No man's land: feminist spirituality in Diana Rivers' feminist utopian novels

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No man's land:
Feminist Spirituality in Diana Rivers' feminist utopian novels

by

Andrew James Cognard-Black

A Thesis Submitted to the
Graduate Faculty in Partial Fulfillment of the
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Signatures have been redacted for privacy

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For Jennifer, whose love and support has made this possible
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CHAPTER 1

NO MAN'S LAND: UTOPIA AND FEMINIST SPIRITUALITY

We can think of the "wild zone" of women's culture spatially, experientially, or metaphorically. Spatially it stands for an area which is literally no-man's land; a place forbidden to men. . . . Experientially it stands for the aspects of the female life-style which are outside of and unlike those of men. But if we think of the wild zone metaphorically, or in terms of consciousness, it has no corresponding male space since all of male consciousness is within the circle of the dominant structure and thus structured by language.

--Elaine Showalter, "Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness"

Amazonas are coming into existence today. I have heard them and joined with them. We have howled with the bears, the wolves, and the coyotes. I have felt their strength. I have felt at moments that they could unite with the animal kingdom, or ally themselves with all that is female in the universe and wage a war for Mother Nature. These women are creating their own mythologies and their own realities.

--Margot Adler, "Women, Feminism, and the Craft"

Introduction

The feminist utopian novel is rather recent literary form, appearing within the last one-hundred-sixty years (Patai). It is within the last twenty-five of those one-hundred-sixty years that the genre has become popular; since that time, feminist utopian literature has also been widely discussed in scholarly criticism. Several books and a number of articles specifically deal with feminist utopian literature; even more include feminist utopias as part of a larger
discussion of feminist science-fiction, or, in the case of Marleen Barr, "feminist fabulation" (which she argues is a more appropriate term than feminist science-fiction). In these discussions, critics have done a number of important things, including identifying a rather impressive list of works that can be classified as feminist utopias and attempting to define the genre.

I must make two points regarding a working definition of feminist utopias as used in this study. The first point includes the "utopia" part of the term. Colloquially, utopia is thought of as a "perfect world." This definition is more restrictive than the one that I will use. Etymologically, utopia means "no place," coming from the Greek ou, meaning "not," and topos, meaning "place." Based on the Greek roots of the term, a working definition of "utopia" is a place that does not exist except within the confines of an author's mind or in her book. More to the point, utopian fiction specifically focuses on imagined societies that exist within fictional, political spaces. This definition allows for flexibility and an expansion of the notion of utopia. As a non-place, utopia, then, may be used as an umbrella term to discuss not only eutopia, meaning "good place," but also the implied opposite, dystopia, meaning "bad place."

The second point to a definition of feminist utopias involves the "feminist" part of the term. "Feminist" utopias refers to a sub-genre of utopian literature that is characterized by process. Again, I make a distinction between the colloquial understanding of utopia (my "eutopia") as a perfect place and a more precise use of the term. The former implies stasis and stagnation. This conception of utopia does not allow for change in the fictional society and, consequently, does not allow for individuals or groups to exist apart from that society. In contrast, because feminist utopias focus on the freedom of the
individual, they allow for individual idiosyncrasy. Rather than a perfect place, feminist utopias are in a constant state of process as the individuals in them change and grow (Donaldson *passim*; Kiser & Baker 32-34; Pearson 57); there are no perfect worlds, only relatively good ones. As Carol Pearson points out in a 1977 article entitled "Women's Fantasies and Feminist Utopias," "The process is more important than the product in feminist utopias" (57). Feminist eutopias, then, are truly "good places" instead of "perfect" ones. Feminist dystopias, too, are in process, as "bad places." The distinction between the two can be made depending on what part of the process the utopian novel describes. In other words, what may appear as a dystopia at an early point in an evolutionary process, may appear later as a eutopia, without the elements that made it a "bad place" earlier on.

The focus of this thesis is the point where feminist utopian novels intersect with spirituality. While spirituality and religion are occasionally alluded to in the wide corpus of criticism on feminist utopian literature (Keinhorst 97; Kiser and Baker 33; Pearson 58-59), the issue has not, as yet, been satisfactorily examined. When spirituality is mentioned, typically the reference is to the explicit appearance of a goddess or "Great Mother," a concept that Carol Pearson suggests occurs widely within the genre. Little else is said with regard to spirituality in the critical literature dealing with feminist utopias. However, spirituality, and in particular what has been called "Feminist Spirituality" (Adler; Finley; Walters), provides an exceedingly good lens through which to analyze two feminist utopian novels that have not heretofore been identified within any of the criticism on the subject: *Journey to Zelindar: The Personal*

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1 I capitalize "Feminist Spirituality" here and throughout this thesis in respect for it as a religion in the same way I would capitalize "Islam" or "Judaism" if talking about those religions.
Account of Sair of Semasi, Book 986 of the Hadra Archives (1987) and Daughters of the Great Star: Book 57 of the Hadra Archives, as recorded by Tazmirrel of Nemanthi under the guidance of Alyeeta the Witch (1992). Both novels are written by Diana Rivers, a woman who, according to the notes of the first Lace Publications edition of Journey to Zelindar, lives "in the hills of Arkansas on women's land in a house all built by women's hands, including her own" (Journey).

I will argue that Feminist Spirituality provides insight into these texts. In saying this, I am not merely suggesting that spiritual elements appear in the novels, but, more specifically, that Rivers' novels are influenced by a relatively new social movement known as the Feminist Spirituality movement. A brief discussion of Feminist Spirituality will be useful as background to an analysis of the novels.

**Feminist Spirituality**

The Feminist Spirituality movement is typically categorized as part of a larger social movement away from monotheistic, Judeo-Christian traditions, which are seen as patriarchal and oppressive. Merlin Stone suggests that in such

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2 For those readers interested in a more thorough and historical discussion of Feminist Spirituality, Margot Adler’s Drawing Down the Moon (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986), first published in 1979 and later revised and republished in 1986, is the most comprehensive and interesting work that I have found. In it, Adler discusses Feminist Spirituality, or “Wicca” as it is known among its practitioners, as part of a larger Neo-Pagan revival in the latter part of the twentieth century; she includes a section entitled “Witches” that deals specifically with Feminist Spirituality. I would also recommend an anthology entitled The Politics of Women’s Spirituality: Essays on the Rise of Spiritual Power Within the Feminist Movement (New York: Anchor-Doubleday, 1982) edited by Charlene Spretnak and The Encyclopedia of Witches and Witchcraft (New York: Facts on File, 1989) edited by Rosemary Ellen Guiley. The first of these includes a number of essays that illuminate many of the most salient motivations and goals among the Feminist Spiritualists, while the second includes biographical profiles of present-day Witches and a survey of topics and symbols from the early history of witchcraft to the present. Each of these works has proved useful in the following examination of Rivers’ novels.
male-worshipping cultures "denigration of the female body is expressed in
cultural and religious taboos surrounding menstruation, childbirth...
menopause," and, especially, female sexuality ("Faces" 78). Arising out of the
countercultural movements of the 1960s and 1970s (Finley 349), Feminist
Spirituality seeks to abandon the belief system that results in the patriarchal
denigration Stone refers to. In Drawing Down the Moon, a study of this larger
movement encompassing Feminist Spirituality3, Margot Adler calls it the "Neo-
Pagan"4 revival; alluding to the connections that its practitioners usually make
with pre-Christian, polytheistic traditions. As Adler points out, Neo-Pagans
"consider themselves part of a religious movement that antedates Christianity
and monotheism" (xi). Among sociologists, however, Feminist Spirituality is
classified under the term "new religious movements," which include, among
others, Hare Krishna and Scientology as well as Neo-Pagans (Finley 349).

The Neo-Pagan movement is decidedly nature-oriented, seeking to bring
humanity back into a harmony with the earth and universe. Neo-Pagans see the
insistence during previous centuries on progress and the use of technology to
accomplish that: progress as a source of alienation for human beings and "ritual
as a tool to end that alienation" (Adler 4). Thus, these groups have developed a
system of rituals, holidays, and nomenclature which attempt to reach back in
time before alienation occurred, often turning to Hellenic or Celtic myth systems
or those of pre-historic goddess-worshipping cultures to inform their own.

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3 Readers will note that I draw heavily from Adler's work in this section. I do this because it is
the most comprehensive work of the little scholarship that exists on the history and description of
Neo-Pagans. A Neo-Pagan herself, Adler offers information both at a personal level and as a
scholar.

4 I capitalize "Neo-Pagan" for the same reason that I capitalize "Feminist Spirituality." It is a
religion and deserves respect as such.
Feminist Spirituality — more commonly known as Witchcraft, Wicca or the Craft — exists within this larger movement, sharing much of the nature-worship focus of Neo-Pagans. Not surprisingly, though, Feminist Spirituality is more politically motivated, drawing heavily from the twentieth-century feminist movements and specifically developing out of the feminist consciousness-raising groups popular in the 1970s (Adler 182). The numbers of those involved in this movement are sketchy, at best. Estimates suggest membership anywhere from three hundred to thirty thousand groups that typically include between seven and twelve practitioners per group (107). From a questionnaire administered by Margot Adler in 1985, the results suggest there are between 50,000 and 100,000 "active self-identified Pagans or members of Wicca in the United States" (455); Adler does not explain how she arrives at that figure. The problem in identifying the number of Wiccans is their decentralization, making counting the individual groups, much less the members of those groups, difficult to impossible. This decentralization also means that no single definition of belief or meaning applies to all Wiccans (99).

Despite the difficulty in identifying Wiccans and what they believe, studies have attempted to describe the membership of Wicca. One such study was done by sociologists Kirkpatrick, Rainey, and Rubi. The results of their survey research indicate that a majority of Wiccans are urban dwellers, yet 41% of respondents were from rural areas (34). Kirkpatrick, et. al also suggest that some of these rural Wiccans live in "utopian" communities, noting, in particular, one instance in Wisconsin where practitioners have fulfilled their desire to return to nature, "living on the land according to their beliefs" (37). While there are some Wiccans in the Midwest and other regions of the United States, the findings of
the survey indicate the highest concentration of Wiccans is in California where nearly half of surveyed Wiccans live (34). Most interesting in the findings of Kirkpatrick, et. al is the report that Wiccans are equally divided by sex and that only a small 3% minority, made up of "radical feminists" and "gay men," thought that "groups should either [be] all male or all female" (36). This small yet vocal minority will become important later in the analysis of Rivers' novels.

Much like the Neo-Pagan movement, Wiccans seek to distance themselves from the patriarchal traditions of Western Civilization. However, where Neo-Pagans are polytheistic, Wiccans are monotheistic, primarily, if not exclusively, worshipping a goddess in her three facets: Maiden, Mother and Crone. Wiccans often see the goddess and nature as an interwoven, even as a unified concept. This view is closely allied with a belief that women are more in tune with nature, a belief which has been identified as the "woman and nature" thesis described by Suzanna Walters in an article entitled, "Caught in the Web: A Critique of Spiritual Feminism":

The "woman and nature" thesis rests on the belief that women have, by virtue of their life-giving potential, an intimate and nurturant relationship to the Earth. . . .Men have sought to "rape" the Earth and use nature to fulfill the exploitative needs of patriarchy. . . .Men, therefore, represent the "death principle," while women represent nature, life, peace. (19-20)

This view, in part, leads to the worship of the goddess in the Wiccan nature-worshipping religions. The belief in the woman and nature thesis also has led some factions of female Wiccans to exclude men from their groups, seeing them as impediments or threats. While the latter attitude is held only by a small
minority (see Kirkpatrick, et. al), these exclusive groups of only women are the Wiccans on which I will focus because they are the ones that inform Diana Rivers' feminist utopian texts.

These men-excluding factions are a branch of a particular Craft tradition known as the "Dianic Wicca" (Adler; Lozano & Foltz). The term has several derivations. "Wicca" is a word used frequently throughout the Neo-Pagan movement and is said to be Old English with its roots in the ancient Indo-European words "wic" and "weik," meaning "to bend" or "to turn" (Adler 11). These are also believed to be the roots of the words "witch" and "wizard." As Adler points out, "Whether or not this idea is etymologically correct, it is understandable, since the old Witches were often the wise people of the village, skilled in healing and the practical arts" (11). The connection that contemporary Wiccans make with "old Witches" is understandable because wisdom is of such high importance among Feminist Spiritualists. For Wiccans, their religion is a "Craft of the Wise" (11). Though some controversy exists over the use of the term "Witch" among Wiccans -- some feel it is a derogatory term -- many seem to have adopted it as a badge of pride much as some lesbians have reclaimed the word "dyke."

In general, as a term and a symbol, the witch is an image that is venerated among the Wicca. The claims about the origins of the word, true or not, have become part of a myth system that gives both meaning and history to the members of Wiccan groups. Most members of contemporary Witchcraft define theirs as a "Craft of the Wise," making "Wicca" and "Witch" appropriate names.

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5 Readers will notice that the word "witch" is capitalized in some instances and not in others. Again, in cases where it is capitalized, I am specifically referring to contemporary practitioners of Feminist Spirituality. Where "witch" is not capitalized, I am referring to a concept or to a distant historical image.
for them. These words also provide practitioners with a sense that they are part of a long tradition of persecuted people who were well versed in using magic. This idea is especially meaningful for the smaller group of feminist Witches who are particularly sensitive to women's oppression, because, as Adler states, "The Witch, after all, is an extraordinary symbol -- independent, anti-establishment, strong, and proud. She is political, yet spiritual and magical. The Witch is woman as martyr; she is persecuted by the ignorant; she is the woman who lives outside society and outside society's definition of woman" (183).

Sociologists Lozano and Foltz suggest that "Dianic" Wiccans are radical feminist Witches who take their name from the goddess Diana (219). Adler includes a more detailed history of the term, claiming that these Witches draw their name from Margaret Murray's *The Witch-Cult in Western Europe* (1921) in which the author argues that witchcraft has its roots in an ancient pre-Christian religion which focused on a two-faced Roman god known as Janus or Dianus. Murray contends that the feminine form of the god, Diana, was found in a number of groups throughout Western Europe where she was said to be the leader of witches (Adler 47, 121). Some speculate that Artemis, the Grecian name for Diana, was also a lesbian (Sjöö & Mor 208). Murray calls these groups the "Dianic Cult" and today many feminist Witches have adopted the term "Dianic," reinforcing the emphasis they place on the worship of a goddess. Once again, there is some division among the Dianic Wicca over meaning and ideology. One stream of the Dianic sects, while exalting the feminine, does allow men to be members, as do most Wiccan groups. The second stream, however, "comprises the entire movement known as the feminist Craft" and "conceives of Wicca as
'womin's religion.' Men are excluded" (Adler 121). The latter informs the precise approach to Feminist Spirituality most pertinent for Rivers' texts.

While Wiccan beliefs and practices vary greatly, many ideas of ideology and symbology are shared among Feminist Spiritualists, or Dianics, and other Wiccans. Adler claims that Wiccan groups are closest in their agreement on ethics: "All agreed with the basic Wiccan Creed -- "An ye harm none, do what ye will"" (101). As this credo suggests, Wiccans deplore violations of beliefs or bodies. Beyond this basic credo, little is universally agreed upon among Wiccans. However, many images, symbols and rituals are found frequently throughout the Feminist Spirituality movement. A discussion of some of the elements of this symbology will also be useful in an analysis of Rivers' novels.

First, at the center of the study is the notion of magic and ritual among the Wicca. I pair these concepts because through them Wiccans try to connect themselves to nature. Like the term "witch" itself, these ideas are historical, linked to a pervasive past. However, modern Witches see magic and ritual in drastically different ways than one commonly thinks of them. Colloquially, we think of magic, ritual and witchery in terms of the supernatural -- as methods for a witch to manipulate reality in unreal ways. For modern Witches, however, magic is not supernatural. In fact, for them, nothing is supernatural because they see everything as fundamentally rooted in the natural. Instead, magic is mental. Adler gives several definitions for "magic" that suggest its connection with the psyche, most notably one offered by a well known Neo-Pagan, Isaac Bonewits, who says that magic is "'folk parapsychology, an art and science designed to enable people to make effective use of their psychic talents'" (8). Adler sums up
the Wiccan understanding of magic: most definitions, "link magic to an understanding of the workings of the mind" (8).

Once again, disagreement exists among factions. While magic is perhaps more easily understood in terms of psychology, some go beyond this simple view. For them, magic is mental, but also an integral part of a ritual that tries to connect the mind with nature:

Ritual... allows us to feel biological connection with ancestors who regulated their lives and activities according to seasonal observances. Just as ecological theory explains how we are interrelated with all other forms of life, rituals allow us to re-create that unity in an explosive, nonabstract, gut-level way. Rituals have the power to reset the terms of our universe until we find ourselves suddenly and truly "at home." (162)

Starhawk, a well-known feminist Witch, offers a similar definition in her Witch guidebook entitled *The Spiral Dance*:

Magic, the art of sensing and shaping the subtle, unseen forces that flow through the world, of awakening deeper levels of consciousness beyond the rational, is an element common to all traditions of Witchcraft. Craft rituals are magical rites: they stimulate an awareness of the hidden side of reality, and awaken long-forgotten powers of the human mind. (27)

According to this second definition, then, the realm of psychology is perhaps too narrow to explain what some Witches believe. For many Witches, the interconnection between human beings and the natural world is paramount. For instance, some believe in what has been called the "threelfold law of return" which states that any action, from intended harm to good deeds, will be returned to the agent threefold (Adler 112; Guiley 340-41; Kirkpatrick, Rainey & Rubi 35).
Adler adds that, although some Witches do not believe in the threefold law, ". . . most believe that you get back what you give out" (112). Starhawk explains this precept in more general terms: "Witchcraft strongly imbues the view that all things are interdependent and interrelated and therefore mutually responsible. An act that harms anyone harms us all" (27). Magic for Wiccans, then, includes some sort of connection between the inner world of the mind and the outer world of nature.

The importance of a connection with nature is also evident in the holidays that modern Witches celebrate. Called "sabbats," again alluding to witchcraft of the past, these festivals "renew a sense of living communion with natural cycles, with the changes of season and land" (Adler 111). Historically there are eight sabbats annually. While not all Wiccan traditions celebrate all eight, almost all traditions celebrate two: "Samhain," a celebration of death, concurrent with Halloween, and "Beltane," a celebration of fertility and birth that falls on May first (Adler 110-11). Together, these two festivals celebrate the birth and death cycle so important in the world-view of Wiccans. While death represents an end in many religious and philosophical paradigms, Wiccans see it as a necessary part of the cycle of life, believing that life springs from death. Sabbats such as these, as well as most Wiccan holidays and festivals, are marked by certain positions of the moon on its monthly and yearly cycles.

In addition to the concept of magic and ritual, Wiccans largely share a common symbology. The moon that marks Wiccan festivals is probably the single most important symbol among contemporary Witches, probably due to ancient associations between the moon and women. As suggested above, the moon is closely linked to seasonal progressions and, subsequently, agricultural
fertility. The Roman Goddess Diana is goddess, among other things, of the moon, and while it is unclear whether modern Witches venerate the moon because they venerated Diana or vice versa, undoubtedly a link exists between the two in the mythology of Wiccans (Sjöö & Mor). Primarily, the Goddess and the moon are seen as one, or one is symbolic of the other. One of the most significant rituals among Wiccans (from which Adler's book is named) is the "drawing down of the moon." In this ceremony, a practitioner draws the moon down into herself and is said to embody the Goddess, to become the Goddess. The triple aspect of the Goddess is also signified by different phases of the moon: the Maiden is associated with the waxing crescent moon; the Mother is associated with the full moon; and the Crone is associated with the waning crescent moon (Adler 112).

Also of particular significance is the circle, symbolic of wholeness and unity, useful in and of itself for a group that envisions the universe as fundamentally inter-connected. In addition, the circle is of particular use for contemporary Witches because of its added signification as the womb, the site of transformation (Guiley 219). The circle plays a role in a number of Wiccan rituals. A fundamental ritual, often a prerequisite for other rituals, is called "the casting of the circle" which symbolically creates sacred space in which Witches meet. As Starhawk says: "In Witchcraft, we define a new space and a new time whenever we cast a circle to begin a ritual. The circle exists on the boundaries of ordinary space and time; it is 'between the worlds' of the seen and unseen" (71-72). In Wicca, the circle has often become institutionalized. In one instance, a coven headed by the well-known Wiccan priestess and author Selena Fox has adopted this symbol as its name, "Circle." "Circle" was recognized as a church at
the federal level in 1980 and its newsletter, Circle Network News, remains the Neo-Pagan journal with the greatest circulation (Guiley 66).

Other typically "female" symbols that are widely used among Feminist Spiritualists include the cup, the cowrie, the turtle and the egg; all symbolize fertility (Adler 218). The importance of fertility imagery lies at the heart of the "woman and nature" thesis. The ability of women to give birth and produce milk from their bodies is primary to connect women with nature. For this reason, fertility is respected among Wiccans.

In a participant-observation study, sociologists Lozano and Foltz also identified several other significant Wiccan symbols: the serpent, a symbol of rebirth and regeneration; the iron cauldron, representative of the womb; and the Oak Tree, a "sacred wood in Wicca" and also a symbol of rebirth and regeneration (226). In Western cultures, images like the Crone or Hag, the serpent and the cauldron, have traditionally represented evil, manipulation and danger, but the Wicca use them in a complex belief system that attempts to abandon the negative connotations of these images for ones associated with the life-giving force.

Finally, I would like briefly to address the role that Feminist Spirituality plays in the larger context of what Walters calls "women's culture" (16-17). Not just a religion among other religions, Feminist Spirituality attempts something more than the mere worship a deity: it attempts to define spaces away from patriarchal realities. For instance, the casting of a circle is the definition of a physical space within the political world. Simultaneously, the circle defines a psychological space in the world of the spiritual. As activists within the Wiccan movement have said, these two elements, the spiritual and political, are
fundamentally linked in the minds of many Feminist Spiritualists (Adler; Goldenberg; Spretnak). Adler concurs in reference to the linking of the political/outer space and spiritual/inner space, noting that "many women regard political struggles and spiritual development as interdependent, and feel that both are needed to create a society and culture that would be meaningful to them" (Adler 178). The idea that the political and personal are intimately linked is a common theme among feminists in general. However, by joining this basic feminist idea with spirituality, Feminist Spiritualists give validity and primacy to the personal, arguing that it has traditionally been neglected by feminists who have focused their attention on a transformation of the political world (Spretnak). For Feminist Spiritualists, no fierce division exists between the political and spiritual. Dichotomies separating the ethereal from the corporeal, the sublime from the mundane, do not exist for these Witches. Instead, the personal and the spiritual are indelibly political and the political is spiritual — they are unavoidably interwoven, one affecting and reacting to the other.

As Walters points out, "spiritual feminism differs from radical feminism in both its theoretical project (the development and articulation of a specifically woman-centered spirituality) as well as its explicit political agenda (the creation of alternative and self-sustaining women's communities)" (16). Rather than radically transforming the patriarchal world, Feminists Spiritualists seek to disassociate themselves from that world altogether. For many Wiccans, their craft is not merely a week-end in the woods howling at the moon and getting in touch with their bodies before returning to the patriarchal world, but instead a way to aid in the creation of a "distinctively woman-centered culture that can survive on its own terms" (Walters 31). Adler cites lesbian separatists as one
group in particular who have removed themselves from mainstream society to define their own women's communities (Adler 184). The appeal of Feminist Spirituality for lesbians has shown itself through their membership in Feminist Spiritualist groups. Adler suggests that there are proportionately more lesbians in Feminist Spiritualist groups than in either Neo-Pagan or feminist groups (Adler 184). Moreover, sociologists Verta Taylor and Nancy Whittier suggest that lesbians have been largely responsible for the maintenance of women's collectives such as women's business and women's spirituality groups in the 1980s and 1990s (539). Lesbians, then, seem to be more attuned to the benefits of Feminist Spirituality as a catalyst for creating women's communities.

For these lesbians who separate themselves from society, Feminist Spirituality is not about creating temporary sacred spaces, but about creating long-term sustainable sacred communities. Feminist Spiritualists seek to create political and spiritual places where women can be themselves, experiencing what it means to be women without worrying about men intruding. This, then, is "no man's land." Walters notes the ideological differences: "Separatism, obviously, means radically different things to different people at different historical moments. It can be a short-term strategy, a world-view, a perceived political necessity, a symbolic intervention, a consciously desired personal choice or any combination thereof" (Walters 30).

Rivers, I posit, sees separatism as a way to provide space not only for spiritual healing, but also for refuge from the violence found in a political world where women have historically been valued only as objects and as property to be mistreated and disposed of at will. As I think will also become clear, Rivers sees Feminist Spirituality as the way to achieve that separatism. Each of Rivers'
novels is a fictional account in which Rivers' rationale for separatism is evident. The first novel, *Journey to Zelindar*, is a "eupopian" novel showing the benefits of separate women's communities. Rivers' second, "dystopian" novel, *Daughters of the Great Star*, illustrates what the author sees as the dangers women face outside of their own separatist communities. In each of these two novels, Rivers uses Feminist Spirituality as the mechanism to create her "eupopian vision," her "no man's land."
CHAPTER 2

NO MAN'S LAND: JOURNEY TO ZELINDAR

"Kedris, I have only seen women here. Where are all the . . .?" Then I stopped, for there was no word for men waiting in my head. But she saw it in my mind and laughed. "There are no men here. We are all Hadra."

--Diana Rivers, Journey to Zelindar

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Introduction

Rivers' Journey to Zelindar was published first in 1987. The events of this novel, however, occur some 200 years after the events that appear in Rivers' second book, Daughters of the Great Star, published in 1992. Thus, Rivers calls Daughters of the Great Star a "prequel." Looking merely at the order of the books, one might presume that Rivers conceived of her "no man's land," her eutopian vision, before she was sure how the women's space found in it was to be defined. Rivers suggests this chronology, commenting on the back cover of the 1987 edition of Journey: "I am now working on the 'prequel' occurring some 200 years before, because I want to know where the Hadra originated and how this all came about." The order in which the two novels were written, however, is less important than what one finds in each of them. Journey to Zelindar is Rivers' eutopian novel. It is this book in which the author shows the reader her separatist vision, and it is with this book that I will begin my analysis.
The Eutopian Text of *Journey to Zelindar*

The novel is the story of Sair, told by herself in retrospect. Sair recalls the place where she began her journey -- her native land, known as Eezore, a highly patriarchal and misogynistic society. In this place she finds some comfort in childhood, but as she grows up, she encounters the social expectation that she present herself as appropriate marriage material. Sair resists, though, and does not marry until she is forced to do so by her father, who has sold her to a local military leader to help save his estate from creditors. Here, too, she resists any expectations put upon her, refusing to consummate the marriage. After a brief time, the husband loses patience and gives her to his military underlings who gang rape her, beat her and leave her at an Eezoran garbage dump to die (9-11).

She does not die, however. Instead, Sair decides to leave Eezore for the ocean where she plans to commit suicide, saying, "That, at least, would be a clean end and one of my own choosing" (14). On her way West to find the "eternal waters" she comes to a fork in the road, noting that "The new road was smaller and less travelled and so seemed safer -- also, it pulled at me" (16). After some time, Sair encounters the legendary "Redline," the border between the dystopian Eezore and the eutopian Yarmald. This Redline supposedly has mystical powers that protect the Yarmald Peninsula from aggressors. Sair reluctantly crosses the line and continues to the ocean where she walks out into the water to die.

Instead of drowning, however, she is pulled from the waters by several women, inhabitants of a small settlement known as Semasi. She soon discovers that she has stumbled into the hands of the Hadra, a culture made up exclusively of lesbians. Sair gradually learns about the peculiarities of this culture and, in
particular, a power they possess known as Kersh which allows them to speak with animals, produce only female offspring, communicate telepathically, move objects telekinetically and repel physical attack without physical effort. The remainder of the novel focuses on the relationships between Sair and the Hadra, plus her gradual initiation into the Hadra culture, including much description of the manners, morals and mores of that culture.

Several other notable events intertwining Sair's story are a battle initiated by Eezoran soldiers in which the aggressors are destroyed by their own repelled artillery and a festival at which the Hadra meet with neighboring and friendly "bi-sexual" cultures (those that have both men and women) for, among other things, ritualized sex with uncoupled males for the purposes of reproduction. The novel ends in Zelindar, the Hadra capital, where Sair discovers the Hadra archives and begins an intensive study of their culture.

The Spiritual Journey of Sair

In *Drawing Down the Moon*, Margot Adler claims that the well-known feminist writer Joanna Russ (author of the feminist utopian novel, *Female Man*) "once told a convention that science-fiction was a 'religious literature'" (Adler 12). More significantly, science-fiction and fantasy literature were found to be the fourth leading path to paganism in the results of a 1985 questionnaire (Adler 445). The structure that Rivers uses to present her novels suggests that she also believes in the religiosity of science-fiction. She explicitly presents her novel as a religious text.
Before Rivers begins the main story in *Journey to Zelindar*, she includes a preface in the form of a fictitious letter addressed to Jorkal, the chief archivist of Zelindar. It is through this letter that the sub-title of the novel, *Book 986 of the Hadra Archives*, becomes clearer. The protagonist of the novel, Sair, is presenting her story, *Journey to Zelindar*, to be included in the historical-religious books of the utopian civilization. As one reads the novel, references to other archives include *Daughters of the Great Star*, book 57 (*Journey 45*), which has since been published by Rivers and will be addressed in chapter three of this thesis, as well as *The Redline of Yarmald*, book 596 (87) and *The Siege of South Yarmald*, book 830 (115). In this way, Rivers, as author and creator, becomes a myth-maker. In fact, the whole novel is a mythology imbued with Wiccan rituals, beliefs and symbols as they are discovered by Sair on her journey from place to place as she develops into a full member of this women's utopian community.

*Journey to Zelindar* is also a novel about women's spaces in the form of a sustainable women's culture. Rivers employs spirituality as a method to define her utopian space much as some lesbian Wiccans use spirituality to help them realize their own communities. What is more, I argue that Rivers' texts are specifically informed by Feminist Spirituality. Thus, Feminist Spirituality is critical to the utopian concept in this novel, both as a political space and also as a psychological space for the well-being of those who inhabit that physical, political space.

The first space the reader is shown is the highly stratified and patriarchal Eezore. Eezore is clearly seen as an analog for our own patriarchal world. As Sair states: "Women in Eezore are trained to be submissive and obedient. I was
neither and had no wish to be so" (2). This society demands that Sair act like a lady. She is to wear dresses and skirts and otherwise appear before her father’s visitors in an "appropriate" manner. She is not allowed to attend school — that, apparently, is a privilege reserved for boys. As Sair suggests above, this world does not give her enough space, physically or psychologically. For her, traditional women's clothes are "confining" (3), even "imprisoning" (5). For as long as she can, Sair makes and maintains her own space within the abandoned rooms of her father's home where she can be free of the impediments of ladies' appropriate attire and can read the books she finds in her father's library: "I would put on my pants, take my books and go about to my secret places" (3).

Sair's childhood freedom is limited, however. As she reports, her father begins talking about her marriage when she turns fourteen; she cannot imagine giving up the freedom she knows within her secret spaces. She resists; at first he is not too insistent until a few years later when he sells her in marriage to Lairz. Once married, Sair still tries to maintain her own space, promising herself that she can never give her body or soul to Lairz even though she has reluctantly given him her hand. But as she discovers, Sair cannot maintain that psychological space without the availability of her own physical space. Soon Lairz's patience runs short and he throws her to the soldiers under his command, saying "'You can have her for whatever you want,'" (9) at which point, she is gang raped by a barrack full of men. It is at this point that Sair loses her will to live, seeing no other way to maintain her spiritual integrity in a world of political oppression.

In this community Sair has no control over her own inner spaces. This is because she has no political spaces of her own in which to develop her spiritual
life. Instead, all the political spaces and the women belong to men -- political space is defined by men. Men rule the city and create rules under which women must live; men control the streets making it dangerous for women to travel unaccompanied; men own the houses; and men control women that live in any of those houses. In childhood, Sair can escape some of this, partly because of the relative kindness of her father. Ultimately, however, Sair cannot escape the inevitable compliance with a patriarchal reality. Not coincidentally, the spiritual life Sair has is suffocated by the society in which she lives. Though not made clear early in the novel, Sair's spirit is akin to and anticipates that of the Hadra, the culture of free lesbians that live in the eutopian space in which Sair eventually finds herself. She mentions early in the novel that she has a "wild spirit," (3) noting her tendency to buck patriarchal authority. As Sair finds, though, that spirit cannot survive in the constrictive and oppressive space of Eezore.

Although the origin of this predisposition is not explicitly stated, Sair's personhood is tied to and anticipates both the physical and spiritual community of the Hadra. Because Sair's mother had died during childbirth, Sair knew little about her, yet she recalls how her questions concerning her mother had been treated by those around her:

Once I heard Old Marl saying, "What a pity to lose her so young to birth-fever. She had more power in her little finger than most who claim to be witches and healers will know in their whole lives." When she noticed me sitting in a corner she fell quickly silent and turned aside all my questions. The other servants, when I sought to ask them, drew away afraid. No one would speak to me of my mother's powers. (2)
The reader is never told the extent of these powers, or even their purpose. Curiously, the fear of talking about those powers indicates something unique about both Sair and her mother. Although not explicitly mentioned, but perhaps suggested, Sair's mother may have been, or may have been trained by Hadra. Witches in Rivers' novel are supposedly quite powerful and to be called even more powerful than a Witch invites speculation. Only Hadra supposedly had such powers. This fact leads the reader to believe that Rivers did intend an immediate connection between Sair and the Hadra she meets later.

For whatever reason, Sair possesses a "wild spirit" which ultimately leads to her expulsion. Eezore is clearly not a space in which Sair the wild spirit or Sair the person fit. Not surprising is that Sair's rape provides the impetus for her journey. In an article in which she identifies the common characteristics of feminist utopias, Carol Pearson notes that "Virtually every author lyrically describes freedom from fear of rape or assault" (51). Rape is an idea intimately linked with space, seen as a violation not only physically, but psychologically as well. Sair notes that a raped woman is already seen as dead in Eezore – not a victim to be helped but a dirty thing to be shunned. Being "dead" in that place and realizing that she has no control over her own spaces, she leaves to find a place of her own choosing, a place to die.

And yet, unlike novels of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries such as Chopin's *The Awakening* where a woman's epiphany ends in death (Christ 330-32), this is the point where Sair's journey actually begins. The feminist utopian genre allows for other options than existed for Chopin. Sair moves away from a world defined by men thinking that there is no place for her, but instead of finding death, she finds life. More crucially, Sair finds a life where her wild spirit
and the body it occupies can be free. Along the way she encounters the legendary Redline of Yarmald, a painted line that is said to have mystical powers. Hesitantly, she crosses this line and enters a eutopian world, leaving the thoroughly terrifying world of Eezore. Only from this vantage point, looking back on Eezore, can the reader fully appreciate what lies ahead in the spaces that the utopianist presents. The importance of the eutopian space is only made clear when seen in contrast to its opposite, the dystopian space.

This second space, the eutopia itself, is the crucial step toward Sair's healing. Sair's new space, known as the Yarmald Peninsula, is more than just ordinary terrain. In textual notes that Rivers includes at the end of each chapter, she tells the reader that the Yarmald Peninsula is completely isolated, having a geographic boundary, the Nevero Sea, on one side and the Redline on the other. The Yarmald Peninsula is also sometimes called "The Hag because of its profile" (Journey 44). The use of this image is no coincidence, not merely a convenient way to illustrate some yet unknown geography. As mentioned in chapter one, the Hag, or Crone, is the third aspect of the Wiccan Goddess. Different from the colloquial understanding of the hag as repulsive and malevolent, Wiccans revere this aspect of the Goddess, seeing her as a wise, albeit weathered, spirit. She is, perhaps, the most important of the Goddess' three facets, considering the primacy of wisdom to Wiccans. The eutopia, then, actually becomes a physical embodiment of this aspect of the Goddess -- a literal woman's space. What is more, this is a woman's space protected by a wise spirit.

Also of significance is the Sea in providing a boundary for The Hag. The sea is often seen as a place of regeneration in most Western literature. While Wiccans have sought to abandon Western patriarchal images, they also
participate in Western culture and, consequently, sea imagery has found its way into much of Wiccans everyday ritual and symbology. In Rivers' novel, the sea is an actual tangible barrier. More to the point, the sea is also a spiritual protectorate for Yarmald. As Guiley points out, water, and, in particular, the salt water of the ocean, is symbolic of healing and regeneration for Witches and is often used in rituals as an agent of purification. More importantly, oceans are linked to the moon, also symbolic of the Goddess principle (Guiley 357). The ocean appears again and again in Journey to Zelindar, frequently in references to "Mother of Waters." For the Hadra, the sea is seen as a life-giving force from which great power can be drawn. In part, this power is used to help define the boundaries of the Rivers' utopian space.

The other element that Rivers uses to define this new, safe space is the curious Redline. The Redline is an actual painted line, but also, as we find out from reading the novel, it is imbued with the powers of the "Cerroi," a principle under which the Hadra live. Sair describes the Cerroi as "the Great Circle, the Law of Return, or the Balancing" (Journey 102). Cerroi harkens back to the Wiccan belief that one receives what one gives out. This principle, represented in the Wiccan "threelfold law of return," is part of the larger belief in the interconnection of the cosmos so important to the Wiccan world-view. The Redline, then, is an actual visible representation of a Wiccan ethic, creating a recognizable safe space for the Hadra culture. The need continually to create space is eliminated: no more hiding in back rooms to wear pants and read. The need for safe space is met by one large border infused with the magic of nature and the Goddess, which are actually one and the same.
The reader gets a feel for how this space actually functions later in the novel. In the beginning of the second section of *Journey to Zelindar*, the Zarn of Eezore sends a legion of soldiers to invade the Yarmald Peninsula and claim it for the patriarchy. The implication is that the Zarn cannot tolerate the existence of women who are not under the control of men. Upon hearing of an invasion, a group of Hadra are called to stand at the Redline before the ensuing army. Following a series of mystical ceremonies in which the power of the Goddess and her Cerroi are invoked to invigorate the power of the Redline, the Redline's protective capabilities are made quite clear. Despite the repeated warnings the Hadra have given, despite the legends surrounding the peculiar powers of the Hadra and their painted line, the soldiers of Eezore attack with artillery and fiery weapons which are shortly returned back to them, destroying the army. This serves to illustrate the reality of Yarmald as a "no man's land."

Thus, the significance of crossing the Redline is central for Sair. She moves from a dystopian space defined by men and their warrior god into a eutopian space defined by women and protected by female entities. Once she crosses the Redline, her initiation and development begin. Immediately, she notices a change in herself: "I even felt a sense of ease and lightness, as if I had crossed to some place where Eezore had less power" (17). Indeed, Sair can change because she finds a place where the men of Eezore have no power at all. Her euphoria at having crossed into Yarmald is not merely a feeling of having escaped danger. Instead, Rivers suggests that once Sair crosses the mystical border of Yarmald, she is immediately infused with the hope of the Goddess.
Shortly after crossing into Yarmald, Sair begins to hear the voices of women as they laugh and sing, and soon after that, she sees a Hadra from a hiding place off the side of the road:

I could see her clearly for she had stopped quite close to my place of concealment. She was dark skinned, bare to the waist, wearing nothing but ragged leather riding pants that scarcely covered her. All she had on her chest was a silver triangle on a chain and several strings of bright beads, yellow and blue and orange. (18)

These women are Hadra -- free of the imprisoning clothing that Eezore required of women. Also included in this picture is a standard Wiccan image -- a silver amulet. As Rosemary Guiley points out, amulets are generally worn for their protective properties. "Silver," she says, "in general is held to have amuletic properties..." (10). Typically, Wiccan amulets take the form of a pentagram, the religious symbols of the Craft. In this case, one sees the silver triangle that appears throughout Rivers' two novels. Textually, this represent the Great Star Triangle, a constellation whose uppermost star is said to be the Great Star from which the Hadra get their name and draw their powers (Hadra is supposedly an abbreviation of an ancient word meaning "Daughters of the Great Star" (44)). In addition, Guiley notes that the triangle can represent spiritual aspirations and, more specifically, the triple aspects of the Goddess: Maiden, Mother and Crone.

In a documentary film entitled Goddess Remembered, directed by Donna Read, it is also suggested that the "pubic triangle" was symbolic of the goddess in ancient goddess worshipping cultures. This symbol might also be reminiscent of the triangle symbol of the gay, lesbian, bisexual movements. While the triangle is likely a combination of meanings in Rivers' novels, it certainly symbolizes the
Goddess. These triangle charms have magical and spiritual significance for the Hadra, connecting them to the Goddess and also serving as individual protectorates for those who wear them.

Following this first contact with the Hadra, Sair again notices that some part of her had been reborn -- "that part of every creature that wants to live" (20). When she finally does arrive at the ocean, she sees it as the end of a journey she began in Eezore. Because her object was merely to get away from the imprisoning, patriarchal space, she does not immediately realize her journey is only a beginning; she does not fully understand the effect that crossing into Yarmald has on her life; she does not realize that she is now free from the men who would imprison, hurt and kill her -- that she is in no man's land. She is safe within a physical space, but she is still riddled with the intrusions that her Eezoran upbringing have on her spirit. In her mind, there are still no alternatives to death. Fortunately, the Hadra pull her from the waters and resuscitate her. Through the course of the novel, Sair discovers the political freedom she now has as she slowly learns about the woman-centered culture of the Hadra and gradually comes to understand exactly what the importance of crossing into Yarmald is. The remainder of the book describes the process by which she comes to that understanding.

The developmental process for Sair can be traced by the spaces she moves through. Moreover, each of these spaces is infused with Wiccan concepts. As a result, her development is fostered by Feminist Spirituality. The next place that Sair finds herself in is Semasi, a small village along the Northern coast of Yarmald. If a map of Semasi were available, it would present a collage of traditional Wiccan imagery. Semasi is a village of round stone buildings
arranged in a spiraling formation at the heart of which is a public circle used for meetings and rituals. At the center of that public circle is a "Gobal" tree around which, it is said, all Hadra settlements are built. The spiral, quite possibly, is a reference to what Starhawk identifies as the spiral dance, after which her Witch guidebook is named. In it, she claims that the dance of the double spiral is a "pulsating rhythm that infuses all life" (17).

Here, too, is a meeting circle. The circle, again, represents a connection with the universe and also female fertility. The Gobal tree has a Wiccan analog; trees are important symbols among contemporary Witches. As Guiley points out, trees are seen as "Reservoirs of immense life energy," associated with fertility and mystical wisdom since antiquity and appearing in lore and myths from all over the world (344-45). More significantly, Lozano and Foltz found that Oak is sacred in Wicca — also symbolic of regeneration and rebirth (226). Considering descriptions of the Gobal as "A wide spreading, long lived tree, that often grows to great heights" (58), Rivers may have had Oak in mind when she imagined the Gobal. Via this geographic arrangement of the settlement, Semasi becomes one large representation of fertility, birth and life.

These symbols also make Semasi an embodiment of several key Wiccan rituals. The casting of a circle is a prerequisite for many Wiccan rituals as it functions to define sacred space in which nature and the cosmos are directly accessible. The existence of the public circle reduces the need for this ceremony, providing a permanent porthole to the benevolent forces of the universe. *Journey to Zelindar* is not merely Rivers' recounting Wiccan ideas in the form of some sort of a sterile catalog; rather, it is her vision of what those ideas can
become: a permanent physical representation of Wiccan spiritual principles.
Semasi is a community that Adler suggests is the goal of many lesbian Witches.

Within this setting the next stage of Sair's development occurs. Sair finds herself in the Zildorn. Considered the spiritual and secular center of any Hadra community, the Zildorn is used as a place for ritual ceremony, for study, and to house any archives and library that may exist. The Zildorn, the first place Sair is brought during the healing time following her rape, foot-blistering escape, and subsequent suicide attempt is physically important too:

It was strangely covered with either a tapestry or a painting, a large wheel or circle or brilliant colors — yellow in the middle merging into oranges and reds with violets and blues at the edges, all woven into intricate, concentric patterns. As I stared at that circle everything seemed to flow toward the center with a rippling motion and then as surely all flowed out again. In and out, like breathing, or like the waves of the ocean I could hear below me. (25-26)

Later on as she begins to regain strength, Sair notices that the walls are also interestingly adorned with relief carvings of triangles and circles; then etched at the top of one of the arched windows is the Hadra credo — "As it must be" — words that are said frequently throughout the novel by Hadra as they contemplate some unpleasant reality of the Cerroi such as death. As she lies there looking at these visuals, Sair finds a newfound energy: "I could feel some echo pulsing in my own body, some flow of strong returning life" (34). Within this space and with the help of the Goddess and her life-giving powers Sair's wild spirit begins to return as the scars of Eezoran reality begin to heal.
Sair replaces her old Eezoran language with that of Kourmairi, the language of the Hadra and also of the Koormir, the neighboring and friendly culture of both men and women who also live behind the protection of Yarmald's Redline. Sair acquires the language quite effortlessly during her unconscious recovery in the Zildorn. In fact, Sair does not have to do anything. As she writes in her story, much of the time during the two weeks following her arrival is spent in a "healing trance" rather than in sleep. Apparently during these trances Sair is endowed with the Kourmairi language.

Not coincidentally, Rivers begins Sair's development with the learning of a new language. Language, itself, has been given a great deal of attention within the feminist and Feminist Spirituality movements. In their article "Images of Spiritual Power in Women's Fiction," Carol Christ describes this attention: "The simple act of telling a woman's story from a woman's point of view is a revolutionary act: It never has been done before. A new language must be created to express women's experience and insight, new metaphors discovered, new themes considered" (328). Such feminists understand language to be the creation of a male-oriented civilization, fully saturated with the sexism of such a civilization. Some feminists have argued that any real change regarding gender will need to be accompanied by a change within the language, beginning with, for example, the abandonment of words like "mankind" and other explicitly gender-exclusive terminology and continuing with less obvious forms of linguistic sexism. In Journey to Zelindar, Rivers provides the reader with an example of what a language outside the realm of our own patriarchy would look like.
Sair quickly learns about one of the most dramatic implications of a Hadra-oriented language in a discussion with her healer, Kedris, a part of which I have included as the epigraph for this chapter:

Now, at last, I could ask the thing I had most wondered on and did not have words for. I turned to look at her, saying, "Kedris, I have only seen women here. Where are all the . . .?" Then I stopped, for there was no word for men waiting in my head. But she saw it in my mind and laughed.

"There are no men here. We are all Hadra."

"But where have they gone?" I insisted.

"There are no men here. We are all Hadra," she repeated. . . .

"But then are you all . . .?" and found I also had no word for "celibate."

Again she caught my meaning. She shook her head and said smiling at me, "Oh, no, we are lovers of women." (36-37)

For Sair, this conversation is quite disturbing; she is still suffering from the patriarchal ethics of her childhood. For her, the idea of women loving women is vile. The word she uses in reference to it is the Eezoran "muirlla," a derogatory word comparable to the word "dyke" in our own language. As Sair points out, "muirlla" is a dreadful insult in Eezore and means death for any woman who is identified as such. Despite the fact that the Hadra have their own language, they, too, are familiar with the term "muirlla." As Sair comes to find, many Hadra deny the Eezoran meaning of "muirlla" and instead use the word as a badge of pride. For them, "muirlla" does not have the negative connotations that it does in Eezore but, instead, is seen as something beautiful. Sair's initial reactions to this idea are what one might expect -- she recoils. But Halli, another of Sair's
teachers, points out the paradox in this: "Sair, they have raped you and dumped you on their refuse heap for the birds-of-death. How can you believe the meaning of their words? Why do you still give those words power over your heart and spirit?" (38). For Sair, questioning beliefs had not been an option. It had not occurred to her not to believe what she had always believed, what she had been taught in Eezore. Halli’s comments strike home with her, however. In a short while she realizes the hold Eezore still has on her inner self. Once she recognizes that her spiritual self is under the power of the Zarn and his language, Sair can abandon the homophobia of her upbringing, in its place finding a new appreciation for muirlla as a central characteristic of the Hadra.

At the Zildorn Sair discovers the other dramatic characteristic of the Hadra -- their "Kersh." Kersh is a mystical power that puts Hadra in connection with nature and one another, a kind of permanent attunement to the universe. This is the goal that Wiccans seek to accomplish through ritual and magic. For them, this connectedness is a matter of concentrating their energies to reverse the alienation they experience from patriarchal "progress." Rivers has incorporated this concept in her novel and institutionalized it as well. The source of Kersh is unclear. Rivers’ textual notes suggest that Kersh mysteriously originated with the passing of "the Great Star" (46). Endemic to the Hadra at the time Sair discovers them, Sair is told that since she was not born a Hadra, she cannot fully enjoy the powers of Kersh. Only her grand-daughter can be Hadra if Sair decides to stay among them. The reader finds, though, that for some reason Sair, too, quickly tunes into Kersh, noting, almost immediately following her first conversation with Kedris, that she felt some "...deep connection with those who had lived and built here in another time" (43). She does not have the full-blown
Kersh of the Hadra, but she does have some of the magical powers, undoubtedly due to the connection to the Hadra that Sair has through her mother. Sair is as close to being a Hadra as one can be without having been born among them.

Once Sair has healed physically and begun to come to terms with her newfound freedom from male dominance, she moves out of the Zildorn and into a new space, quickly becoming a member of the Semasian community. What happens in this new space and the others that Sair moves through in the rest of the novel amounts to a fine-tuning of the education that she has already received.

The next place that Sair comes to is her own quarters, the small shelter of Seronis, a Hadra who wanders frequently and who is currently out on some sort of journey. Sair writes: "Never in my life had I had my own home" (59). To have a home, a retreat away from the demands of others, seems a key issue for Rivers. Yarmald fulfills such a need for women. Of course in Yarmald women are free from the demands of men, but more importantly, Rivers points to the need for personal space free from the demands even of other women. Sair's new home gives her new physical freedoms, and once again this liberty allows for inner, spiritual liberation as well.

As has been suggested, Kersh allows for telepathy, or as the Hadra call it, "mind-speech." Mind-speech is a bit of a misnomer, though. More accurately, Hadra use their mind-speech to communicate images as well as words. This power can be used to communicate with horses, birds and any number of animals as well as human beings. Kersh is an effortless endeavor for Sair. She has no difficulty communicating in this way with other Hadra. Instead, Sair has another problem. Rather than requiring effort to mind-speak, effort is required
of a woman in order not to communicate in this way. This effort, which the
Hadra appropriately term "shielding," requires practice. Up to this point in the
novel, Sair has been plagued with the Hadra intrusion into her thoughts. She
has some Kersh and has utilized it, but she has not yet learned to shield, which
causes her great anxiety. In reference to her initial stay in the Zildorn, she writes:
"I could not shield my thoughts nor make them cease. . .My body had been
stripped naked before their eyes, and now, even my thoughts were not private or
my own" (40). This results in Sair's embarrassment in a number of instances
and also, occasionally, the embarrassment of others who unsuspectingly tune
into some of Sair's private and sometimes inflammatory thoughts. This quality
of Sair's seems to be somewhat of an object of humor among many of the Hadra,
however, because for a great while no one teaches her how to protect those inner
thoughts. By engaging the issue of shielding, Rivers also points to issues of
privacy. Not only is there the issue of political space and the threat of men, but
women, too, can invade personal space, as is the case with Sair and Seronis.

In Sair's new home the next stage of her developmental process takes
place. Here, in the home of Seronis, Sair learns to hide her thoughts, allowing
her the ultimate freedom — the freedom of her spirit and mind. She learns this
upon the return of Seronis. As she writes, Seronis has a beard that Sair finds
rather unattractive. Unfortunately, Sair is not in a position to keep that feeling a
secret, and one evening Seronis grows tired of having the unpleasant thought of
her beard thrown about her psychic space, saying, "Sair, you are welcome to
think what you like about my beard, and whatever else you please, but I do not
like to have it intruding on my mind. I must teach you how to shield, so we can
both have some privacy in this place" (203). Seronis presumably could have
shielded away Sair's thoughts. However, Seronis makes the point that she should not have to have unspoken insults drive her into telepathic hiding. As an older and more Crone-like Hadra, Seronis is not as mischievous as some of the younger Hadra with whom Sair has been associating and helps her in the next stage of her spiritual development. With the help of the wise Seronis, Sair exercises and soon masters her own inner space.

Thus, Sair fully understands what it means to cross into Yarmald. She has gone from being bound physically and spiritually in Eezore to being physically free, yet spiritually captive, in Yarmald. Once in the protected space of Yarmald, Sair's spiritual side is given the chance to develop, resulting in her being free in both the political sense and in the spiritual sense. If it were not for the availability of the safe political space found in Yarmald, that spiritual development would never have been possible. Thus, no longer is Sair bound, as a woman, by the Eezoran patriarchy. Instead, she is free -- free of what men expect that she should be, free of their ability to make her comply with those expectations, and free of her fears of either. Each of the steps involved in her coming to that realization is fostered by her entrance into some new space that allows for the subsequent step to take place. What is more, for Rivers, the spaces needed for that personal development would not have been possible if it were not for the help of the Goddess. By means of the latter, Sair finds a home.

From Semasi, Sair moves once again. Free, both politically and spiritually, Sair begins to search, not for herself, but for the Goddess who made her liberation possible. Through a series of events, Sair finds herself with a group of Semasian Hadra on a journey to the city of Zelindar for the fall Festival-of-Lights. She finds it a beautiful city, unlike the city of Eezore. Here, Sair reports,
there are no guards to be afraid of, and rather than filthy streets, it is like "a giant
garden in which the buildings, mostly white stone domes, were set as
ornaments" (278). She recalls that Zarmell, one of her teachers, described the
city as "two big white nipples on the green breasts of the hills" (276). A fitting
description of the city that is home to the largest Hadra library as well as the
Hadra archives themselves, the stories found in the libraries of Zelindar are a
source of spiritual energy in Yarmald. They tell of the genesis of the Hadra, their
trials as they are persecuted by ancient Eezore, and even of the ancient Witches
that preceded the Hadra. Through a twist of fate, Sair finds herself at that library,
drawing from that energy. She writes: "In Semasi I had forgotten the pleasure of
study for the joys of physical life. Now the passions of the mind returned to me"
(280). Sair begins, thus, a spiritual journey that has no end -- in search of the
Goddess and all that She is.

Sair's story ends in Zelindar with the Festival-of-Lights that has brought
her to the great city to begin with. Rivers describes it as a spectacular event.
Following a day of bathing and purification, the women of Zelindar deck
themselves in silver and crystal and other reflective ornaments. In the dark of
the moon and with the lights of the city extinguished, the Hadra carry candles
through the city and out to the shore of a bay. Sair writes: "Never had I heard
the Hadra so quiet for so long" (294). At the shore each Hadra places her candle
on a piece of wood and floats it out to sea. Then, we are told, a death chant is
sung to mourn the old year followed by a blessing to welcome in the new. The
festival begins, described as a celebration full of hilarity and teasing, in which
faces are painted in wild colors and bells are worn.
The Wiccan analog for the Festival-of-Lights, unquestionably, is the widely celebrated Samhain, better known as Halloween. For Wiccans, though, the day is not a minor holiday on which to trick-or-treat. Instead, Samhain marks the Wiccan new year, the end of the fertile period and the beginning of a new cycle of life as it progresses through death and into the next fertile period. This is a holiday that recognizes the place of death as a source of new life. As such, it serves as a fitting conclusion to Journey to Zelindar, reminding the reader that, in order for Sair to live as a new person among the Hadra, she had to die in Eezore.
"Permeeth, at the end, when all is over, what do you want?"
"Oh my, what a question! Well, my answer is simple enough. My garden, my shelter, my lover, and myself, all together in some safe place"... 
"And you, Tazzi?" Murghanth asked me suddenly.
I felt a great ache in my heart.
"To stand still, to stop running. To find a home."

—Diana Rivers, Daughters of the Great Star

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Introduction

Like Diana Rivers' first book, Daughters of the Great Star is also a "utopia" — it is a place that does not exist in reality. Rather than a "eutopia," though, Daughters of the Great Star is a "dystopia." It tells part of the "dystopian" history of the "eutopian" land that Sair came to be familiar with in Journey to Zelindar, and it suggests that Sair, in fact, read this particular story in the Hadra archives.
As such, Daughters of the Great Star is also a story about no man's land. Unlike its predecessor, though, this novel is a story about a group of women in search of such a land, rather than of women who live behind its protective borders. Like its sister-book, Daughters of the Great Star belongs to a mythology which Rivers is creating based upon the world-view, ethics and symbols of a contemporary Feminist Spirituality movement. This mythology does not begin or end with
the covers of any one book, and while these two novels are treated separately in this thesis, they are both part of the mythology undergirding Rivers' utopian vision.

However, there are differences. While *Journey to Zelindar* focuses on a spiritual journey, Rivers' second book focuses on the political journey of a group of women who slowly realize that, collectively, they have the power to separate themselves from antagonistic political spaces. In *Journey to Zelindar*, the plot incorporates the political but is driven by the need for the spiritual. The opposite is true in *Daughters of the Great Star*. In this second book, Rivers returns to issues of political space that have long been the concern of many feminists. Although spirituality is involved in this second book, Rivers recognizes and focuses on the need to identify physical spaces before spiritual spaces can be accommodated. Spirituality is still the ultimate concern, but physical spaces are the immediate concern that temporarily supersede spiritual development. Because of the differences that political space and spiritual space play in the two novels, the plot in each is traceable in different ways. Where political spaces are used to trace the spiritual development of Sair in *Journey to Zelindar*, spiritual needs are used to trace the political development of the Star-Children in *Daughters of the Great Star*.

**The Dystopian Text of Daughters of the Great Star**

Like its predecessor, *Daughters of the Great Star* is also told in retrospect, but this time by Tazzi, a member of the first generation of Hadra. Tazzi and her compatriots are not called Hadra, however, at least not yet; neither do they really
know what they are, even that they are different from those around them. They are called "Star-Children" and as the reader comes to find, these women are different from the people around them, having been born in the year of a mystic celestial event: the passing of the Great Star. Due to this mystical event, the women who will become the Hadra are endowed with their own magical characteristics: their lesbianism and their powers.

Rather than engendering wonder and respect, the Star-Children's powers to heal and connect with animals elicit fear and misunderstanding from nearly all those who are not Star-Children. As Tazzi explains, both the Star-Children's power and lesbianism are unwelcome in the communities in which the inhabitants grow up. Fear of the Star-Children's unknown capabilities eventually cause Tazzi's fellow villagers and the members of her family to drive her from the village of her birth, Nemanthi.

Soon Tazzi discovers that there are others like her. Motivated by a Zarn's death proclamation issued for all Star-Children, Tazzi and her newfound compatriots go into hiding in the Twisted Forest, said to be protected by haunting spirits. From this protected space Tazzi and the other Star-Children begin a movement to free themselves from the patriarchal, homophobic rule of the Zarn. The remainder of the novel deals with the underground organization of these masses of women and their struggle to find larger, more accommodating places in which to live. Eventually, the Star-Children migrate West to secure the space that will become their home, the eutopia found in Journey to Zelindar.

The most notable and dramatic part of this story occurs when Tazzi and her band of guerrilla sisters infiltrate the blockaded city of Eezoret to liberate the remaining Star-Children trapped behind its walls. Included in the novel is a
rather moving scene in which the women, previously divided by the history of their own patriarchal cultures, are united into the nation of "Khal Hadera Lossien," a name that eventually is shortened to "Hadra."

The Political Journey of the Star-Children

In one of the few reviews of *Daughters of the Great Star*, Nedhera Landers points to a "puzzling lack in growth" in the lead character of the novel. In defense of Rivers, I would say that the reason behind this allegation is because her second novel is not only about any one character, unlike *Journey to Zelindar*. The focus of *Daughters of the Great Star* is not upon an individual character, but upon a tapestry of women and their stories centered around the search for a homeland to which they can be spiritually connected and in which they will be safe. Tazzi is not the lead character, but one among many. Instead of being a lead character, as Landers suggests, Tazzi is a narrator who weaves the women's stories together.

The motivations for the action and the resolution of the conflict are similar in both novels. In both, the action is motivated by the desire to be free from patriarchal constraints; in both, the existence of the Goddess ultimately allows for the resolution of the tension surrounding that desire. Where the two novels differ is the ability of the characters to escape the possibility of emotional and physical rape. In *Journey to Zelindar*, Sair escapes the possibility of physical rape allowing herself to focus on her inner growth. In *Daughters of the Great Star*, the Star-Children live in constant fear of rape and death; therefore, they cannot deal with their inner growth. They must first deal with the physical
restraints placed upon them by the patriarchal world. As I mentioned in chapter one of this study, the difference between "eutopia" and "dystopia" is the point in time that the "utopian" space is described. The events that occur in *Daughters of the Great Star* exist at an earlier point in the chronology of the utopia where there are no places that exist completely outside of the rape-culture of Eezore. The Star-Children have no place to go toward at this early point in the utopian history. Thus, they are stuck in the political space that Sair escapes and cannot pursue their spiritual development. Thus, *Daughters of the Great Star* is a dystopian novel.

Because of the inherent nature of a dystopian novel, the focus of *Daughters of the Great Star* is on the political. The nature of the dystopian form is such that it speaks directly to negative political situations in the real world. But spirituality does not lose its importance. On the contrary, spirituality is still Rivers' ultimate concern. However, the Star-Children cannot focus on this, their ultimate concern, until they have escaped the dystopian space and are safe from persecution. Thus, they are motivated by the reality of a dystopian rape-culture to take a political journey through physical space. This journey, then, becomes part of the process of Rivers' utopian vision. Because of the action in the "prequel," the subsequent action of *Journey to Zelindar* is made possible. Through the definition of safe physical space in *Daughters of the Great Star*, spiritual, psychological space can begin to be defined in *Journey to Zelindar*.

Landers' critique of *Daughters of the Great Star* is understandable. Little development in the "lead" character occurs. However, rather than a flaw in the construction of the novel, this fact is required by its dystopian form. Little development of the lead character can occur specifically because she occupies a
dystopian space. Instead, hers and her fellow Star-Children's stories are of their unsettling political situations. Her only real growth involves the painful realization that her spiritual development must be put on hold. Not until a safe eutopian space is identified can anything like personal development take place. Like Sair in *Journey to Zelindar*, spiritual development can only take place once out of immediate physical danger.

Like *Journey to Zelindar*, Rivers' second novel is presented as a manuscript from the Hadra archives, only this time, as told by Tazzi. Through telling not only her story, but also other women's stories as they have been told to her, Tazzi presents the reader with a detailed picture of the horror that women and, in particular, Star-Children, face in the patriarchal land of the Zarn. The beginning of the novel is the telling of Tazzi's story, a story like that of other Star-Children. In her case, Tazzi grew up in Nemanthi, a small agricultural village, one not directly under the ruling thumb of the Zarn of Eezore but still a part of the misogynistic, rape-culture Eezore represents.

As Tazzi recalls, her first childhood memories are of speech with animals. This Star-Child capability does not seem strange to her. Far from being unnatural, Tazzi recalls the ability with the same fondness as she does her mother's love. She also does not see anything unnatural in her keen healing skills and soon enters into an apprenticeship with a local healer, a Witch much relied upon and, at the same time, much feared for her mystical powers. And yet, for those around her, Tazzi is unnatural. Soon she notices that she, too, is feared by the villagers of Nemanthi. Even worse, Tazzi notes that the fear the villagers have of her makes them angry. She writes: "Some even tried to hurt me for my strangeness, push me down or throw stones. They soon learned that
their intended harm returned to them" (Daughters 8). Tazzi is protected, yet, as we learn later, her protective powers are limited. Star-Children can individually defend themselves against one or two attackers but not against larger numbers. Thus, Tazzi lives in a hostile environment, under the threat that she can be attacked for her differences at any time. This is not the worst of her situation. Not only is she feared by those in her village, she also is not safe in her own home. While her mother is always loving and kind, Tazzi’s father is as scared of his daughter as are the other villagers and, like them, his fear is transmitted into anger. Despite her attempts to please him, Tazzi’s father abuses her verbally and tries physically to abuse her although he find out that he cannot.

Tazzi is not welcome or safe in her own childhood home. She is physically threatened, and because of the patriarchal space she occupies, Tazzi’s spiritual world is also in jeopardy. Her childhood is one of confusion and loneliness. She knows that she is different because others tell her that she is, but in truth, she does not know who or what she is. Not until Tazzi discovers one other like her, one other Star-Child in Nemanthi, does she realize the spiritual support that she has been denied. One day, Tazzi encounters the other Namanthian Star-Child, Kara. At this meeting Tazzi realizes what she has been missing:

Not until that moment had I realized how hungry I was, how starved I had been all those years for human company, not company such as my mother or sister, much as I loved them, but someone with whom I could share my inner life, someone else who knew, who understood, and, above all, who was not afraid of me. (12-13)
Consequently, Tazzi realizes how desperately she needs spiritual healing amid the physical and emotional abuse that she receives from nearly everyone around her. Tazzi knows that she cannot talk to her mother about the confusion that she is experiencing. While Tazzi recognizes that her mother cares for her, she also realizes that her mother cannot understand her daughter's problems. Kara, on the other hand, knows the torment Tazzi has experienced because Kara has lived the same lonely and fearful existence. Together, they try to provide emotional support to one another in a world that seeks to alienate and harm them.

Besides providing some spiritual comfort, Tazzi and Kara's relationship also introduces yet another confusion that ultimately makes living in Nemanthi or anywhere else in Eezoran society impossible. Once together, Tazzi and Kara discover the second thing that makes them Star-Children -- their lesbianism. While Tazzi explains that the physical and spiritual loving that she and Kara have is deeply significant for her, she knows it must be hidden from other Nemanthians. She does not understand why she must lie about this characteristic just as she does not understand why people fear her because of her healing abilities. For Tazzi, the love that she and Kara have is a beautiful gift, and yet she must keep the secret. Thus, Tazzi leads a schizophrenic life in Nemanthi, divided by her own feelings and the expectations of the culture she lives in.

Tazzi's situation grows worse. As Tazzi moves into adulthood, new expectations are placed on her to assume the "proper" place for women in her culture. Part of this transformation involves heterosexual relationships in which women are subordinate. Tazzi is able to escape this expectation for a
while, partly because of the fear that people have of her, but her evasion does not last. Eventually, her defiance of norms angers one man so much that he attempts to force her into compliance with male rule. Fortunately, her powers protect her. When in a fit of rage the man tries to stab Tazzi his effort rebounds; he stabs himself in the chest. In this interchange, Tazzi lets out the secret shared by her and Kara. In a fit of anger, Tazzi responds to her would-be rapist's accusation that she and Kara are lovers saying, "Yes, and I would not let you touch me after being loved by her" (22). This event causes Tazzi to realize the real danger that she lives in, and it immediately begins to interfere with her inner peace. Tazzi writes: "All my life my dreams had been sweet, often taking me to some favorite place in the woods. That night I could find no peace in sleep. My dreams were filled with screams and scenes of fire, the shouts of angry voices and dark figures running in the night -- all dread and horror and terrible foreboding" (23-24). Not only is her political world a maelstrom of anger and violence, the result is that her spiritual world has now become filled with fear too. This spiritual inner world remains in jeopardy throughout the novel. Tazzi's desire to focus on her spiritual life appears again and again until she finds a place where she does not have to live in fear of her life. Not until she finds a place of safety is she able effectively to deal with her inner, spiritual world.

The attempted rape of Tazzi also ignites a sea of hostility that makes it impossible for Tazzi or Kara to live in their childhood community. Once it becomes known that the two are "muirlla," or lovers of women, the villagers of Nemanthi seek to kill them. Ultimately, Tazzi and Kara are chased from Nemanthi by an angry crowd intent on the couples' death. While Tazzi and
Kara escape, they are unfortunately separated in the scuffle and are not reunited until the end of the novel. At this point Tazzi meets up with other Star-Children and goes into hiding in the Twisted Forest, protected by benevolent spirits.

As a woman, Tazzi is expected to be submissive. Yet her magical powers protect her so that she does not have to give into a patriarchal mind-set. Tazzi remains in Nemanthi for as long as she can, for it is her home. For women in her culture, the reality of rape and mistreatment is ugly enough. For women who are Star-Children, it is even uglier. Star-Children face the same harsh expectations as women as well as the added persecution intended to beat them into submission. As Olna, the Witch, points out later on: "Those who cannot be controlled are a great threat to those who must control" (366).

Tazzi's story is about the physical, political space that she calls her home, but which does not welcome her. The situation becomes so bad that she must flee for her life. The result is that Tazzi's life constantly hangs in the balance. She lives from moment to moment not knowing if she will be attacked by a mob of people. She can no longer concern herself with her spiritual life because her whole existence must be focused on one thing -- survival. This, in and of itself, makes the Eezoran world a dystopian one. Tazzi is not simply unwelcome, she is unsafe.

In general, Tazzi's is the story of all Star-Children. Afraid and ignorant, the people around them try to harm and kill them because of whom and what they are. As one reads the novel further, other stories with variations on similar themes emerge. When Tazzi begins her life as an outlaw, she comes together with other women who have suffered too, and through the course of the novel,
she and her fellow victims enter into a dialogue about the horrors of the world they live in. Tazzi picks up these stories and includes them in her manuscript. The first is that of Pell who later leads the Star-Children in their liberation movement:

"Mine is not a pretty story, not a pretty family tale, just the opposite. I myself never sought to gain my father's affections as you [referring to Tazzi] did. Quite the contrary, I always tried to keep clear of him. In addition to being angry like your father, mine had a craving for young female flesh. He had been able to use my sister at his will and thought to do the same with me... Though my mother hungered for some touch and my older sister, already broken, would have offered her body to save mine, still he became obsessed with me and what was denied him. All he wanted was what he could not have." (72)

Yet another of the frightening tales is Riska's:

I was raped by my uncles when I was little, to teach me submission. For as long as I can remember, I was beaten by my father, mostly for not being a proper woman... I ran off many times. Always other tribesmen returned me to my father, tied me up and brought me back as if I were his goods. (194)

Together, these tales and others like them tell the larger story of what it is like to live as a woman in Eezoran culture. More specifically, though, these women are marked with the characteristics of Star-Children and, as such, they must fear for their lives.

While Tazzi and legions of other Star-Children are being expelled from their homes, we learn that a war is being waged against the women born under
the star. Evidently, the Zarn has heard about these women loving women who have strange powers of protection. At roughly the same time that Tazzi and Kara begin their journey in search of safety, the Zarn issues a death edict for "all girls of seventeen or thereabouts, all those born under the Great Star" (33). In this way the informal harassment of Star-Children becomes formal Eezoran policy.

As in Journey to Zelindar, this space is an analog for our own contemporary society, a place, too, where women are expected to maintain their proper position in life, one mainly under the control of their male counterparts. Those that do maintain their "position" are faced with a life of mistreatment and pain. Those who cast off their "position" are treated even worse in an effort to make them comply, or, as the case may be, eliminate them. Lesbians, of course, are the group that are the most feared. They abandon male-female sexuality, challenging the thing that the patriarchs seek to dominate. In an effort to make lesbians comply with the idea of male domination of women, the patriarchs then increase their efforts, making it difficult to impossible for "lovers of women" to live lives in heterosexual spaces.

As Star-Children grow up, they find the wild spirits that the Goddess has endowed them with are limited. As individuals, they do not have the power to ward off the affronts of more than one person, much less a whole society. Only when they come together, joining their spirits and the Goddess' into one united force, can they resist the patriarchal regime. And this tactic is exactly what the Star-Children follow. In hiding from the Zarn, the Star-Children come together, slowly but surely. Tazzi writes: "As word spread that there was a safe-place to gather, those who had been waiting began to come out of hiding" (179). Secretly
carrying the symbolic mark of the pentagram and the triangle inside a circle (both symbols of the Goddess), the Star-Children gradually find one another and unite. The very thing the Zarn of Eezore feared he himself creates.

This is the Star-Children's first attempt at separatism. Finding no peace in the Eezoran world, they find a space in which they do not have to live with the constant message that they are strange and will be eliminated if need be. This is a step in the process from dystopian space to eutopian space. The Star-Children soon discover, though, that they are not totally safe, even within the Twisted Forest. The fact is that they remain in "man's land," and although not living amid their oppressors directly, they lie under the Zarn's watchful eye. This effectively cages the Star-Children in the confines of the Twisted Forest. They are still not free in this space although, perhaps, temporarily safer.

As such, each of the Star-Children's respective inner worlds can still not be attended to. Pell, who takes responsibility for leading the renegade women, is monomaniacal about her focus on the need for a safe "no man's land." While a number of the Star-Children, Tazzi included, wallow in a spiritual uncertainty never able to attend to their inner feelings for long enough to do any good, Pell attempts to focus the group on their immediate concern. She becomes the leader of the group because she recognizes early on that her spiritual life is not and cannot be a pleasant one until her political life is free of turmoil. For Tazzi this presents some difficulty. She does not understand why Pell does not express emotion or seem to be spiritually alive. Pell's undying focus becomes clearer when Tazzi seeks physical and spiritual comfort in her arms, only to have Pell explain that she cannot provide emotion support:
"Understand what you ask for, Tazzi. I can give you my body, but not my heart. That goes to no one till this is over — whenever that will be. If my body is what you wish for, it is yours, full of hunger and want. It has been so for days. I have been trying to curb it, thinking if I rode to exhaustion it would leave me some peace and let me sleep. If you want more, if what you want is the heart-touch you had with Kara, then you need to look elsewhere. I do not have that to give." (65)

Pell and Tazzi represent two extremes with respect to the Star-Children's spiritual situation. On one side, Tazzi does not recognize that her spiritual development will always be impeded until she is safe from Eezoran control. Yet she focuses nearly all of her energy on the futile task of establishing her spiritually integrity. As a result, she becomes more and more frustrated, causing her spiritual well-being to grow worse and worse. She also provides a constant reminder of the importance that spirituality and connection plays for the Star-Children. Pell, on the other hand, has decided that she can do nothing about the security of her spiritual self until she has done something about the security of her political self. As a result, Pell ignores her inner world altogether, becoming cold and cruel in the process. Pell avoids much of the frustration that Tazzi experiences and instead focuses on her own and the Star-Children's immediate need. Unfortunately, Pell also loses sight of the thing that provides the motivation for finding the safe space in the first place -- spirituality. The remaining Star-Children fall at points on the continuum between Tazzi and Pell. None is as focused as Pell on the political; none is as focused on the spiritual as Tazzi. While Tazzi looks to the future, providing hope, Pell takes the
responsibility of focusing the group's attention on the goal of liberating Star-
Children and of finding a "no man's land."

As this group of women come together in the hiding places of the Twisted
Forest, their dreams quickly become apparent. All they really want is a place of
their own, away from the Zarn and the things that he stands for. The desire for
this safe space appears again and again throughout the novel. At first, the
Twisted Forest is attractive for the Star-Children. Legends of the place as
haunted by spirits and Witches keep the Eezoran soldiers at bay. With the
exception of only a few, though, the Witches are long gone. The reader comes to
find that the Zarn has effectively extinguished them in a campaign known as the
"Witch-kills" or "burning times." The Witches that do remain provide some
useful counsel but are of little use for protection against the Zarn.

The Witches are interesting, however. As is suggested a number of times,
Witches are spiritually akin to the Star-Children. They, like the Star-Children,
are unconventional women. They are herbalists and mystics in tune with the
healing powers of nature. In the eyes of Eezoran society, they are
unconventional women, first and foremost; that is enough for mainstream
society to want rid of them. This is also the reason that the Zarn wants rid of the
Star-Children. Both he and those he influences misunderstand and fear the Star-
Children, and so they seek to destroy them. The weapons Rivers describes in the
warfare used against the Star-Children are similar to those used during the
Witch-kills. However, as we are told, the primary weapon is more deadly than
the originals used in the Witch-kills. Rivers calls it "fast-fire," and soon, its use
again jeopardizes the safety of the Star-Children.
In this part of Rivers' mythology the author is making a direct connection to the Feminist Spirituality movement. The use of the Witch image is the first clue, but as one inspects the other images Rivers uses, the connection becomes unquestionable. In chapter one of this thesis I mentioned that part of the mythology in the Wiccan movement involves a connection with the Witchcraft of the past. In particular, Wiccans have a great deal of empathy for the women who suffered through a period of intense witch-hunting and executions between the mid-fifteenth and early-eighteenth centuries. Among Wiccans, this period is also known as the "burning times" in reference to the fact that fire was often the method of choice for the executions (Guiley 43). For many Wiccans, such historical atrocity has become a metaphor for the prejudice and subsequent persecution of Feminist Witches in the present day (44).

Rivers uses all these images explicitly. Not only are there Witches in her story who have suffered the same inquisition-like history as did witches in the early-modern period, but her spiritually endowed Star-Children are threatened by the same fate. In this way, Rivers incorporates Wiccan mythology into her own, drawing an immediate connection between our real world and her dystopian world -- between Star-Children and Feminist Wiccans.

The dystopian world is where the Star-Children come together, combining their powers to resist the Eezoran edicts and way of life and continuing the process toward their eutopian future. As they join in numbers, collecting in the forest, their powers begin to grow. This amalgam of power allows the group slowly to challenge their boundaries. With each attempt, they test their ability ultimately to fulfill their desire of finding a place of their own. They begin
slowly, first, simply moving to new campsites closer to the edge of the forest, yet still under its protection.

Eventually, the Star-Children, with the help of the Goddess, are able to expand their boundaries, leaving the Twisted Forest and entering into the uninhibited man's land from which they all initially came. Never is the magic of their combined power so clearly evident as when the guerrilla women infiltrate Eezore to rescue the last remaining Star-Children from bondage. Secretly, they weave their way into the city. Rivers paints it as a grotesque mess of cold stone, the streets of which are controlled by loud guards who harass female passers-by. This space becomes a metaphor for the dystopia itself. This is the Zarn's strong-hold and the metaphoric epitome of the misogynistic monster that he has created.

With their combined Kersh and the help of the Goddess, the Star-Children elude detection, free the women, and escape to their encampment, leaving the Zarn's guard in mass confusion. Rivers suggest several things here. First, her Star-Children accomplish the most difficult task possible in the Eezoran space -- they violate the heart of that space, Eezore itself. Second, the way in which this is accomplished is through the spirituality of the group. Their connection with one another, with nature, and with the omniscient female spirit of the universe allows them to enter and leave virtually unharmed. Thus, Rivers suggests that the way to challenge and beat patriarchal space, both in her mythology or in our own world, is through Feminist Spirituality.

All the while that the Star-Children have been gathering and planning to march on Eezore, though, Tazzi and those who operate under the assumption that they can focus on their spiritual life gradually grow more and more bogged
down in a sense of listlessness. Tazzi is the worst of all. The draining of her energy culminates immediately after the Star-Children flee from the city of Eezore. Unable to solve her spiritual dilemmas, Tazzi loses sight altogether of her goal to find a safe place. As a result, she jeopardizes her physical safety. Immediately following the liberation of the Star-Children trapped in the city of Eezore, Tazzi breaks down under her spiritual pressure. As the rest of the Star-Children flee, Tazzi crouches on the ledge of a bluff to "watch the evil that is Eezore burn itself out" (Daughters 260). She refuses to follow even after her friends plead with her to do so. Alyeeta, the wise Witch, is most convincing, saying, "This sight is sickening your soul" (260). The comment suggests the root of Tazzi's problems. She refuses to focus her attention on getting away from the "evil" space. Instead, she wants it to "burn itself out." As Alyeeta points out, though, Tazzi will be "windblown bones before that time" (260). Tazzi refuses to move despite the pleas of her friends, though, and soon they are forced to leave before the Eezoran guard finds them. In this way Tazzi is almost captured. Fortunately, she escapes, but only after a series of terrifying scenes in which she is almost killed. This series serves as the transition point for Tazzi. Having been forced into fight or flight mode by the soldier's pursuit, she realizes that she must focus her attention on finding a eutopian safe place. Unfortunately, she still does not totally understand that her spiritual life must wait until that space is found. Eventually, she catches up with the Star-Children at their camp site. Yet, even then she continues to flounder in spiritual chaos, but with a beginning perception of a newfound direction. Not until later does she reconcile her spiritual needs with her physical constraints.
With the success of their liberation campaign, the band of outlaw women doubles in size. At this point in the novel, hundreds of Star-Children have amassed. Unfortunately, they are now more crowded than ever by their camp's size. This reality combines with continuing rumors of "women traps" and other evidence of the Zarn's increasing efforts to destroy the Star-Children to lead the rag-tag group to the decision to leave. They do not just leave the Twisted Forest for some other space within the Zarn's reach, though. They determine to find their own place to the West. With the cumulative Kersh that the additional Star-Children have brought to the group as well as the boosted confidence in their abilities to protect themselves, the Star-Children set off to find their space -- a space without men.

But first, they have some unfinished business to take care of. Once they enter into the space unprotected by the spirits of the Twisted Forest, they are in a spiritual limbo. The Star-Children are spiritually caged in one way. The lands under the control of the Zarn are wide and many. From all over this land the Star-Children have come to be together. Some are from cities; some are from the countryside; some are from warrior cultures, and others are from more peaceful cultures. The differences this group brings with it are many. That diversity proves a problem in more than one instance. In close proximity over long periods of time and under immense emotional pressure, these cultural differences are magnified manifold and jeopardize the unity of the group, the very unity which is the source of their protection. Tazzi recalls the situation: "We found ourselves suspicious of the differences. It seemed as if we had brought all the men's old wars with us to fight out on each other" (292). Again, some connections in the novel are made between the Eezoran world and our
own. As has become readily apparent in recent years, differences of opinion among feminists and lesbian feminists, alike, sometimes border on divisiveness. Some disagree on how to bring about change in society and others disagree on what those changes should be. In a similar way, the diverse patriarchal history of the Zarn's world nearly destroys the Star-Children.

With the guidance of Alyeeta, the Witch, though, these women are challenged to question their values and divorce themselves from the Eezoran way of thinking. Following a ceremony reminiscent of the Wiccan casting of a circle (which they call the "circle-of-peace"), the women set out to give themselves a name. The words of one Star-Child make clear the importance of this ritual:

"We need a name under which we can gather together, a name in which we can speak our new powers. We all have different pasts. That cannot be changed. But now we share a future. For that we must have a name that speaks for us all... As long as we are Muinyairin and Shokarn and Kourmairi, then all we have for names are the curses on men's lips: star-brats or star-cursed or star-crossed. Sisters, what name do we have to call ourselves? That is what we choose tonight." (315)

At this juncture in the novel the Star-Children become a nation. What is more, the Star-Children are free of the inner hold that the Zarn has on them. No longer are they unfortunate Eezorans, but, instead, they are the gifted nation of "Khal Hadera Lossien." As we find out, these are ancient Asharan Witch's words meaning "daughters of the Great Star" and are also the linguistic cognate for "Hadra." As was mentioned in chapter two of this essay, the Great Star is part of the constellation called the Great Star Triangle, which is representative of the
three aspects of the Wiccan Goddess. Thus, through the circle-of-peace the Star-Children become a literal nation of the Goddess, entirely divorced, both politically and spiritually, from their patriarchal history and united to find themselves a homeland.

Again, Rivers message is clear: embrace commonalities and disregard differences. For her, it is clear that to survive, feminists and, in particular, lesbian-feminists must not let minor ideologies get among them, but must struggle for a united front in the form of a huge, empowered sisterhood. Much like the message of Feminist Spirituality, Rivers' message is one of connection rather than isolation.

At this juncture in the novel, the Khal Hadera Lossien can continue the journey toward their utopian vision, leaving the dystopian world behind. Tazzi writes: "Leaving! We were leaving! We were going at last! We were going west, west to the sea, west away from Eezore, west out of reach of the Zarn's guards, going away from burning death, away from posted edicts that turned us into hunted animals, away from the hatred of men" (326). While they do not find the home that appears in Journey to Zelindar, they do distance themselves from the Zarn and his control and at least temporarily find a "no man's land." Only at this point can Tazzi and the others can re-focus on their respective unattended spiritual wounds. For most, this can be done naturally with time. For Tazzi, though, healing will take more than time. Her spirit has been harmed too much through her unremitting anger and unfulfilled attempts to stay spiritually whole. Instead of getting better, her attempts have made her situation worse. Olna, another of the Witches, points to Tazzi's unusual pain, saying "your spirit has grown sick from all you have seen" (371). Because of Tazzi's
embittered soul, Alyeeta orders Tazzi to leave to seek an "asking place" in which to be cured or die.

Free from the constant threat of harm, Tazzi can now go off to focus on her spiritual self. This is what she does. "Asking places" are old Witch spaces that have been infused with the spirit of the Goddess. They are not marked by maps, nor are they known by any wise person. The only way someone can find an asking place is if she is led there by the guidance of the Goddess herself. In this way that the spaces remain protected. In spiritual need, the Goddess leads Tazzi to one of the Witch asking places known as the "Malia-Humia" or "Cavern-of-the-Mother-of-Waters" (391). In this place Tazzi begins a process of healing her spiritual wounds, facilitated by Wiccan imagery. The first image is the place itself. The Cavern-of-the-Mother-of-Waters is a metaphor for the womb of the Goddess, a place of rebirth. Another image invoked is in a vision that Tazzi has while under the healing spell of an old Witch spirit:

With her body swaying slightly, the old Asharan began intoning words in a steady, repetitive, melodic drone. Almost immediately I was caught in the tide of her voice like a leaf caught in the flow of the river. Utterly at peace, I floated there for what seemed like a long while. Then suddenly I found myself being pulled, drawn, sucked in by a faster and faster current, pulled into what felt like the center of a whirlpool, taken at great speed through many unknown places, split open to the core, peeled back and turned inside out. These are only words to speak of experiences for which there are no words. (393-94)

The image of Tazzi's spirit being pulled through a whirlpool of time and space is, again, reminiscent of the "spiral dance" cited in chapter two of this study. The
spiral dance is seen as a metaphor for a universal life essence. As the Wiccan author, Starhawk, says, the ritual called the "spiral dance" sparks an awareness of "whirling into being, and whirling out again" (17). In this scene of the novel, Tazzi is brought in tune with that life essence. Tazzi's old sick spirit is broken down and rebuilt anew using Feminist Spiritualistic ritual as a tool for the reconstruction. Tazzi's inner self is thus healed. She writes: "I felt light and hollow, like something washed clean and hung out to dry, my anger gone like some storm" (Daughters 395). Only after this might Tazzi return to the Star-Children encampment. Here, Rivers again speaks to the need for privacy, even among political allies. Tazzi's spiritual struggle is personal. As such, she requires privacy away from the rest of the Khal Hadera Lossien in order to regain her spiritual self.

At this point, Rivers' second book leaves off. Tazzi and the others are still on the run in search of their final destination -- a safe place free of Eezoran control. Through the course of the novel, Rivers provides a rationale and, subsequently, a call for a sustained, separatist community for lesbians, envisioning Feminist Spirituality as the means to that end. Though they do not find it between the covers of this book, we know that that society exists somewhere in the mythology of Rivers' mind. However, unlike Sair who has those mythologies at her fingertips, we must wait for Rivers' next book to find out what happens to the Khal Hadera Lossien.
NO MAN'S LAND: LOOKING BACKWARD

Since there is no historical referent for a world in which women are not in some important sense subordinate, the utopian literary mode has become an important supplement to theoretical work as a place to work out the feasibility of these hypothetical, non-exploitative worlds.

--Edgar Kiser & Kathryn Baker, "Feminist Ideology and Utopian Literature"

Women's inner knowledge is beginning to inform the future.

--Baba Copper, "The Voice of Women's Spirituality in Futurism"

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A discussion of Rivers' novels Journey to Zelindar and Daughters of the Great Star opens up two main issues that require closure: the role of feminist utopian literature in society and Rivers' contributions to feminist utopias with regard to space and Feminist Spirituality. In Suzy McKee Charnas' feminist utopia Motherliness, she includes this epigraph: "This is, alas, a fantasy" For some readers, such will also be true of Diana Rivers' novels -- they are merely the fantasy of the author. That they are fantasy is true, of course, but through the course of this thesis, I hope to have shown there is more to fantasy than just fancy. Sociologists Edgar Kiser and Kathryn Baker suggest that utopian fiction is "(1) necessarily ideological in its content because of its form and (2) highly suited to expand the scope of ideological discourse" (30). Kiser and Baker point to the idea that fantasy is also linked with political reality. Not only is fantasy
influenced by reality, but so, too, is reality influenced by fantasy. Through her utopian novels, Rivers calls for the political separation of lesbians from the patriarchal world. She also argues that Feminist Spirituality is a means to that end. In this way she participates in feminist ideological discourse.

Feminist Spirituality gives Rivers a new way of accomplishing her separatist agenda. As Kiser and Baker point out, "The first important dialectic in utopian thought exists between social order and individual freedom" (34). They go on to say that most utopian literature has focused on social order. In many ways, therefore, that is the way we think of utopian literature. Utopias are supposed to be carefully constructed social systems characterized by an extreme emphasis on order. Yet feminist utopias exist in contrast to this notion. Laura Donaldson discusses the difference in terms of the "monologic" and "dialogic." She contends that dialogic constructions of utopia assume and even require change — these utopias are not static. Monologic constructions of utopia, however, offer only one set of ideas on which the society is to be based — these utopias are steadfast and unchanging, but also tyrannical in their efforts to remain so. In contrast, dialogic represents the feminist utopian form. Dialogic is another way of explaining the idea that feminist utopias are characterized by process as I mentioned in chapter one. Dialogic utopias allow for diversity in ideology and the possibility for change. The process of Rivers' novels involves the spiritual transformation of the characters as they are limited by political space. The transformation would not be possible without the spirituality. Therefore, it would not be possible without safe space. Thus, Rivers' utopias fit into the history of feminist utopian literature which are characterized by the importance of process. Rivers' utopias are also are distinguishable from the
history of feminist utopian literature in that they contribute something new -- spirituality. Feminist Spirituality in Rivers' novels gives added credence to the nearly universal characteristic among feminist utopias: taking the frequently cited yet undeveloped idea of a Goddess figure and elevating it to the form of a sociological institution --religion.

Feminist Spirituality also gives added meaning to the feminist utopic form. As Joanna Russ suggests, science-fiction is a religious literature (Adler 12). Rivers takes advantage of utopia as a religious form by incorporating already existing religious elements into her utopian fiction. If one can see utopia in these terms, Rivers' fantasy is a full-blown mythology while Tazzi, Sair and the other characters of the Hadra archives are heroic figures who operate within legends. The heroic motif and symbolism are suggested by Rivers' in Journey to Zelindar, when a Hadra spy returns from Eezore and exclaims: "'Sairizzia!' . .'Ah, so you are the woman who rose from death on the Bargguell and walked to the ocean. Already there are legends told of you in Eezore. Your name is a hope to women there'" (78). Evidently, Sair's and the other stories of the Hadra archives are intended to give hope to women who suffer from patriarchal limitations in our world as well as in their utopian world.

Rivers' novels can also be used to chart changes in Feminist Spirituality. Her first novel is about the spiritual transformation in safe spaces. Separatism is implied, but as secondary to the opportunity for spiritual development. Five years later, Rivers published her second book where separatism is the explicit message. Spirituality is forced to take a back seat, as Rivers' deals with political restrictions that stand in the way of spirituality. Sociologists Taylor and Whittier suggest that "movements adopt abeyance structures in order to survive in
hostile political climates. . . . Focusing on building an alternative culture, for example, is a means of surviving when external resources are not available and the political structure is not amenable to challenge" (543). It is possible that the need to hide from a mainstream society anathema to feminism occurs in Rivers' second novel as a result of the move toward conservatism during the 1980s. Taylor and Whittier note this shift to "abeyance" from what they call the "feminist heyday" of the 1970s. Daughters of the Great Star then may really be describing a different historical period than is Journey to Zelindar which represents feminism of the heyday. Rivers' second book emerges from a political climate of renewed hostility toward women and feminism. The separatism in Daughters of the Great Star may thus represent a change in Rivers' focus. Rivers does not abandon Feminist Spirituality, but her attention is focused on new political realities.

Rivers' mainstay in presenting two differing political spheres in her novels comes out of an understanding of the different levels of space. The idea of space appears frequently in my essay, yet space is not one clear entity. It has overlapping and related facets, two of which have been suggested already: inner, psychological space and outer, political space. The novels themselves are also spaces in which the characters also have inner and outer spaces. The fictional space that Rivers envisions finds a wonderful medium in the feminist utopian model because utopia is defined by space. As a "utopia," space exists within the fictional space of the novel. Space also emerges out of the psychological space of the author which is directly influenced by her own outer political world. Yet, the many different levels of space are related. The fictional space does not exist without the "real" political space that Rivers lives within. By commenting on
that fictional space, then, Rivers can comment on her own political space. Thus, the change in focus that occurs from Rivers' first book to her second might readily speak to the change in the political space that Taylor and Whittier identify.

Another question is whether Rivers is violating those real and fictional spaces as she seeks to describe them. In publishing, there is the danger that Rivers opens up a protected space for public view. In this way, Rivers may be violating the fictional spaces within her novels by describing the spirituality that exists within those spaces. She also may be violating the "real" space that informs the fictional space. Presumably, this is the "women's land" on which she lives (Journey cover notes). Yet, keep in mind Rivers' disclaimer included with the publication information in Journey to Zelindar: "All characters in this book are fictional and any resemblance to persons living or deceased is purely coincidental." Rivers attempts to distance the fictional utopian space from "real" space. The degree to which this is accomplished is not clear. That Rivers attempts to protect the space of the people that influenced her utopian creation is significant to the sanctity of the created space within the novels.

Does Rivers violate her own fictional space by publishing books about those spaces and the people that occupy them? At some level she does, while she simultaneously separates herself through the disclaimer. In publishing, Rivers opens herself up for critics to enter into her inner space, evaluate it, and possibly dismiss it. Her choice to publish requires, however, that she choose to violate her own utopian space in order to illustrate the processes that occur within them. Feminist utopias are not about perfection, instead, they are fundamentally about the creation of space. By defining her utopia in a fictional
account, Rivers is then able to speak to an audience where there is not only the potential for criticism, but also the potential for support of her ideological stance. Thus, Rivers enacts the other side of the relationship between ideology and utopia — her utopia effectively enters into the political world by defining a boundary between those who criticize and those who support her Feminist Spirituality agenda.

The role of the critic is also significant. As a critic, I am attempting to reveal something about Rivers' two novels by showing where Feminist Spirituality appears and how it functions in them. This is a violation of the utopian space. Further, I am critiquing Rivers' work from the point of privilege I have as a middle-class, white, heterosexual male. My position presumes that I will be critical of Rivers' agenda. As such, I need to be especially careful not to violate either the space Rivers creates or that which she lives within. I hope that I have been able to do this. My own agenda is not to undermine Rivers, her agenda, or the Feminist Spirituality that informs it, but only to try to understand those things and then enter into the discussion about women's issues. In support of my doing this, I call upon the words of another male critic of feminist utopias, Peter Fitting, who addresses the same dilemma of a man participating in a feminist discussion:

As to the specific issue of a man writing about feminist utopias, and of the criticism that in doing so I am working to preempt and neutralize the force of the feminist critique of patriarchal forms, I can only reply that unless we all join in the struggle to transform the existing relations of exploitation and domination we risk losing the future and any possibility of creating a genuine human society here on Earth. (156-57)
I am participating in a discussion initiated by Rivers through her novels. Historically, women have had to listen to what men have had to say. Now, feminist and women's studies discussions offer the opportunity for men, such as myself, to listen to what women have to say. This is what I have tried to do with Rivers' texts. It is through the process of both women and men listening to women's stories and the subsequent dialogue about those stories that we can better understand a part of humanity that has been largely ignored.
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