ABSTRACT

DISSENTATION: The Body in Heaven and Hell: Capitalism and Embodied Difference in Margaret Atwood’s MaddAddam Trilogy, Marge Piercy’s He, She and It, Octavia Butler’s Parable series and Leslie Marmon Silko’s Almanac of the Dead

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DATE: May, 2015

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This dissertation discusses capitalist exploitation, counter-capitalist resistance and disability in seven recent critical dystopian texts. As the dissertation demonstrates, each of my primary texts depicts the disabled or non-normative body as both a locus of capitalist exploitation and as a potential agent of counter-capitalist resistance. Each of my primary texts links capitalist exploitation directly to the norms that define able and disabled bodies. Each demonstrates that bodies marked as non-normative are also, overwhelmingly, those marked as expendable under the capitalist system. Nevertheless, each of my primary texts also declares that marginalized populations – a group that prominently includes the disabled – possess a unique potential for resistance. Non-normative individuals may gain unique perspective through their distance from the cultural center and may also draw on their unique experiences to further their rebellion. My primary texts conclude by recommending specific resistance strategies, including the dissolution of the embodied norm and the fair exchange of resources through cross-cultural coalition.