Odsjek za Anglistiku

Filozofski fakultet

Sveučilište u Zagrebu

DIPLOMSKI RAD

Dystopian Framework of Sir Thomas More's *Utopia*, Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* and

George Orwell's *1984:* A Foucauldian Discourse Reading

(Književno-kulturološki smjer: Engleska književnost i kultura)

Kandidat: Robert Češljaš

Mentor: dr. sc. Iva Polak

Ak. godina: 2017./2018.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Literary scholars have generated extensive volumes of texts on the rise of the utopian writing, its definition as a genre, and the literary status of its evil twin, the dystopian novel. However, this paper offers a reading through somewhat narrower theoretical lens by arguing that utopian/dystopian writings can be viewed as a part of an evolving discourse, in a Foucauldian sense. However, rather than a discourse of disease, sexuality or criminology – topics that naturally come to mind in relation to Foucauldian discourse – the paper proposes that utopian/dystopian writings represent a discourse of the *socially conceivable*.

After providing a historical framework for the utopian genre, with particular attention to Plato's *Republic* as a point of origin of the utopian genre, the subsequent discussion shall provide a brief overview of the Foucauldian concept of discourse and its relevance to utopian/dystopian literary formats. This is followed by a discursive reading of Thomas More's *Utopia*, George Orwell's *1984*[1], and Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*. These readings address the discursive function of each text as text – through Stanley Fish's reader-response theory. On another level, these readings address the intrinsic functions of discourse within each text's imagined, alternate social order, by focusing on discourses of social roles, education, and history/cultural memory. The final segment presents key observations that emerge when the texts are read together, rather than separate works, as part of an ongoing and evolving discourse. It is argued that, when understood as discourse in Foucauldian sense, the three utopian/dystopian writings mainly serve to reflect and reinforce status quo in political and social arrangements, rather than suggesting directions to social change.

COMMUNICATING UTOPIA

Within the opening pages of one of the great 20th-century dystopian novels, George Orwell's *1984*, the book's central protagonist, Winston Smith, embarks on a project that – while seemingly innocent to the average reader – is punishable by 25 years of hard labour in the setting of Orwell's fictional, future London. The endeavour originates as a kind of an 'impulse buy' in the planned economy of Orwell's dystopic state: after seeing a blank book in the window of a shop in a shabby quarter of the city, Smith checks that no one is watching him, then rushes inside the store to purchase it. Orwell informs us that party members are not

---

[1] The American edition was used for the thesis. The original British edition uses letters and was published as *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

supposed to shop in free market stores like this one,[2] but Smith finds the notebook irresistible. "It was a peculiarly beautiful book. Its smooth creamy paper, a little yellowed by age, was of a kind that had not been manufactured for at least forty years past" (Orwell 6).

Smith begins his journal with hesitation, noting only the date. He observes that he cannot be entirely sure of the year. In current circumstances, it has become impossible to determine a date with accuracy. The word *utopia*, coined by Thomas More, famously denotes "nowhere" (as later played upon by Samuel Butler's *Erewhon*, or loosely, "Nowhere" spelled backwards), and the idea of a utopia's *nowhereness* is often felt to be a key defining feature of the genre (Sargent 154, 157). In *Six Lines on the Island of Utopia*, More plays with the term "utopia" – from the Greek word *ou-topos*, meaning *nowhere* – and "eutopia," from Greek *eu-topos*, meaning *a good place* (117, ftn 20). In this play on words, More insinuates that a true good place could not be found, since it is positioned nowhere. But if utopias are nowhere in space, Orwell hints that his gloomy dystopia is not entirely well-anchored in time. Which is to say, as famous as the date 1984 has become, is not important in itself. It is just the indicator of a possible, indeterminate future, which Orwell imagines in order to warn his readers in 1948[3] of what may come to pass—a project that is reflected in Smith's own:

> For whom, it suddenly occurred to him to wonder, was he writing this diary? For the future, for the unborn. His mind hovered for a moment round the doubtful date on the page […]. For the first time the magnitude of what he had undertaken came home to him. How could you communicate with the future? It was of its nature impossible. Either the future would resemble the present, in which case it would not listen to him, or it would be different from it, and his predicament would be meaningless. (Orwell 7)

---

[2] This information comes without prior knowledge of what sort of party Orwell is referring to, or whether Smith is a member. However, it establishes a parallel between the dystopic world of 1984 and the Soviet state in 1948, when the novel was written. The importance of a party and rules for party members is one obvious reference, as is the crucial detail that free-market shops are considered politically tainted places. Moreover, the Soviet Union actually did have special hard-currency shops that carried premier goods. This might be surprising to outsiders with a distorted view of how planned economy functioned in the authoritarian Soviet state. But at the time that Orwell was writing, hard-currency shops were a vital way for the state to gather remaining stashes of western currencies from its citizens, in order to finance its rapid industrialization. Likewise, during times of famine, these stores sold food that allowed people to survive (Ivanova 244).

Access to the stores would later be restricted to foreigners and party members who had recently returned from state-sanctioned work abroad (Ivanova 243). Yet sometimes even citizens out of favour with the regime could gain access to the stores. In 1969 a Soviet Russian political dissident, Andrei Amal'rik, wrote an essay so critical of the state, that it had to be smuggled out of the country for publication. Nevertheless, the regime allowed Amal'rik to collect a fee from the British journal that published it. The fee was delivered to him in the form of certificates for shopping in the hard-currency stores. The title of the essay that gave him this unusual access is "Will the Soviet Union Survive until 1984?" (Ivanova 243).

[3] The manuscript was finished in 1948. The first edition was published on 8th June 1949.

With this, Orwell establishes what is perhaps the central problem of writing utopias or dystopias: how to communicate the outlines of a radically different social world, located in a fictional geography or fictional future, so that this *other*, nowhere place feels appealing and important to read? How to write about it so that it conveys a convincing message about what is possible to accomplish in a society or what is important to avoid? In *1984*, Smith creates a textual conundrum to the reader in the future, while Orwell writes a pseudo-prophecy to the reader in the present.

This does not imply that every utopian or dystopian writing calls for the same political urgency as Orwell's *1984*, or pretends to represent a guide to building a better society or avoiding disaster. Indeed, it is often emphasised that More's foundational book, *Utopia*, is thoroughly playful and often humorous, creating an uncertainty for any interpretation of its message (Sargent 158; Rodríguez García 84). Yet the fact remains that lively discussion and debate of More's *Utopia* continues more than 500 years after it was written,[4] precisely because readers and critics seek to stake their claims on the text's interpretation. Additionally, utopian/dystopian writing has gained unprecedented currency in the 21st century due its socio-political implications, whether we are speaking of Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, Orwell's *1984* or Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*.

Writers of utopias and dystopias instil fictional societies with realness and meaning for audiences rooted in their own existing social worlds. They claim the authority needed to convince readers to pay attention to what these alternate worlds have to say about the real world. The means at their disposal, this paper proposes, is discourse.

Discourse is invoked here in a Foucauldian sense. By discourse, Foucault indicates systems of statements that construct and enact knowledge about human societies, with each statement making a claim concerning what is desirable, knowable, or real – for instance, statements about psychology and mental illness, medicine and disease, crime and criminology, or even geography ("Questions on Geography" 63). There is no one point of origin for a discourse, no definitive author or definitive catalogue of it. Instead, a discourse is achieved through the "regular dispersion" of statements associated with it, each statement making a claim about what is desirable, knowable, or true ("Questions on Geography" 63). However, as Paul Bové notes, "since the 'truths' of these discourses are relative to the disciplinary structures, the logical framework in which they are institutionalized, they can have no claim upon us except that derived from the authority and legitimacy, the power,

---

[4] As Davis notes, the work has "enjoy[ed] worldwide popularity, being translated into numerous vernaculars, and scarcely ever out of print in the 500 years since its first publication in 1516," (28).

granted to or acquired by the institutionalized discourses in question" (54). It follows that, each time an individual repeats a statement related to a discourse, the individual enacts, affirms, and extends the authority and power of that discourse.

It has become popular to suggest that *knowledge is power* – by which is usually meant that the more knowledge one has, the more power one has as well. But for Foucault, knowledge does not *relay* power; it *is* power. In this relation, "knowledge and power are integrated with one another," and the correlation will never cease to exist ("Prison Talk" 52). The dialectic of power is deeply entrenched in the social body and its function is to "permeate, characterise and constitute the social body, and these relations of power cannot themselves be established, consolidated nor implemented without the production, accumulation, circulation and functioning of a discourse" ("Two Lectures" 93). The manifested discourse is essentially an instantiation of power that holds individuals tied to specific systems of ideas concerning what is desirable, knowable, or true.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Although More is famously credited with coining the term utopia (Sargent 154; Vieira 3) the first work considered to embody the utopian genre predates More's *Utopia* by nearly a millennium. It is Plato's *Republic*, in which Plato lays out the program of a polity administered according to the demands of justice as Plato understands that term (Griswold part 3.1; Vieira 8). As Margaret Atwood notes in an essay on the writing of *The Handmaid's Tale*, "Utopia is an extreme example of the impulse to order; it's the word *should* run rampant" (95). Atwood's observation fits Plato's *Republic* well, for unlike More's seminal work, Plato proceeds with no ambivalence or ambiguity and refrains from humor.

Central to Plato's certainty concerning how the ideal polity is to be achieved is the concept of rhetoric. When Socrates proposes in Book II of *The Republic*, "[L]et's make a city in speech from the beginning," he appears to be conveying more than the obvious fact that his city of perfect justice is being imagined through Socratic dialog (in this case with Glaucon and Andeimantus, 46). He is indicating that a city of perfect justice – the justice-driven nature of any polity or even of an individual – must be achieved, first and foremost, through the correct sort of speech.

The means to this end is laid out in Book II, where Plato describes the type of education he believes would be vital in shaping the mentality of the philosopher-guardians charged with overseeing, protecting, and propagating justice in his perfect polity. Socrates begins by noting:

"Don't you know that the beginning is the most important part of every work and that this is especially so with anything young and tender [as a young child to be educated]? For at that stage it's most plastic, and each thing assimilates itself to the model whose stamp anyone wishes to give to it."

"Quite so."

"Then shall we so easily let the children hear just any tales fashioned by just anyone and take into their souls opinions for the most part opposite to those we'll suppose they must have when they are grown up?"

"In no event will we permit it." (54-55)

As a result, Socrates concludes, the fundamental step to be taken when educating the guardians of the perfect state is to supervise those who make the tales that are told to children and which serve to form children's supple senses of right and wrong (55). As the key figures who tell childhood stories, mothers and caregivers must be ordered "to tell the approved tales to their children and to shape their souls with tales more than their bodies with hands" (55). Indeed, most of the tales that currently are told to children, Socrates concludes, must be thrown out, because they do not shape children's souls with a sufficient sense of justice. Even Homer is subject to this critique, for Plato believes that at the heart of literary tragedy is an idea that can corrupt young souls – the idea that good people sometimes suffer greatly, while evil individuals sometimes flourish (Griswold part 3.1). Indeed, according to Socrates:

poet mustn't be allowed to say that those who pay the penalty are wretched and that the one who did it was a god. […] he should say that the bad men were wretched because they needed punishment and that in paying the penalty they were benefited by the god […] (Plato 58)

In order to nurture the justice-seeking instinct, Plato suggests that children must be exposed only to discourse of reaffirming the central idea that the cosmos reflects divine justice, supporting goodness and punishing wickedness (Griswold 3.1). Thus, it seems fair to suggest that, at the inception of the literature of utopia, the role of discourse was already fundamental. Plato does not shy away from fabrications – a concept of "noble lie" – for the sake of public interests (90). The greater good is allowed to take precedence (a manoeuvre often employed by fictional and real totalitarian systems alike).

It is equally important to note that the idea of *failed utopia*, if not dystopia in its modern conception, appears to have been born simultaneously. It may be considered as utopia's twin – in fact, its slightly older twin. Plato's *Republic* dates to c. 370-360 BC (Vieira 8). If Plato can be considered the first great utopian thinker, Sargent suggests that Aristophanes is the first great writer of the failed utopia. His *Ecclesiazusae*, or "Women in

Parliament dates to 393 BC" (Sargent 156).[5] *Ecclesiazusae* tells how a group of assembly-women seek to form a communistic ideal state by taking over Parliament. "Their legislation fails not because it is bad but because the human race is not capable of the required altruism," a point made again through Aristophanes' later work, *Platus* (388 BCE). In *Platus* the blind god of wealth suddenly recovers the power of sight, which prompts him to redistribute wealth to those with merit. However, greedy human beings quickly intervene to unravel this new and more just scheme, returning wealth to those who are undeserving (Sargent 156). *Platus* is a type of tale that Plato would consider dangerous to a child's moral development.

More's 16th-century *Utopia* bears the thematic marks of Plato's work. It emerged in a post-Medieval Europe whose intellectual elites looked to classical antiquity for inspiration, even as they forged a new humanism for Western Europe (Vieira; Rodríguez García). Central to the new intellectual movement was the conviction that humans could apply reason and science in order to create "not […] a state of human perfection (which would be impossible within a Christian worldview, as the idea of the Fall still persisted), but at least an ability to arrange society differently in order to ensure peace" (Vieira 4). As discussed further below, the discovery of the *New World* additionally served to fuel new ideas of the social order. More himself, according to Vieira, took inspiration from the diaries and letters of Columbus and Vespucci and "used the emerging awareness of otherness to legitimize the invention of other spaces, with other people and different forms of social organization" (4).

A great deal of scholarly attention is given to considering the boundaries of utopia as a genre after More. Sargent complains that "utopia and utopianism are often conflated," leading to an overinclusive approach to the genre – including not only described travels to an imagined place with radically different, beneficial social arrangements, but "descriptions of ideal cities and what might be called architectural utopias, […] paintings like the various works entitled 'Peaceable Kingdom' by Edward Hicks;" and so on (154). Peter Fitting attempts to clarify the terminological confusion by defining utopia as "a non-existent society described in considerable detail and normally located in time and space," while dystopia is defined as "a non-existent society described in considerable detail and normally located in time and space that the author intended a contemporaneous read to view as considerably worse than the society in which that reader lived" (126). Other artistic and intellectual endeavors fall under the category of "utopianism," which encompasses utopian studies examining the philosophical "social dreaming" (Fitting 126).

---

[5] According to Sargent (154), the first usages of the term 'dystopia' appear in the mid to late 1700s (154), though Vieira attributes John Stewart Mill with the first use of the term in 1868 (16).

However, for the purpose of this paper it is enough to note that, after More, utopian writing thrived across much of Europe. It found particularly fertile soil in Britain, where Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis* was published in 1627; Francis Godwin's *The Man in the Moone, or, a Discourse of Voyage Thither*, in 1638; and Gabriel Plattes' *A Description of the Famous Kingdome of Macaria*, in 1641 (Pohl, 51).

The Enlightenment marked a strengthening of the genre across Europe, as well as a noticeable shift away from utopian imaginings that unavoidably dealt with the Christian problematic of how inherently sinful human beings could build an ideal society. It moved toward a much more open optimism, in which the central issue was that science and rationality would drive the perfection of social arrangements (Vieira 9). In this, utopian thinkers and writers were not only inspired by technological progress, but by the late 18th-century revolutions in the American colonies and in France (Pohl 81). Undeniably, the emphasis on progress was such that, according to Pohl, the *euchronia*,[6] or a vision of an ideal society set in a future time, came largely to succeed utopia in literature. This reflects a context in which the "belief that under the right conditions improvement was not only possible, but also natural, invited readers to assume that progress was as self-evident as the laws of nature that promised democracy, equality and happiness in the Declaration of Independence" (Pohl 82).

The Enlightenment's faith in progress also served to foster socialist utopian thinking and literature. Sargent (154) might disagree with such a wide approach to the genre, but both Vieira (11) and Pohl (82) include socialist utopian writers. For Vieira, the prime characteristic of this branch of utopian writing and thought is the notion that "it is up to man to conceive plans for the reconstruction of society *and to put them into practice*" (11, emphasis added). Indeed, Welsh socialist Robert Owen not only published his visions of a new and more perfect society, but actively attempted to enact one by founding socialist communities (one in Scotland and one in the United states) that "set the basis for the creation of what he called 'a new moral world,' inhabited by those who would have adhered to a new religion, which would have given them the needed ethical support—the religion of humanity" (Vieira 12).

Vieira further views the political writing of Marx and Engels as crucial to the development of the utopian literary genre. However, as Vieira argues, when Marx and Engels applied the term 'utopian' to the thought and writings of certain socialist thinkers, they did so

---

[6] For the purpose of this paper, dyschronia is treated as synonymous with dystopia, since both *1984* and *Brave New World* use the future as the site for their dystopic imaginings. In fact, it is difficult to name a dystopia that does not use chronology to situate its imagined society. Dystopias, as Atwood writes, "are dark shadows cast by the present into the future" (94).

as an insult and indicating the lack of systematic and scientific analysis of society, conflict, and social change. In other words, they dismissed such work as wishful thinking (12). Yet, if Marx and Engels hoped to establish the notion of political utopianism as insufficiently scientific:

> Marxism not only did not provoke the death of utopian thought, but instead forced its transformation, a situation that was crucial to its success. As Karl Mannheim pointed out in *Ideology and Utopia* (1929), this transformation was denoted in the way the future came to be perceived […]. (Vieira 13-14)

Vieira seems to be suggesting that the transformation she is describing is the equating of time with progress, both scientific and social. Once that equation is made, the concept of ideal society becomes both achievable and inevitable. Marxism thus emerges as the embodiment of Enlightenment thought. It is removing the last fragments of the Christian problematics – i.e., how can the perfect society be achieved by inherently flawed and sinful humans? – and proposing that humans can and will realize their perfect potential once the correct social relations are in place.

In contrast to Vieira, I would argue that the crucial shift Marxism seems to have enabled in utopian writing was not as much *toward* the idea of inevitable social perfection, but *away* from the idea that human nature is the stumbling block in the achievement of a better social order. Instead of humans, their flawed or sinful natures as the reason that utopias remain continuously *nowhere* and *nowhen* in reality, social systems are identified as the problem. In this regard, Marxist thought contributes to a broader intellectual trend, and toward the systematic study of societies and social problems, as shown by the 19th century rise of sociology as a developed and scientifically justified system. The greater emphasis on sociological thinking occurred within literature as well. That is reflected by the emergence of fictional works dealing with major social structures and their effects on human freedoms and its experience – from Elizabeth Gaskell's *North and South* (1855), which tackled issues of class and region in England; to Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), which cast issues of racial oppression in the U.S.; to Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace* (1869) which, among other things also grappled with the question of how to improve the lot of Russian peasants. None of these works is a utopian or dystopian writing. As a group, however, they reflect a broad intellectual shift toward acknowledgement of the ways that social systems shape human experience and either facilitate or limit human freedoms.

It is also doubtful that the Marxist view of social perfection as historically inevitable significantly shaped the course of utopian writing, given that few utopian writings after Plato

depict societies that are uniformly positive or perfect (Atwood 94; Vieira 13). Atwood remarks in this regard that, while there do exist examples of "extreme utopias," in which all inhabitants share the same concept of the good, as well as "extreme dystopias," which are marked by repressive and absolute control over their people,[7] "[i]n-between is where most Utopias-Dystopias, as well as most human societies fall" (94-95). This degree of non-absoluteness in utopian writings suggests that the Marxist idea of historical inevitability of social perfection did not come to permeate the genre.

Moreover, it was precisely around the time that Marxist ideas were taking root that dystopian visions began to emerge with clarity, a point that Vieira herself makes: "When the idea of euchronia came to be systematically promoted (i.e. when utopian thought turned towards the future), it was inevitably accompanied by the imagination of darker times" (16). Here, Vieira's suggests that the Marxist insistence on history/time as the central point of human development laid the foundation for the emergence of dystopian writing. However, it seems equally plausible that dystopic writings were enabled by a wider emergence of systematic approaches in the field of social studies. This possibility is further supported by the fact that dystopian writings – as opposed to the early failed utopias – almost inevitably highlight flawed social systems, but by no means uniformly highlight themes of communism.

The history of major periods in utopian writing makes one thing clear: despite their promoted nowhereness and nowheness, utopian works are, ultimately, deeply reflective of major social and intellectual undercurrents within the places and times they were written. Atwood makes a strong related point concerning her own dystopic novel, *The Handmaid's Tale*, when she refuses to label it as science fiction. According to her view, science fiction involves writing about things that are not possible in the present, whereas in *The Handmaid's Tale*, "[n]othing inconceivable takes place, and the projected trends on which my future society is based are already in motion" (92).

Yet, to say that utopian works merely reflect social context is to exclude their power to help construct the very same context to begin with, or to help *extend it*. Hence, the analysis proposed here focuses on such works as a discourse which reevaluates their importance, casting them not as merely imaginative reflections of contemporary social currents, but as active interventions into evolving systems of knowledge. The idea that utopian writings function as discourse is supported by the fact that many of the most enduring utopian works

---

[7] It is symptomatic of both the extreme utopia and the extreme dystopia that "neither contains any lawyers" (Atwood 4). The extreme utopia renders lawyers redundant by producing perfect unity among its members, while the extreme dystopia renders lawyers redundant by exerting total and tyrannical social control.

have been produced by leading intellectuals of their times, men and women with established political and social involvement – including figures such as Thomas More, George Orwell, and Aldous Huxley, the authors whose works are considered here.

UTOPIA/DYSTOPIA AND THE RISE OF THE NOVEL

It seems impossible to discuss works as diverse as Plato's *Republic*, More's *Utopia*, and Orwell's *1984*, without paying attention to their respective narrative forms. Although Plato's *Republic* assumes the form of dialog, it must be viewed as a clear example of a *political treatise*. Here the word political should be understood the same way it was used and understood by the Roman statesman Cicero, who employed the Greek word for political when describing his own Republic as a political treatise. In this context, the word "refers not primarily to practical politics, but to a branch of philosophy, the theory of the polis or city-state; this was regarded as a part of the larger study of 'ethics,' the theory of human character and behaviour" (Powell and Rudd xi). It systematically lays out Plato's ideas concerning the building of the ideal state, without allowing narrative elements such as plot or character to interfere with the methodical report of the author's ideas. This is a form open to a treatment as discourse (defined here as systems of statements that construct and enact knowledge about human societies, with each statement making a claim concerning what is desirable, knowable, or real), since Plato's treatise seeks directly to contribute to public opinion and debate.

More's *Utopia* takes a markedly different narrative approach than the *Republic*, presenting itself as an example of the travel writing genre[8]. The genre enjoyed great success in early modern Europe, with popularity fuelled by nonfiction reports of voyages to the so-called New World and to locations like Tahiti, Australia, Patagonia, and Hawaii. Travel accounts of real explorations introduced the radical other to Europe[9] and helped open European perception to the possibility of alternate social orders (Trouillot 14-18; Vieira 3-4). Yet, fictional travel accounts tended to merge with nonfiction ones in the public imagination. An intriguing number of writers of utopian travel narratives also produced early anthropological (nonfiction) writings. In this light, it appears possible (or perhaps mandatory) to treat utopian travel accounts as contributions to discourses concerning the prospect and appeal of alternative social arrangements.

---

[8] The 1743 edition published in Scotland was subtitled "A Philosophical Romance" (Davis 30).

[9] Although, the Muslim Arab provided the original *other* against which European identity solidified (Trouillot 20-21).

But the rise of the modern novel represents the most radical shift in narrative approaches to utopia. In both the political treatise and the travel account, narrative elements are secondary to didactic content. This is not possible within a fully developed novel, for several reasons. First, the modern novel presents itself explicitly as fiction; second, and somewhat contrary, it seeks to create a sense of realness for the reader, primarily through presentation of detail, including descriptions of times, places, events, and sensory experiences that make the world of the novel *feel* real (Watt 32). Third, and most importantly, the modern novel probes into the inner lives and psychology of complex characters, so that the reader comes to identify with these characters and share their feelings about the stories' events (Watt 201). In a fully realized modern novel, the story unfolds according to the internal logics of a world and a series of events presented as *real* despite their fictive status. Didactic content must assume a secondary role to these outlines.

At first glance, it might seem difficult to treat novels as discourse in a Foucauldian sense. After all, Foucauldian discourse is identified with groups of statements emanating from expert professions and institutions such as medicine ("The History of Sexuality" 183-193) and penology/criminology ("Prison Talk" 37-54). These statements, however, are fundamental in the general framework for truth-production, as truth is:

> a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power. Each society has its regime of truth, its "general politics" of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true. ("Truth and Power" 131)

Yet, as it will be discussed anon, Foucault does not limit the concept of discourse to the statements of experts. Novels often make direct interventions into existing social discourses, even if they are not presented as such. So, the key thesis here is to view utopian/dystopian texts as discourses that articulate with power, not by representing themselves as knowledge, per se, but by plotting the boundaries of what might be known. These are *discourses of the socially conceivable*.

MICHEL FOUCAULT AND DISCOURSE

Michel Foucault was both a philosopher and an historian greatly influenced by the history of science, and his major works include continuous historical investigations of evolving bodies of Western expertise on mental illness, sexuality, and crime/prisoner life

(Gutting, n. p.). Each of these made signal contributions to their respective fields. However, it was Foucault's approach to discourse that established him as a major intellectual force across the disciplines. And it was Foucault's understanding of power[10] that gave his concept of discourse "a newly powerful critical function" (Bové 53).

Foucault's conceptualization of power is extensively grounded in Continental philosophy (see Gutting), but Foucault himself attributed the crucial shift in his understanding of power to his research of the history of prisons and techniques of prisoner control ("History of Sexuality" 183-184). Jeremy Bentham's "panopticon" is placed centrally in this new conceptualization, due to its reliance on observation as a technique of control, which is particularly effective and extensive in its effects because it raises a *sense of being watched* that prisoners themselves internalize (Gutting n. p.). For Foucault, the panopticon, along with numerous other techniques for controlling dangerous populations that emerged in late 18th-century and early 19th-century Western Europe, signalled a broader transformation in the exercise of power. While power had once been firmly centralized, exercised from the top down, new mechanisms of coordination and control reconstituted power as a field "coextensive with the social body" itself, so that "power *is* 'always already there' […] one is never 'outside' it, [and] there are no 'margins' for those who break with the system to gambol in" ("Power and Strategies" 141-142, emphasis in the original). Returning to the rise of surveillance as a mechanism of control, for instance, we might reference the ever-increasing number of contemporary contexts in which individuals feel watched – whether in stores (regardless of whether a store actually has its cameras switched on); or on London streets, due to a pervasive regime of CCTV; or even in their own living rooms, given that 'smart TVs' have been known to transmit the content of private conversations, without their owners' knowledge or consent (McGoogan n. p.).

Power, in this sense, courses through the social body. It is not primarily being wielded by a central authority via the threat of legal sanctions or physical violence, but:

> [p]ower must be analysed as something which circulates, or rather as something which only functions in the form of a chain. It is never localised here or there, never in anybody's hands, never appropriated as a commodity or piece of wealth. Power is employed and exercised through a net-like organisation. And not only do individuals circulate between its threads; they are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power. They are not only its inert or consenting target;

---

[10] Foucault suggests his own, characteristic approach to power did not emerge until after his writings on madness and mental illness in the early 1960s ("History of Sexuality" 183-184).

they are always also the elements of its articulation. In other words, individuals are the
vehicles of power, not its points of application. ("Two Lectures" 98)

For that reason, Foucault speaks of this power as *capillary*, referring to the thinnest
vessels that carry blood throughout the body and to locations furthest from the heart.[11]
Capillary power represents "the point where power reaches into the very grain of individuals,
touches their bodies and inserts itself into their actions and attitudes, their discourses, learning
processes and everyday lives" ("Prison Talk" 39). In modernity, power is exercised "*within
the social body, rather than *from above it*" ("Prison Talk" 39, emphasis in the original).

This is not to suggest that power in the modern era becomes formless, or that it is no
longer arranged according to the schemes that benefit the state or dominant classes. Power can
no longer be thought of as "a binary structure with 'dominators' on one side and 'dominated'
on the other" ("Strategies and Power" 142). Instead, an array of techniques and mechanisms,
originating from various centres of power – e.g., the state, professional bodies, or institutions
that control financial transactions – serve to shape and connect an ever-expanding network of
social relations through which power is enacted, extended, and enhanced.

Foucauldian discourse is generally understood as a series of statements issued from
institutions and professional bodies; describing specific domains of social life (e.g., madness,
sexuality, prisons); and which collectively endorse specific ideas concerning what is
desirable, knowable, or true in social life. Discourses are *systems of topics* on various
subjects, originating from agents who produce what is claimed to be the best, most accurate
knowledge of a subject. According to Foucault, the medical profession is the most significant
and prolific producer of discourse in the modern era, since "[i]t was in the name of medicine
both that people came to inspect the layout of houses, and equally, that they classified
individuals as insane, criminal, or sick" ("Body/Power" 62). But any number of fields could
be mentioned in this regard, from education, criminology, to social work and sociology,
management studies, ethics, etc. In representing itself as knowledge, discourse merely
disguises the fact that it is also a mechanism of power, one that organizes our very sense of
what is desirable, knowable, or true, in the interest of the state and other stakeholders.

It is a defining feature of a Foucauldian discourse that it cannot be fully catalogued or
recognised ("Prison Talk" 38). Although, central to Foucault's method is the assumption that
researchers can identify seeds of new knowledge around which discourses group and

---

[11] Also, Foucault describes this new form of power as 'synaptic,' referring to neural pathways in human bodies
("Prison Talk" 39).

multiply, and which play a special role in nurturing the power arrangements of a particular place and time. In this sense, the Foucauldian concept of discourse is far removed from the term so often used in literary studies, in connection with the New Criticism. For the New Critics, "discourses" contain specific, distinct rhetorical forms with "established identities," each of which "establishe[s] the limits of a particular genre" (Bové 50). When used in this narrow sense, discourse represents itself as a kind of transhistorical 'pure knowledge' generated by truth-seeking experts. What does and does not belong within a given literary discourse is exclusively the domain of experts. Non-experts have no role in creating or extending it.

In contrast, the opportunities to participate in discourse, understood in Foucauldian sense, are as all-embracing and omnipresent as power itself. This is because discourses offer what Bové calls "the power of positive production," by which he means: "a kind of power that generates certain kinds of questions, placed within systems that legitimate, support, and answer those questions," producing individuals "as agents capable of acting within them" (54). We might, for instance, consider how discourses of democracy and rights play out in everyday talk. Often, we hear people make claims such as, "in this country I have the right to do X," or "people who do not value this country should move out." Each such reference reinforces a sense of what democracy *is* (the desirable, knowable, or true), while strengthening the political justification for the form of regime under which the speaker lives. The reference claims the truth, even when the speaker's references to specific rights are illogical or technically incorrect. Simultaneously, such statements generate the experience of power and knowledge for the speaker, as "[t]he exercise of power itself creates and causes […] new objects of knowledge and accumulates new bodies of information" ("Prison Talk" 51). The procedure leads to the unavoidable deconstruction of the scientifically established spheres of knowledge, as truth converts to "a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation and operation of statements" emanating from the whole social body ("Prison Talk" 133). Ultimately, discourses come to shape what individuals hold to be, and actively confirm as being, "self-evident" or "commonsensical" (Bové 54). In Foucauldian view, what passes as self-evident or commonsensical is merely discourse that has achieved "the privilege of unnoticed power" (Bové 54).

Utopian/dystopian writings do not make straightforward claims to knowledge. As mentioned earlier, these texts almost uniformly reject their claim on the real. Plato's work is detached by suggesting that the ideal republic can only exist in rhetoric. More announces Utopia as a "nowhere" island, immersed in innuendo and textual artfulness. The dystopias of

Orwell and Huxley are set in the future, and thus out of the realm of actually knowable. Yet each of these disclaimers must be viewed with a grain of salt, because it is not the domain of such works to produce the same kind of knowledge as discourses emanating from fields such as medicine, psychiatry, criminology or social work. Utopian/dystopian texts are discourses of the *socially conceivable*, which articulate with power by pushing out the boundaries of the knowable.

Considering utopian/dystopian writings as discourse shapes the method taken to their analysis. A number of scholars of utopian writing seem preoccupied with defining the genre and determining what does or does not 'count' as a utopia, dystopia, euchronia, etc. (see, e.g., Sargent; Vieira). When treating texts as discourse in the Foucauldian sense, though, it makes little sense to focus on how well a work does or does not conform to an ideal genre. Instead, focus shifts to how the texts themselves operate to produce certain kinds of knowledge, or push out the boundaries of the conceivable, as in the case of utopian/dystopian texts.

THOMAS MORE'S *UTOPIA*

As noted above, More's *Utopia* is modelled on the early travel writing. This would become a popular subgenre in its own right, and utopian travel stories established a generally consistent narrative. These narratives featured a European individual who journeys to an unknown land (often one that is supposedly situated in newly explored territories) and by happy chance finds a native guide who, as the journey proceeds, explains native social practices and customs (e.g. religion, love/sex, economy). The traveller then returns home to retell the wonders of what he has learned concerning *other*, alternate ways of life (Vieira 6). The 18th-century Robinsonades and Gulliverianas, the most popular forms of imaginary voyages, employed this structure as the foundation for their narrative. Although such accounts could become quite farfetched, they shared and maintained a didactic core along with nonfiction travel accounts, representing an emerging European intellectual project "that tied order to the quest of universal truths, a quest that gave savagery and utopia their relevance" (Trouillot 21).

Intriguingly, the line between fictional utopian travel writing and nonfictional travel accounts became so blurred in this period that, "[o]utside of a restricted group of overzealous scholars and administrators, it mattered little to the larger European audience whether such works were fictitious or not" (Trouillot 15). Indeed, a number of notable intellectuals moved back and forth between fictional and nonfictional modes of writing on exotic others:

> Voltaire, who read voraciously the travel descriptions of his time, gave us *Candide* and *Zadig*. But he also used paraethnographic descriptions to participate in

anthropological debates of his time [...]. Denis Diderot, who may have read more travel accounts than anyone then alive, and who turned many of them into paraethnographic descriptions for the *Encyclopédie*, wrote two utopias true to form. Jean Jacques Rousseau, whom Claude Lévi-Strauss called "the father of ethnology," sought the most orderly link between the "state of nature" first described by Martire d'Anghiera and the "ideal commonwealth" envisioned by More and his followers. He thus unwittingly formalized the myth of the "noble savage" [...] (Trouillot 16)

In *Utopia*, however, More is not the narrator who travels to the fantasy island of Utopia, on which the book is focused. Instead, in the first section of the book, More recounts an ambassadorial trip to Holland, during which he meets with a friend, Peter Giles. Giles introduces him to Raphael Hythloday, a Portuguese man who supposedly encountered Utopia on his voyages with Amerigo Vespucci – thus establishing the *factual-fictional* fusion of utopian travel accounts. Yet the framing of the narrative viewpoint turns out to be doubly complex, since Peter Giles was a real, historical individual and More's friend, while Hythloday is a fictional character. Giles was well-known to the humanist intellectual circles emerging in early modern Europe, so his presence in the narrative serves to reinforce the humanist authenticity and seriousness of the text. Yet the introduction of Raphael Hythloday is an interruption that communicates something along the lines of an intellectual disclaimer. Contemporary readers would recognize the dual references of the character's name: Raphael, a reference to the archangel Raphael, who was a healer and the patron saint of sailors, and Hythloday, which "suggested to humanist grammarians an idle talker, a dealer in nonsense or an expert in trifles" (Davis 29). Furthermore, as Davis points out, once the name of his Portuguese conversationalist is revealed as a literary device loaded with biblical and classical references, More's own name becomes susceptible to examination as well. More's real name carries as many significant references as the name of his fictional character does, with Thomas referring to the doubter among Christ's apostles, and More meaning (through its Latin form) "the fool" (Davis 29).[12] Hence:

> [...] learned readers were immediately being asked to decide whether to attach
> credibility to an account by the most disinterested and experienced of travelers, a
> healer and divine messenger, but also perhaps a purveyor of nonsense, or to the
> reaction of a sceptic who might also be a fool (Davis 29)

In the first section of the book, More and Hythloday converse on a number of political matters and the picture becomes yet more complex. On the one hand, Hythloday is presented

---

[12] At the time, the latter was "a particularly relevant reference, given the publication of *Moriae Encomium, Praise of Folly*, by Erasmus in 1511" (Davis, 29).

as a man of great integrity, indicated by the fact that, although Giles urges Hythloday to enter king's service and thus make his mark on political affairs, Hythloday emphatically rejects the idea. He clarifies he would be tainted by engagement in politics, and that kings and princes generally seek flattery from their companions, not sage advice (More 8-10). Through this response, Hythloday proves himself to be an intellectual heir of Plato, whom he later cites directly on that point (More 33-48).

Hythloday proposes that "there is no room for philosophy in the courts of princes," More-the-narrator disagrees, suggesting that abstract philosophy is of little use to rulers, but that a practical and tactful philosopher would know how to make useful interjections at the right moment (More 47). When Hythloday states his criticism of private property, More counters with the advantages of private ownership. At moments such as this, More-the-narrator appears moderate and rational, while Hythloday comes across as too impassioned to be taken completely seriously.

A good deal of academic discussion of *Utopia* revolves around the issue of whether More-the-author meant to endorse the radical ideas that Hythloday introduces (see Davis). When the text is treated as discourse, the more interesting question is how the text operates, regardless of authorial intent. In this respect, the subtle othering of Hythloday makes it possible for the text to introduce potentially shocking ideas without acquiring the tone of a political manifesto. In a sense, this distancing is an extension of the *nowhereness* concept: the text moves readers from the real world of More, with his political concerns and intellectual activities, to the passionate worldview of Hythloday, a fictional but realistic character. At the same time, the reader is thrust into the fantasy world of Utopia itself, regarding which we have only Hythloday's reports. This gradual immersion in the unreal is mirrored by the covertly systematic way the text unfolds. Although scholars routinely refer to the first and second sections of the book, in reality there is no sharp division. In the first few pages, we accompany More to Holland where he meets Giles, who introduces him to Hythloday. Hythloday gradually speaks more and more of Utopia, encouraging More to suggest they retire to dinner, so that Hythloday can tell them about Utopia in greater detail. Thus, over dinner, Hythloday begins systematically relating his knowledge of Utopia, but this unfolds as a natural extension of earlier conversations and does not disrupt from the first section of the book. Then, suddenly, a new chapter heading appears, "Of Their Towns, Particularly of Amaurot" (60). From there the book reads as a series of brief proto-anthropological reports on various aspects of Utopia. More-the-narrator only briefly reappears at the end of these reports, noting to the reader that, since Hythloday seemed very tired, he delayed any sort of engaged

discussion of Utopia to another time (175). The only insight the reader is provided into More-the-narrator's assessment of Utopia is usually ambivalent. He declares that he finds several aspects of Utopian society "very absurd", although he admits "there are many things in the commonwealth of Utopia that I rather wish, than hope, to see followed in our governments" (175-176).

Because the rest of the book unfolds as a series of reports by Hythloday, readers do not ever access the voices or documents of Utopians or their discourses. In this respect, the treatment markedly differs from Orwell's and Huxley's novelistic accounts. Yet Hythloday provides plenty of details concerning Utopian social roles and education – neither of which can be regarded without treating the principal fact of Utopian society: its denial of private property.[13]

The rejection of private property is evident in the very way Utopians shape their social space, a point that articulates with the 20th-century work of Henri Lefebvre, who argued that social systems are embodied and lived through the spaces they create. The town Amaurot (and Hythloday notes that all Utopian towns are similar in their use of space) is laid out so that every house has a front door to the street and a back door to a garden. None of the houses are locked, because without a private property system there is no theft (although this idea is contradicted by Hythloday's account of the treatment of thieves, discussed immediately below). Moreover, every ten years, families switch houses by drawing lots, suggesting that even in More's time location was an essential element in the value of a property. Thus, Utopian custom demanded this value be spread as equally as possible among its citizens (62).

While the text imagines a society that functions without the institution of private property, it does not imagine a regime of complete equality in social roles. This is demonstrated most clearly by the fact that Utopian law allows holding slaves and indentured servants. Convicted thieves, for instance, are sentenced to serve as public workers, and they wear distinct clothes and haircuts to mark their servitude, although they can redeem themselves and regain their freedom through hard work (25-28). However, any potential instability presented by this servitude and the resulting social inequality, is explained:

> The only danger to be feared from them is their conspiring against the government; but those of one division and neighbourhood can do nothing to any purpose unless a general conspiracy were laid amongst all the slaves of the several jurisdictions, which cannot be done, since they cannot meet or talk together (28)

---

[13] This fact has made More a cornerstone of Communist thinkers. Karl Kautsky called *Utopia* "the foregleam of Modern Socialism," and Vladimir Lenin made sure More was included in a public monument portraying western thinkers admired by the new Soviet state (Papke 29).

Slaves are also taken in war, though the children of slaves taken on the battlefield are not considered slaves (115). Most notably, adulterers, like thieves, are sentenced to serve in the public works. Innocent spouses who wish to continue the marriage are condemned to follow them into this servitude (123).

Two tendencies emerge in these accounts of slavery and indentured servitude that run throughout the book. First, More (as the author) cannot seem to grasp a society without robbery and war, which are felt to be inevitable – even if it is a fantastic and isolated one. Once the book is treated as discourse, this becomes one of its most fascinating aspects: it exposes the limits to the socially conceivable. In addition, the role of gender in the imaginative rendering of Utopia's equality also lays bare crucial limits to the conceivable.

Clothing is used to highlight the equality of free people, as well as their rejection of wealth as an element of status. So, all Utopians dress plainly, "without any other distinction except what is necessary to distinguish the two sexes and the married and unmarried" (67). The text creatively presents an episode to emphasise how profoundly deep-rooted the plainness of self-presentation is in Utopian life. According to Hythloday, nearby island nations sometimes send ambassadors to Utopia and representatives from nations familiar with Utopian custom arrive plainly dressed. However, the Anemolians were insufficient acquainted with Utopian life and were, as Hythloday puts it, a "vainglorious rather than a wise people" (90). So, when three representatives of the Anemolians, one of Utopia's neighbouring nations, made a formal visit to Utopia, they came dressed in their finest clothes and decorated with gold and gems, reasoning that they would "look like gods, and strike the eyes of the poor Utopians with their splendour" (91). The Utopians were not impressed, though. When Utopian children began to say rude things about the outfit of an ambassador, "their mothers very innocently replied, 'Hold your peace! this, I believe, is one of the ambassadors' fools'" (91).

In Utopia, education is also used proactively to nurture equality, and every man and woman is educated in a trade. Here too, gender tramples the ideal equality scheme. Women, "for the most part, deal in wool and flax, which suit best with their weakness, leaving the ruder trades to the men" (68). Meanwhile, all individuals are expected to learn the skills of agriculture and animal husbandry. Since this work is particularly difficult, family units are required to send half of their members every two years to labor in the countryside, after which the laborers may return to the city (57).

Essential to the social scheme is the importance of family life – another significant limit to the conceivable. Utopians are expected to set up large households of 40 or more, with

a man and woman presiding as head of each extended family unit. The central position of the family unit helps explain the drastic penalties imposed for adultery. Similarly, pre-marital romantic relations are strictly punished:

> Their women are not married before eighteen nor their men before two-and-twenty, and if any of them run into forbidden embraces before marriage they are severely punished, and the privilege of marriage is denied them unless they can obtain a special warrant from the Prince. Such disorders cast a great reproach upon the master and mistress of the family in which they happen, for it is supposed that they have failed in their duty. The reason of punishing this so severely is, because they think that if they were not strictly restrained from all vagrant appetites, very few would engage in a state in which they venture the quiet of their whole lives, by being confined to one person, and are obliged to endure all the inconveniences with which it is accompanied (121-122)

Here, the text tries to tackle the prescribed necessity of monogamy, as well as the problems with it – through sanctions and moral discourse – as experienced by the European audience for whom More writes.

Amusingly, the Utopians are supposed to initiate a marriage by presenting the bride and groom naked, for each other's inspection. Hythloday and his European companions laugh at the custom, but the Utopians are puzzled by the idea that a man, who would want to inspect a horse before buying it, should be enthusiastic to marry a woman after seeing only a very little bit of her body (122). This bizarre custom is reminiscent of European livestock expositions.

Issues of cultural memory are rather scarcely registered, as opposed to social roles and education. In Utopia, the cultural memory is virtually non-existent, as their education system is evasive towards history. The whole society exists, supposedly happily, exclusively in the present and the near future. This is one of *Utopia's* fallacies. However, the text presents an extended account on religion that is revealing in this respect. According to Hythloday, the Utopians practice a wide variety of religions; their forms of worship varying from region to region, and even town to town. The culture is described as remarkably open to debate over the ideal form of worship. Moreover, a number of the Utopians are motivated to embrace Christianity, after learning about it from Hythloday and his companions. There is a limit to this openness, however, as marked by the case of one Utopian convert to Christianity who began preaching that the unconverted will be condemned to Hell. For this, the converted Christian was banished from Utopia. Hythloday explains this by noting that Utopus, founder

of the Utopian nation, knew that earlier inhabitants of the island fought among themselves over religion, and that this had made them easy to conquer. Thus:

> After he had subdued them he made a law that every man might be of what religion he pleased, and might endeavour to draw others to it by the force of argument and by amicable and modest ways, but without bitterness against those of other opinions; but that he ought to use no other force but that of persuasion, and was neither to mix with it reproaches nor violence […] (151)

Here the text is dealing with the toll of religious wars on Europe, and perhaps, the emerging humanist attempts to defend Christianity without condemning nonbelievers. At the same time, the passage speaks to clashing assumptions regarding life in the exotic lands of the New World. On the one hand, Utopians are presented as people who learn from history and use cultural memory to refine their practices. On the other, they are presented as people open to the new and willing to shed tradition with ease. In this respect, the text seems to be speaking less of the qualities needed to ensure a good life and a peaceful society, and more of the European imagination of native peoples as willing 'blank slates.'

More's depiction of Utopia supports Foucauldian notions of power and the pervasiveness of discourse, enacted by the knowledge within the social body. The text is unable to fully suspend the othering of race, restraints on sexuality and gender roles – proving the difficulty of stepping outside the social context Thomas More was immersed in. Placing the island nation outside the familiar geographic sphere, the author had the ability to create distance from the European socio-political environment and present a plausible imagining of a *good place*. By placing Utopia outside the systems of statements that stake a claim to what is desirable, knowable, and true, More was given a platform to explore the socially conceivable, which inevitably proved to be – *nowhere*.

GEORGE ORWELL'S *1984*

With *1984* we enter fully into the realm of the dystopic novel. The extent to which the reader does or does not find the narrative believable no longer relies on the personal credentials of the narrator/reporter. It is fully dependent on the believability of the characters, their experiences, and their internal states. The text's discursive elements unfold according to the internal logics of the plot. It is in stark contrast to *Utopia*, which uses plot as a device for systematic delivery of discourse; indicating systems of statements that construct and enact knowledge about human societies, with each statement making a claim concerning what is desirable, knowable, or true. Nor does *1984* rely on *Utopia*'s clever ambiguities and

humorous word play. Here the narrator is third-person heterodiegetic and the tone is utterly serious.[14] From the first page, we are thrust into the life and world of Winston Smith as he seeks alternative truths and pursues illicit love in a totalitarian state.

Violence, or the threat of it, is a constant in the fictive police state of Oceania. At least once a month the Party orchestrates public hangings of supposed enemies. Each day it sponsors thousands of "Two Minutes Hate" events, where citizens gather to vent their rage at a man named Emmanuel Goldstein. Once the chief author of Oceania's "Ingsoc" (the abbreviation for "English Socialist") ideology and a close comrade of Oceania's ruler, Big Brother, Goldstein has turned against the Party and gone underground. From there he leads a secretive resistance movement known as the Brotherhood (or so, at least, the dominant narrative suggests). Though the resistance is nowhere visible in everyday life, the *idea* of Goldstein functions as an ever-present symbol of treachery and deceit – to such an extent, that his image is nearly as omnipresent as Big Brother's. At a Two Minutes Hate near the start of the book, Winston watches as participants go into a state of frenzy, "leaping up and down in their places and shouting at the tops of their voices" (18). One woman – later revealed to be Julia, the Fiction department worker who becomes Winston's secret lover – begins shouting, "Swine! Swine! Swine!" and tosses a book at the screen (18).

Meanwhile, citizens are subject to an unescapable regime of surveillance and control. Party members are monitored via telescreens in their homes, so that even the things they say in their sleep can be analysed for signs of deviation. Approval is needed to travel more than 100 km from one's home, and police patrol the railway stations, checking documents and raising "awkward questions" for Party members, even when they travel within the 100 km zone (148). Couples wishing to marry must go before a special committee that only grants permission if they display no signs of attraction to one another, unveiling a taboo against sexual pleasure. It is conveyed indirectly, as a sort of aversion "rubbed into every Party member from childhood onwards," as well as directly, through groups such as the Junior Anti-Sex League, which promote lifelong celibacy and artificial insemination as the sole means of procreation. "This [position], Winston was aware, was not meant altogether seriously, but somehow it fitted in with the general ideology of the Party" (84).

It might be tempting to conclude that Orwell's Oceania, with its highly centralized mechanisms of control, offers a contrast to Foucauldian notions of power and discourse.

---

[14] Technically, the book is a satire, as Orwell himself suggested (Kellner 238). However, in terms of tone, the text is thoroughly serious, displaying countless details and snapshots of Winston's thoughts, as well as recollections, in order to convey a sense of reality to life under conditions of extreme repression.

Indeed, social theorist Douglas Kellner makes this very point, noting: "power in capitalist societies is, as Foucault argues, diffused through different institutions, disciplines, and discourses that often function is much more subtle and complex ways than in the repressive societies of Orwell's nightmare" (232). Consequently, Kellner contends, *1984* neglects the "micropolitics of resistance" that emerge when power is so dispersed (232). Ultimately, he suggests, *1984*'s vision of power and control is "quite flawed" and "should be corrected by the insights of contemporary social theory" (231).

Given that *1984* responded to the threats of Nazism and Stalinism – a point that Kellner also acknowledges – it seems odd to fault Orwell for his focus on the totalitarian exercise of power. To criticise him for failing to anticipate theories that would not be developed for another two decades seems inappropriate. Far more importantly, Kellner seems to have ignored the subtle ways that *1984* in fact anticipates Foucauldian approaches.

Oceania accomplishes widespread forms of surveillance, but it cannot arrange the total monitoring of its citizens. For instance, after Winston purchases his diary in the seedy second-hand shop, he determines that he must wait at least a month before visiting the shop again. Even with this strategy in place, he is overcome by anxiety, knowing that there is no way to determine "whether the proprietor of the shop could be trusted" (Orwell 126). Winston is not certain whether he is being followed, or that he has ever been seen entering the shop, or that the shop owner is an informant. But, the very *possibility* of these things creates a persistent field of uncertainty, through which power is extended and dispersed.

In addition, the threat of force is dispersed as well. There are public hangings reminiscent to pre-modern Europe. The "Two Minutes Hate" events operate differently, inviting citizens to become mechanisms of control themselves. Power is everywhere in this scenario. Nevertheless, instances of potential opposition appear – at least for brief moments. So, the reader learns that:

> […] at one moment Winston's hatred was not turned against Goldstein at all, but, on the contrary, against Big Brother, the Party, and the Thought Police; and at such moments his heart went out to the lonely, derided heretic on the screen, sole guardian of truth and sanity in a world of lies. And yet the very next instant he was at one with the people about him, and all that was said of Goldstein seemed to him to be true (19)

At another moment Winston notices that, although Goldstein was the focus of hate at events held across Oceania every day – his very image provoking ecstatic frenzies of rage – his influence never seemed to be more present. It suggests an ongoing dialectic of power and resistance.

Here it becomes clear that discourse is paramount in Oceania; only, this is discourse at the extremes. At the heart of the government's power is its ability to overturn the prior meanings of words and their logical, historic connections, establishing a set of seemingly absurd guidelines as reliable knowledge: "WAR IS PEACE. FREEDOM IS SLAVERY. IGNORANCE IS STRENGTH" (Orwell 21, emphasis in the original). These slogans are etched into the edifice of the Ministry of Truth, or Minitrue. The Ministry is placed in a structure in the form of a stunning, white pyramid, 300-meters high, with rows of windows that – when the light shifts away – appear "grim as the loopholes of a fortress" (34). The massive architectural form of the Ministry is itself a discursive act, communicating the impossibility of challenge.

Yet this seemingly blunt ideology is not merely imposed from above. Like any discourse in a Foucauldian sense, it operates as an expansive system of institutionally-generated knowledge, emanating not only from the four major state Ministries, but from other groups, such as the Junior Anti-Sex League, which actively supplement its content and extend its boundaries. The active participation and knowledge-work of individuals is also key, as exemplified by the character Syme. One of Winston's colleagues at the Ministry of Truth, Syme is working on a new dictionary of Newspeak, the evasive and abbreviated language that is the lifeblood of Oceania's institutions. Syme enthusiastically explains how the new dictionary will crystallize Newspeak in its definitive form, one capable of acting as a new language for the entire population. "We're destroying words – scores of them, hundreds of them, every day," Syme says with pride. "We're cutting the language down to the bone" (65). He cannot see that Newspeak will never take on a finished form, that its *raison d'être* is to keep language in constant flux. It functions as a gatekeeping mechanism and a way to dislocate any sense of cultural and historical heritage that might pose a challenge to the state.[15] Like any professional who works within the doctrines of a discourse, Syme sees only its promise of knowledge and progress, not its normalizing and power-laden implications. Here, it is useful to recall Foucault on criminological discourses, where he finds enormous seductive potential exerted by discourse – power is seductive.

Social roles are intimately entangled with discourse in the state of Oceania, where one is either a member of the Party, or a "prole." The text offers little insight into the life of

---

[15] In this context of extreme discursive control, even seemingly harmless uses of language can represent moments of resistance and the seeds of counter-discourse. So, for instance, the shopkeeper Carrington hums an old nursery rhyme for Winston: "Oranges and lemons say the bells of St. Clemens […]" After hearing this fragment of pre-Oceania cultural knowledge, Winston concludes, "you had the illusion of actually hearing bells, the bells of a lost London that still existed somewhere or other" (126).

proles, but it appears they are primarily distinguished by their relative distance from the sites where knowledge is produced. They are also portrayed as easy-going consumers of cultural products that reflect and carry state discourses. For instance, Winston notes how a new "Hate Song" has become pervasive because, "[t]he proles had taken a fancy to it, and in the midnight streets it competed with the still-popular 'It was only a hopeless fancy'" (187). Party members, by contrast, serve the four major bureaucracies of Oceania – the Ministry of Peace, the Ministry of Truth, the Ministry of Love, and the Ministry of Plenty (273) – propagating and putting into action the discourses they produce.

How well a member "carries" these discourses can determine their status, or even their fate. For instance, much of Oceania seems to take only sporadic notice of pronouncements by the Ministry of Peace (which functions as the Ministry of War), and "it is in the ranks of the Party, and above all of the Inner Party, that the true war enthusiasm is found" (272). Yet enthusiastic belief is by no means a requirement for maintaining one's job and social position, as illustrated by the character Julia, Winston's illicit lover. Julia does not share Winston's strong need to struggle against Oceania's structure of official knowledge. She simply possesses a deep-seated sensuality that drives her to risk physical intimacy despite the state's counter-erotic stance. (As Winston sarcastically remarks, "You're only a rebel from the waist downwards" [196].) Aside from her sensuality, Julia is a competent manager of her social role. She fulfils her job in the Fiction department, gladly takes part in Two Minutes Hates, and casually ignores Winston's attempts at exposing Party fabrications. "Talking to her, [Winston] realized how easy it was to present an appearance of orthodoxy while having no grasp whatever of what orthodoxy meant," and in this, the text implies that she is hardly unique in her relationship to the state (196-197). Although not completely brainwashed subjects, Party members such as Julia apathetically use dominant discourses as a routine part of their jobs and their social roles.

Winston is convinced, however, that the secret to resistance – and freedom – lies in determining and articulating a cohesive counter-discourse. In this regard, he faces an uphill battle. The problem is not simply that certain maxims of Ingsoc ideology are literally etched in stone and voiced by nearly all those around him; whether out of professional pride, a sense of their social roles, a desire to survive, or simply fear. But in Oceania, the function of knowledge production is to disrupt the certainty of knowledge, to defeat cultural and historical memory, and render the accumulation of continuous collective memory impossible. Winston works at the Ministry of Truth continuously 'rectifying' news accounts. For instance, when Big Brother delivers an inaccurate prediction, Winston receives instructions to alter

newspaper coverage, in order to bring the reported prediction in line with actual events. Minitrue workers apply similar methods to every form of communication, including posters, photos, films, and even cartoons. Thus, "[d]ay by day and almost minute by minute the past was brought up to date" (51). Even abbreviations like Minitrue are consciously engineered to disrupt any potential association with past words which might evoke cultural memory or counter-knowledge:

> [T]he associations called up by a word like MINITRUE are fewer and more controllable than those called up by MINISTRY OF TRUTH. This accounted not only for the habit of abbreviating whenever possible, but also for the almost exaggerated care that was taken to make every word easily pronounceable (387)

Education functions as a source for the constant reshaping of memory. At one point, Julia naively repeats the *fact* that the Party invented the airplane. Winston is certain this is false. He is older than Julia and recalls that, when he was a student, it was only the helicopter that the Party claimed to have invented. He suspects, the Party will teach the next generation children that it invented the steam engine. Yet, "when he told her that aeroplanes had been in existence before he was born and long before the Revolution, the fact struck her as totally uninteresting" (193). In an atmosphere of continuously shifting knowledge, *real* knowledge has no firm ground to be planted and to flourish – discourse itself is paramount. Education filtered by dominant state discourses reshapes history in its own image. History is nothing more than "a verbal structure in the form of a narrative prose discourse that purports to be a model […] of past structures and processes in the interest of *explaining what they were by representing* them" (White 2, emphasis in the original).

For this reason, Winston becomes obsessed with the hope of obtaining a copy of an underground tract. It is referred to simply as "the book," that is supposed to have been written by Goldstein. The book is used to induct new members of the Brotherhood, and – according to O'Brien, the man whom Winston comes to know as a Brotherhood member – its potential for disrupting state-produced knowledge is so significant, Oceania's Thought Police are constantly involved in tracking down and destroying copies of it. Yet, O'Brien assures him, "The book is indestructible. If the last copy were gone, we could reproduce it almost word for word" (224). The assurance resonates with Winston's hope that alternative systems of knowledge not only exist but are guaranteed continuity through their life within a community. Almost by definition, the individual's *alternative knowledge* represents a form of madness, though alternative knowledge shared among a network of individuals represents a true counter-discourse, a point of resistance.

Here we learn a crucial aspect about how the novel itself operates as a discursive artefact. It reveals a point of resemblance to the utopian travel narratives such as More's. In *Utopia* a chain of acquaintances (More to Giles to Hythloday) leads us into the discursive heart of the text: a systematic exposition and "tour" of a fantastic society. In *1984*, a chain of subtle cues leads Winston to gradually place trust in the figure of O'Brien, leading us to the discursive heart of the novel: a systematic exposition and tour of Ingsoc ideology – in the form of Goldstein's book. For Winston, the book is the holy grail of sanity and resistance, a confirmation of all that he suspects about truth and knowledge in Oceania. "In a sense," the text remarks:

> it told him nothing that was new, but that was part of the attraction. It said what he would have said, if it had been possible for him to set his scattered thoughts in order. It was the product of a mind similar to his own, but enormously more powerful, more systematic, less fear-ridden. The best books, he perceived, are those that tell you what you know already (252-253)

Here, for instance, Winston receives confirmation that the world of Oceania is:

> [a] bare, hungry, dilapidated place compared with the world that existed before [the revolution that brought the Party to power], and still more so if compared with the imaginary future to which the people of that period looked forward (238)

Science and technology do not serve collective advancement but are employed solely to aid the perpetual pursuit of war. In turn, perpetual war has become a mechanism for consuming surplus production and ensuring that the standard of living never rises above a basic level. Through this policy, Winston learns the goals of Oceania and the two other mega states with which it perpetually battles. It is turning from one enemy to another so frequently that the notion of "the enemy" becomes blurred. Thus, despite all the many cues that Oceania is modelled on Soviet society, we come to realize that *1984* is not a would-be manifest against either capitalism or communism. Rather, it strives to be a warning of the extremes that can emerge as governments seek to impose control over vast and educated populations. Finally, *1984* is also a contemplation on the power and failings of language.

In the end, of course, we learn that O'Brien is no resistance fighter, but rather an agent of the state, and both Winston and Julia are doomed. During his torture and reconditioning, O'Brien visits Winston, and Winston asks him about the book. O'Brien reveals that he wrote the book, along with other Party members. Its 'secret knowledge' is nothing more than what its authors knew people like Winston already believed. Nevertheless, O'Brien also admits that the book's description of how Oceania came to consolidate its power is true. It possibly

suggests that, if individuals such as Winston trusted more to their own memories and understanding of reality, rather than allowing themselves to be seduced by the discourses of power, with all their promises of progress and knowledge, something like resistance would be possible.

Ultimately, the dystopian vision of *1984* leaves little hope for resistance. Nevertheless, what little hope it offers seems to be related to bonds of love and friendship that has the potential to emancipate individuals to act in noble and irrational ways. There is the potentially subversive power of Winston and Julia's love. There is the empowerment of camaraderie, represented by the regretfully fictive Brotherhood. Human connections paved the path to Winston's tragedy, though, just as well, they could have been the source of salvation as well. In Foucauldian perspective, human connections have the theoretical capacity to establish a counter-discourse, to create an intellectual alternative with the ability of "counterposing" power ("Truth and Power" 128). Foucault sees resistance as an intellectual mode of action, as the resistance is a "battle 'for truth', or at least 'around truth' – […] by truth I do not mean 'the ensemble of truths which are to be discovered and accepted', but rather 'the ensemble of rules according to which the true and the false are separated and specific effects of power attached to the true'" ("Truth and Power" 132). The reason Winston's resistance failed lies in the origin of the *alternative knowledge* he relied on; the book he trusted is not the origin of counter-discourse, but, in fact, the artefact of the prevailing discourse. The *alternative truth* was a chimera, an extended arm of the *Party truth*, and the source of his demise.

ALDOUS HUXLEY'S *BRAVE NEW WORLD*

In a sense, *Brave New World* creates a circuit with *Utopia* and *1984*. Like *1984*, *Brave New World* is a novel that explores a dystopic scenario of total state control. However, it shares the playful tone and ambiguity of *Utopia*, employing a manner of writing that is, at times, matching satire. Like *1984*, the plot leads to an immersion into a distinct system of knowledge, where all the principles of the state are inverted. However, rather than leading to a resistance manifesto as *1984*, it leads to the tour of a primitive space, thereby resonating with *Utopia*.

In *Brave New World*, a near-total world domination is achieved through control of procreation, which occurs exclusively in laboratories. Extensive thought conditioning is employed in infants and children, who are raised in collective facilities. The inspiration for this efficient assembly-line production of individuals traces directly to Henry Ford, who is treated as the sole deity of the new World State. Rather than "Our Lord," people instinctively

invoke "Our Ford," and the introduction of the Model T is apparently taken as year one of the World State's new history.

Inequality and class divisions – which have mostly been erased in *Utopia* through the elimination of private property, and which are kept at bay in Oceania through the pursuit of perpetual war – are here resolved through a systematic genetic engineering of individuals in uniform batches, ranging from Alphas, who are destined to take part in the mechanisms of state control, to Epsilons, destined to perform manual labour. Epsilons are produced by depriving them of oxygen in their embryonic state, and embryos destined to become tropical laborers are given x-rays when exposed to cool temperatures, in order to develop individuals with inherent intolerance for cold. All classes of infants then undergo intensive neo-Pavlovian conditioning, in order to ensure, for example, that they grow up with an instinctive dislike of books, if books are not meant to be part of their adult social roles.

In *1984*, Party members are monitored in their sleep, in case things they say in their sleep give up signs of deviant tendencies. In *Brave New World*, sleep is used as an optimal time to implant subconscious messages concerning social roles. So, for instance, Beta infants hear a message on a continuous loop that reinforces the advantages of their future class position:

> Alpha children wear grey. They work much harder than we do, because they're so
> frightfully clever. I'm really awfully glad I'm a Beta, because I don't work so hard.
> And then we are much better than the Gammas and Deltas. Gammas are stupid. They
> all wear green […] (21)

As a result, discourses of the state become hardwired in developing brains. At one point in the novel, one of the central characters Lenina becomes troubled, thinking about the lives of Epsilons. Then she recalls the soothing recording concerning her place as an Alpha, which she heard whenever she woke in the night as a child. With this, her sense of the 'natural order' returns: "'I'm glad I'm not an Epsilon,' said Lenina, with conviction" (50). Henry, the man she is with, responds by reminding her that Epsilons similarly feel thankful not to be Alphas or Betas. As the London Director of Hatcheries and Conditioning remarks to his students, "that is the secret of happiness and virtue—liking what you've got to do" (13).

The erasure of cultural memory reinforces this contentment. Establishment of the World State involved a "campaign against the Past," including the destruction of museums and monuments (36). All old books were banned, in part (as we learn towards the end of the book, when a senior state Controller describes the ideological underpinnings of the Fordist

order) because the beauty of so many old literary works hinged on conflict and tragedy, which the state supposedly has eradicated.

Education completes the erasure. Speaking to the London crop of students, the Controller says, "'you all remember, I suppose, that beautiful and inspired saying of Our Ford's: History is bunk. History,' he repeated slowly, 'is bunk'" (26). In particular, children learn nothing of family life in earlier eras. Chunks of information concerning nuclear family life (which no longer exists) can be used to shock and horrify.

However, rather than suppressing the erotic, the World State promotes it ceaselessly, through ever-present pornographic "feelies" (films that incorporate a sense of touch), requirements to take part in weekly orgies, and a free supply of the drug known as soma, which is often taken during sex. Still, multiple levels of ideology, cultural practice, and medical intervention support a strict separation of sex from both reproduction and romance. Women of childbearing age are kept in a constant state of infertility, and 'coupling' is utterly taboo.

In fact, one of the central tensions of the book is Lenina's growing attachment to Henry. In a locker room scene, Lenina tells her friend, Fanny, that she has been feeling slightly off – so much so that her doctor has recommended that she takes her first Pregnancy Substitute earlier than most young women, in order to help her calm down. "'I hadn't been feeling very keen on promiscuity lately,'" Lenina admits. "Fanny nodded her sympathy and understanding. 'But one's got to make the effort,' she said sententiously, 'one's got to play the game. After all, everyone belongs to everyone else'" (31). This last phrase, "everyone belongs to everyone else," is in fact one of the mantras that all children hear 62,000 times in their sleep, conditioning them to believe that sexual intimacy should be shared without restrictions.

Thus, control is achieved in the new World State through the extensive and efficient exercise of the pleasure principle. This becomes especially clear through the character of Bernard Marx, an Alpha whose out-of-standard behaviour and ideas initiate the rumour that he was accidentally oxygen-deprived at birth. Through Bernard, the text suggests that natural impulses continue to reside under the surface of conditioning, and that among these are a man's feelings of protectiveness and jealousy for the woman he desires. Marx is attracted to Lenina, but instead of simply asking her to have sex – to which she doubtlessly would agree – he takes her to a romantic spot and attempts to have a meaningful *talk* with her, even sharing his dangerous ideas of personal freedom. Lenina is confused and distressed. More than anything, she cannot comprehend why they are not simply having sex. "'Everyone says I'm

awfully pneumatic,'" she flirts, using the industrial word used for attractive women. Bernard agrees, but it pains him that Lenina thinks of herself as "meat" (62). Due to what the text suggests is an atavistic streak of normalcy, Bernard yearns to know one woman well, to protect her from even her own instincts, and to delay having sex so that passion can build. For this kind of behaviour, his Director criticizes him strongly, threatening to relocate Bernard to Iceland (one of the few territories outside of state control) if he continues to fail to demonstrate the "proper standard of infantile decorum" in his life outside work (66).

For Kellner, "Aldous Huxley's vision of a pleasantly manipulative society in *Brave New World* provides a more salient vision of how contemporary capitalist societies function than Orwell's nightmare of totalitarian horror" (230). However, Kellner appears to overlook that modern capitalism fosters compliance (and consumption) mostly through imperative, as well as hollow, discourses of individualism, identity, and differentiation – and it casually explains economic distress in corresponding fashion, through discourses of poor individual choice. So, labelling the ideologies of the World State as discourse may not be entirely correct, since individuals are biologically engineered and psychologically conditioned to accept the canons of the state. If the extreme coercion of *1984* emerges most clearly at the end of the novel, when Winston is tortured and brainwashed, until he famously accepts that $2 + 2 = 5$, in *Brave New World* the torture and brainwashing takes place in the initial stages, the first few years of life, including the embryonic stage. The central characters are adults, who have already been fully *formatted* and developed.

It is difficult to conclude that the character of Bernard represents a model for resistance against the state of *Brave New World*. This becomes clearest when Bernard takes Lenina to the former American Southwest, in order to vacation on one of the "Savage Reservations," where people continue to live outside the efficiency-driven structures of the new state. Special permission from the Director is needed to travel there, and the reservation is surrounded by an electrified fence. The text makes clear that this is a voyage into otherness, and potentially a journey to utopia within dystopia.

However, it quickly becomes clear that there is little promise of redemption in so-called savage societies. Both Bernard and Lenina are discouraged by the filth, poverty, and lack of technology and education to be found there among a population dominated by Native Americans. Lenina is horrified to find that the people of the reservation age, and her horror is magnified by the fact that they are dark-skinned:

> An almost naked Indian was very slowly climbing down the ladder from the first-floor
> terrace of a neighbouring house-rung after rung, with the tremulous caution of extreme

old age. His face was profoundly wrinkled and black, like a mask of obsidian. The

toothless mouth had fallen in. At the corners of the lips, and on each side of the chin, a

few long bristles gleamed almost white against the dark skin (75)

Thus, while the text prepares us for an inversion of the idea of the savage, in the end it shifts to basic stereotypes of native people as impoverished, illiterate, and brutal.

Bernard discoveries that, unlike the Ford deity who demands his followers to pursue efficient and rationalized pleasure, the people of the reservation worship Christ who demands irrational sacrifice, self-abnegation, and pain. He befriends John, the son of a Beta woman named Linda who was left stranded and pregnant on the reservation decades ago by the Director. He learns from John that the reservation life is marked by an insistent pressure to conform, just like the life in London, and that both John and his mother were cruelly ostracized because she did not practice monogamy. Linda herself dreams of the order, cleanliness, promiscuity, and advanced technology of the World State. Whether this is because her conditioning makes it impossible to adjust, or because she really prefers her old life, it is impossible to say. Bernard and John bond, although, not over a shared vision of freedom and identity, but merely over the shared pain of being different.

Ultimately, Bernard gains permission to bring John and Linda back to London – though he brings them back as *interesting specimens*, rather than as friends. This venture is reminiscent of the tradition of European voyagers who brought indigenous people back with them as oddities to be paraded. Bernard does not hesitate to enjoy the minor celebrity rank he achieves by doing so:

Success went fizzily to Bernard's head, and in the process completely reconciled him

(as any good intoxicant should) to a world which, up till then, he had found very

unsatisfactory. In so far as it recognized him as important, the order of things was

good. But . . . he yet refused to forego the privilege of criticizing this order. For the act

of criticizing heightened his sense of importance […] (105)

Ironically, Lenina likes him now more than she ever did before, but Bernard – feeling emboldened – embraces promiscuity.

John alternates between painful emotions of longing for Lenina and sessions of self-flagellation in which he calls out "strumpet" (175). And through his self-flagellation, he initiates a craze among London Alphas. Indeed, they attach none of John's religious aspects to the practice, but experiencing pleasure all their lives, they seem to have discovered a new faucet of pleasure in pain. Eventually, the pressure leads John to hang himself.

If there is any glimmer of hope for escape from dystopia, the text offers it in the form of the Controller's decision to exile Bernard and a minor character named Watson, to one of the few territories ungoverned by the state. Bernard is disappointed and has to be carried from the room and soma-tized. Watson remains with the Controller, who comments that if Bernard were wiser, he'd know that this was actually a sort of a reward – being sent to a place filled by "people who aren't satisfied with orthodoxy, who've got independent ideas of their own" (155).

The place Bernard is exiled to turns out to be an island, entirely detached from known centres of power and politics. The prospect is given to cut ties from the system of discourse he was struggling to completely accept. The subversiveness of his actions, in the form of shy attempts to disperse alternative knowledge, creates an opportunity for casting away his New World identity and assuming a new one. Instead of appreciating the possibility, Bernard is petrified. He realises he "is the product of a relation of power" exercised time and time again, over his lifetime, and his current discourse environment is the very confirmation of his being ("Questions on Geography" 74). In abandoning the power/knowledge/truth system, Bernard sees the erasure of his entire persona. Viewed in this light, the total resistance to discourse may come at the expense of expunging oneself from the public world – becoming nobody. At the end, we are inescapably returned to More's *Utopia,* its social otherness potential and the inviting idea of a land that is, by definition, really nowhere.

SHARED UTOPIC/DYSTOPIC DISCOURSE IN THE THREE TEXTS

Utopia, *1984*, and *Brave New World* were all produced by notable intellectuals of their times. Thomas More was a prominent English defender of Catholicism, later sainted by the Catholic church. He was an active participant in politics, who served in Parliament, and a friend to other distinguished intellectuals of the time, including Erasmus ("Thomas More Biography" n. p.). George Orwell (born Eric Arthur Blair) built his reputation as both a novelist and war reporter, who famously travelled to Spain to aid the fight against Franco's forces in the Spanish Civil war. Later, he became a BBC producer, thereby cementing his role as public intellectual. Orwell authored not one, but *two* allegorical and dystopian political novels, *1984* and *Animal Farm*, whose worldwide readerships continue to this day ("George Orwell Biography" n. p.). Aldous Huxley was born to a prominent intellectual family that included one of England's earliest and best-known advocates of Darwinian theory. He established himself as a writer early in life; and socialized with the likes of Virginia Woolf, Bertrand

Russell and T.S. Eliot, gaining a reputation as "one of the most significant minds in England" at the time ("Aldous Huxley Biography" n. p.).

The texts considered here added neologisms and new concepts to the collective vocabularies through which we imagine social life and political possibilities. The date 1984 has become a pervasive reference to totalitarianism and thought control. The idea of a *brave new world* is invoked whenever new technology emerges with the overwhelming potential for reshaping human life. And *Utopia* introduced a universal term for the imagination of social perfection. These facts alone suggest that, more than merely a genre, utopian/dystopian writings constitute an evolving discourse, rooted not in institutions such as medicine or social work, but in the special sphere of social and political influence. As with all discourses, what these texts take for granted is as important as what they appear to proclaim. As Bové notes, common sense is discourse that has achieved "the privilege of unnoticed power" (54). With Bové's notion in mind, three observations emerge: the significance of gender and sexuality, the invisibility of race and the transience of hope.

In the discourse of the socially conceivable, gender and sexuality (along with related issues of eroticism, procreation, family life) arise as the most consistent unifying force. In *Utopia*'s imagination of a potentially ideal state, social stability depends on the formation of extended households, each overseen by a single, married heterosexual couple. The book suggests that these couples are attracted to one another, since it is unthinkable that they would marry without first seeing each other fully nude. (The Utopians wonder at the "folly of the men of all other nations, who, if they are but to buy a horse of a small value, are so cautious that they will see every part of him," but are willing to marry a woman without first inspecting her body [More 128].), While physical attraction holds importance in sanctioned relationships, both pre-marital sex and infidelity are treated as serious crimes and are carefully controlled and kept in check. The importance of marital stability is particularly evident among couples that lead households, for they are expected to act as extensions of state power. They are entrusted with keeping order in their spheres of influence by, for instance, ensuring that young people do not engage in pre-marital sex and deciding who should be sent to the countryside every two years to fulfil the household's agrarian work quota. The text goes into detail about how equality is maintained among family units, yet no attention is given to equality within them. The family unit is both a social foundation and a black box.

Several centuries later, we see the family problematic emerge in dystopic visions of state control. *Brave New World* basically functions as an inversion of *Utopia* in this respect. Lasting stability in Utopia is achieved through the maintenance of firm family units, while in

Huxley's new World State authoritarian control is achieved by separating the links of romantic coupling, procreation, and family life. The Controller shocks and horrifies a group of young Alpha adults by entertaining them with descriptions of family life before the World State (a topic that they are forbidden to study in school). The family home, he tells them, was a rabbit hole, a dump, reeking with emotion:

> What suffocating intimacies, what dangerous, insane, obscene relationships between the members of the family group! Maniacally, the mother brooded over her children (her children). Brooded over them like a cat over its kittens; but a cat that could talk, a cat that could say, "My baby, my baby," over and over again. "My baby, and oh, oh, at my breast, the little hands, the hunger, and that unspeakable agonizing pleasure! Till at last my baby sleeps, my baby sleeps with a bubble of white milk at the corner of his mouth." (28)

This is a form of satire, meant to amuse with its bizarre take on family bonds that are typically cherished. The implication *Brave New World* addresses is clear: the private family unit functions as a natural barrier against overweening state power. The control of male-female desire is likewise key to state control. Although, the new World State tries not to repress sexual energies, but to ensure they flourish and are dispersed. Hence, orgies are a routine part of civic duty. The assumption – one that articulates both with Utopia's careful controlling of sexual desire as well as Oceania's attempt to eliminate it – is that social stability and the erotic impulse are explicitly interconnected.

Though *Brave New World* imagines a state where women are entirely freed from monogamy, procreation, and mothering, it is unable to imagine that anything has been altered in the romantic feelings of either men or women. The girl talk between Lenina and Polly reveals that they treat promiscuity as a duty at times when it does not seem pleasurable. They are deeply concerned with their attractiveness and pleased when men desire them. At the same time, chunks of guy talk in the book suggest that men are largely concerned with identifying which women are most pneumatic and should be taken as a sexual partner. It is up to a male character, Bernard, to feel outraged that the woman he is attracted to views herself as "meat" (Huxley 62). However, even Bernard, who was apparently oxygen-deprived as an embryo and therefore strays from the Alpha mould, appears to be attracted to Lenina chiefly for her looks. Bernard harbours dangerous thoughts of his own and is frustrated when Lenina does not behave as an interested and dazzled audience. Yet, once he gains a bit of fame, Bernard begins to pursue sex freely. Lenina is left to pine for him; though at no point does she grapple with the larger, philosophical issues at play; none of the female characters do. As the only

female character presented with any depth, Lenina is a more instinctual then intellectual person. She is led both by the artificial instincts bred into her by the state and by the atavistic inclinations, such as the desire to have one man's attentions focused solely on her, that surface within her.

In *1984*, the state seeks to obliterate, rather than disperse, the erotic impulse. Yet, the achieved outcome is similar – preventing the formation of strong male-female relationships and traditional family units. As in *Brave New World*, the discourses of Oceania have created horror stories out of the anachronistic family unit, particularly its irrational and inherent loyalties. By repressing romance and desire, Oceania can more easily channel its citizens' energies into violence. This is a central differential aspect from *Brave New World*, which rules through a carefully prescribed regime of happiness. However, despite their strikingly divergent visions of dystopia, they share the fundamental premise that the spheres of male-female romance and traditional family life represent important barriers against state power, and that power is closely linked to control of the erotic impulse.

Above all, they share a strikingly traditional view of gender roles. In *1984*, Winston is the isolated dissenter, hungry for connection. He is a much different character than Bernard and the novel treats him with a far more sympathetic tone. Still, like Bernard, he is disappointed in his lover's inability to understand dissent through a shared perspective. Julia, like Lenina, is a creature of impulse, driven by desire to violate the pervasive taboo against romance. Winston is a rationalist, who seeks a systematic understanding of oppression; Julia is emotional and seeks to evade the forces of oppression only to the extent that it enables her to find intimacy and pleasure with the man she loves. As in *Brave New World*, no other female character is well-developed. Meanwhile, neither of these modern visions concerns itself with non-heteronormative sexualities, or considers whether they might act as a lever, either of control or resistance. It comes as no surprise that *Utopia* is mute on the subject. Here, within the discourse of the socially conceivable, gender and sexuality are presented as commonsensical, natural categories that allow no reimagining.

If gender and sexuality are central to the utopian/dystopian discursive project, race is kept on the side lines. *Utopia* is premised on a supposed encounter between European travellers and an *other* race, articulating with accounts of actual voyages to the New World. In this sense, it might seem that issues of race are central to the text. Yet the fictional Utopians seem to be a mere excuse for the text's attempt to reflect upon European politics and emerging struggles.

The essential function of race remains unchanged when utopian/dystopian discourse enters the 20th century. In both *1984* and *Brave New World*, non-white individuals rarely appear. The breakdown of social structures forms a binary – us vs. them – gap. In this context, the challenges of *everyman*, embodied in the protagonist placed in a dystopian milieu, substitute traditional social and racial divisions. Nevertheless, the issue of race, no matter how marginal when brought to attention, is often dappled with stereotypes – reflecting the inevitable socio-cultural setting these texts were created in.

When non-white characters are present, they are used as a background motif to white characters and their concerns. In Oceania, we learn that one of the three mega-states is Eurasia. Because the three states must continually be at war, in order to pacify their own populations, Eurasia functions exclusively as a feared *other*, used by the state to channel aggression. There is only one point in the text where the reader encounters actual non-white people, and this is when Winston sees a row of transport vehicles carrying Eurasian prisoners of war. He observes: "Their sad, Mongolian faces gazed out over the sides of the trucks utterly incurious" (145). Thus, the text calmly reproduces the stereotype of the inscrutable Oriental.

In *Brave New World*, there is a reference to race early on, when the London Director of Hatcheries is touring the lab with his students. At one point, a student asks for the record number of individuals produced from one human ovary. The Director notes that 16,012 is the general limit (produced in 189 "batches"). "Mombasa," he notes, "has actually touched the seventeen thousand mark. But then they have unfair advantages. You should see the way a negro ovary responds to pituitary! It's quite astonishing, when you're used to working with European material" (8). Within the satirical context of fictional science, the text skilfully manages to highlight the stereotype of black hyper-fertility and introduce it as *fact*.

The new regime of industrial procreation is a worldwide endeavour, so it clearly must involve extensive non-white populations. However, it is unclear whether Alphas are always white. The Controller, presented as the only character reflecting meaningfully on the new world system, is "black-haired, with a hooked nose, full red lips, eyes very piercing and dark" (25). Yet, the racial reference here is unclear. To be fair, there are few mentions of non-white individuals, but all of these are either members of the lower castes or residents of the Savage Reservation. Moreover, each such mention is used to underline feelings of fear or contempt among the book's central (white) Alpha characters. For instance, when Bernard goes to the hangars to retrieve his flying machine, he pulls away from the twin Delta-Minus attendants, who are "identically small, black and hideous" (43). Lenina similarly flinches at the sight of

the elderly, dark-skinned man on the Savage Reservation, and both Bernard and she are shocked by the poverty and uncleanliness in which the mostly non-white people of the reservation live. John, the only resident of the reservation whom either of them befriends, is actually white. Ironically, he has lived his life as a bullied outsider – embodying the *other* to the residents of the reservation.

As with *Utopia* and *1984*, race in *Brave New World* is the matter devoid of conceptual dimension. Race is undeniably one of the central axes of both power and conflict in the modern world, yet utopian/dystopian discourse seems unable, or unwilling, to cope with it. *Utopia*, as an early modern text, is premised entirely on the idea of contact with non-Europeans. Yet, this idea functions merely as a screen against which European political and social ideas are projected. As twentieth century texts, *Brave New World* and *1984* invoke race only sporadically, as a minor contrast, in order to expose the feelings and ideas of central, white, European characters. And though each novel contains racial stereotypes, neither bothers to explore race systematically enough to propose what race *means* to either dystopia or resistance. Where gender and sexuality cannot be reimagined because they are too fundamental, race cannot be reimagined because it is too marginal to the reimagining power of white, English authors.

However, the most important aspect of the discourse is the transience of hope – hope for social improvement, hope for avoiding disaster, hope for resistance against oppression. It is the universal anticipation of a better life, and ultimately, a better world. The image of future perfect states is reflected in the impulse of anticipation which "operates in the field of hope; so this hope is not taken *only as emotion* […], but *more essentially as a directing act of a cognitive kind*" (Bloch 12, emphasis in the original). Thoughts of resistance are seeds of counter-discourse, the one that stems from "[t]he imagination and the thoughts of future intention," opening the possibility of utopia (Bloch 12). But, on one hand, *Utopia* offers the vision of an amiable, just society full of prospect for human fulfilment; on the other, the vision of a single small island, surrounded by less stable and peaceful neighbours causes uncertainty with which the potential should be viewed. The idea almost retracts itself, as the *fragility* of utopia becomes apparent.

Violence is key to the erosion of hope in the 20th-century discourse. The dystopian regimes of *1984* and *Brave New World* both emerged in the aftermath of devastating wars, allowing total state control to appear as an attractive option – even at the price of sacrificing individual freedom. The novels contain only the smallest hints of how resistance to dystopia might be possible. In *1984*, we are left with the possibility that hope may lie in the sphere of

interpersonal trust and friendship. Ultimately, these turn out to be the source of Winston's demise. *Brave New World* suggests only the possibility for small groups of nonconformists. If left alone on little islands, they might find a way to forge better, braver new social orders of their own. Intriguingly, both texts put hope in the smallest of social units – the subversive individual, friendship, family, close-knit community. But the sheer scale of challenges these novels grapple with is immense: how to manage the vast populations of a modern, globalizing world? How to regulate their consumption and assign social roles? How to build something new on the foundations of societies that have become desensitised to violence and inequality? In this sense, utopian/dystopian discourse may act less to diagnose society, issue prophetic warnings, or form perceptions for new possibilities. Instead, it may primarily function as a discourse of the *political status quo*.

CONCLUSION

If More's *Utopia* announced the arrival of a genre, *1984* and *Brave New World* possibly represented the genre's modernist apex. Indeed, the titles of all three works have become firmly entrenched in common language. The first is routinely used to describe a state of social tranquillity and individual fulfilment that is unachievable, while the other two serve as shorthand references to future states of totalitarian control that may be looming just over the horizon. While utopia seems always beyond reach, dystopia seems always just about to arrive.

Given their places in the literary canon, as well as the extent of debate they have provoked, it is tempting to conclude that these three works reflect bold interventions in the collective imagining of the socially conceivable. Yet when removed from authorial intent debates and read as parts of an evolving discourse, their value appears largely normative. For instance, all three rely on heterosexual coupling as the base of social order. In *Utopia*, strong heterosexual heads of household provide the basic framework for social tranquillity, while in both *1984* and *Brave New World*, totalitarian control operates through the repression of romantic, heterosexual coupling.

All three texts use race to introduce the *other* and make their characters' reactions seem 'authentic.' Yet none of these texts brings race to the surface or reflects on it directly. *Utopia* serves to develop a European fantasy of the exotic, native 'other.' *1984* uses that fantasy's downside to help make sense of citizens' allegiance to Big Brother. *Brave New World* experiments sporadically in both fantasies of, and repugnance at, ethnic others. However, race is never placed in the foreground. This too reflects a normative, Euro-centric

stance: valuing race as a background, yet avoiding recognition of race as a point of social experience.

Finally, none of the texts allow social change. *Utopia* ensures that the premise of imagined social alternatives cannot be taken too seriously, both by naming its fictive island a *no-place* and by emersion in multiple ambiguities. Both *1984* and *Brave New World* offer apparently sharp critiques of emergent political and scientific tendencies, yet neither envisions possibilities of genuine resistance. It stops at intimate relations or the subversive thinking of a handful of individuals. Resistance, in both scenarios, is more or less futile. Viewed in this light, these three utopian/dystopian texts serve mainly to strengthen and emphasise the social and political status quo, rather than open perspectives onto radically new imaginings.

Works Cited

"Aldous Huxley Biography: Writer, Screenwriter, Author (1894–1963)." *Biography*, A&E Television, 17 Feb. 2016, www.biography.com/people/aldous-huxley-9348198. Accessed 19 Nov. 2018.

Atwood, Margaret. "Writing Utopia." *Writing with Intent: Essays, Reviews, Personal Prose, 1983-2005*. New York: Caroll & Gaaf, 2005, pp. 92-100.

Bloch, Ernst. *The Principle of Hope*. Translated by Neville Plaice, Stephen Plaice and Paul Knight, vol. 1, The MIT Press, 1996 (1986).

Bové, Paul A. "Discourse." *Critical Terms for Literary Study*, 2nd ed., edited by Frank Lentricchia and Thomas McLaughlin, Chicago, U. Chicago Press, 1995, pp. 50-65.

Davis, J. C. "Thomas More's *Utopia*: Sources, legacy, and interpretation." *The Cambridge Companion to Utopian Literature*, edited by Gregory Claeys, Cambridge UP, 2010, pp. 28-50.

Fitting, Peter. "A Short History of Utopian Studies." *Science Fiction Studies*, vol. 36, 2009, pp. 121-131. www.jstor.org/stable/25475211. Accessed 13 Oct. 2014.

Foucault, Michel. "The History of Sexuality: Interviewer: Lucette Finas." *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Writings, 1972-77*, edited by Colin Gordon, Random House, 1980, pp. 183-193.

-----. "Power and Strategies: Interviewers: Editorial Collective of *Les révoltes logique*." *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Writings, 1972-77*, edited by Colin Gordon, New York, Random House, 1980, pp. 134-145.

-----. "Prison Talk: Interviewer: J.-J. Brochier." *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Writings, 1972-77*, edited by Colin Gordon, New York, Random House, 1980, pp. 37-54.

-----. "Truth and Power: Interviewers: Alessandro Fontana and Pasquale Pasquino." *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Writings, 1972-77*, edited by Colin Gordon, New York, Random House, 1980, pp. 109-133.

-----. "Two Lectures." *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Writings, 1972-77*, edited by Colin Gordon, New York, Random House, 1980, pp. 78-108.

-----. "Questions on Geography: Interviewers: The Editors of the Journal *Hérodote*." *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Writings, 1972-77*, edited by Colin Gordon, New York, Random House, 1980, pp. 63-77.

"George Orwell Biography: Journalist, Author (1903–1950)." Biography, A&E Television, 17 Feb. 2018, www.biography.com/people/george-orwell-9429833. Accessed 19 Nov. 2018.

Griswold, Charles L. "Plato on Rhetoric and Poetry" *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* edited by Edward N. Zalta, 2016, plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2016/entries/plato-rhetoric/. Accessed 13 Nov. 2018.

Gutting, Gary. "Michel Foucault." *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* edited by Edward N. Zalta, 2014, plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2014/entries/foucault/. Accessed 13 Nov. 2018.

Huxley, Aldous. *Brave New World*. Harper, 2017 (1932).

Ivanova, Anna. "Shopping in *Beriozka*: Consumer Society in the Soviet Union." *Zeithistorische Forschungen/Studies in Contemporary History*, vol. 10, 2013, pp. 243-263. zeithistorische-forschungen.de/2-2013/id=4536#pgfId-1036716a. Accessed 3 Oct. 2018.

Kellner, Douglas. "From 1984 to one-dimensional man: Critical reflections on Orwell and Marcuse." *Current Perspectives in Social Theory*, vol. 10, 1990, pp. 223–52. pages.gseis.ucla.edu/faculty/kellner/Illumina%20Folder/kell13.htm. Accessed 21 Nov. 2018.

Lefebvre, Henri. *The Production of Space*. Translation by Donald Nicholson-Smith. Blackwell Publishers, 1991 (1974).

McGoogan, Cara. "Why Your Smart TV Is the Perfect Way to Spy on You." *The Telegraph*. 8 Mar. 2017, www.telegraph.co.uk/technology/2017/03/08/smart-tv-perfect-way-spy/. Accessed 7 Sep. 2018.

More, Sir Thomas. *Utopia*. Edited by Ronald Herder. Dover Thrift Editions, 1997.

Orwell, George. *1984*. New American Library, 1977 (1949).

Papke, David. "The Communistic Inclinations of Sir Thomas More." *The University of the Pacific Law Review,* vol. 29, 2016, pp. 29-43, scholarship.law.marquette.edu/facpub/691/. Accessed 12 Nov. 2018.

Plato. *The Republic of Plato: Translated and with an Interpretive Essay by Allan Bloom*. Translation by Allan Bloom. Basic Books, 2016.

Pohl, Nicole. "Utopianism after More: The Renaissance and Enlightenment." *The Cambridge Companion to Utopian Literature*, edited by Gregory Claeys, Cambridge UP, 2010, pp. 51-78.

Powell, Jonathan and Niall Rudd. "Introduction." *Cicero: The Republic and The Laws*. Translation by Niall Rudd, Oxford UP, 1998, ix-xxxi.

Rodríguez García, José María. "The Politics of Discourse in Thomas More's *Utopia*." *C.I.F.*, vol. XXVI, 2000, pp. 81-87, dialnet.unirioja.es/descarga/articulo/258585.pdf. Accessed 26 Oct. 2018.

Sargent, Lyman Tower. "What Is a Utopia?" *Morus—Utopia e Renascimento*, no. 2, 2005, pp. 153-160, www.revistamorus.com.br/index.php/morus/article/view/139. Accessed 2 Nov. 2018.

"Thomas More Biography: Journalist, Lawyer, Philosopher, Saint (1478–1535)." *Biography*, A&E Television, 27 May 2016, www.biography.com/people/thomas-more-9414278. Accessed 19 Nov. 2018.

Trouillot, Michel-Rolph. "Anthropology and the Savage Slot: The Poetics and Politics of Otherness." Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Global Transformations: Anthropology and the Modern World*, Palgrave, 2003, pp. 7-28, https://iidypca.homestead.com/.../Trouillot_-_The_Savage_Slot.pdf.

Vieira, Fátima. "The Concept of Utopia." *The Cambridge Companion to Utopian Literature*, edited by Gregory Claeys, Cambridge UP, 2010, pp. 3-27.

Watt, Ian. *The Rise of the Novel*. University of California Press, 1957.

White, Hayden. *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe*. The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975 (1973).

Abstract

This paper proposes that utopian/dystopian writing should be understood as contributions to an ongoing discourse of the socially conceivable. After determining the utopian genre historically and establishing the relevance of Foucauldian discourse to the study of utopian/dystopian literature, the paper provides a discursive reading of Thomas More's *Utopia*, George Orwell's *1984*, and Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*. These readings explore both the discursive functions of each text, as well as the functions of discourse within each different social order portrayed; focusing attention to discourses of social roles, education, and history. In conclusion, the paper treats the three texts not as separate contributions to a genre, but as elements of a continuous discourse. Although unbalanced and evolving, the discourse serves to map the boundaries of the social imagination – the socially perfected conditions, or dystopic inversions, that can or 'should' be imagined; hope for restitution and possibility for societies gone horribly wrong; and the inevitable forces involved in encouraging progress or hindering it. Considered in this manner, three observations emerge. The discourse of utopia/dystopia place gender and sexuality as principal forces of social stability and suggests that their manipulation is essential to maintaining alternate social orders. By contrast, the role of race in social context can neither be completely acknowledged nor challenged within the classic, Eurocentric utopian/dystopian writings. Thus, race is reduced to the margins, establishing it as a 'normal,' almost trivial category. Finally, while the discourse proposes systemic understandings and critiques of alternative social orders, it offers only transient, individualistic accounts of resistance or social change. In this sense, while utopic/dystopic texts are often viewed as socially and politically engaging tracts, ultimately, the discourse serves to endorse the social and political status quo.