

The Evolution of Dystopian Literature

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Dystopian literature has sparked an interest, particularly in teens and adolescents, over the past couple of decades. This phenomenon seems to occur anytime there has been change or controversy in the country's political climate. George Orwell's *1984* is continued to be taught in high schools and colleges all over the country some 70 years after its initial publication and Phillip K. Dick's *The Man in the High Castle* has now become a hit series on Amazon. Both novels feature middle aged protagonists who essentially have no control over their own lives and the world they live in. They also portray countries which have been overrun by political machines, the "Party" of Oceania, and the Japanese and German forces in the United States. These novels are somber, and end with the reader having more questions than answers. No matter how much time passes however, it seems that this kind of dystopian literature continues to impact our society and readers are drawn to it. In recent years, a new genre commonly called "Young Adult" (YA) dystopian fiction has become increasingly popular, representing worlds that parallel our own in a safe and fictional way. New works such as *The Hunger Games* (Collins 2008) and *Uglies* (Westerfeld 2005) depict disturbingly corrupt societies in which a young protagonist is somehow, by means of extraordinary talent and dumb luck, able to save the world. This type of story tends to give the reader, particularly young readers, hope and confidence, and many have become "adventure franchises" which are later adapted into movies and tv shows. Overall, dystopian literature has certainly begun to dramatically change over the past couple decades, but interest in the gloomy worlds in which authors like Orwell and Dick created, never seem to go out of style.

The Rise of Dystopian Literature

The creation of the Dystopian Narrative began in the early 20th century, when attitudes towards human nature and society started to change across the globe. Prior to this time period, people living in the 16th and 17th centuries, possessed “faith in human progress and in man’s capacity to create a world of justice and peace” (Fromm 257). This was one of the “fundamental features” of what was referred to as “Western Thought” and can be traced back to the Greek and Roman thinkers as well as the Old Testament. The first published work of literature pertaining to this idea is Thomas More’s *Utopia*, in which he “combined a most penetrating criticism of his own society, its irrationality and its injustice, with the picture of a society which...had solved most of the human problems which sounded insoluble to his own contemporaries” (Fromm 258). Therefore, people who lived under the burdens and hardships of 16th and 17th centuries were actually more optimistic about a better future for mankind than the generations to come.

Although More gave the literary cannon the term “utopia” in 1516, the idea of a “utopia,” or paradise, is much older than that (Sargent). Society had been fantasizing about places in which humanity’s problems are obsolete since the beginning of time. The concept of the “utopia” is found in places like “the biblical Eden, Greek and Roman stories of the earthly paradise and the idea of a golden race or age” (Sargent 12). Therefore, authors like More were influenced by these early religious and philosophic texts to create a world where the hardships of the time were non-existent and where life could be lived happily and justly. With the everyday hardships that individuals faced during this time period, stories and myths like these may have well been the only escape from reality.

In the beginning of the 20th century however, perspectives towards human nature began to change. This change started with the breakout of the First World War and then became amplified after World War II. It is suggested that the brutality and violence portrayed between

the European nations in the First World War, managed to “destroy a two-thousand-year-old Western tradition of hope and to transform it into a mood of despair” (Fromm 258-259).

Therefore, perspectives on human nature changed, and the events following the First World War, such as the rise of Stalin and an economic crisis all over Europe, created a unanimous sense of doubt that the world could ever get any better. The rise of Hitler and the Nazi party led to the breakout of the Second World War and the eventual use of atomic weapons. Human beings were now seen as barbaric, selfish creatures and society was destined to destroy itself. People were no longer hopeful for the future but rather, dreaded it, and literature began to reflect these new negative feelings.

This new brand of dystopian literature or “anti-utopian” literature pointed out the errors in utopian ideas when applied to a real human society. Critics of utopianism have claimed that the word “utopia” equates with the word “perfect,” and a perfect society would be one that is “finished, complete, or unchangeable” (Sargent 103). Obviously, a human society could never be capable of these things indefinitely, and therefore a “utopian” society will always become a dystopian one. Arguably Communism or even the terrible Nazi regime were based off of “utopian” ideas of what a perfect society should look like however, when put into practice they become something completely barbaric and utterly dystopian. Ultimately, this new genre of dystopian literature directly reflected society’s opinions on “utopianism” following the rise and eventual downfall of such regimes.

The first three novels that fall into the “dystopian literature” genre are Orwell’s *1984*, Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World*, and Yevgeny Zamyatin’s *We*. These novels essentially act as the “counterpoints” to the utopias written in the centuries prior. Despite the apparent critiques on politics and totalitarian regimes, these novels also critique the same inventions and new

technologies that were making everyday life easier. This perspective of a mistrust in the machine and modern technology varies greatly from those living during More's era. While man was now able to solve many of its hardships during the industrial revolution and forward, new, modern problems were simultaneously being created. The increase in technology simultaneously created a sense of fear of what it could do, and how government could use it to control its people.

Another literary genre that began popping up more frequently during the early 20th century is the genre of Alternative History. Novels that fall into this literary category, like the ones that fall into dystopian genre, ask the question "what if?" Similarly, these novels are also heavily influenced by war, with particular emphasis on the American Civil War and WWII (McAllister Smith). The two most popular Alternative History novels are Ward Moore's *Bring the Jubilee*, "a moving depiction of the United States as a powerless backwater 100 years after the Confederacy triumphs Gettysburg" (McAllister Smith), and Philip K. Dick's *The Man in the High Castle*, which tells a story about what life would have been like had the US been defeated by the German and Japanese in WWII.

Similar to Dystopian Fiction, Alternative Histories are meant to "articulate different possible solutions of societal problems" (Suvin 149), or in the case of *The Man in the High Castle*, amplify said problems. However, they almost always conclude that an alternative version of history would lead to a dogmatic, some may argue dystopian, version of society. Therefore, it maintains the idea that history as is should not be altered. This genre is also often divided into two subcategories, "the comico-satirical and the serious Alternative History" (Suvin 150). Without question, *Man in the High Castle* would fall under the latter, as it depicts the absolute worst case-scenario had the US been unsuccessful in WWII. Ultimately, these texts, like

dystopian narratives, depict a “world gone wrong,” but instead of through fantasy or future societies, use our own human history to get their message across.

Why *1984* Still Pertains to the Modern Reader

The rise in technology and the industrial revolution created a sense of mistrust of the machine. It is speculated that George Orwell’s influence for writing *1984* was as a response to the buildup of atomic weapons after World War II. The creation of the atomic bomb, brought warfare to a whole new level, and one that it could not come back from. Orwell’s portrayal of Oceania in the novel, is that of a state that was mostly destroyed by nuclear war, and that lives in constant fear of being attacked by its enemies, whether it be Eurasia or Eastasia, and possesses a permanent threat to the countries that oppose it. Orwell “gives an impressive picture of how a society must develop which is constantly preparing for war, constantly afraid of being attacked, and preparing to find the means of complete annihilation of its opponents” (Fromm 262). This feeling is repeatedly found throughout history first during WWII, then during the Cold War, and even now, in our own post 9/11 society. Oceania leaves a lasting impression is because it contradicts the idea that “we can save freedom and democracy by continuing an arms race and finding a ‘stable’ deterrent” (Fromm 262), which was a popular idea in the mid-20th century throughout the Cold War with the Soviet Union, and is still a common ideology today. Many people believe that no country with nuclear weapons would ever attack the US out of fear of retaliation, but *1984* shows something quite different. Oceania, Eurasia and Eastasia do not withhold their weapons out of fear of repercussions, but rather constantly bomb one another, until whoever is left standing becomes the ultimate victor.

However, Orwell does not just warn against modern war tactics but also the invention of other technologies like telescreens and listening devices. Winston and his fellow *comrades* live in a world where they are under constant video and audio surveillance throughout most of their lives, a phenomenon that was not yet possible at the time that Orwell is writing but that is frighteningly real today. Orwell “was imagining the possible consequences of political totalitarianism in his own time and taking especially into account how modern technologies would make such totalitarianism more possible than ever before” (Jackson 376). Therefore, Orwell recognized the limits of totalitarian governments during his own time period but forewarned that with the rise of technology, governments would be able to supervise and control both the actions and the *thoughts* of its citizens like never before. In many ways, *1984* is more representative of the world in which we live in today than it was of post WWII Britain, due to the significant increase in modern technology.

A significant invasion of privacy in our own country became increasingly apparent to the public in 2013 when Edward Snowden’s “exposure of the mass spying conducted by the United States National Security Agency” (Giroux 22), caused a frenzy among the American public. This sparked a ton of controversy and citizens compared the spying to that of Orwell’s “Big Brother.” Ironically enough the government’s reasoning for this massive spying operation was to protect against terrorists, like the ones who caused the 9/11 attacks. It seems as if the more protections we try to put in place the more our country itself begins to look like a dystopia. Executives from both political parties such as Obama and Trump have both suggested Snowden should be brought home and convicted of criminal charges however, many Americans consider him a hero. Congress responded to the incident by passing the “USA Freedom Act, improving transparency about government surveillance and limited government power to collect certain records” (Roth &

Shetty). Despite Snowden bringing forth an important political and social issue and the resulting adjustment in the law, politicians still have tried to paint him as the “bad guy.” He is comparable to the 1984 character Goldstein, who may or may not exist, but whom acts as the Party’s scapegoat for everything that goes wrong. Snowden may have breached confidentiality, but his actions appear to have been more beneficial to society than harmful.

In the novel, Orwell takes the Party’s spying on its citizens to a whole new level, by having the government control not just what people are doing, but also what they are thinking. In Oceania, the most abominable crime a person can commit is *thoughtcrime*, something that might have sounded absurd in the 1940s, but nowadays has become terrifyingly real. In the novel, the Party detects *thoughtcrime* with its constant video surveillance of its citizens. If someone so much as appears unsettled for too long, they may be accused of *thoughtcrime*. Orwell describes it as “not a thing that could be concealed forever” (19), which is ironic in itself since a person’s thoughts are supposed to be the *only* things in which they could hypothetically hide forever. Often there is very little proof of whether or not someone has actually committed *thoughtcrime*, but the accused person is always taken away and never seen again. Overall, Orwell warns about the dangers of letting our government get too close to our personal lives. After all, if we can’t even have our own thoughts, what do we have left?

Furthermore, critics have claimed that the current administration is partially, if not mostly, responsible for the public’s sparked interest in dystopian novels as well as depicts frightening parallels to the governments described in these books. Similar to the world of “Big Brother,” Trump’s administration turned American politics into a “spectacle of fear, divisions and disinformation” (Giroux 21). The government has become a parallel to the government of Oceania, which is full of contradictions. Winston’s world is divided into four ministries, “the

Ministry of Truth, which concerned itself with [altered] news...The Ministry of Peace, which concerned itself with war; the Ministry of Love, which maintained law and order, and the Ministry of Plenty” (Orwell 8). It’s obvious early on in the novel that each of these ministries are hypocritical to their titles, and that they all play a role in maintaining the “fear, divisions and disinformation” of Oceania. It’s alarming when the agencies put in place to protect us actually prove harmful, which many current American citizens are afraid of.

The most famous and utterly shocking parallel that people have made between the current administration and Oceania is Kellyanne Conway’s mention of “alternative facts” during a press conference. The media exploded with controversy after this conference, describing the term as a “move reminiscent of the linguistic inventions of Orwell’s Ministry of Truth” (Giroux 23). Not to mention, many speculators have claimed that “alternative facts” is simply an “updated term from what Orwell called ‘doublethink’” (Giroux 23). *Doublethink* is defined as “to hold simultaneously two opinions which cancelled out, knowing them to be contradictory and believing in both of them” (Orwell 32). In the novel, *Doublethink* essentially is used as a tool, for people in his world to prevent being guilty of *thoughtcrime*. This could range from simply not believing in what the Party tells you to actually plotting against the Party. *Doublethink* essentially, is a way for the citizens of Oceania to protect themselves against the Party, when they know what they are being told as untrue. People have argued that Conway’s use of the term “alternative facts” was the executive branch’s attempt to legitimize the practice of *doublethink* and get away with false claims. Overall, this whole ordeal made the general public frantic, and people began to worry over whether or not they can believe what the government tells them.

A prime example of *doublethink* in the novel is when Winston is told that Oceania is at war with Eurasia, and that they had always been at war with Eurasia. However, Winston

distinctly remembers “it was only four years prior since Oceania had been at war with Eastasia and in alliance with Eurasia” (Orwell 31-32). Those who know that Oceania was once at war with Eastasia never admit it, and simply accept that Oceania is at war with Eurasia because to do otherwise would be to go against the Party. In Oceania, the current enemy is the embodiment of “absolute evil” (32), and therefore must be rendered as having always been evil. In reality, the idea of an “absolute evil” is by far improbable, which is why Winston has a hard time grasping at it. We also see this in Dick’s *Man in the High Castle*, when high ranking Japanese and German officials must overcome personal struggles that border the line between “good” and “evil.” As Winston’s character goes to show, doublethink proves to be a difficult task when one possesses a strong conscience and the need for the truth. Winston knows that the party is changing history and falsifying records, and it is his job to make sure these things are carried through. His personal struggle throughout the novel is to convince himself to not commit *thoughtcrime* against the Party, but in the end, his conscious refuses to let him overlook the injustices that the Party is guilty of.

Furthermore, another point that Orwell warns about is a government’s ability to “control” the past. Orwell’s “Ministry of Truth” is where Winston holds his job falsifying records. He even admits “if all records hold the same tale-then the lie passes into history and became truth” (Orwell 32). It is an inner struggle throughout the novel for Winston as to whether it is ethical to change records from what they originally were. Orwell’s “machinery of organized forgetting” is comparable to our current society which is overrun by “mega-malls and theme parks, media driven spectacles of violence, and a culture of consumerism, self-interest and sensationalism for those who can afford participation” (Giroux 23). However, this only hold true for those who are wealthy enough to live this lifestyle, for the other half of society, the “ongoing financial

starvation and evisceration of public schools and public universities ensures that the lessons of history are neutered or displaced altogether” (Giroux 23). Therefore, our rich are too preoccupied with consumerism and our poor with financial burdens to even pay much attention to what the government is doing, allowing similar regimes to arise right under our noses.

Moreover, Orwell’s world also emphasizes the importance of language, and how it can be used to make or break society. Language takes on a very peculiar form in *1984* with the development and perfection of *Newspeak*. *Newspeak* is one of the Party’s several tactics to keep the public of Oceania oppressed by “steadily reducing the number and kind of words in the dictionary and, of course, enforcing the diction as the source of speech” (Jackson 380). In the novel, *Newspeak* is still being perfected, and Winston’s comrade Syme, is currently working on the most updated edition, with its end goal being the simplest form of speech possible. Syme tells Winston as they wait for their food “You think, I dare to say, that our chief job is inventing new words. But not a bit of it! We’re destroying words-scores of them, hundreds of them every day. We’re cutting the language down to the bone.” (Orwell 45). Therefore, even Syme admits that it is *Newspeak*’s main objective to reduce the number of words used in vocabulary, but he seems too fascinated with the task to register the imminent danger that comes with destroying words. Syme admits to Winston that “the whole aim of Newspeak is to narrow the range of thought” (Orwell 46), and by doing so the Party will be able to achieve even further control over its people. *Thoughtcrime* will be “literally impossible, because there will be no worlds in which to express it” (Orwell 46). Therefore, the goal of *Newspeak* is to create a language so that it would be impossible to commit treason against the Party. Ironically enough, Winston during this conversation thinks “Syme will be vaporized. He is too intelligent” (Orwell 47), a prediction that would eventually come true. Therefore, Orwell warns how language, and its complexity, are

important to keep a society going, they allow people to express thoughts and ideas freely, and that the more restricted a language gets the easier it becomes for a government to control not only what people say, but what people think.

The simplicity and reduction of language is another way in which sceptics compare the Party to the current administration, with Trump's avid use of platforms such as twitter and his supposed "affection" for the uneducated. Trump has created his own way of illegitimizing language and speech with the #fakenews movement. The current commander and chief has used his twitter account, a platform that is specifically designed to get one's point across in very few words, to take "ownership of the notion of 'fake news' [by] inverting its original usage as a critique of his perpetual lying and redeploying it as a pejorative label aimed at journalists who criticized his policies" (Giroux 26). Therefore, by illegitimizing the speech and language of those who oppose him, he essentially controls what the country can claim as "real journalism" and what is deemed as "#fakenews." This control is frightening to the public, as what is true and untrue has become indistinguishable. On top of all of this our society has in general begun to use less and less words. With almost the entire "millennium generation" on social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat and Twitter, our minds have been taught to think in the simplest forms possible. Our lives and daily experiences are limited to captions of just a few words and we've been taught to simplify and dumb things down.

Overall, *1984* proves to still be relevant to our current society and administration. Oceania warns against many modern issues such as the governmental infringement on the public's privacy, the inability to distinguish between truth and false, and the reduction of our language to its barest forms. *1984* divulges deeply into these issues despite being written 70 years ago, and serves as a platform for what dystopian fiction should look like. This novel has

also remained consistent in our education system due to the concerning accurate parallels between Oceania and the world we live in. It is important to continue to read and analyze this book because it presents us with the grim truth behind an overcontrolling society and does not “sugar coat” it with teen romances and happy endings. Orwell’s *1984* presents a reality that many of us probably do not want to face, but one which has become increasingly important.

The Resurgence of Dick’s *The Man in the High Castle*

Phillip K. Dick’s *The Man in the High Castle*, a novel that came out in the wake of the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union, also pertains to many of the social and political issues we are faced today and well as has received a newfound popularity among the public. *The Man in the High Castle (MHC)* is a novel of Alternative History which depicts a dystopian United States that has been taken over by the Japanese Empire in the west and the German Reich in the east, with a lawless wild west “buffer zone” in between. Slavery has been reinstated in the south and in San Francisco, where the majority of the novel takes place, whites are seen as subordinate to the Japanese, and Jews are of even lower status. Dick’s multilayered world in *MHC* also warns against the dangers of government interference with everyday life, as citizens, particularly white American citizens, are closely watched by government police. While exploring the world of “what could’ve been” Dick manages, like Orwell, to also make commentary on over-intrusive governments and the importance of language to maintain freedom.

In the *MHC*, the story focuses on a banned novel, a book within the book, titled *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy*, which contradicts the emergence of the Japanese and German Empires. In *Grasshopper*, the US and Great Britain become the victors of WWII. This does not parallel our “real history,” with the US and Soviet Union claiming victory and ultimately creating the

Cold War to display power over one another, but rather gives the reader a second version of alternative history (Gray). The novel is written by a man named “Hawthorne Abensen,” the titular character, who is rumored to live in a “fortress” to protect him from those who are outraged by his work. For the majority of the story, we follow a woman named Juliana, who is travelling with an undercover Nazi, Joseph Cinnadella, to find the “man in the high castle.” *Grasshopper* has been banned in the country and Juliana wishes to meet the author, initially oblivious that her partner plans to murder him. In *MHC*, we see how literature such as *Grasshopper* can have such an impact on the public’s mind, that governments such as the one’s portrayed would not allow it to be read. We have seen this quite often in the past with several books such as *The Catcher in the Rye* (Salinger 1951), *The Great Gatsby* (Fitzgerald 1925), and even J.K Rowling’s famous *Harry Potter Series*, being banned from schools on the grounds of having inappropriate or questionable content. Much like in *1984*, the limit of words and literature that a person has access to forbids them from opening up their minds to new ideas and perspectives.

Furthermore, *MHC* shows how dystopian governments control their citizens’ minds by controlling what they read. By banning what is considered to be a treasonous book, the governments in the novel believe that their citizens will be less inclined to rebel. Like *1984*, *MHC* demonstrates how a totalitarian regime will attempt to control the ideas and opinions of its people through restrictions on what they can read. The Japanese Empire and the German Reich fear that a book which dictates a world in which the United States have won the war will influence people to revolt and resist the occupation of the states. Ironically enough, despite the novel being “banned through the United States. And in Europe” *Grasshopper* is still described as “popular...Another fad. Another mass craze” (Dick 68), not unlike many of the novels

mentioned previously that were banned throughout the 20th century. Therefore, Dick may be hinting that human curiosity and interest in asking “what if?” may still be more powerful than any government agency, even a totalitarian regime. Even still, by banning *Grasshopper* the government demonstrates its attempt to limit the people’s consciousness and keep them from fantasizing with these ideas.

Furthermore, *The MHC* does not only explore the relationship between government and language, but also divulges into the fluidity of power. *Grasshopper* presents the reader with another version of *alternative history*, one where the “losers” become the “winners” and vice versa. However, Dick is doing more than just reversing history. At the end of the novel Hawthorne Abensen admits that he consulted the Oracle while writing *Grasshopper*. After Juliana is able to get him to admit this, she too consults the I Ching, asking ““Oracle, why did you write *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy*? What are we supposed to learn?”” (Dick 271). She rolls the dice which land on the hexagram of “Inner Truth.” Abensen is dumbfounded with this response, ““It means, does it, that my book is true...Germany and Japan lost the war”” (Dick 272). This realization makes Abensen angry that Juliana has come to visit him, as it is something that he is not ready to accept. Critics have related this realization to “Nazism” and how it “really triumphed in World War II” (Rieder 215). Therefore, the true winners of WWII, the US and the Soviet Union, were also the losers. Nazism is what caused the war to begin with and had already brought significant devastation to Europe. Not to mention, following the end of the War the US and the Soviet Union began the Cold War, frantically competing with one another to show off their power and armistice of massive nuclear weapons. Therefore, it is arguable that, although these two countries were the ultimate victors, they had to keep “fighting” long after the war was over.

The Man in the High Castle also dives deep into the question of right and wrong. It seems apparent in the novel, since it is mainly told through the perspectives of Americans Juliana, Frank Fink, and Robert Childan, that the “enemy” in the novel would be the German and the Japanese, represented by businessmen Mr. Tagomi and Mr. Baynes. However, *Grasshopper*, with its reversal of the victors, the whole concept of “right” and “wrong,” “good” and “evil,” is put into question. It “collapses into the comfortable hallucinations of *ressentiment*: that evil is an illusion and that we losers really have won” (Rieder 215). After all, whose to say that the US and Great Britain wouldn’t be just as “evil” as the Japanese and German having won the war. The bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki certainly would be evidence to suggest so. Joe Cinnadella makes this argument when Juliana questions him about the book, stating “They talk about the things the Nazis did...The British have done worse...those mass fire-bombing raids that Churchill thought were going to save the war” (Dick 85). As we saw in *1984*, the idea in “absolute evil” as pushed by the Party, is flawed. Much like Oceania’s enemy changes from Eastasia to Eurasia and back again, the characters in *High Castle* prove to be just as ambiguous. The reader’s alliance may change while reading the book, just as the perspective of the characters’ change.

Furthermore, the first time we see Dick blend the lines between “good” and “evil” is when it is revealed that Swedish businessman Mr. Baynes, who is actually Captain Rudolf Wegner with the German Reich, is also secretly a Jew. “I have never told anyone this. I am a Jew...physically I cannot be detected...We did not die. We still exist...We live on unseen” (Dick 43), Baynes says to the German artist Lotze after he makes an anti-Semitic comment in the beginning of the novel. In this moment, Bayne’s whole character is perceived differently, but only to the reader and to Lotze. Mr. Tagomi still thinks of Baynes as a man whom he must

impress, and Baynes does nothing to make him think otherwise. However, we also are faced with the reality that Baynes is not the only one. He admits that there are in fact several Jews working in German government and business. “I have very high connections” (53) he tells Lotze after he threatens to tell security of his “true” status, “Some of them are Aryan, some are other Jews in top positions in Berlin” (53). Therefore, we learn that the Greater Nazi Reich has Jewish members not only living, but thriving within it. It is like Baynes says “We did not die.” However, are Baynes actions noble? He continues to feed into a system of injustice and goes on essentially living a lie. Therefore, we see both “good” and “bad” tendencies in Baynes character, and it is impossible to categorize him as one of the other.

Another character who blurs the lines between good and evil in *MHC* is the Japanese Trade Minister Mr. Tagomi. Mr. Tagomi is the main representation of the Japanese Empire in the novel, and he plays sort of a double role throughout the entirety of the story. To American Robert Childan he is an intimidating character, a Japanese official who essentially represents those who oppress the American culture. However, Mr. Tagomi plays a different role during his interactions with Mr. Baynes, where the latter clearly has the upper hand. Between these two characters we see how even in a world where the Japanese and German are the victors, there is still an imbalance of power between these two nations. More importantly, there is still tension between these two nations to maintain the power that they’re acquired. This again is a direct representation of the tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War.

However, Mr. Tagomi’s character becomes even more ambiguous towards the end of the novel. It begins with his killing of two German SD men. Here, we learn that Mr. Tagomi is not the hesitant Japanese official he comes across as for most of the book. Even more so, we really

get to divulge deeply into his fears in the aftermath of his confrontation with the SD men.

Ironically, Mr. Tagomi finds himself alone in a place where his own people have taken over.

“One must still try to find the Way” (Dick 235) he tells himself the next day when he skips going to work. Tagomi finds himself both on a literal and spiritual journey, where he questions the realities of his own world. “Our enemy, alongside whom we fought in the last war. What good did it do us? We should have fought them...”(235). Therefore, Mr. Tagomi begins to question everything he has been told and everything that he stands for. He feels outcasted from the very own institution in which he represents and now wonders as to whether or not it was all worth it. This makes him perhaps one of the most relatable characters in the novel because he does not simply face opposition on the outside, but also the personal struggle within himself. It is clear that his time is coming to an end, however he must come to terms with who he is and what he has done before he can “go on.”

Tagomi finally does accept everything that has happened after he is “transported” to another world by means of a pendant that was given to him by Robert Childan. He finds himself in a San Francisco with no “pedecabs,” overrun by whites and concrete highways. He thinks “After death we seem to glimpse others, but all appear hostile to us. One stands isolated.” (246). Therefore, Tagomi’s “journey” to an alternate universe represents the current situation he is in. He is “isolated” now that he has murdered the two SD members and strained relations between the Japanese and German even more. It is only after this experience, that he is able to go into work and face his fate. Ultimately, Mr. Tagomi walks on the line of “right” and “wrong,” “good” and “evil” throughout the entirety of the novel. It is only at the end however, that he realizes that he has been doing so. This ambiguity, as well as that of Mr. Baynes, is part of what makes *MHC*

so interesting to modern day readers. It does not clearly differentiate between good, bad, right, wrong, but rather plays with the idea that humanity in and of itself is both good and bad, etc.

This holds true still for our politics in the modern-day United States. It has been argued that, now more than ever in history, politicians have been making decisions based on partisan politics as opposed to doing what is best for a country as a whole (Greene). It is arguable that Democrats and Republicans in Washington are too busy fighting with one another to get anything accomplished. Studies have shown that the party in which an individual chooses to support is due to more than just political values, but also “social” values. The social aspect of political parties makes one feel a strong connection with their party, and therefore also stirs up feelings of resentment towards the opposing party. It is said that with political parties, as with almost everything else in life, we tend to “instinctively categorize the world into myriad dichotomous groupings consisting of *us* and *them*” (Greene 394). Therefore, it is only natural to assume one’s own political party that they identify with as “right” and the opposing party as “wrong.” In times of political unrest and controversy, it could even be easy to picture members of an opposing party as “evil” for not seeing that the ways of one’s favorable party as clearly right. Overall, the concept of “right” and “wrong,” “good” and “bad” is one that has been trifled over since human history began. It is natural for us to view our own group as being right and the “other” group and being wrong, but what novels such as *The Man in the High Castle* reminds us, is that the lines between these two opposing ideas are actually much more complex than they seem.

Dystopian Literature for the Modern World

Our political climate as altered countless times since the publications of *1984* and *The Man in the High Castle*. *1984* and Orwell's other renowned work *Animal Farm* are taught throughout most high schools in the United States as well as are also analyzed and studied at the collegiate level. Dick's work, on the other hand, has entered the modern era in a different way, having now been adapted into an Amazon Prime series that currently has three seasons, and is being renewed for a fourth. It seems as if despite all the cultural and political change that has occurred in our country over the past 60-70 years, people are still interested in dystopian societies and what they represent. However, along with the continued regard for these books, a new kind of dystopian literature has found its way into bookstores and into the mind of several young adult readers.

Nowadays, there has been a growing concern that people of the "millennial generation" have little regard for politics and what was going on in the world. Studies have shown that millennials are less likely than previous generations to show up to the booth on voting day and to be able to name key members of the presidential cabinet and Congress (Ames). However, new research has begun to suggest that young people are in fact interested in social and political issues, just not in the typical way. Instead of keeping track of the nightly news, young people have become more interested in dystopian fiction. If you walk into a bookstore now, you're more than likely to find a "'Young Adult Dystopian' section" (Fisher 27), something you probably would not have come across 20 years ago. This new subgenre if you will, has become mainstreamed into our culture, with narratives like *The Hunger Games* and *Divergent* series having huge sales and being adapted into movies. *The Hunger Games* in particular was published in 2008, around the time when the financial recession of the late 2000s was hitting the country the hardest. It appears as if this novel and others like it resonated well with young readers

because it “engaged feelings of betrayal and resentment rising in a generation asked to accept that its quality of life will be worse than that of its parents” (Fisher 27). It seems as if since current issues were impacting the lives of young people specifically, they developed their own literary response to it, and the results were massive.

The Young Adult Dystopian narrative uses metaphors to portray problems and concerns arising in everyday society. It seems that this form of literature began trickling into the literary canon following the attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon on September 11, 2001 (Ames). It appears as if these tragic attacks have once again brought this literary genre alive, much like after WWII and the Cold War. However, this new brand of dystopian novels may not be solely influenced by atrocities such as 9/11 but also the aftermath of them. We now live in a society where it is considered normal to be on video multiple times a day, and we essentially have very little understanding of how much information our government can collect from us.

It is no question that societal norms altered after the 9/11 attacks. People can now expect to have their belongings searched at the airport, as well as have to go through metal detectors at border security. We live in a world with ever increasing protections, however when these safety precautions begin to infringe on personal privacy, much like Orwell’s “Big Brother,” our society begins increasingly to reflect the conditions in these novels. The new brand of YA Dystopian novels helps adolescents deal with these situations and pressures in a harm-free way. It seems that the rise in popularity for YA dystopian fiction comes from “seeking a safe space to wrestle with and perhaps displace, the fears they play upon” (Ames 7). However, it is also important to note that this new brand of dystopian literature not only presents readers with metaphorical political scenarios, but also “resolves” them “amidst the comfortable narrative threads of young adult narratives: coming of age rituals, identity struggles, romantic love triangles...” (Ames 7).

Therefore, these YA dystopian novels portray corrupt governments that are ultimately taken on by a teenager or young adult looking to “find themselves.” The protagonist almost always overcomes a personal struggle while also being able to fight off the corrupt government being represented. These books are certainly entertaining and help build self-esteem in young adults but do not necessarily portray the realities of over-intrusive governments and technologies.

While new dystopian novels such as Suzanne Collin’s *The Hunger Games* and Scott Westerfeld’s “*Uglies*” series have been gaining the spotlight in popular culture, sales for the “classics,” have also spiked in recent years. The *New York Times* article “George Orwell’s ‘1984’ is suddenly a best seller” claims that in 2017, George Orwell’s famous *1984* saw an incredible “surge” in sales, “rising to the top of the Amazon best seller list in the United States and leading its publisher to have tens of thousands of new copies printed” (de Freytas-Tamura). Therefore, it appears that over the past couple years people have become increasingly interested in early works of Dystopian literature. The article further states that this isn’t just a phenomenon for the U.S., but that sales outside of the United States have also gone up. Furthermore, Phillip K. Dick’s alternative history book *The Man in the High Castle* has also had an increase in sales, and is now adapted into an Amazon television series. Ultimately, people are definitely becoming curious about dystopian literature, and this phenomenon makes us wonder whether our post 9/11 society has helped resurface anxieties about the future world we live in.

There is however, critique of these new Young Adult Dystopian narratives, and whether or not they live up to the dystopian novels of the past. These narratives typically tend to feature incredibly talented teenagers who are somehow able to overturn the ranks of the totalitarian regime of which they are living under as well as the people who are there to control them. In *The Hunger Games*, for example, Katniss and Peeta are able to change a longstanding tradition

of having only one ultimate victor for the titular “hunger games,” when they develop a relationship for the spectators watching them. In the novel, the “Gamemakers pick up on the romance by announcing that there will be a change in the rules” this year, there can be two winners” (Fisher 28). Therefore, Katniss and Peeta, despite their apparent helpless position being the two tributes from the poorest district in Panem. District 12, are still able to change the Gamemakers minds on how many people should be allowed to win the games. When the Capitol threatens to go back on its promise, the pair decides to “eat a handful of deadly berries,” very Romeo and Juliet like, until “a further announcement is made...there can be two winners” (Fisher 28). Katniss and Peeta ultimately walk away from the games the victors, having outsmarted not only the other adolescents forced into this competition, but those who created the Games as well.

Protagonists like these are found in many modern dystopian fiction novels, and are very different from characters such as Winston or Juliana, who are the main focus of older dystopian works. In Scott Westerfeld’s *Uglies*, the world in which Tally Youngblood lives in is also riddled with microphones and cameras that detect where its citizens are at all times. However, all too often Tally is able to deceive these devices with common internet hacks that generations of rebellious teenagers before her have passed down (Westerfeld). In the third book of the series, *Specials*, Tally’s quick thinking is so feared and admired by the government who has been working to stop her, that they recruit her to become one of their own. She becomes what’s known as a “special” and essentially becomes a part of the police force that is meant to keep the people of Tally’s world in line, until the end of the novel when she remembers her childhood dream of being free and she is able to use her new status to manipulate the system and escape.

Tally Young Blood, like Katniss, is very intelligent and is able to rise quickly through the ranks of the very same totalitarian force that made the world the way it is.

It is quite clear how this kind of exceptional and confident protagonist differs greatly from the ones we see in *1984* and *The Man in the High Castle*. Winston, for example, does not have the same mental capability or power even as say Tally Youngblood to deceive his telescreen so that it won't watch him 24/7. The Party of Oceania is much more difficult, if not impossible, to allude, and anyone who is caught breaking the rules is punished severely. Although Winston believes he is out-smarting the Party by meeting Julia in secret, it is later revealed that the Party knew the whole time of their affair and was simply waiting for the right moment to arrest them (Orwell). Therefore, the government in Oceania cannot be alluded by simple tricks and does not respond lightly to those who break the rules. This makes Oceania a lot more comparable to our own society since the government cannot be fooled by simple internet tricks. The same holds true for the Pacific United States and the Greater Nazi Reich in Dick's novel. Juliana is able to avoid government control by living in the Neutral Zone, but she is limited to its confines, plus she puts herself in danger by venturing out of it to look for "the man in the high castle."

Overall, dystopian literature, despite having changed dramatically over the centuries and even over the last couple of decades, continues to be a genre that the public is fascinated by. It is clear that these novels, beginning with the utopias and merging into dystopias, serve as "reflections of the issues that were important to the period in which their authors lived" (Sargent 21). Clearly, Thomas More's *Utopia* reflected the desires of those in his time, where technology was scarce, if even existent, and daily struggles made life hard. We see this change during the middle of the 20th century with the break out of World Wars I and II, and the emergence of

Communism and Nazism. During this time, it becomes apparent that the type of “utopia” in which More depicted is not realistic or obtainable in the real world and the literature at the time furthered this argument.

Orwell's *1984* and Dick's *The Man in the High Castle* portray these new found attitudes of skepticism of one's government and fear of the machine in several ways. Winston's Oceania is run by a totalitarian regime simply referred to as The Party, which continuously surveillances all of its citizens activities and arrests people under and small suggestion that they may not fully be committed to the Party. In the Pacific states, Americans such as Robert Childan and Jew Frank Fink need to keep low profiles in order to avoid the wrath of the Japanese Imperial government. The novels also warn about the power of literature and how a government who controls this discipline will have a greater control over not just its citizens, but their thoughts as well. This is depicted through the use of *Newspeak* and by the banning of what is considered “treasonous” literature, a novel by the name of *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy*. Ultimately, these elements critique the idea of “utopian” societies and ideas, by bringing for the realities of what would occur under such as regime.

Dystopias, to no surprise, have always been influenced by the political manifestations of the time in which they are written in. Certainly, a lot has happened in our nation and around the world over the past couple decades that would ignite a resurfacing interest in this literary genre. Catastrophes such as the 9/11 attacks and their aftermath and brought us into a world that is starting to look increasingly like the dystopias depicted in these novels. More recent events, such as Edward Snowden's admission that the government uses technology to spy on its citizens as well as the current administrations use of medias like Twitter to communicate its messages

through short, quick means even further questions the legitimacy of our own society and just how dystopian we are.

Alongside sparked interest in novels like *1984* and *The Man in the High Castle*, so has a new, modern genre of dystopian fiction emerged, the Young Adult dystopian novel. These novels, like Collin's *The Hunger Games* portray young protagonists who, unlike the earlier works, are able to use both moral and mental superiority to outsmart the political regimes that look to suppress them. This new form of dystopian literature arises from a whole generation of millennials growing up in a post 9/11 era, in which they've have to come to the realization that they're lives may not be as fulfilling, or free in any case, as that of their parents. Some critics argue that due to the subtle and overall positive nature of these novels, that they might not have as long a self-life as Orwell, but none-the-less these new works of young adult dystopian fiction have still managed to engulf a whole generation of young readers. Overall, dystopian literature has truly changed and altered over the years in many ways but one thing still remains consistent. Readers are still interested in dystopian fiction because it critiques society in a way that other genres of literature simply do not. No matter what form, dystopias use the scariest most unthinkable aspects of our own political climate and present them for us in a way that cannot be overlooked or ignored. All in all, pollical structures may change and genres may alter, but the idea of dystopian and all that it represents for a society will remain consistent in the literary world.

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