novel apart from most critical utopias and dissociates it from one of the most fundamental staples of the genre: exodus from Earth. Indeed, Gerry Canavan links *2312* to Octavia Butler's *Parable of the Sower*, in which the same question of whether it is ethical to abandon an apocalyptic Earth dominates:

> First, can you get off the planet before humanity destroys it (through war or climate change or stupidity or anything else), and, second, *should you* get off the planet before humanity destroys it, that is, should your ambition be to escape in a tiny utopian enclave […] while the rest of humanity burns and chokes and starves and dies? What looks from one angle like a species destiny looks from another like the destiny of a tiny, privileged few that considers itself the whole species, or at least the only part of the species that really matters. (Canavan 265, emphasis in the original).

While Canavan is describing Butler's novel in this passage, his language perfectly captures the violence that can lie in the act of abandoning the Earth in the style of Noah's Ark, as the spacers have done in *2312*. The violence at play in standard utopian sci-fi exodus fantasies comes from the fact that, clearly, the privileged classes will be first to get a place on that Ark. Even in the MT, the First Hundred are all highly trained and well-paid individuals who are expected to serve

their nations' interests, as well as those of the transnats. An encyclopedia-style entry in *2312* describes humanity's motivation for leaving Earth and confirms that escaping humanity's problems is more pressing for the upper classes than solving them: "The space project accelerated as it was becoming clear that Earth was in for a terrible time because of [climate change]. Going into space looked like an attempt to escape all that" (Robinson, *2312*, 368). Indeed, the classist nature of this exodus project is confirmed in a bit of dialogue between Swan and Zasha, her ex-partner who lives on Earth: "Earth itself is now a development sink. The marrow has been sucked dry, and most of the upper classes went to Mars long ago" (310). The effects of this utopian exodus and abandonment are felt deeply on Earth, the "planet of sadness" in *2312*: "Of the eleven billion people on Earth, at least three billion were in fear when it came to housing and feeding themselves—even with all the cheap power pouring down from space […] No—off in the sky they were bashing out new worlds, while on old Earth people still suffered" (307). Consequently, the main utopian quest of the book's protagonists is to rectify the staggering imbalance between the suffering endured by people on Earth and the easy-going adventure and fulfillment experienced by the spacers, who live in what is effectively a post-scarcity utopian solar system.

To explain the difference between *2312*'s focus on the pain felt by those abandoned on Earth compared to the *Mars* trilogy, which concentrated for the most part on the suffering of the Martians, it helps to consider the place that *2312* occupies in Robinson's body of work. The MT came out between 1993 and 1996 and depicts positively the necessity to escape Earth to achieve utopia. However, other major utopian works of the time were already questioning the ethics of such an exodus. For example, Butler's *Parable of the Sower* came out in 1993, while its sequel, *Parable of the Talents*, came out in 1998. In *Talents*, a character denounces utopian exodus as a

refusal to face humanity's problems: "the country is bleeding to death in poverty, slavery, chaos, and sin. This is the time for us to work for our salvation, not to divert our attention to fantasy explorations of extrasolar worlds" (Butler, 1998, 170, quoted in Canavan 266). While it would be reductive to attribute *2312*'s anti-exodus stance solely to the influence of other utopian novels on Robinson, the fact remains that his literary output after the *Mars* trilogy did not continue in the same pro-exodus vein. Indeed, one of his biggest projects, eight years after the completion of the trilogy, was to write another one: the *Science in the Capital* trilogy, which portrays a fictional Bush-era America's successful navigation of the climate crisis. Here, even though the outcome of the trilogy is utopian, its starting point is not science-fictional and not pro-exodus. Thus, the anti-exodus stance of *2312* can be understood as Robinson's attempt to reach a synthesis between his pro-exodus and fiercely utopian *Mars* trilogy and his Earth-bound *Science in the Capital* trilogy. Understood this way, *2312* becomes something of an oddity within the sci-fi critical utopia canon: a novel which revisits the kind of pro-exodus world that the *Mars* trilogy offers, while bringing to it an anti-exodus ethos that is less common in science-fiction.

2312 vs the *Mars* Trilogy on the Value of Exodus: A Dialogue Through Earth and Mars

2312 echoes the MT in a multitude of ways, which has led some readers (and even critics) to assume it is a sequel to it. However, the novel is not a sequel to the trilogy, but rather an answer to it as a revision of its ideals. In it, Robinson undoes the bow he had so neatly tied in his trilogy in order to revise old themes, such as the value of exodus and of a completed utopian process, as well as to explore new ideas, such as posthumanism and artificial intelligence. I argue that *2312* shows the need for a utopianism that makes Earth and its problems a central narrative concern, rather than a secondary one as in the trilogy. The novel does this by shifting the narrative representation of Earth's problems from a secondary concern for the main characters of

the MT to a primary concern for those of *2312*. I will now illustrate these two works' different stances towards the moral value of exodus by close reading their contrasting representations of Earth and Mars.

In both the MT and *2312*, Earth is without a doubt presented as a dystopia. It is a planet ravaged by environmental disasters and unfettered capitalism. In both works, Earth is used as a dystopian foil for the utopian worlds in which the protagonists evolve. However, in the MT, the Martians are portrayed mostly as heroes for daring to leave Earth and establish a utopia elsewhere. Indeed, even though Art Randolph's life was heroic long before he left Earth, it is not portrayed as such: "Before its acquisition [Art] had been the cofounder and technical director of a small company called Dumpmines, which was in the business of digging up and processing old landfills, recovering the valuable materials that had been thrown away in a more wasteful age" (Robinson, *GM* 79). In this passage, everything paints Art as humble and Dumpmines as unimpressive. "Before its acquisition" shows that Art is no longer the true boss of his company, while Dumpmines itself has a silly-sounding name and is described as a "small company". What is surprising about the language used is that it distracts from the fact that Art's job is *indeed* a heroic one: he is helping to alleviate the harmful effects of the climate crisis in his own original way. However, Robinson's language cannot help but diminish Art's initial situation, as it only serves in the narrative as the mundane origin from which he will transform to become *truly* heroic once he travels to Mars: "He was in the middle of a perfectly ordinary life when they drafted him and sent him to Mars" (79). Thus, the pro-exodus message of *Green Mars* is clear: humanity's biggest problems might be on earth, but the story and the adventure are on Mars, which is where our main characters belong. *Blue Mars* even extends this glorification of adventure and exodus to going beyond the solar system. Before leaving Mars to join a spaceship

bound for the stars, Jackie Boone tells Nirgal: "people are beginning to wonder if we don't have to get that distance from Earth to get a fresh start" (*BM* 510). By contrast, *2312* establishes the stars as off-limits even for human exploration: "Sorry, but it's true . . . the stars exist beyond human time, beyond human reach. We live in this little pearl of warmth surrounding our star; outside it lies a vastness beyond comprehension. The solar system is our one and only home" (*2312*, 328). This delimitation of human exploration to the solar system is another way in which *2312* strikes against the generic conventions of sci-fi utopias, which are often based in the idea that utopianism warrants an unlimited scope of exploration (in *TD*, for example, Anarres and Urras are far away from Earth).

In the MT, any guilt the protagonists might feel for abandoning their home planet is assuaged by the presence of Praxis, a utopian company which combines the power and resources of a metanat with the goodwill and socialistic tendencies of our heroes. By the time of *Blue Mars*, most metanats have switched to a Praxis-like model (which is successful) out of fear of extinction (*BM* 499). In this way, what is arguably the most significant revolution of all (the conversion of Earth's greatest capitalist entities into Praxis-style socialistic ones) is not dramatized directly, and its progress gets reported to the Martian characters through news or second-hand reports from characters in the know: "[Maya and Ariadne] ate for a while, looking out at the fresh blue of the morning sea. Ariadne said, 'The exmetas are a problem as well. They want to come here even more than the UN'" (499). Thus, the protagonists of the MT can go about their quest to make Mars into a utopia without experiencing guilt about having abandoned Earth, as Praxis takes care of things there. In *2312*, by contrast, every spacer (regardless of which planet they live on) has to spend one year in every six on Earth (a practice known as a "sabbatical") to maximise their longevity: "neglect of this practice leads to a high risk of dying

many decades before" (*2312*, 87). Thus, it is baked into the worldbuilding of *2312* that Earth cannot be abandoned as it was in the MT: "Earth's continuing clutch on space-dwelling humans is physiological and will not go away" (87). This kind of profound link to Earth is nowhere to be found in the MT: Nirgal visits some of the least dystopian parts of Earth, makes a rousing speech, then goes back to Mars without interacting meaningfully with the Terrans themselves. The MT's protagonists are understandably too focused on saving Mars to devote their attention to saving Earth. In *2312*, however, each of Swan's visits to Earth is charged with an exodus-related guilt and with her desire to help make the planet a better place: "No, Earth was a mess, a sad place. *And yet still the center of the story*. It had to be dealt with, as Alex [Swan's grandmother and mentor] had always said, *or nothing done in space was real*." (90, emphasis added). Here, Swan recognizes that the space-faring utopian lifestyle she enjoys will always be tainted by exodus-related guilt until she finally does something to change the situation on Earth.

The moment that most resembles the MT's triumphant Martian revolutions in *2312* is called the Reanimation, when Swan gathers the multitudes of animals who have grown off of Earth in zoo terraria (terraformed asteroids) in anticipation of their return to Earth when the climate would be more hospitable to them. Swan descends to Earth with the animals inside aerogel balloons which look like transparent bubbles, each "holding inside it an animal or animal family" (395). The Reanimation is framed as a revolutionary and almost miraculous event: "Many of the creatures descending had been absent from Earth for two or three centuries. Now all back, all at once" (395). It is also framed as the start of process which will become the true antidote to the ills caused by the abandonment of Earth by its elite, centuries ago: this antidote is reconnection, a return home (410). During the event, Swan declares on the radio: "All God's children are home at last!" (397). Indeed, the Reanimation is the first and most important utopian

transformation for Earth in the novel, and instead of ending the utopian process, it restarts it after it had stagnated. What makes the event important beyond just the return of the animals themselves is that it takes a tremendous amount of organization and coordination to make it happen, involving work from both Terrans and spacers: "twelve thousand terraria and a few score Terran states apparently agreed to execute the plan in the first half of 2312" (410). Thus, the Reanimation stands as a symbol that humanity can work together to better its fate once again, after years of "balkanization" had eroded people's belief in human unity. Before the Reanimation, "the story of humanity had for a time disappeared like a stream of meltwater on the surface of a glacier, falling into a moulin and running thereafter invisibly under the ice. No one controlled it; no one knew where it was going; no one even knew what was happening" (408). As Canavan says, the Reanimation (and Swan's utopian mission more generally) is about learning to think as a "we" once more: "Robinson's ambition in *2312* is to extract some hope from the idea that we might yet craft a truly universal human 'we'—not the old erasure of all difference by whiteness, but the truly multitudinous and polyvocal achievement of justice for all, for the first time" (Canavan 277).

While the representation of Earth becomes central in *2312* after having been secondary in the MT, the opposite happens to Mars, which is a minor location in the story, even if it plays a key role in the story's worldbuilding. Indeed, one of the most pronounced differences between the two works is the relationship between the solar system's planets in each of them. While in the MT, Mars has opened its borders to Terrans and helped Earth become another utopia by the end of the story, the red planet does not play such a heroic role in *2312*. The key difference between the story worlds of the trilogy and *2312* can best be expressed by asking: what if Mars had stayed closed on itself instead of allowing Earth to share in its utopian features? More pointedly, what if

the protagonists of the MT had succeeded in turning Mars into a utopia, but without being able to count on Praxis to handle everything back on Earth? The answer is the Mars of *2312*: a perfectly utopian and classless society living in relative isolation from the rest of the solar system, like a utopia from the traditional version of the genre. Swan characterizes the planet's image thus: "Mars itself is a bully now. In the total system they're like an upper class" (Robinson, *2312*, 334). Thus, *2312*'s depiction of Mars as an upper-class bully not only denounces the MT's narrative disregard for Earth, but also serves as an argument for the superiority of the critical utopia genre (which actively tries to improve the world) over the traditional utopia genre (which is content with isolated utopias).

Beyond its contextual importance, Mars makes two dramatized appearances in *2312*, both of which are very significant. The first time, it is in a lightly self-ironizing passage that emphasizes how unimportant Mars is to the story of *2312*, even though it was the core focus of Robinson's previous sci-fi work:

> For a matter of ten minutes or so they were right over [Mars]—the red land, the long green lines of the canals, the canyons running down to the northern sea, the great volcanoes sticking right up out of the atmosphere—then it was behind them, shrinking like a pebble dropped from a balloon. "I hear it's an interesting place," someone said" (302).

Besides being funny, this passage highlights Robinson's keen awareness that *2312* will inevitably be compared to the MT: indeed, it shows that he is counting on it, cementing the idea that the novel serves as an intertextual revision of the MT's ideas on the utopian process and exodus. The second appearance of Mars is as the setting of the novel's happy ending: the marriage of Swan and Wahram. This scene is very significant because it is the only one that

takes place *on* Mars: as such, it is particularly important when interpreting the representation of Mars within the novel. Most importantly, since Mars is used as the location for the protagonists' happy ending together, it is clearly being represented as a positive, even utopian location, which is a very different characterization from the upper class bully that Mars is framed as up until the ending. Indeed, the ending takes place after Mars' isolationism has been revealed to be a result of qubanoids (artificial intelligence robots who look human) having infiltrated and influenced the Martian government (519). By the end of the novel, the qubanoids are apprehended and Mars eventually rejoins the Mondragon, which means Mars's isolationism is a thing of the past when the final scene takes place (551). However, the question remains: why set the happy ending on Mars when the rest of the story has very little to do with the red planet? The text comes closest to answering this question when describing the peerless utopian beauty of a terraformed Mars:

> A green and pleasant land. They trammed from oasis to oasis, in a regular flashing of light and shadow created by the long rows of cypress trees by the tracks. Gardens in the desert. The hyperterran look combined with the Mercury-light gravity created a dreamscape feel. Mercury would never look like this. Nowhere else could look like this. (556)

Since Mercury, Swan's planet, is compared unfavorably to Mars, it is hard not to think that something metaphorical is going on in this passage. Just as the joke passage brings attention to the absence of Mars from *2312* after its omnipresence in the MT, perhaps the happy ending on Mars means that the goal of *2312* has always been to regain what Mars signifies at the end of the MT: a realized utopia which shares its utopian features with the rest of humanity. The difference in how Mars is featured in *2312* as opposed to in the MT illustrates the entire utopian project of

the novel: this time, to reach the utopia that is a generous Mars, humanity and its heroes must not leave the Earth behind, but instead reconnect with it fully.

Swan and Wahram: Posthuman and Post-utopian Heroes

I will now address how the heroes of *2312* relate to its anti-exodus and pro-permanent-revolution re-imagining of the MT and, more generally, how the characterization of these heroes contributes to Robinson's evolution of the science-fiction critical utopia genre. Thus, I will now argue that Swan shows the unique utopian qualities that a posthuman hero can access, while Wahram shows what it is like to be a hero in a post-utopian world, where utopian culture is established and where heroism is institutionalized. These characterizations illustrate the novel's new utopian vision by representing the characters as heroes through the way they put their sci-fi traits and abilities in the service of helping Earth and of expanding the utopian community in the long term.

Just as *2312* is a reimagining of the MT, Swan Er Hong (the main character of *2312*) is a reimagining of a character from *Blue Mars*: Zo Boone. Zo's section of *Blue Mars*, "Viriditas", portrays the Accelerando, the period in humanity's history characterized by a vigorous push towards space exploration and the terraforming of asteroids and planets other than Earth and Mars. Zo works as the Machiavellian political negotiator for her mother, Jackie Boone, who is the ruler of Mars during Zo's story. Zo divides her time between manipulating the leaders of other planets for her mother's benefit and returning to Mars to work in a coop and engage in flying sessions with her friends. It is worth noting that Zo's first mission takes place on Mercury, in the city of Terminator, where she has to persuade the leader of the city, called the Lion of Mercury, to ally with her mother (*BM* 395). Many of these elements, including Terminator as a

city and the Lion of Mercury, return in *2312*, where the Lion is actually Swan's grandmother, Alex, whose death is the inciting incident of the novel.

One thing that differentiates Zo from the other MT characters, but which likens her to Swan, is her posthumanism: on top of having the longevity treatment, which almost everyone has in *Blue Mars*, Zo has had additional posthuman attributes inserted into her genes, such as the ability to purr like a tiger: "It turns out to be a minor change in the larynx and the vocal cords. You should try it, it feels really good" (418). Similarly, Swan has the posthuman ability to imitate birds' cries perfectly with her voice: "[Swan] whistled and cooed like a dove, then a nightingale. She had never seen a wolf eating a bird of any kind, but just so he didn't get any ideas, she added a short hawk's cry" (*2312*, 405). While this ability might be seen as incidental, it is actually indicative of a core part of Swan's characterization: her posthuman features and bodily modifications do not make her more distant from nature, but rather closer to it. As Tyler Harper puts it, "Swan adopts as her philosophical standpoint a post-humanism that would be marked not by a transcendence of nature but a turn back into it" (120). Swan's extraordinary proximity with nature and animals is evident during her stay in a zoo terrarium designed by her long ago, during which she spends most of her time outdoors with the animals and hunts them for food (54). When she is caught red-handed by Wahram and others, she "looked up at them with a feral glare, very like the look one would have gotten from a hyena caught in the same moment" (54). These animal-like quirks make Swan seem rather alien to her fellow citizens, but they are ultimately depicted as part of what makes her a successful utopian heroine, as she uses her bird voice and spends long stretches of time with animals during the Reanimation.

Another way in which Swan stands as a reimagining of Zo is in their shared character journey from a kind of detached nihilism typical of the Accelerando to an engaged heroism.

While Zo excels at her job as an interplanetary negotiator, she does not view her work as very meaningful. When she completes a mission and returns to Mars, she thinks: "Back to Mars. The red planet. The most beautiful world in the solar system. The only real world" (*BM* 440). Zo's view of the worlds outside of Mars as unreal (including Earth, the most populous world in the solar system by far), her status as the daughter of Mars' leader, and her job as a political strongwoman combine to make her seem like the personification of the "upper class bully" representation of Mars in *2312*. However, her attitude can be understood as typical of the Accelerando insofar as it is a time period characterized by the search for excitement and adventure, not moral purpose. Zo's capacity for heroism is only revealed at the very end of her story, when she tries to save a flyer who falls while flying herself using a hawksuit: "Shocked at the sight of the accident, Zo pulled her wings in and began dolphin-kicking downward next to the seastack, until she was plummeting in a powerful stoop; she caught the girl in her arms" (442). Much like Frank Chalmers before her, Zo's act of selflessness ends in her tragic death, as she crashes into the water and drowns. However, this last-minute heroism shows that there is more to Zo than just a Machiavellian will to manipulate politicians and the pursuit of adventure.

Similarly, Swan starts off her character journey living a frantic life defined by the Accelerando: she travels throughout the solar system and designs terraria. Once she gets tired of that, she becomes an artist and spends most of her time creating conceptual art on Mercury or even sunwalking. She describes sunwalking to Wahram as follows: "We eat on our feet, and sleep in carts pulled by companions […]. We take turns at that, and on it goes" (*2312*, 25). Clearly, sunwalking is not as politically engaged an activity as saving the Earth. Thus, even though Swan's early occupations are all only possible within the world of the Accelerando, she does not discover her heroic utopian purpose until the death of Alex forces her to get acquainted

with the utopian work Alex was doing with Wahram, Genette (an Interplanetary Police detective), and her other disciples before her death: fixing the situation with Earth and with the evil qubanoids. Thus, Swan's similarities with Zo further accentuate their differences. While Zo only proves her heroism in a last-minute failed attempt at heroics, Swan represents an evolution over her as a posthuman utopian heroine, as her involvement in the novel's central utopian transformation shows that she *cares* about humanity and is ultimately not content with living a politically uninvolved life of privileged adventure.

Swan's posthumanist utopian heroism is further developed through Pauline, her qube (quantum computer) artificial intelligence, which is interfaced with her brain. Pauline shares the name of John Boone's AI, thus linking Swan with the great hero of *Red Mars*. However, Swan's Pauline is technologically on a much higher level than Boone's, as Swan can have conversations with her which are almost like having conversations with a human being:

> [Swan:] Pauline, you're funny! You're really getting quite good. It's almost as if you were thinking!
>
> [Pauline:] Research supports the idea that most thinking is a recombination of previous thoughts. I refer you again to my programming. A better algorithm set would no doubt be helpful.
>
> […]
>
> [Swan:] Interesting. Can you pass a Turing test?
>
> [Pauline:] I cannot pass a Turing test, would you like to play chess? (336)

Pauline's conversational aptitudes mean that she ends up having as many lines as a major character would in the novel. Her constant presence helps Swan in many ways: most importantly, her constant monitoring of Swan's vitals means that she can give her life-saving information at

all times. Even when Swan loses consciousness herself, Wahram can still interact with Pauline to get information on Swan's state, which makes Pauline a precious kind of self-care technology (181). However, this constant monitoring is also a double-edged sword, as Genette and the rest of Alex's disciples (collectively called "the council") suspect Pauline of sharing information with the evil qubanoids and request that Swan turn her off during their group meetings (452). Regardless of their fears, Pauline turns out to be an incredible asset to the group, as she is the only being whose foresight thwarts the qubanoids' attack on the Venus sunshield: "Pauline has been in touch with Wang's qube […] they're seeing a new pebble attack in the process of coalescing, an attack on the Venus sunshield" (473). Importantly, Pauline is only able to reach these conclusions after Swan gives her more information than the council would want, which highlights the importance of post-human intersubjectivity in the novel's utopian vision.

Another way in which Pauline enables Swan to embody a new kind of utopian hero is by helping her develop her knowledge of political theory. When Swan asks Pauline to tell her about the political theory behind revolutions, Pauline does more than simply give her a definition of the concept as a search engine would. Instead, Pauline uses the best existing information to create a recipe for revolution during her conversation with Swan:

> Take large masses of injustice, resentment, and frustration. Put them in a weak or failing hegemon. Stir in misery for a generation or two, until the heat rises. Throw in destabilizing circumstances to taste. A tiny pinch of event to catalyze the whole. Once the main goal of the revolution is achieved, cool instantly to institutionalize the new order (334)

While it is humorously phrased, Pauline's recipe for revolution actually helps Swan imagine the kind of event that would be needed in order to help the Earth. With Wahram's help, that line of thought culminates in the Reanimation.

Beyond Pauline's informative capabilities, she also helps expand Swan's moral consciousness when it comes to how she thinks about the moral status of qubes and qubanoids. It is no accident that Pauline has as many lines as a major character: it makes Swan relate to her as much as she would with another character over time, to the point where she even disobeys the orders of the council to bring Pauline into her confidence and get her perspective on things: "[Swan:] Pauline, were you truly turned off during that meeting on Titan? [Pauline:] Yes. […] [Swan:] Well, listen, I want to tell you what happened" (465). After having taken Pauline into her confidence this way, she asks her: "So, Pauline, what do you think of that? […] What do you think we should do?" (466, 468). Pauline then makes the decision to contact Wang's qube, thereby gaining the information required to save the Venus shield later on. Thus, Swan's posthumanism—and her close relationship with Pauline—is shown to greatly benefit humanity at large, as it saves many lives in the long run.

Pauline also helps Swan deal more humanely with the evil qubanoids at the end of the novel than Genette does. First of all, everyone recognizes that the qubanoids' programmers and Lakshmi (a political leader on Venus) are the true villains. Genette says: "I think the attacks on Terminator and Venus were political […] I suspect they were approved by Lakshmi" (524). However, Genette's solution, which is to exile the qubanoids as well as their programmers from the Mondragon, strikes Wahram as too severe for the qubanoids (who were used as tools by the programmers). Genette counters that the qubanoids' moral sense cannot be trusted: "[these are] quantum computers that now can't tell whether what they're doing is good or bad. They've been

given intentionality without adequate limits, and are an obvious danger, and we don't have a good defense against them right now" (527). While Genette is primarily concerned with security, as befits his job, Wahram, in good diplomatic fashion, considers the ways in which the qubes are *like humans*: "right now somewhere in the system there could be machines in human form, escaped into the crowd, doing their best to stay free […] detached from any other consciousness, solitary and afraid—in other words, just like everyone else" (530). I contend that Wahram's compassion for the qubes comes not only from his kind temperament and diplomatic training, but also from his time spent interacting with Swan and Pauline, time during which he got to establish a working relationship with the latter. Swan's own relationship with the qubanoids is even more humanized than Wahram's, as she frees one of them into the wild after kissing it and asking: "Can you pass? Will you be alright? […] Do good. Go" (534). The passage in the novel where this happens, titled "Quantum Walk (3)", is written from the point of view of the qube, which implicitly supports, on the level of novelistic form, Wahram and Swan's belief that the qubes have consciousness and are worthy of moral consideration. Swan's close relationship with Pauline and the suspicions she faces from her peers because she has a qube wired into her brain have prepared her to treat the qubanoids humanely. Genette's exiling of the qubes is only a temporary solution to the crisis at hand, while Swan's complete embrace of the qubanoids' personhood hints towards a more permanent solution to the reality of qubanoid existence: peace between them and humanity. Questioned about her augmentations by Zasha, Swan alludes to the fact that her posthumanism helps her better serve humanity: "Everything I've done to myself I consider part of being a human being […] It isn't being *post* human, it's being *fully* human. It would be stupid not to do the good things when you can do them, it would be *anti*human" (99, emphasis in the original). The novel's events prove her right, as Swan's posthumanism allows

her to embody both *2312*'s anti-exodus ethic through her achievement of the Reanimation and the novel's expansion of the utopian community through her understanding of and humane treatment of the reality of qubanoid existence.

Beyond the way Pauline and the qubanoids bolster Swan's heroism, their inclusion in the narrative also constructs a vision of posthuman plural identity that cements *2312*'s utopian vision as an evolution over that of the MT. Indeed, the utopian sense of posthuman community being constructed here includes not only qubes, but also human-qube dyads such as Swan and Pauline, who effectively have intertwined consciousnesses all the time. Pauline's usefulness, sense of humor and human name all work to include her seamlessly into the novel's cast. This inclusivity and familiarity also extends to Genette's qube, Passepartout, which Genette uses to read the poem that Swan and Warham have asked him to read at their wedding (559). Finally, the narrational use of the qubanoid point of view in the "Quantum Walk" sections also work to include them into the novel's sense of a communal "we". When a qubanoid has to escape from humans who want to destroy it, it still takes the time to crack small jokes:

> kick the gun and run humans hilariously slow on the uptake dash into cinder shadows of dun brake duck and turn jump a creek green meadow crumpled with moss pads were Persian carpets ever green? (531)

In this passage, not only does the humor work to humanize the qubanoid, but the formatting with the long spaces between sentences also works to make their point of view seem different and *interesting*. This combination of familiarization and defamiliarization invests the qubanoid's subjectivity with value, thus including them in the utopian community created by the novel. Just as the passages about the Accelerando in the MT suggest that the closer humanity gets to utopia, the more it will include nonhumans into its sense of community, *2312* evolves this idea of

inclusivity even further by including not just animals and humans, but machine lifeforms as well. Constantly rethinking and expanding the utopian community like Swan does is an important aspect of the permanent revolution of utopian transformations that the novel argues for. Through Pauline and the Quantum Walks, the novel portrays what that permanent revolution looks like by expanding the sense of *who utopia is for*.

While Swan's character shows the unique utopian advantages that a posthuman heroine brings to the table, Fitz Wahram highlights the kind of heroism that exists in a post-utopian world in which heroism is institutionalized and a utopian culture is already established. The institutional aspect of Wahram's position means that he is much closer to Shevek—inheriting his utopian duty from others before him and accomplishing his part in his own time while expecting his quest to be fulfilled by others later—than to the heroes of the MT, who bring about utopia once and for all in their world. However, Wahram's institutional heroism is also a revision of Shevek's typological heroism, as unlike the Anarresti scientist, Wahram can *rely* on the council actually fulfilling their utopian mission across the centuries, while Shevek can only *hope* that his invention of the ansible will lead to a better future for all. Furthermore, it is also a revision of the MT model of heroism and of the utopian process. In the trilogy, the heroes work tirelessly to achieve the three Martian revolutions, but once they achieve them, there is a strong narrative sense that the bulk of the utopian work is over and that the people of Mars will now only have to maintain the utopian gains of the trilogy. By contrast, Wahram and the council's work to help Earth even though their own planets are already utopian combines with the novel's narrative awareness that the process to improve Earth's condition will take a lot of time. This combination promotes a new kind of heroism: one in which the utopian process is always taking place and must always be fought for. The last words before the novel's epilogue cement this feeling: "there

is still and always the risk of utter failure and mad gibbering extinction. There is no alternative to continuing to struggle" (553). As a forward-looking long-term heroic institution (compared to the heroes of the MT, who retire when their work on Mars is done), the council is uniquely suited to continue the utopian struggle for as long as it takes. Thus, Wahram's heroism illustrates the generic evolution that the novel presents in its affirmation of the necessity of a permanent utopian revolution.

A highly respected diplomat from Saturn, Wahram is above all else an incredibly kind and well-mannered person. His kindness and care are depicted as the result of his growing up in a utopian culture that completely disregards traditional gender roles: "I was born a hundred and eleven years ago, on Titan. My mother was a wombman who came originally from Callisto, a third-generation Jovian, and my father was an androgyn from Mars" (170). Wahram is an androgyn himself (a male possessing both sexual organs), and has fathered children, which he has raised with his crèche, a group of six non-monogamous men, women, and androgyns who all raise their children together (171). This radical exploding of traditional gender roles and of the traditional familial unit means that Wahram is free from any kind of limiting notions about masculinity. For example, when Swan falls down from exhaustion and radiation poisoning during their walk in the tunnels of Mercury, Wahram knows exactly how to care for her: "Like anyone he had done his share of diaper changes, on both babies and elders, and knew the drill. . . He finished cleaning her up, trying to be meticulous but fast, and then he pulled her arms over his shoulders and lifted her" (165). Claire P. Curtis uses this passage to show that Wahram's culture is one that prioritizes care:

> Warham cleans Swan's diarrhea quickly, efficiently and without much thought. It is something he has done before and, importantly, it is not something he associates merely

> with infancy. He worries about Swan, worries about what it would mean to be walking through the tunnels with her dead body, but he cares for her body's weakness with equanimity (Curtis 21).

Curtis' comments highlight that for Wahram, care is not an extraordinary thing, but rather a habit, one that he has cultivated for more than a century. Curtis also notes how Wahram never judges Swan for her augmentations, unlike characters like Zasha or Genette (22). Nor is his attraction to her linked to her augmentations or to her status as a gynandromorph (female, but possessing both organs): in other words, Wahram does not fetishize Swan's differences (22). His liberal attitude towards Swan is significant precisely because it goes above and beyond the standard attitudes of their time: while all sexual and gender differences are respected in this world, posthuman differences are not. However, Wahram's character is not *wholly* extraordinary within the world of the novel: his gender-bending attributes are the result of the utopian parenting practices used in the privileged parts of the solar system of *2312*. Thus, like Shevek from *TD*, he is both extraordinary within his utopian world *and* also a living embodiment of what makes that world more desirable to live in than ours.

Wahram's post-utopian heroism is also bolstered by the fact that, unlike Shevek or the First Hundred for most of the MT, he evolves within a heroic community that holds official power within his world, which allows him to improve it much more effectively. Indeed, the council is composed of Wahram, an official representative of Saturn; Genette, an Interplanetary Police officer; Alex, the Lion (and leader) of Mercury, and Wang Wei, one of the foremost experts on qubes. To all these skills are added Swan's own when she joins the council to replace Alex. This dense concentration of extraordinary skills and political powers within the council allows it to pull off quasi-miraculous feats of utopian heroism, such as the Reanimation. In

periods of crisis, such as the attack on the Venus shield, it takes a combination of Swan's qube (Pauline), Wang's qube, and Wahram's political authority to prevent the worst from happening (Robinson, *2312*, 475-6).

The post-utopian aspect of the council is what must be noted here: the existence of a council made up of politicians and policemen who are *truly* working for the people's interests also presupposes the existence of a much more utopian political world than ours. Overall, then, Wahram's kindness, his ability to care for others effectively, and his position on the council are all portrayed as heroic attributes that are only possible because he exists in an already utopian world. This serves also as a kind of selling point for utopianism in general: according to *2312,* the closer humanity gets to utopia, the better it will become at getting even closer to it. Thus, the utopian process is conceived in the novel as constantly ongoing and progressive.

Taken as a unit rather than separately, Swan, Wahram, and Genette are also post-utopian heroes in the way that their differences do *not* result in their marginalization, which shows how utopian their culture is. It is worth noting the heroes' heights: Wahram is incredibly tall and is therefore part of the group called the talls, who can measure up to three meters, while Genette is small and is part of the group called smalls, who can measure under one meter (12,15). Although this great variety of bodies exists in the novel, Curtis notes that the society of *2312* does not present a bodily norm: for example, when a spaceship must be evacuated, it becomes evident that "the spaceship is constructed in such a way that spacesuits fit all bodies and are available in lockers accessible from the floor" (Curtis 15). Curtis also notes that there is no judgment among the characters against those whose body type means that they are hit harder by the gravitational force (15). Instead, there is "a sense of working together in an emergency to ensure that everyone evacuates safely" (15). This solidarity between people of different body types is reflected meta-

textually in the diversity and equal worth of the main characters: Wahram is a tall, Genette is a small, and Swan stands somewhere in-between them, but although Swan is more explicitly the main character of the novel, the three of them all play essential roles in accomplishing their common utopian mission. This complete acceptance of difference in the novel's society is also illustrated by the fact that Swan is of Chinese descent, yet does not once experience any discrimination based on her race. In fact, one of the rare times her race comes up is when Genette tells her that she should not stay too long in China given anti-spacer sentiments there (314). Swan answers: "But I'm Chinese!", to which Genette responds, "You are a Mercurial of Chinese extraction. It isn't at all the same" (314). In this passage, the novel's utopian lack of discrimination related to race or gender identity reveals the only identity distinctions that still matter: the spacer/Terran and augmented/nonaugmented dichotomies. Still, it is the mission of the protagonists to overcome these divisions, and Swan proves to be instrumental in bringing Terrans and spacers together for the Reanimation, as well as in building trust with qubes and qubanoids through her relationships with Pauline and with the qubanoid she frees. Canavan points out that *2312* is relatively unique among contemporary sci-fi novels in that it features "an explosion in gender categories that doesn't result in homo- or transphobic panic but that is in fact essentially irrelevant to the plot, in the best possible sense" (Canavan 276). Indeed, this image of radical acceptance and togetherness comes across perhaps most powerfully in this passage from the novel's extracts:

> We all began female, and always had both sexual hormones in us. We always had masculine and feminine behavioral traits, which we had to train into gender-appropriate behaviors, even though they were traits that everyone has. We selectively encouraged or repressed traits, so for most of our history we have reinforced gender. But in our deepest

> selves we were always both. And now, in space, openly both. Very small or very tall—human at last. (Robinson, *2312*, 431)

This is the universalist ethos that Swan, Wahram, and Genette represent as characters: their very diversity and lack of marginalization makes them post-utopian representatives, symbols of how things could be—and how people could behave—in a better world.

Conclusion

Overall, *2312* performs a delicate operation: balancing the utopian world-building that gave the world of the *Mars* trilogy its verisimilitude, while at the same time critiquing the utopianism of the trilogy for its abandonment of Earth and completed utopian process, at least at the narrative level. This tension can be seen in the novel's uneasy placement within the sci-fi critical utopia genre, as well as in the pro and anti-exodus stances communicated through the very different representations of Earth and Mars found in the novel and in the *Mars* trilogy. With its posthuman and post-utopian heroes, however, *2312* goes beyond the themes of the trilogy to explore what it means to work for utopia with the tools of the future and within a culture of the future. What emerges most clearly from the heroes' efforts is the novel's new utopian vision for the genre: reconciling with an abandoned Earth and restarting the utopian process to reshape it into a permanent revolution, which also includes constantly expanding the inclusivity of the utopian community and the sense of who utopia is for. Thus, Robinson illustrates the novel's generic revision through his humanist commitment to celebrating diversity and to representing the political power of shared utopian striving.

Thesis Conclusion

The final fate of three texts' utopian heroes is to reunite with the ones they love in their utopia. Even Shevek's ambiguous final situation reinforces this commonality, as his fate is either familial reunion or death. When thinking about his future, he initially uses language that could fit both endings: "I will lie down on Anarres tonight" (Le Guin 387). However, the grim ambiguity of this resolution is curtailed when his thoughts move from his planet to his family: "I will lie down beside Takver. I wish I'd brought the picture, the baby sheep, to give Pilun [his daughter]" (387). *The Mars* trilogy's ending similarly focuses on family by featuring the heroes with their kids, while *2312*'s ending features the creation of a new family unit via Swan and Wahram's marriage.

However, these texts do not forget what makes them heroic utopian texts in the end. All three point to a regeneration of heroism that will happen in the future: in *TD*'s final chapter, Ketho's presence as Shevek's diplomatic guest and his foreshadowing of Genly Ai's later heroism signifies a continuation of Shevek's legacy. In the *Mars* trilogy, the final section is called "Phoenix Lake", and alludes to regeneration when it is revealed that one of the heroes' children is called Boone (Robinson, *BM* 605). *2312*'s ending alludes to heroic regeneration through the wedding of two members of the council. The fact that this wedding happens between a hero and a heroine at the very end of the novel—on Mars, no less—gives it a fairy-tale quality. According to fairy-tale logic, Swan and Wahram's children will probably also be members of the council, as Swan herself inherited her heroic quest from her grandmother.

Narratively, the genre of utopian science-fiction, at least in its major canonical iterations, has never fully separated itself from the individualistic ideal of the scientist hero first seen in Wells' *The Time Machine*. Thus, while the switch from traditional utopias to critical science-

fiction utopias has given the genre a wealth of new resources to make its stories and heroes more compelling, it has also made its heroism exclusive to extraordinary individuals. Speaking at the dawn of the twenty-first century, Moylan calls for a reconfiguration of the utopian genre, aligned with its critical turn in the 1970's: "the current situation calls for yet another transformation of the ways in which Utopia is spoken or enacted" (*Scraps* 105). Since the dominant model of utopian heroism from Wells to today consistently favors extraordinary heroes, a shift towards a model that gives narrative importance to ordinary heroes might reinvigorate the genre.

Perhaps in a way to reckon with this possibility, the *2312* ending foregrounds the ordinariness of its heroes. Swan and Wahram marry during the epithalamion, the wedding day for Mars and for people across the solar system. There is thus an aspect of universality, of normalcy to their marriage. When they reach the location of their ceremony, many other couples are there to marry also, in their own reserved spots. Their simultaneous marriages become an example of togetherness while being apart: "each ceremony took place in a little bubble world of its own; but the sight and sound of all of them was very much part of each one" (*2312* 560). The reference to little bubble worlds even recalls the bubbles in which Swan and the animals descend to Earth during the Reanimation: another time of universal reunion. Therefore, this wedding-among-many-others zooms out of the novel's usual narrative focus on a select few characters and attempts to look at these heroes as just people among many in the end. Perhaps this wedding could be seen as the final movement in a process of heroic democratization, from the solitary heroism of Shevek to the communal heroism of the heroes of Mars to the institutionalized heroism of Swan and Wahram: in the final scene, heroes marry just like ordinary people.

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